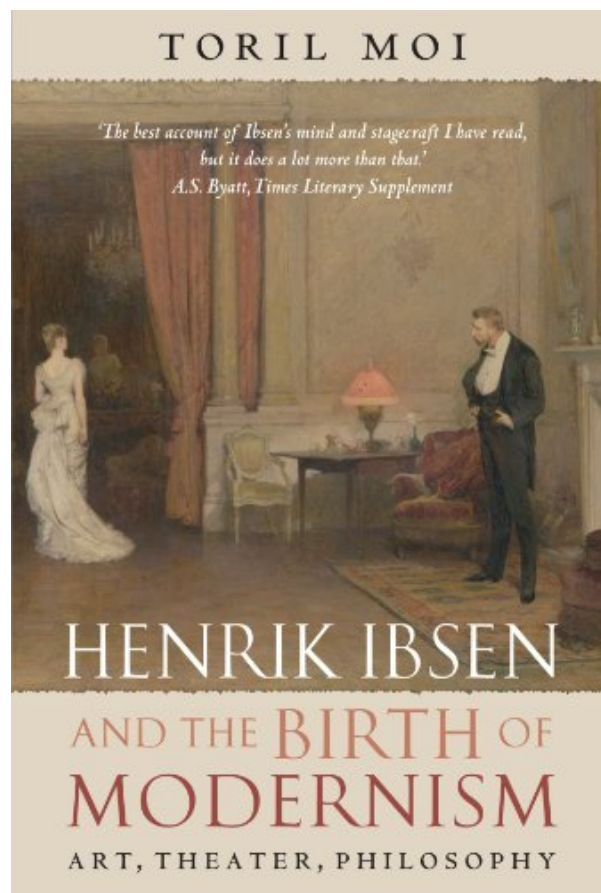


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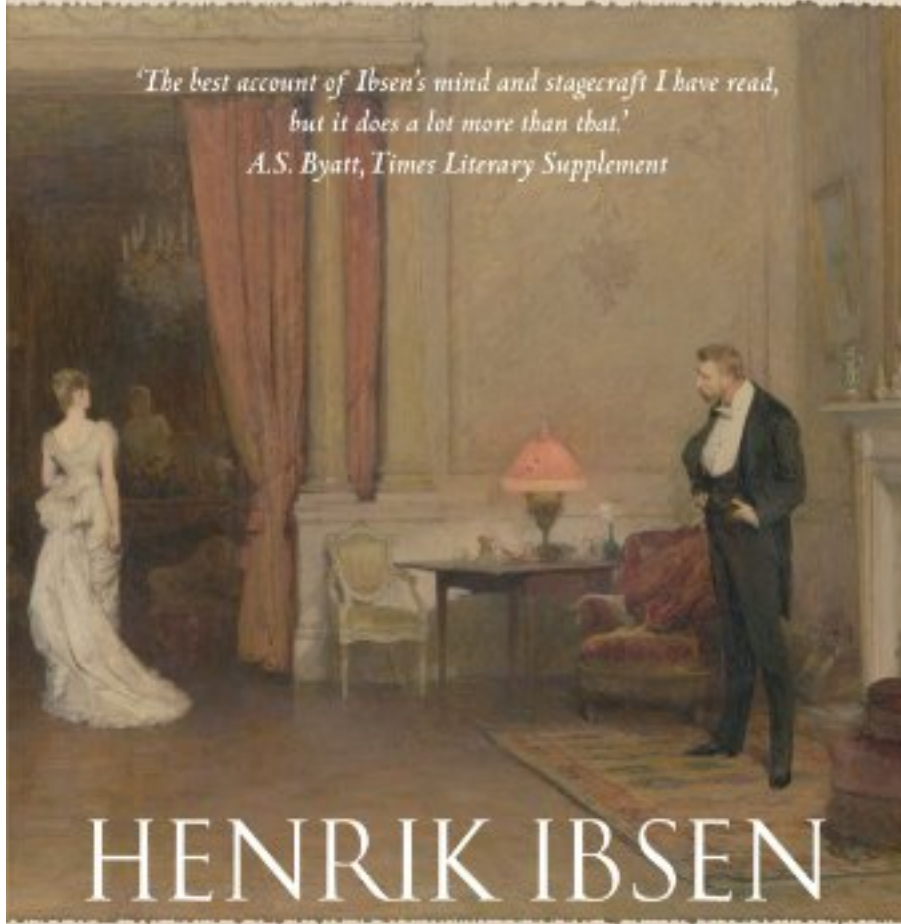


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TORIL MOI

*'The best account of Ibsen's mind and stagecraft I have read,
but it does a lot more than that.'*
A.S. Byatt, Times Literary Supplement



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Review

"The best literary criticism makes us see authors and literary works in a new light and inspires us with a desire to reread them. This is the critical alchemy that Toril Moi achieves with her accessibly written yet genuinely scholarly book *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*. A sustained study of a single major author, the book also has global sweep and interdisciplinary breadth. Moi situates Ibsen and Norway within the European republic of letters, overturns the conventional reading of Ibsen as a realist predecessor of modern theater, and produces a compelling answer to the perennial question, "What is modernism?" By reframing Ibsen as a modernist, Moi gives fresh meaning to Ibsen's work across disciplines and to his influential engagement with modern visual culture."--MLA Prize Committee

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Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) is the founder of modern theater, and his plays are performed all over the world. Yet in spite of his unquestioned status as a classic of the stage, Ibsen is often dismissed as a fuddy-duddy old realist, whose plays are of interest only because they remain the gateway to modern theater. In *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, Toril Moi makes a powerful case not just for Ibsen's modernity, but for his modernism. Situating Ibsen in his cultural context, she shows how unexpected his rise to world fame was, and the extent of his influence on writers such as Shaw, Wilde, and Joyce who were seeking to escape the shackles of Victorianism.

Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism also rewrites nineteenth-century literary history; positioning Ibsen between visual art and philosophy, the book offers a critique of traditional theories of the opposition between realism and modernism. Modernism, Moi argues, arose from the ruins of idealism, the dominant aesthetic paradigm of the nineteenth century. She also shows why Ibsen still matters to us today, by focusing on two major themes—his explorations of women, men, and marriage and his clear-eyed chronicling of the tension between skepticism and the everyday.

This radical new account places Ibsen in his rightful place alongside Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Manet as a founder of European modernism.

- Sales Rank: #243348 in Books
- Published on: 2008-03-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x 1.20" w x 9.10" l, 1.36 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 416 pages

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A very fine introduction to a ggreat play writer

By Israel Drazin

This is a very good book for people interested in the theater generally and Ibsen specifically. The author divides her book into three parts: Ibsen's place in history. Ibsen's modern breakthrough, and Ibsen's modernism: Love in an age of skepticism. In the third part, she analyses in detail "A Doll's House," "The Wild Duck," "Rosmersholm," and "The Lady from the Sea."

Ibsen, she shows, introduced plays that addressed social ills. Ibsen wrote: "What I wanted to do was to depict human beings, human emotions, and human destinies, upon groundwork of certain of the social conditions and principles of the present day." Many people of his time were offended that he did so, but we realize today the value of this contribution as well as the fine quality of the plays as literature.

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