

Review

A Reality Beyond Truth: A Lacanian Reading of Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*

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The Wild Duck, written by Henrik Ibsen in 1884, is singled out by many critics as his greatest dramatic work. The play presents a diverse array of characters, fascinating plot and a high emotional tendency. In fact, Ibsen in writing *The Wild Duck*, for the first time, undertook to launch on a dramatic work, which besides rendering typical of his principal themes aimed at approaching his characterization with a desire to investigate them more scientifically than his previous works.

The main objective of this article has been to apply Lacanian psychoanalysis to this dramatic work in order to shed some light on the unconscious aspects of its main characters (Gregers, Hjalmar and Hedvig) and the way their actions are the result of their unconscious pathological motivations rather than their conscious intentions. In other words, the researcher has tried to demonstrate how Gregers and Hjalmar are respectively suffering from some degrees of neurosis and psychosis, which directly affect their conscious behaviors. In the third part of this article we concerned ourselves with Hedvig and her relation to the wound, on the body of the duck, was deeply explored. By concluding the fact that these characters do not avoid the truth because they are not willing to confront reality; rather they believe that by dismantling their illusion the reality itself would be demolished

Key words: Desire, foreclosure, neurosis, psychosis, the-name- of-the -father.

INTRODUCTION

The main argument of this article rests on psycho-analytical criticism of Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* with the aim of uncovering the unconscious motivations of its principle characters. In *The Wild Duck* (1968), Ibsen, in representing his characters in their highest realistic look, arrived at the zenith of his métier as a dramatist. The play was well received in Stockholm and directed by August Lindberg, who understood the special problems that *The Wild Duck* posed. "With your new play," he wrote to Ibsen before starting rehearsals, "we stand on new and unbroken ground...these are quite new human beings, and what will it avail to use the common approach of actors –people who have lost touch with nature through spending their lives playing boulevard comedy? I realized this with *Ghosts*, and it is the same with *The Wild Duck*"

(Meyer, 1971).

This comment truly illuminates how in this play, each persona is characterized in conformity with his or her distinct psychological properties and attributes, which uncovers the full extent of Ibsen's potentials in realizing human condition. To put it in better terms, the "naturalistic school of which Ibsen was a leading figure expressed an increasing conviction that aesthetic purism – art for art's sake- must give way to the artist's concern with the concrete problems of men" (Fjelde, 1965). Relating to the play, Ibsen himself once mentioned that critics would find plenty to quarrel about, plenty to interpret. With respect to the high capacity of the play in yielding itself to various interpretative trends, it becomes utterly unjustifiable only to hold on to the general aspects of the play and ignore

its other significant implications. Indeed Ibsen, for the first time, undertook to launch on a dramatic work, which besides rendering typical of his principal themes aimed at approaching his characterization with a desire to investigate them more scientifically than his previous works. This sort of scientific realism on his part contributed to the production of real-like and unfeigned characters, which in a dramatic form displayed some of their peculiar and pathological idiosyncrasies.

The key characters in this play are exceedingly complicated, and each depicts some ambiguous attitudes towards life, which manifest their impact on their inter-subjective relations with other characters. In this article, the researcher has attempted to show how by means of psychoanalytical techniques, it is possible to discover the implicit unconscious motivations and pathological incentives, which lie behind the explicit actions of the main characters. This kind of an approach would help to shed some light on the fact that, in contrast to popular belief, true catastrophes in life are mainly the result of family complexes; arising from human psyche, rather than the functioning of the machinery of the bigger universe itself. Here it should be reminded that the guiding purpose in this article is not to reduce the play to its basic libidinal economy, rather the main point is, by decentering the play, to bring to light its disavowed and hidden unconscious aspects.

In analyzing *The Wild Duck* the researcher has endeavored to deposit the main characters (Gregers, Hjalmar and Hedvig) at the center of attention and by exploring the nature of their uncommon individual psychology, account for the dissymmetry in their relation to each other, which is further outlined in their particular eccentric behaviors, statements and thoughts. Throughout this article, the researcher has attempted to argue how Gregers and Hjalmar are respectively displaying the symptoms of neurosis and psychosis. By bringing to light the very formal aspects of these particular psychological deficiencies, it would be possible to disclose the fact that Gregers and Hjalmar are standing in opposite directions from each other. In other words what is decisive in understanding the true motivation of the characters is not the tricky surface of the events and actions but rather in order to come to a valid understanding of the characters we need (By looking away at the work) to explore the other side of the coin; the unconscious mind. In the first part of our analysis, we would concern ourselves with Gregers and by exploring his unconscious mind in a very indirect way; we would be able to gain some insight into his true motivations. This kind of an investigation finally would put us in doubt as to whether Gregers has a true conscientiousness nature or whether he is truly in love with disclosing the truth to other people. The researcher would argue for example how Gregers' decision to rescue Hjalmar from what he judges to be the falsehood and lying that are ruining his life arises from his peculiar

pathology –neurosis- rather than his conscious intentions. This would consequently demonstrate how obsessional's conscious search for a discovery (of the truth) paradoxically coincides with a particular unconscious concealment. In other words the obsessional's fervent activity to conceal the lack in the other should be taken as a pretext under which the obsessional unconsciously tries to divert attentions as to his own true status as a lacking person. In the second part of this article entitled: Hjalmar as a psychotic character, we would concern ourselves with the psychotic nature of Hjalmar. To justify the fact that he was suffering from a kind of psychosis the researcher would discuss some elements in the play, which relate to Hjalmar's psychosis arising from the lack of adequate paternal authority. Some of these psychotic symptoms arguably are his excessive imaginative creations, his fake attempt to commit suicide, and his inability to come to a proper inter-subjective relation with others, which would be discussed in detail throughout this research. To put it in other words, our investigation into Hjalmar's unconscious motivations would lead us to understand the reasons for which Hjalmar always deters his future invention, the way he wants to direct his father's vengeance towards himself rather than towards old Werle who is the main cause of his father's disgrace, and the way his suicidal effort was no more than a fake, covering his desire to reintegrate himself even further into the symbolic world of the other people. In the third part of this article, the researcher has concerned himself with Hedvig and her taking care of a wounded duck, arguing that the wound on the body of the duck is the "little piece of the real" to which Hedvig's death drive clings. This means that the cut introducing torsion on the body of the duck, the existence of an obscene, ungraspable and indivisible real, which is not in full harmony with the duck's body, is the very point in which Hedvig's desire has been invested.

The Wild Duck has been re-read and re-interpreted in the light of various theories. Since the researcher in this thesis would apply psychoanalytical criticism to *The Wild Duck*, here it is necessary to bring a brief account of the works, which have looked at this work from psychological perspective. Many scholars have indeed considered *The Wild Duck* from psychological point of view. Martha Hasey in her *Reality versus illusion: Ibsen's The Wild Duck* and Buero Vallejo's *En la ardiente oscuridad*, has studied the contrast between reality and illusion in *The Wild Duck*. Albert Bermel in his *Hedvig's suicide: a reexamination of the Wild Duck*, has tried to look at *The Wild Duck* from a new perspective. Oliver Gerland in his *The Lacanian imaginary in Ibsen's Pillars of Society and The Wild Duck*, has attempted a Lacanian approach in analyzing *The Wild Duck*. Sydney Mendel also, in *The revolt against the father: the adolescent hero in Hamlet and the Wild Duck* has observed this play from a psychological perspective. From Iranian writers, Behzad

Ghaderi an eminent scholar on Henrik Ibsen, in addition to his translation of *The Wild Duck* into Persian-Murghabi Vahshi- in his article *Cultural transactions with Ibsen: problems and Objectives in translating Ibsen into Persian*, has talked of cultural issues, which could impact translations of Ibsen's works. Behzad Ghaderi Also has written some critical works on Henrik Ibsen. For example in one part of his book Ibsen: *Utopia and Chaos*, he has looked at *The Wild Duck* from a psychological perspective, discussing Hedvig's relation to the wound on the body of the duck.

This research is significant in that it helps us to understand the fact that not only we could look at Henrik Ibsen's works from sociological perspectives but also it is possible to approaches his works from a different angle namely from a psychological point of view. On the other hand, this study would also help the literary scholars to well investigate the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. It is also significant in that it would help to understand how psychoanalytical criticism requires close application rather than flies of fancy, a painstaking study of all details rather than broad and facile generalizations.

DISCUSSION

Gregers as a neurotic character

In this part, we would discuss the way the excessive paternal power (the excessive function of the paternal signifier) in Gregers' life has led to his 'Oedipal' irresolution, and the way this oedipal irresolution has ultimately made of Gregers a neurotic character, creating in him some symptoms characteristic of obsessional neurosis. These neurotic symptoms in Gregers' life, which the researcher would discuss in detail, consist of an excessive and conscientious sense of guilt and an impulse toward abrupt and fevered action, which finds its manifestation in his incessant and fake inclination to discover the truth in the life of other people. Cast by his rival Dr. Relling as a spiritual quack, Gregers is the impassioned, idealistic son of Haakon Werle. Dr. Relling believes that, Gregers is "an acute case of inflamed scruples," which is a sort of "national illness," occurring sporadically (Ibsen, 1968). Relling who is a sort of a doctor seems to have understood the truth about Gregers. Gregers is full of scruples, ambiguities and obsessive thoughts, which according to Dr. Relling are signs of a national disease. Relling tells Hjalmar that: "the man's mad, barmy, off his head," warning him not to get too close to Gregers. At the end of the story, Dr. Relling's predictions turn out true: Indeed at the end, Gregers brings catastrophe to Hjalmar's life. For the time being let's come to the beginning, when Gregers after a long time of absence has returned home, and see how his obsessive conduct would lead to the destruction of

Hjalmar's family life.

Young Werle is petty, mean-spirited, and vengeful, who, in a redemptive mode and after an absence of almost seventeen years, returns to the house of his wealthy and realistic father, Haakon Werle. The two of them have always felt hostile towards each other. Gregers obsessively wants to atone for his father's mischievous deeds, which old Werle has done to Hjalmar's family in the past. There is no need to guess whether Gregers is sick (obsessional); he confesses this himself when he discloses the neurotic motivation behind his mission by telling his father that "it's thanks to you that I go around hunted and gnawed by a guilt-laden conscience." He has returned from self-imposed exile to avenge his father's crimes on the Ekdal family. In this particular sense, his return is analogous to the return of the repressed in psychoanalysis. Gregers perceives of his vengeance as the unmasking of the illusions, which have surrounded Hjalmar's family life: the disclosure of his wife's relationship with his father, their continued debt to Werle, and, inadvertently, Hedvig's uncertain parentage. Gregers, a total idealist, cannot bear to observe that Hjalmar is ignorant about the facts concerning his wife and Werle's generosity; therefore, he believes that he should tell his friend the truth and present "the claim of the ideal." Gregers believes that if he discloses to Hjalmar that his marriage is fundamentally based on lies, the marriage will become stronger, more honest, and more ideal.

Gregers obviously misjudges the capacity of his friend. Now Gregers decides to rescue his friend (Hjalmar) from what he judges to be the falsehood and lying that are ruining his life. The obsessional neurotic, according to lacan, performs some compulsive ritual because he thinks this would enable him to escape the lack in the other, the castration of the "Other" which is represented in fantasy as some terrible catastrophe (Evans, 1996). To put it in the words of Slavoj Zizek an avid fan of Lacanian ideas, the obsessional by taking part in feverish action works all the time to avoid some unusual catastrophe that would happen if his activity were to stop. To put it in other words, the obsessional assumes that if he does not do the compulsive ritual some inconceivable horrible X will take place (Zizek, 1992). Therefore, the obsessional neurotic should all the time indulge in performing an activity so that by his action he would avoid the occurrence of the true catastrophe, which is the catastrophe of his/her own castration, to divert attentions as to his own true status as a lacking person. This is exactly what happens in the case of Gregers who in a redemptive mode and after a long time of absence has returned to his father's house and obsessively wants to atone for his father's mischievous deeds which he has done to Hjalmar's family in the past. Gregers who has recently been aware of his father's machinations all of a sudden starts upon a mission to open Hjalmar Ekdal's eyes to the lie he had been living for the past fifteen years. Indeed

Gregers' inclination towards revealing the truth arises from the intrigues his father has played upon poor Ekdal's family. In a burst of guilt, contrition, shame and conscientiousness, he begins to ruminate upon performing an act, which consequently would stop the proliferation of falsehood and illusion. As if by awakening Ekdal family to truth, he craves to find a justifiable reason to his own humiliated existence. This humiliation, which has put Gregers into shame resulting in his excessive feeling of guilt in the face of his friend mainly, arises from his father's overbearing patriarchal authority, dominance and power. In other words, in this dramatic work Gregers' father, Old Werle, who enjoys overwhelming power and domination due to the wealth he has received in industrial business, is the epitome of patriarchal sovereignty. His castrating power not only incorporates his own child but also encompasses the lives of other people, like Ekdal family, who lie beneath his domination. The overwhelming power of old Werle mainly acquires its particular *mise en scene* when in one point of the play Werle tells Gregers "You have seen me with your mother's eyes" and then immediately adds: "But you should remember that her eyes were -- clouded now and then." As if by drawing Gregers' attention to his mother's "Eyes" he wishes to remind his child of the imaginary triangle of mother, child and phallus, which establishes itself in the oedipal period (Evans, 1996). In this period, the child desires to be the object of his/her mother's desire. One of Lacan's repeated formulas is: "man's desire is the desire of the (m) Other" (Evans 1996) which both means to desire the Other, and to be the object of Other's desire. Therefore the child should look through his mother's Eyes to see what she desires, so that by identifying with her mother's desired object would enable himself to gain her recognition. In the first time of the Oedipus complex, the child realizes that both the mother and the subject are marked by a lack. The mother is marked by lack, since she is seen to be incomplete; otherwise, she would not desire. The subject is also marked by a lack since he does not completely satisfy the mother's desire. The lacking element in both cases is the imaginary phallus. The mother desires the phallus she lacks, and the subject seeks to become the object of her desire (Evans, 1996). However, this imaginary identification (through eyes) with the mother's object of desire ultimately remains clouded and blurred for the child himself cannot certainly determine what his mother really desires. This unconscious conflict between his mother's clouded and vague desire and the fear of his father's retribution would eventually lead to neurosis (Chiesa, 2007). In other words, this means that Gregers would not be able to identify the object of his mother's desire and is eternally condemned to undergo his father's overwhelming castrating power. This ever-present fear of the punishment of the father would ultimately make of Gregers a neurotic person; always compelling him, in a compulsive way, to think of a way to escape the castration of the other, which in his

fantasmatic horizon always appears as an imminent catastrophe. In the following we will read how Gregers projects this scenario on to his friend's life and family.

Gregers' insistence to take part in an abrupt and fevered action even arouses the surprise of the old Werle's servants for Pettersen receiving the news of Gregers' arrival remarks: "Oh yes, he has a son, right enough. But he's a fixture, as you might say, up at the Hoidal works. He's never once come to town all the years I've been in service here." This comment of Pettersen, particularly when he employs the word *Fixture* as a defining feature of Gregers would at first look appear superficial and unimportant but in deeper analysis would reveal the neurotic aspects of Gregers. It is surprising to the people who know Gregers to hear of his arrival to his father's house for they think of this as an omen of a catastrophic event. Gregers who never travels to his father's house now all of a sudden has decided to visit his father and the consequent shock of his act is so vast that his father prepares to give a party in Gregers' honor. But what if the planning of this party in Gregers' (dis)honor could be read in another way? What if Gregers' father does not hold the party because Gregers has been for a long time away from home and now he is back, but paradoxically because his father thinks that by the return of his child he would be once more able to exert his retributive castrating power over his son? Gregers' return is not celebrated because his relatives missed him for a long time but because his father would find another chance to affect his child with more regulative power and authority. This authority is more highlighted when Gregers' father endeavors to persuade Gregers to avoid contact with Ekdal family by offering him a share of his property: "Very good. But as I am thinking of marrying again, your share in the property will fall to you at once." In other words, this means that old Werle in contrast to the appearances is more aware to the truth of events than Gregers who claims to be a truth lover. In fact, old Werle is more conscious to Gregers' neurotic condition; he knows that Gregers' attempts to reveal the truth are in fact directed towards concealing his own truth as a lacking person. Therefore, old Werle offers his son his share of the property so that by filling in his lack, Gregers would no longer interfere in the affairs of Ekdal family. But Gregers in a fit of conscientiousness and a sense of guilt rejects the offer by saying: "No, I dare not take it, for conscience' sake". As if his father tries to persuade him to take his share and leave Ekdal family alone!

When Gregers invites Hjalmar to the party which his father has arranged for him, Hjalmar takes it as a sign that Gregers has finally come over his resentment against him: "Hjalmar [(sentimentally).] After all, Gregers, I thank you for inviting me to your father's table; for I take it as a sign that you have got over your feeling against me." Gregers has summoned Hjalmar to confirm that he has some admirable aspiration for him, that he wants to share his honor with his friend but there is also a

possibility to read this act in another way: what if Gregers needs someone to divide his disgrace with? What if he wants to have someone who feels “more manly” to share his feeling of impotency and castration, which he went through during the rule of his masterful father? Gregers has invited his best friend to the party so that he would be able to project upon him some of his disgrace and dishonor; to find someone to sympathize with. He has asked Hjalmar to the party not to compensate for his father’s wrong deeds, to undo infelicitous conditions, which they have suffered under the manipulative power of his father, but conversely he has asked Hjalmar to the party to apply his own version of manipulation/castration over him. Gregers in escaping from the over ruling power of his father’s supremacy which in the old times had exacted an injury upon Ekdal’s family, and in undertaking to disclose the truth, himself changes into a patriarchal figure. Gregers seeks to redeem the very conditions of experience of the Ekdal’s by the imposition of his transcendental authority. Gregers unrelenting insistence upon uncovering the truth of Ekdal’s family could be interpreted in another way; the fascination of Gregers with uncovering the truth far from pointing to his love of truth would rather belie its banal background in which he strives to conceal the truth of his own self. His act of disclosure and revelation reminds us of the ironic reverberations established in Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex. Like Oedipus Gregers is metaphorically blind to his own condition and endeavors to put a mask on his own failure to defend himself against the real catastrophe. Gregers in the face of his own impotence and weakness before his father, and in order to cover the truth of his own castration unconsciously adopts the role of paternal figure in Ekdal’s family. He asks Hjalmar’s address so that he would call for him in his house in the future. Gregers’ enquiry to enter Hjalmar’s house as an attempt on his part to take Old Ekdal’s paternal position evokes the formation of a delicate comparison; Gregers himself a while ago or rather a long time ago had been forced to leave his father’s house to release himself of his father’s excessive sovereignty and now by a revengeful twist he has returned to enter Hjalmar’s house as a sovereign himself. Gregers’ version of truth is not the offsetting of old Werle’s castrative impact on Old Ekdal but it is conversely the truth of castration itself. In other words notwithstanding his own wishes to avoid the emergence of catastrophe in Ekdal’s family, he himself conversely changes into the ultimate catastrophe, which may occur to Ekdal’s family and ruin their lives.

Gregers as a neurotic or to put it in better words as an obsessional neurotic is intent upon participating in an act to avoid the occurrence of an unspeakable catastrophe, but the crucial question is what this catastrophe is? Is it the facts that if the truth is not revealed to Ekdal’s family they would gradually get into deeper troubles and miseries? The true catastrophe does not lie in the accumulating suffering of Ekdal’s family, that by the ignorance

of the others they would drown in their falsehood and therefore someone like an angel should come down and rescue them, the true catastrophe rather lies in the fact that if Gregers would stop participating in an act his own true nature would be disclosed. Gregers does not want the Ekdal family to discover that he himself is like old Ekdal feminized and castrated, or in better words he wants to conceal the fact that he himself does not possess the masterful phallus; the sign of potency and power. Therefore, he should indulge in an act to preserve the appearance, to sustain himself in a masterful condition, and thereby to guarantee himself the status of a true man.

Hjalmar as a psychotic character

In this part, we would concern ourselves with Hjalmar and his psychotic nature. Son of old Ekdal, Hjalmar is self-centered, indolent, and laughably commonplace. As a family man and provider, he relies on the patronage of Werle, the hard work of Gina, and the unrealistic delusion of a ground-breaking discovery to get from one day to the next. His character begins to reveal itself early on, in Act 1, when he is too ashamed to acknowledge the presence of his father at the Werle dinner party. Hjalmar’s superficially sensitive nature, understanding voice, and gift for reciting the verses and thoughts of others, have always made him appear the great light of the future among his family.

In the case of Hjalmar, to justify the fact that he is suffering from a kind of psychosis the researcher would discuss some elements in the play, which relate to Hjalmar’s psychosis arising from the lack of adequate paternal authority. First we would notice how the lack of paternal metaphor in Hjalmar’s life, has resulted in an imbalance in his symbolic universe. Then we would discuss the way this flaw in his symbolic domain is filled up with fantasmatic creations, which are deployed to help Hjalmar to restore his proper inter-subjective relation with others. In this part we would also concern ourselves with his fake suicide as another attempt to bridge the gap with other people. Now let us further illuminate this condition by referring ourselves to the particular status of poor Hjalmar.

In the play we read how Hjalmar has been developing some plans in his mind as to his future invention but he cannot indeed give any specific details of his invention; he says only that “when I resolved to dedicate myself to photography, it wasn’t just with the idea of taking portraits of all kinds of everyday people... I swore that were I to concentrate my powers to this craft, I should also exalt it to such a height that it would become both an art and a science. And that is why I decided to make the great invention.” Interestingly this valuable fantasy has been brought into his world of dreams from outside, by Dr. Relling, who developed Hjalmar’s delusions by suggesting

to him that he would make some remarkable discovery in the realm of photography someday. Then Dr. Relling continues that Hjalmar “had talent for prettily declaiming the verses and thoughts of others.” This statement makes Hjalmar a mere imitator or an artificial artist who has no specific originality of himself sustained by an illusory hope that never comes off. In other words “both Hjalmar and his father have sought to hide themselves in the deep blue sea of illusion, and Gregers, like the ‘damned clever dog’ trained by his father, hauls them back to the surface” (Meyer, 1971). Hjalmar’s escape from reality situates him in his insulated fantasmatic world in which the reality (the signified) always slips beneath the layer of the pure signifiers as if an insurmountable hole is opened up in his symbolic world. To put it in more appropriate terms, Hjalmar in contrast to Gregers is inflicted with psychosis, which is mostly defined by the functioning of *foreclosure* (Evans, 1996). In this operation, the “Name_Of_The_Father” is not properly assimilated in the symbolic universe of the psychotic patient with the consequent outcome that a fissure is left in the symbolic order (Evans, 1996). The Name-Of-The-Father is the fundamental signifier, which permits signification to proceed normally. If the Name-Of-The-Father is foreclosed, as in psychosis, there can be no paternal metaphor and hence no phallic signification. Here we should perceive of the father in its symbolic dimension. The Symbolic father is not a real being but a position, a function. This paternal function imposes the law and regulates desire in the Oedipus complex, intervening in the imaginary dual relationship between mother and child to introduce a necessary symbolic distance between them (Evans, 1996). “The hole in the symbolic order caused by foreclosure” results in “the consequent ‘imprisonment’ of the psychotic subject in the imaginary” (Evans 1996), or according to Lacan in psychosis “what is not symbolized returns in the Real; It returns in the Real-of-language, for instance as auditory hallucinations” (Chiesa, 2007), as if “psychosis is sweeping the victim out of his familiar world”, indulging him in mere imaginary creations (Adams, 2004). Here we can expand this particular notion to the case of Hjalmar. Hjalmar is distressed not because he thinks that Old Werle’s over-reaching authority has played havoc on his family but on the contrary, he suffers his condition for he has not been able to adequately undergo his father’s paternal authority. Old Ekdal’s incapacity to impose proper regulative law (of the father) on his child is partly responsible for Hjalmar’s symbolic disintegration/imbalance. This would seemingly entail the consequent result that this lack of paternal authority in Hjalmar’s symbolic domain would ultimately make him correspond with a “being passively spoken by language” (Chiesa, 2007) rather than employing any factual originality, hence his inclination towards imitating the others and having no general sketch of his invention. The lack of metaphorical paternal authority behind Hjalmar’s symbolic world would compel him, of course

unconsciously, not to be original and authentic, for how he could persuade the others as to the truth of his speech when there is no guarantee behind his words. Here we could even go a radical step further and reverse the situation: of course due to the lack of paternal authority behind Hjalmar’s symbolic world he has lost his originality but what if we could also claim that the lack of paternal authority as a regulative factor, is the very cause of Hjalmar’s too much originality? What if Hjalmar does not imitate the works of the others because he believes that he is incapable of originality but conversely he is imitative because he thinks that he is too much original, too much separated from the inter-subjective symbolic world and therefore he should moderate his originality by becoming more imitative? In other words, the lack of adequate paternal authority in Ekdal’s family has caused Hjalmar to lose contact with the realities of his symbolic world: either he is situated below the level of the symbolic world by his lack of originality or he is positioned above the symbolic level by being too much original. Hjalmar’s fluctuation between his excessive originality and his lack of originality would make of him an unreliable person. Hjalmar’s inability to smoothly handle his symbolic universe and to establish a normal connection with others, would ultimately give him no other choice except to take recourse to his solitary imaginative horizon. Here we should be reminded that, Hjalmar’s involvement in excessive imagination is not destined to enable him to sever his relation from the real world of the people around him or to discover something, which would distinguish him among his fellow people; rather he is already distinguished and separated from the symbolic world of the ordinary people. Therefore, we should attempt to give a totally different interpretation to his passive engagement in the world of the dreams; what if his imaginative efforts are not directed towards separating him from his surrounding world but they are the manifestation of an incessant undertaking which would at the end help him regain his symbolic integrity, and affiliate himself more effectively with the world of the people around him? We could also here bring an analogous counterpart to this in Hjalmar’s efforts to commit suicide; his suicidal efforts in contrast to the common held beliefs does not arise from the fact that he has got tired of the living world and therefore desperately wishes to attain the inanimate world of the dead. His efforts to kill himself which fortunately or unfortunately were declined at the critical moment of pulling the trigger, and which was assumed irretrievable on Hjalmar’s part for the promise he had made himself, should be interpreted in a totally different light. He rather develops ideas of committing suicide to enter the world of the living more effectively than before, to integrate himself in a more proper way into the symbolic world of his fellow peers and regain his capacity to establish a more realistic connection with his surrounding world. Here I am tempted to bring a rather long quotation from Chiesa to shed

some light on the existing issue:

"The case of suicides is paradigmatic here: the suicide's desire—which we could call the "death wish," in opposition to the death drive—that apparently is a desire to have done with the Symbolic—to exit from it in order to join the inanimateness to which, according to Freud, the evolution of life ultimately aspires—actually conceals a desire to be recognized by the symbolic Other as a suicide, as the one who rejects the Symbolic. . . . It therefore follows that "the more a subject affirms through the signifier that he wants to exit the signifying chain, the more he enters into it and becomes its part" (Chiesa, 2007).

Therefore here we could claim that Hjalmar's suicidal desire (death wish) is not directed towards ousting him from the world of the Others; in other words he does not desire to rid himself eternally from the recognition of the others by opening up a space for himself in which he no more suffers humiliating contact with the outside people and therefore he can put an end to his human desires (desire is the desire of an Other), rather his death wish conversely works out to fulfill his hidden and suppressed desires. The more he declares his suicidal intentions the more he manifests his desire to enter a proper dialectic and symbolic relation with the other people. In other words as Chiesa mentions, he conceals the desire to be recognized by the others under the guise of his death wish; the more he tries to escape the presence of the others, the more he is entrapped in the symbolic relation with others. Therefore his inclination towards death wish makes of him a passive character which in contrast to compulsive nature of Gregers is summed up in a mere play with language. According to Lacan "if the neurotic inhabits language, the psychotic is inhabited, possessed by language" (Evans, 1996). For example, in the play we observe how Hjalmar in response to Gregers who asks him about the time which will take Hjalmar to complete his invention, in an absolute ignorance states that his invention is not under his own control and then he immediately adds: "It depends largely on inspiration -- on intuition -- and it is almost impossible to predict when the inspiration may come". Hjalmar in contrast to Gregers' precision and exactness displays some of the symptoms, which pertain to his psychotic nature; not only his thoughts are unpredictable and unforeseeable but also they are out of his controlling grasp. He just boastfully speaks of his future invention in an elegant way with no intention of entering the realm of practice and materialization of his thoughts. Having no real integrity or resources within himself, Hjalmar naturally fell back on all the clichés in the stories he had read. His boastful speech and pride is situated in contrast to the words of Gregers who once told his father that "do not play with nice words." Hjalmar's infatuation with language should not be taken as a sign of his complete ability in handling the language and impressing his fellow men rather it is precisely on the basis of his entrapment in the language

that his inability in mastering the symbolic world of language is uncovered. Hjalmar's passive obsession with the domain of dead speech and symbolic language which always in a compulsive way keeps him in an inactive position, preventing him from realizing his true action and which makes him postpone his action to the future should be considered in contrast to Gregers' compulsive obsession with participating in an act. In contrast to Gregers who wanted to participate in an act to avoid the occurrence of the true catastrophe, Hjalmar by his mere avoidance in taking part in an act (materializing his invention) tries to provide the conditions for the occurrence of the catastrophe itself. Like Gregers' attempts to obsess himself with committing an act that he thinks helps him to escape the disclosure of his own truth Hjalmar, too, is somehow obsessed with the economy of an Act, which is in an asymmetrical way homologous to Gregers. Hjalmar, In contrast to Gregers who wants to postpone his truth by taking part in an act, wants to postpone the act itself so that he would be able to come to the truth of his own self (his castration).

Hedvig and the Real

Hedvig is conceivably the play's most pitiable figure. She is of uncertain parentage, belonging either to Hjalmar or to Werle and potentially passed from the former to the latter in a marriage intended to avoid public disgrace. Hedvig is also marked by an incipient blindness, a degenerative eye-disease that she has inherited from either Werle or Hjalmar's line. Hjalmar's obsession with inactivity extends itself even to some further domains in the play; Hjalmar even does not want to take responsibility before Hedvig's weakening eyes, which are at the brink of blindness. We could interpret the imminent blindness of Hedvig as another catastrophe, which is the symbolic sign of her castration. Hjalmar by displaying no considerable distress towards Hedvig's likely blindness and in an insensitive way by openly announcing his irresponsibility toward his daughter demonstrates his implicit and unconscious consent over this event. Hedvig's blinding eyes should be read alongside her preoccupation with taking care of a crippled duck. While hunting, Haakon Werle shoots a wild duck but only wounds it. Werle's servant, Pettersen, later gives the duck to Old Ekdal, who takes it home and, with the help of his son and granddaughter, Hedvig, cares for it in the garret. However the crucial point lies in the fact that, Hedvig, associates the wild duck with herself not because she wants to heal the duck's wound and palliate its pains but inversely her intentions to cure the duck rather arises from her concern to cure her own wound, her castration. In other words her fascination with the duck is the result of her unconscious desire to possess herself of her lost phallus. We could claim that her desire is not invested in the duck to enable the bird to obtain her health to fly again, rather the duck

as a symbolic substitute for Hedvig's phallus should eternally remain crippled and incapacitated so that Hedvig would not lose her symbolic phallus. As if Hedvig does not need to go under her father's castrating power under the condition that the duck remains crippled and incapacitated, because in this case the duck (her symbolic phallus) is already castrated. In the play we are convinced of Hjalmar's inattentiveness toward Hedvig and Hedvig's thirst for her father's attention; what if we could reverse the positions here? What if Hedvig wants to escape her father's excessive castrating attention by sticking to her wounded duck? This fact becomes more understandable when, concerning Hjalmar's longing for the occurrence of the true catastrophe, Gregers advises Hedvig to kill her beloved duck in an act of self-sacrifice to prove her love to her father.

Gregers believes that the true meaning of sacrifice would ultimately materialize itself in Hedvig's killing of the wild duck. However, at the end Hedvig in an unexpected way kills herself instead of her beloved duck, which should be interpreted in a totally different way. Hedvig does not commit suicide because she has realized that Gregers is speaking in codes and therefore looking for the deeper meaning of Gregers' statement decides to kill herself, but conversely her self-sacrificial act is the result of her avoidance to come to terms with the deeper meaning of Gregers' statement: that Hedvig, in order to obtain her father's love and attention should surrender to her father's overreaching power and authority which ultimately would result in her castration. Hedvig commits suicide not to satisfy the pathological ideas of Gregers or to satisfy the inner instabilities of his father, rather she wants to sustain her own desire for possessing a symbolic phallus. In order to clarify the point a bit further we need to get acquainted with the idea of fantasy in psychoanalytical theory. In Lacanian psychoanalytical theory fantasy is usually thought of as a scenario that is staged to bring about the subject's sought for object of desire. This basic definition acquires its full proper meaning on the condition that we take it literally. In fact, the scene that our fantasy presents for us is not a place in which our desire is fully satisfied but on the contrary, it is a scene that stages our desire as such. Here the basic point which psychoanalysis emphasizes is the fact that our desire is not something, which we come to its position from the beginning of our lives, but something that has to be constructed. The fundamental role of fantasy is precisely to do such a thing; to define for the subject the coordinates of its desire and to establish the subject in the position in which it assumes its relation to the object of its desire. In other words the only way to constitute ourselves as desiring subjects is through fantasy which helps us to learn how to desire (Zizek, 1992). The crucial point with psychoanalysis is the fact that if this fantasmatic world is broken, if we come too close to the object of our desire and know too much about it the core of our being would disintegrate itself and we will lose the object

of desire itself. To put it in better words, in psychic sphere we experience a series of discernible facts in so far as we unconsciously commit ourselves to a certain misrecognition, insofar as some part of the truth is left silent, is not included in the symbolic space. As soon as the subject comes to know the unspoken truth, he compensates for it, the excess knowledge by the very core of his being. The ego is an entity of this kind; it is a series of imaginary identifications upon which the stability of a subject's being depends, but as soon as the subject gets too close to the unconscious truth, his ego breaks up (Zizek, 1992). Therefore, the only condition for the existence of the object of our desire is that, it should conceal itself under a fantasmatic cover. With this cutting/removing of the little piece of the Real (object of desire), our symbolic reality which supports the integrity of our psychic life, comes into existence. In other words, the mere cut in the Real will result in a kind of double fold with the resulting separation of the surface from itself. On the one hand, we will have the discontinuous scattered symbolic surface and on the other hand its horrifying obscene supplement in the background, which may sometimes (re)appear to undermine the superfluous and serene daily reality. Our reality becomes sensible by the existence of this repressed Real thing, which acts as its guarantee. It becomes clear that the disappearance of the Real thing provides the condition for our interminable looking after it, which as we discussed is no more than a futile effort. Therefore, we observe how Fantasy keeps us at a safe distance from the unbearable object of desire.

Looking at the play, In the conversation between Gregers and Hedvig, we observe how Gregers wants to make Hedvig to encounter the truth, to make her put away her fantasmatic scenarios and come to terms with truth itself. Here Gregers truly has understood how the figure of the wild duck acts as a nodal point, which serves as a supportive prop for sustaining and shaping Hedvig's fantasmatic world. The interesting point here is the fact that Hedvig is not concerned with taking care of a duck with a wound, but rather she is concerned with the wound itself, with the cut which has inscribed itself on the body of the duck, the point of the exclusion of the little piece of the real which establishes for Hedvig a new symbolic domain. As if she prefers the duck with a wound, with a cut from which point she can establish her fantasmatic world, which regulates her psychic life, and keeps her in a desiring state. The open wound in the body of the duck acts as a horrifying supplement in the background, which sustains Hedvig's fantasy. Gregers seems to have understood the fact that it is not the duck itself that should be removed; as if the duck itself is tame enough and its mere presence is no obstacle to the revelation of the truth, rather on the contrary, it is the wildness of the wound in the body of the duck, which should be tamed and moderated. The precise definition of fantasy in Lacanian psychoanalysis is: "to be present as a pure gaze before one's own conception or, more precisely, at

the very act of one's own conception" (Zizek, 1992). This means that according to the Lacanian formula of fantasy the true object of fantasy is not the scene observed but on the contrary, the true object of the fantasy is the gaze observing the fantasy scene. However, Hedvig does not want to lose the impossible gaze, which involves her in the fantasmatic scenario that she herself has constructed. In a performative way, she wants to witness herself as observing her own fantasy scene, to precede her own origin and to objectively observe herself, reducing herself to the presence of a pure gaze. As if, the core of her subjectivity maintains itself only through the fabrication of an illusory fantasy world. To put it in better words the only possible way, which allows her ego to sustain its coordinates and preserves it from dissipation, is provided with the formation of fantasmatic space. It is only through sticking to a fantasmatic world, which she is able to define for herself the true boundaries of her subjectivity. Here Gregers seems to have got the crucial point that: the pure subjectivity is a void, which is filled out by fantasmatic scenarios. Gregers seems to have understood the true horrible dimension of the wound on the body of the duck. The duck itself has been tamed and domesticated by the emergence of the wild wound gaping wide open on its figure, which as a signifier in its pure virtuality simultaneously stands for a lack and an insurmountable excess. This cut introducing torsion on the body of the duck, the existence of an obscene, ungraspable and indivisible real which is not in full harmony with the duck's body is the very point in which Hedvig's desire has been invested. There the subject (Hedvig) has to recognize the core of its most intimate being. That is to say, what is this "open wound" if not, in the last resort, Hedvig herself—insofar as she is dominated by the death drive, insofar as her fixation on the empty place of the wound derails her, deprives her of support in the regularity of life processes? According to Freud this kind of a traumatic attachment to a Thing, to an empty place, that excludes man forever from the circular movement of life, opens the immanent possibility of radical catastrophe, the "second death" (Zizek, 1992). The wound on the body of the duck is the "little piece of the real" to which Hedvig's death drive clings. And it is precisely at the moment when Hedvig not only becomes aware that she is herself the victim of fate but also fully accepts her fate by not ceding her desire that she becomes a "subject" in the strict Lacanian meaning of this term. For Lacan, a subject is in the last resort the name for this "empty gesture" by means of which we freely assume what is imposed on us, the real of the death drive. To put it in better terms up until Hedvig realizes herself as a helpless victim she was an object for men, her power of fascination depended on the role she played in her father's fantasy space, she was nothing but his symptom. When she finally becomes an object for herself, when she realizes that she is just a passive element, she "subjectifies" herself; she becomes a true

subject.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this article has been to apply Lacanian psychoanalytical criticism to Henrik Ibsen's play *The Wild Duck* in order to shed some light on the unconscious aspects of the main characters and the way their actions are the result of their unconscious pathological motivations rather than their conscious intentions. Such a content analysis would work to show how psychoanalytical literary criticism and in particular content (psycho) analysis, is able to discover the true incentives of the characters, which lie behind their conscious actions. In other words, from a psychoanalytical point of view in order to come to a genuine understanding of the personality of the characters we should not look at their apparent conscious behaviors and actions directly. This means that, paradoxically, in order to come to an authentic understanding of the true motivations of the characters we need to look at their conscious and intentional actions and behaviors from an oblique angle, from which point their unconscious motivations and desires become visible and noticeable. In order to exemplify such a content analysis in Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, the researcher has put the main characters at the center of attention—Gregers, Hjalmar and Hedvig—and by exploring their unconscious mind has tried to demonstrate how these characters are affected by psychological disorders, which unconsciously work on their conscious behaviors. In the first part of our study, we concerned ourselves with Gregers and by exploring his unconscious mind in a very indirect way; we attempted to gain some insight into his true neurotic motivations. After giving a brief account of neurosis the researcher argued that Gregers is suffering from a particular kind of Obsessional neurosis. Then in the following of the study, the researcher argued some elements in the play, which were related to Gregers' obsessional neurosis. We discussed how old Werle's excessive paternal authority, lead to Gregers' Oedipus irresolution resulting in Gregers' neurosis, which entailed perpetual sense of guilt and a fake passion for finding the truth, compelling him to participate in an obsessional act to restore the lost truth and redeem his guilt. In the second part of this article entitled: Hjalmar as a psychotic character, we concerned ourselves with the psychotic nature of Hjalmar. To justify the fact that Hjalmar was suffering from a kind of psychosis the researcher discussed some elements in the play, which were related to Hjalmar's psychosis arising from the lack of adequate paternal authority. Some of these psychotic symptoms were his excessive imaginative creations, his fake attempt to commit suicide, and his inability to come to a proper inter-subjective relation with others. In the third part of this article we concerned ourselves with Hedvig and her relation to the wound, on the body of the

duck, was deeply explored. At the end we should not forget to mention that, In contrast to Hjalmar and Gregers who- despite their claims to attain the truth of their human condition- only too late realize that the absolute truth of the "ideal" is sometimes too much for the human heart to bear. Dr. Relling and old Werle by their avoidance to encounter the truth that is laid behind their illusory worlds are more aware of their true human condition. The only persons who sustain real and complete identity are old Werle and Dr. Relling. They are the only people who can bear reality more than others, and are able to cope with reality by looking at the world and the personality without casting up strong defenses against the real world. In other words, they do not avoid the truth because they are not willing to confront reality; rather they believe that by dismantling their illusion the reality itself would be demolished.

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