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Having spent a substantial part of my career building research infrastructure, I have learned to appreciate the value of user-friendly, well-organized, and well-maintained databases, archives, museums, and library collections, and I take this opportunity to pay homage to all those who are involved in building infrastructure for research and to express my special gratitude to all those archivists and librarians whom I have contacted ever since 2001 – there have been hundreds of hundreds of them. Their work constitutes the backbone of my research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On 1 June 1891, *Der Zeitgeist*, a weekly supplement to the *Berliner Tageblatt*, printed a stage song under the title “Das Lied vom Ibsen”, whose first stanza went as follows:

Ibsen, Ibsen, everywhere! There’s nothing like it! Over the whole globe Ibsen fever rages. The whole world is Ibsen-mad, [...] for the entire air is full of Ibsen-germs! No salvation! Fashions and advertisements everywhere proclaim Ibsen’s name, trumpet his praise! On cigars, ladies’ trinkets, pastries, bodices, ties is flaunted the word in letters of gold: Ibsen! A la Ibsen!¹

Written by Maximilian Krämer, the editor of the *Lustige Blätter*, clearly to be used as part of an act at one of Berlin’s cabaret clubs – the details of the performance are not known – the lyrics suggest that Ibsen pervades all facets of human life. Modern existence itself is entirely inconceivable without him. He is idolized, ideologized, fetishized, merchandised, and capitalized on, and appears as the measure of all things. Only the closing lines of the final stanza call for sobriety. The Ibsen vogue is profound and all-pervasive, but prevails only ‘until God lets Ibsen succumb to new trends’.²

Krämer applies genre devices well known to the cabaret song: satire, ridicule, exaggeration, irony. Yet the general observation that informs the contents and in all likelihood inspired him to write the song in the first place does not seem far from the truth: At the close of the nineteenth century, Ibsen had only two rivals in respect of world-wide renown, Tolstoy and Zola (Archer 1901, 182); in Germany, no dramatist earned as much attention, recognition, and fame as Ibsen. Here, “Das Lied vom Ibsen” serves first and foremost as an appetizer, as a testimony of something else. The song in itself does not interest me as much as the context that conceived it and the fact that it was written for the stage. The present thesis is intended as an investigation of Ibsen from the point of view

1 Ibsen, Ibsen überall! / Da geht nichts mehr drüber! / Auf dem ganzen Erdenball / Herrscht das Ibsen-Fieber! / Alle Welt wird Ibsen-toll, / Wenn auch wider Willen, / Denn die ganze Luft ist voll / Ibsen-Ruhm-Bacillen! / Keine Rettung! Ueberall / Künden Ibsens Namen, / Preisend mit Posaunenschall, / Moden und Reklamen. / Auf Cigarren, Damenschmuck, / Torten, Miedern, Schlipfen. / Prangt das Wort in gold’nem Druck: / „Ibsen! A la Ibsen!” Quoted and translated in McFarlane 1991, 112.

2 “Bis Gott Ibsen unterliegt / Einer – neuen Mode!” *Der Zeitgeist. Beiblatt zum Berliner Tageblatt*, 1 June 1891.

of the German stage. How was he introduced? How did his plays fare on the German stage? Who were the people that produced them? What characterizes the German Ibsen tradition when seen from the perspective of the stage?

My approach is quantitative, historical, transnational, and guided by research methodologies from the field of digital humanities. I will examine the German stage history of Ibsen's plays over a period of forty-two years. 1918 is chosen as the end point for two main reasons: First of all, that year marked the end of two empires, the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³ The political structure of these two empires is crucial to an understanding of the events put under scrutiny in this thesis. Second, as will be shown, the volume of German Ibsen performances increase constantly from the mid-1880s until World War I, from when the numbers decrease until the 1950s. Measured in volume of theatrical events, the period of the German Empire was marked by growth and advancement whereas the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich saw recession.

By 1918, Ibsen was produced on stage in German at venues all over the Western world, from Moscow in the east to San Francisco in the west. Previous research on the German Ibsen tradition was predominantly carried out within the framework of the nation as a basic knowledge category (cf. Stein 1901; Eller 1918; George 1968; Bernhardt 1989). By contrast, I propose the application of a consistent methodological transnationalism known from migration studies to unravel the transnational entanglements of Ibsen's German stage history (Manz 2014, 2–7). German Ibsen performances transcended the borders of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, and Switzerland both through the German diaspora and through the international touring circuit. Scholarship has failed to take into account the impact of migration on the spread of Ibsen. Likewise, not enough attention has been paid to the role of transnational and international touring in the stage history of his plays.

Throughout its six stanzas, "Das Lied vom Ibsen" leaps back and forth between the local and the global. It contains references in abundance to the prosaic reality of Berlineser consumer culture, yet claims that the Ibsen craze applies to the world at large and closes by introducing the otherworldly perspective of a merciful God bringing Ibsen hysteria to an end. In parts of my thesis, the German perspective and the global perspective will go hand in hand in a similar manner. The German introduction of Ibsen paved the way for him being introduced into other language areas and cultural markets. Polish audiences first

3 To avoid confusion with today's Germany and Austria – and as a reminder of the fact that the political map of Europe was quite different from today – I will systematically use the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire or simply Austria-Hungary to refer to the 'Deutsches Kaiserreich' that existed between 1871 and 1918 and the 'Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie' that existed from 1867 to 1918.

encountered Ibsen in Wawrzyńiec Engeström's small monograph *Henryk Ibsen: Poeta norwegijski* (1875). In large parts, this booklet is a loose translation of the chapter on Ibsen in Adolf Strodtmann's book *Das geistige Leben in Dänemark* (1873, 223–258, cf. Kłańska 2006, 180–181). Ibsen's first major success on the European continent, *Pillars of Society*, which was soon published in three different German translations and staged by more than sixty theatre companies in the German-speaking areas of Central Europe in the late 1870s, spread out over several language areas. The very first Hungarian, Serbian, Czech, and Dutch performances of *Pillars of Society* used translations based on German translations, thereby constituting specific side effects of Ibsen's German success. In the further course of events, German translations led to the introduction of Ibsen's works in languages like Russian, Italian, Latvian, Bulgarian, Slovenian, and Romanian.

This has made scholars assume that Ibsen's German breakthrough led to his subsequent international breakthrough (Reich 1908, 193). However, as will be shown, the matter is more complex. The above-mentioned offshoots of Ibsen's German success with *Pillars of Society* left no lasting impact. More importantly, instead of following up on the success of the preceding play, *A Doll's House* initially failed both critically and financially on the German stage. In this thesis, I will revisit the assertion that Ibsen's German breakthrough led to his international breakthrough and treat it as a hypothesis still to be tested. Undeniably, the German stage was key in introducing Ibsen's plays to performance venues across the entire Western world, but German Ibsen performances did not necessarily contribute to the making of Ibsen the world dramatist.

The stage history of Ibsen's plays in the period of the German Empire is not unknown territory, far from it. I rely on numerous volumes of Ibsen scholarship carried out by scholars and non-scholars before me. At the same time, in terms of methodology I deviate radically from traditional Ibsen research, first and foremost as a consequence of my use of the performance database IbsenStage as a research tool and e-research methodologies pioneered by the AusStage team. The particularities of my methodological approach are best described through the following shifts:

- the shift from traditional to digital humanities,
- the shift from qualitative to quantitative approach,
- the shift from literary to theatre studies,
- the shift from textual analysis to data analysis.

1.1 IbsenStage: the database as a research tool

Our combined knowledge of Ibsen resides not only in documents and items (books, articles, manuscripts, etc.) in libraries, archives, and museums across the globe, not only in the minds and bodies of all those who have read Ibsen, written about him, or portrayed his characters. It also resides in digital resources independent both of print media and the human mind: digital repositories, databases, collections of files in multiple formats, and so forth. These resources represent new and still largely unexplored modes of knowledge formation and production that the emerging field of digital humanities has taken into consideration.

The pool of digital resources generated on the basis of Ibsen's life and works is relatively rich and manifold. The Ibsen Concordance, available online since 1993, was the first of its kind. It facilitated search for words in Ibsen's complete works. Over the years, digital Ibsen resources proliferated. Simple research questions that only twenty-five years ago required days and weeks or even months and years of work to determine are now potentially solved in a matter of seconds thanks to resources like the International Ibsen Bibliography, the digital edition of *Henrik Ibsen Skrifter*, the National Library of Norway's Ibsen site (formerly known as Ibsen.net), and IbsenStage.⁴

Set up by the Ibsen Centre at the University of Oslo in collaboration with the National Library of Norway and the Australian live performance database AusStage, IbsenStage is an event-based, relational performance database currently holding more than 23,000 records with data from Ibsen performances from 1850 until the present day.

Burdick et al. claim that

[d]igital humanities is born of the encounter between traditional humanities and computational methods. With the migration of cultural materials into networked environments, questions regarding the production, availability, validity, and stewardship of these materials present new challenges and opportunities for humanists. In contrast with most traditional forms of scholarship, digital approaches are conspicuously collaborative and generative. (Burdick 2012, 3)

The story behind IbsenStage is a striking illustration of this point. In its essentials, IbsenStage is a combination of four things: a collection of data, a way to organize the data, a set of procedures to facilitate interaction between data and users, and a set of research methodologies to enable scholars to use the database for research purposes. The collection itself stems from countless volumes

4 See www.nb.no/bibliografi/ibsen/; <http://ibsen.uio.no/>; <http://ibsen.nb.no/>.

of Ibsen scholarship and from more than seventeen years of gathering performance data from archives, libraries, and museums. The Repertoire Database of the website formerly known as Ibsen.net became “the first ever attempt to map exactly to what extent, by whom, when and where Ibsen’s plays have been staged in theatres all over the world” (Hanssen 2014). Ibsen.net was initiated by the National Ibsen Committee, appointed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture to coordinate the plans for the Ibsen Year 2006 to commemorate the centennial of Ibsen’s death. In 2007, the editorial office of Ibsen.net moved to the National Library of Norway and eventually changed to its current domain name, Ibsen.nb.no. By March 2014, the Repertoire Database consisted of 9,670 records.⁵

AusStage was instigated by the Australasian Drama Studies Association in 1999, setting out to “address the need for research information in Australian theatre, drama and performance studies by building an index of performing arts events in Australia, and a directory of research resources on the performing arts”.⁶ An online database was established. Around 2008, initiatives were taken to establish a tripartite collaboration. Initially, Ibsen.net’s contribution was to share all the data on *A Doll’s House* from the Repertoire Database with the AusStage team. A research project on the global production history of *A Doll’s House* conducted by Julie Holledge applied e-research methodologies developed by the AusStage team on the dataset (Bollen et al. 2009; Bollen and Holledge 2011; Holledge et al. 2016). The project was part of the international research project “Ibsen between Cultures” at the Ibsen Centre (Helland and Holledge 2013). In 2012, the three institutions came to a mutual agreement to expand the collaboration. The National Library agreed to share the total dataset of 9,670 records from the Repertoire Database. The Ibsen Centre at the University of Oslo agreed to set up and run IbsenStage, and AusStage agreed to share their database model and research methodologies. IbsenStage was launched in March 2014.

IbsenStage differs from the Repertoire Database in a number of ways. There are three main differences. First of all, the Repertoire Database is a production database, whereas IbsenStage is an event database. In IbsenStage, the event is specified as a

5 For the record, as the editor of Ibsen.net from the start in 2001 until 2014, I was myself in charge of the Repertoire Database. The database has not been updated since March 2014.

6 www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/learn/about/project-history.html, accessed 7 March 2017.

distinct happening defined by title, date/s and venue; typically, a performance or series of performances at a venue. [...] Multiple presentations of the same production at different venues (e.g. touring productions) are recorded as separate events.⁷

Take as an example a theatre production performed over three consecutive seasons at a local venue, which, in addition, tours venues in ten cities. The Repertoire Database would record this production in one single record. In IbsenStage, on the other hand, the example would give altogether thirteen (associated) event records, one for each of the ten touring performances, plus three records for the consecutive seasonal runs. A theatre production is likely to change as a function of time and space. Instead of collapsing the production data into one single record, IbsenStage structures the data in a way which provides greater flexibility and accuracy.

Second, IbsenStage is a relational database, while the Repertoire Database is a hierarchal database. Like AusStage, IbsenStage has been developed on the basis of the relational model of data which means that data are organized into tables (or ‘relations’) of columns and rows. Each table represents one entity type, the rows represent instances of that entity type, and the corresponding columns represent values attributed to that instance. IbsenStage consists of six core tables: events, contributor, organization, venue, resource, and work. At the front end, an event record typically displays a combination of data from multiple tables. Take the event record of *Ghosts* at the Kammerspiele Berlin as an example.⁸ The event name (Gespenster) and the date of the first performance (8 November 1906) are derived from the event table; the venue name (Kammerspiele) and the corresponding street address (Schumannstraße 13A, Berlin) are derived from the venue table; the name of the organization, that is the theatre institution in charge of the production (Deutsches Theater) is derived from the organization table; and finally, the contributors, here twelve fully named individuals, including the director Max Reinhardt, the designer Edvard Munch, and the leading cast members Agnes Sorma and Alexander Moissi, are derived from the contributors table. Every event is associated with one or (occasionally) more works, in IbsenStage defined as “the abstract conception of an event, typically (though not always) expressed as a material resource, such as a script or score”.⁹ Here, the event in question is associated with one of Ibsen’s dramatic works,

7 <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/learn/show/category/About/content/Data+Models>, accessed 7 March 2017.

8 <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/event/79324>, accessed 7 March 2017.

9 <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/learn/show/category/About/content/Data+Models#work>, accessed 7 March 2017.

Ghosts. At the back end, SQL (Structured Query Language) is used to maintain the database and to perform queries according to specific research questions.

Third, IbsenStage is a research tool. Although the intention of the Repertoire Database was to build research infrastructure and facilitate research, the database gradually faced shortcomings due to the choice of database model. The Repertoire Database was developed as an integral part of the Ibsen.net website, which in its overall design was more targeted at the general public than the research community. IbsenStage is a research tool first and foremost because of a set of e-research methodologies and techniques inherited from the AusStage project. Every venue is georeferenced by using latitude and longitude coordinates according to the GPS system. A map interface applying Google Earth/Google Maps provides a tool to study the geographical distribution of events from the point of view of cartography. The contributor dataset, holding data on every individual who has contributed “in some capacity to the conception, production or presentation” of an Ibsen event, enables users to undertake analyses of artistic networks of contact and collaboration across time and space.¹⁰

Furthermore, IbsenStage is a research-driven project. Data exported from the Repertoire Database have been supplemented through research work, and new data are continuously being added as a result of individual research projects and collaborative projects involving cooperating institutions.

1.2 The quantitative approach

A shift from qualitative to quantitative approach implies a shift of focus from the particular to the general, from the extraordinary to the ordinary, from the atypical to the common. Instead of drawing general conclusions on the basis of analysis of a presumed representative sample of particulars, one starts with the general and raises new issues and problems and poses new questions on that basis. In quantitatively driven hard sciences, there are long traditions and more or less standardized procedures on how to carry out quantity research. In the humanities – historically “the province of close analysis of limited data

10 By way of cross-linking tables, IbsenStage creates a web of links which lends itself to relational analysis. The contributor-event table links each contributor with each event in which s/he participated; the contributor-function table joins contributor data with data about the function(s) the contributors had in the events (actor, director, designer, dramaturge, composer, translator, etc.); the contributor-contributor table links each contributor with all other contributors featured in the events in which s/he participated. To see how data retrieved from multiple tables are displayed online, see for example the contributor page of Max Reinhardt: <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/contributor/427222>.

sets” (Burdick 2012, 37) – quantitative research methods have been a case of experimentation only since the turn of the millennium.

One of the pioneers in using quantitative research methods in humanistic studies is Franco Moretti, who coined the term ‘distant reading’ in opposition to the established concept of close reading. The trouble with close reading, Moretti argues, is “that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon”. At its core, close reading is “a theological exercise – very solemn treatment of very few texts taken very seriously” (Moretti 2013a, 48). Moretti’s alternative is distant reading – “where distance [...] *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the texts: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems” (Moretti 2013a, 48–49, italics in original).

Close reading would normally fit into the category of qualitative research methods, while distant reading as a procedure would point in the direction of quantitative research methods. Moretti’s term has indeed inspired my thesis in that I intend to perform a kind of distant reading of German Ibsen performances in the period 1876–1918.

In his article “Conjectures on World Literature”, originally published in 2000,¹¹ Moretti applies distant reading as a procedure of synthesizing research findings from a long list of scholars in order to analyse world literature as a system, his hypothesis being a possible law of literary evolution:

[I]n cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system [...], the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials. (Moretti 2013a, 50)

He finds support for the hypothesis, but also “that the compromise itself was taking rather different forms” and that “world literature was indeed a system – but a system of *variations*. The system was one, not uniform. The pressure from the Anglo-French core *tried* to make it uniform, but it could never fully erase the reality of difference” (Moretti 2013a, 54, 56, italics in original).

In his 2005 book *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, Moretti applies distant reading in a slightly different fashion, more in line with how the term is understood today. Less focus is given to the synthesizing technique, and instead distant reading is now an approach

in which the reality of the text undergoes a process of deliberate reduction and abstraction. ‘Distant reading’, I have once called this type of approach; where distance is however not an obstacle, but *a specific form of knowledge*: fewer elements, hence

11 *New Left Review* 1 January – February 2000, 54–68; re-printed in Moretti 2013a, 43–62.