

HEDDA GABLER: BETWEEN TERRITORIES

Gianina Druță

University of Oslo, Email: gianinadruta@yahoo.com

Acknowledgements

This paper has been presented at the Seventh International Conference on Baltic and Nordic Studies in Romania, Good governance in Romania and the Nordic and Baltic countries, hosted by the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies and Nicolae Iorga Institute of History of the Romanian Academy, București, 24-25 November, 2016.

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to provide a deleuzian analysis of Hedda Gabler, one of the most controversial feminine characters of Ibsen's plays. Thus, using Gilles Deleuze's concepts to interpret Hedda Gabler we can acquire a clearer perspective over the protagonist and her relationship to "territories" as sexuality, family or society, reconfiguring also the context in which she is living. The deleuzian lens enables us to offer a logical explanation of Hedda Gabler as a complex character, reconfiguring the context she belongs to and taking her out of the rigid imaginary of the paradox and of the absurd. Thus, Deleuze's philosophy helps us understand better how Hedda Gabler determines in a certain way the ambiguity of the "territories" and how she influences/is influenced by it. Thus, this study represents a literary analytical exercise inspired by some of Deleuze's concepts, more specifically deterritorialisation/territory, antigenealogy, rhizome, alliance and the plan of immanence, and is interested to see how they function in Henrik Ibsen's play. Aspects as a character's corporeality, the spatial structure and the irony contribute as well to a unified perspective regarding the different territorial forms analysed in the paper: sexuality, family, society, etc.

Rezumat:

Scopul acestei lucrări este de a realiza o analiză deleuziană a unuia dintre personajele feminine cele mai controversate din piesele de teatru ibseniene, și anume Hedda Gabler. Astfel, utilizând conceptele lui Gilles Deleuze pentru a o interpreta pe Hedda Gabler, poate fi conturată o perspectivă mai clară asupra protagonistei și asupra relației sale cu teritorii precum sexualitatea, familia sau societatea, reconfigurând, de asemenea, contextul în care trăiește. Lentila deleuziană ne permite să oferim o

explicație logică a personajului complex care este Hedda Gabler, reconstituind contextul căruia îi aparține și analizând-o în afara imaginarului rigid al paradoxului și al absurdului. Astfel, filosofia lui Deleuze ajută la o mai bună înțelegere a felului în care Hedda Gabler determină, într-un anumit fel, ambiguitatea "teritoriilor" și (le) influențează/este influențată de acestea. Astfel, studiul de față reprezintă un exercițiu analitic literar inspirat de câteva dintre conceptele lui Deleuze, printre care deterritorializarea, anti-genealogia, rizomul, alianța și planul de imanență, după cum are în vedere modul în care acestea funcționează în piesa lui Ibsen. Aspecte precum corporalitatea personajului, structura spațială și ironia contribuie, de asemenea, la o perspectivă unitară asupra diferitelor forme teritoriale analizate în lucrare, precum sexualitatea, familia, societatea etc.

Keywords: Hedda Gabler, territories, deterritorialization, sexuality, family, society

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of Hedda Gabler, one of the most controversial feminine characters of Ibsen's plays. Thought to be a paradoxical and even absurd protagonist, Hedda Gabler has often been negatively reviewed over time, despised and too seldom understood and looked at as a valuable human being. It was her gestures, her lines and her acts that scandalised readers and spectators, though, ironically, what Hedda was literally most afraid of was the scandal. So, understanding Hedda Gabler is no easy task, since there is already a long tradition in ascribing the paradoxical and absurd things an independent and isolated value and not really questioning them. Thus, this study proposes a deleuzian analysis of Ibsen's play, using concepts as deterritorialization/territory, antigenealogy, rhizome, alliance and the plan of immanence and questioning and attempting to understand the protagonist as a complex human being with a complex way of thinking and of acting, who cannot be separated from the context she is certainly connected to. We are not interested in ascribing Hedda Gabler a definitive and unique value, avoiding thus any labelling, since, as Gilles Deleuze says, the main characteristic of the human being is an "irréductible multiplicité"¹. The main aspect that is obvious in Ibsen's play is that Hedda Gabler is symbolically moving between several "territories", like family, society or sexuality, constantly avoiding to be taken

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2. L'image-temps* (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), p. 174.

prisoner to none of them. If she manages to free herself of these “territories”, how she does it, what is the meaning of her actions and, more specifically, what is the meaning of her suicide represent some of our most important concerns in this paper. Using Gilles Deleuze’s concepts to interpret *Hedda Gabler* we can acquire a clearer perspective over the protagonist and her relationship to the “territories” mentioned above, reconfiguring also the context in which she is living. The deleuzian lens enables us to offer a logical explanation of Hedda Gabler as a complex character, reconfiguring the context she belongs to and taking her out of the fixed, rigid imaginary of the paradox and of the absurd. Thus, Deleuze’s philosophy helps us better understand how Hedda Gabler determines in a certain way the ambiguity of the “territories” and how she influences/is influenced by it.

Despite the labels that critics have used over time and which Joan Templeton was right to approach in a critical manner in her overview, Hedda Gabler is more than an unreal², inhuman³, phallic⁴, unwomanly⁵, born bad⁶ or neurotic woman⁷. What the critics have transformed in a „determined effort to classify its protagonist [Hedda Gabler] as a defective form of Woman”⁸ is rather the story of an individual whose main obsession is freedom. But, in Gilles Deleuze’s terms, what Ibsen’s play really questions is the individual’s deterritorialization as a way of evading ideology’s prison. Thus, it is precisely the sharp consciousness of being deliberately taken prisoner to the territories in which she is paradoxically searching liberation that marks the destiny of this character. But the paradox proposed by Hedda Gabler is not at all indecipherable or incomprehensible⁹, but rather

² „But if the language was too realistic, the protagonist was too unreal. Reviewers in Scandinavia, England and the United States accused Ibsen of willful obscurity on the grounds that a Hedda Gabler could not exist.” (Joan Templeton, *Ibsen’s women*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.204).

³ „For the literary critic of Oslo’s *Morgenbladet*, Hedda was a ‘monster created by the author in the form of a woman who has no counterpart in the real world’.” (*Ibid.*, p.204)

⁴ „Psychiatrist Karl Stern is grateful to Ibsen for providing in Hedda a textbook case of the ‘phallic woman’ who refuses the normal female ‘desire to receive, to hold and to nourish’.” (*Ibid.*, p. 208)

⁵ „The play’s early commentators generally depend for logic on begging the question; they refused Hedda the status of woman because they found her unwomanly.” (*Ibid.*, p.205)

⁶ „Like Coleridge’s motiveless Iago, Hedda acts as she acts because she is as she is, a vicious, evil nature. Hedda, in other words, was born bad.” (*Ibid.*,p.206)

⁷ „Freudian interpreters have classified Hedda as a study in sexual neurosis.” (*Ibid.*, p. 207)

⁸ Joan Templeton, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

⁹ „The word that appears most often in the early reviews of *Hedda Gabler* is ‘incomprehensible’.” (*Ibid.*, p. 204)

transforms the stage in a plane of immanence, characterised by two tendencies, generally known as public and private, that no longer function as opposed. The combination determined by the image of the territory and the one of the plane of immanence creates very subtle lines of flight that Hedda uses to draw her own freedom, playing thus on the stage both an individual and a collective destiny. Thus, the protagonist's physical and mental dynamism creates a world where the vice is not the consequence of a world tainted itself by this vice, but a resistance gesture concerning the permanent (re-/de-)territorialization that Hedda understands exceptionally well.

Originating in geography, the notion of territory is associated in Deleuze's philosophy with concepts like "plateau" and "map", and its specificity concerns the fact that it does not represent a perfectly closed dimension, but one that contains the possibility to transgress the limits through the deterritorialization movement. Thus, the closed territory becomes the pretext of its opening: "A territory refers to a mobile and shifting centre that is localisable as a specific point in space and time. It does not privilege or maintain the nostalgic or xenophobic protection of any particular homeland; instead, this centre (...) expresses an experiential concept that has no fixed subject or object. (...) As an assemblage, a territory manifests a series of constantly changing heterogeneous elements and circumstances that come together for various reasons at particular times. Although a territory establishes connections from the areas of representation, subject, concept and being, it is distinct from a fixed image, signification or subjectivity."¹⁰ Moreover, the concept of territory is not part of an antithetic relationship, but rather incorporates the antitheses in a unique plane of immanence. This explains the fusion of the public and of the private dimensions, the ambiguity of the sexuality which is both an intimate and a social aspect, the behavioral paradoxes and the ambiguity of notions as love, trust, belonging, care, anxiety, death, creativity, art etc. Thus, each territory implicitly offers the liberation precisely through the norms defining it, but it is the individual who chooses whether to enact such a possibility through transgression. As a veritable "trickster", Hedda acquires the function of a lens/mirror which reveals the absurdity and the paradox of any (apparently) stable world. She perceives and understands perfectly the

¹⁰ Parr, Adrian, *The Deleuze Dictionary. Revised Edition*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 280-281.

alienation, solitude and the boredom as an estrangement. However, freeing herself from boredom, alienation and solitude signifies more than playing the territorial game of power and dependence. One must not be surprised that the protagonist looks at the other characters both with contempt, irritation, indifference and cynicism, since they cannot understand either their own captivity or her ideals. It seems that all the characters are part of an “apparatus” and Hedda does not really want to belong to it:

(1) MISS TESMAN(...): God bless and keep you, Hedda Tesman.

For Jørgen’s sake.

HEDDA (frees herself): Oh...! *Leave me be!*

(2) “TESMAN: Oh well... I just thought, now that you *belong* to the family, you...”

HEDDA: Hm...*I’m not at all sure...*”¹¹

(3) Oh, pray, *leave me out of this.*¹²

(4) “Our way? *Leave me out of it*”.¹³

Thus, irony, silence and death become deterritorialization options the protagonist wants to apply, since boredom becomes a perverse relish and since life’s meaning cannot really be found in the territorial assemblage. Moreover, Hedda’s irony and obsessive gaze demonstrate that she knows the subtleties of this mechanism and, as a voyeur, wants to see how the wheels of the “apparatus” are moving, being permanently aware of the fact that she is outside it.

2. Family and (anti)genealogy

The family is a crossing point where the public and the private domain meet each other, but it is also one of the most important territories that are visible in *Hedda Gabler*. Thus, from a deleuzian point of view, we witness the protagonist’s refusal regarding the genealogy and the hereditary hierarchies as a normative system. The famous scene in the beginning of the play whose protagonists are Hedda, Tesman and Aunt Julle is a full expression of how Hedda tries to undermine the family as a social territory that governs private relationships. Denying her suggested pregnancy,

¹¹ Ibsen, Henrik, *Four Major Plays. A Doll’s House. Ghosts. Hedda Gabler. The Master Builder*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 180.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

refusing to participate in Tesman's joy of receiving his slippers, the reserved attitude towards Berte, the maid, as well as towards the "everlasting" cohort of aunts who raised her husband, are all examples describing the statement above. Even the fact that the play begins with a discussion between Berte and Aunt Julle, and afterwards continues with a discussion between Aunt Julle and Jørgen, representing the Tesmans as a significant majority in the scene, describes family as a harassing institution to Hedda. "Because she's ever so particular"¹⁴ and an eccentric appearance that used to ride a horse and wear a "black habit"¹⁵ and "a feather in her hat"¹⁶, Hedda does not (seem to) fit in the intimate, passive, caring role of Jørgen Tesman's housewife, as both Berte and Løvborg underline: "But I declare, I never once dreamed they'd make a match of it, her and Mr. Jørgen"¹⁷; "Hedda Gabler (...) married to... Jørgen Tesman! (...) Hedda, how could you throw yourself away like that?"¹⁸. Moreover, Hedda has to cope with an aunt that has "always been both father and mother"¹⁹ to Tesman and a maid that "always looked after him, ever since he was a little boy"²⁰, making her feel misfit in a genealogical story she has no connection with. Thus, the "everlasting" mention of the familial roots – "sainted Joachim's little boy"²¹ and the constantly praised childhood memories of Tesman delineate a closed network she cannot really belong to, because she has neither previous emotional attachment to it, nor wish to engage in such a context she finds rather pathetic, as the "slippers"-scene proves it:

TESMAN: My old house shoes! My slippers, Hedda!

HEDDA: Ah yes. You mentioned them quite frequently on the trip, I remember.

TESMAN: Yes, I did miss them so. (*He goes to her.*) Here, just take a look at them, Hedda!

HEDDA [*crossing the stove*]: Thank you, they wouldn't appeal to me.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

TESMAN [*following her*]: (...) Oh, you can't imagine how many memories they have for me.

HEDDA [*by the table*]: But not for me, particularly."²²

But Hedda is, as Deleuze would say, „fatiguée de l'arbre”²³, completely bored of a genealogy that rules over time and over the human being: it is already September, says Hedda while looking, ironically, “at the leaves of the trees”, “so yellow” and “so withered”²⁴, experiencing the rhythm of the nature as a burden on her body, making the aunt's blessing “for Jørgen's sake”²⁵ even more unbearable as it expresses at the same time a definitive belonging (in terms of nearly objectification) to the family hierarchy of the Tesmans. Hedda as human being has no more meaning than the old piano or the chest where Tesman kept his research documents during the honeymoon. Thus, drawing a line of flight as she tries to escape the classical familial duties, Hedda becomes rhizomatic, in her own room, accompanied by her piano, her pistols and the portrait of the General Gabler.

3. Maternal territoriality

Related to the familial horizon, maternity is a way of enacting its values and a way of expressing genealogy. Thus, by denying her own future maternal condition, Hedda Gabler practically denies the memory of her own body containing the embryo of a new familial, collective memory as part of the genealogical dimension: “I'm exactly the same as I was when I left.”²⁶ Hedda's pregnant body seems sentenced to an eternal glorification of the family as institution, so her refusal to accept her condition as a future mother is the refusal of an additional territory that drastically limits her ontological horizon. It is the pregnancy itself that creates a memory, because of the natural temporal continuity, illustrating how the public dimension gains the right to move freely within the private space:

“TESMAN [*following her*]: Yes, but have you noticed how well and bonny she looks? I declare she's filled out beautifully on the trip.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²³ Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. Mille Plateaux*, (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), p.24.

²⁴ Henrik Ibsen, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

HEDDA [*moves irritably*]: Oh, do you have to...!

MISS TESMAN [*has stopped and turned*]: Filled out?

TESMAN: Yes, Aunt Julle, you don't notice it so much when she's wearing that dress...But I...well, I have occasion to...

HEDDA [*at the verandah door, impatiently*]: Oh, you don't have occasion for anything!"²⁷

There is basically no boundary, so Aunt Julle's threat to visit the new family daily – "Every single day I'll come and visit you both"²⁸ – delimitates even more clearly the territory of the social femininity, where the traditional image of maternity becomes a socially engaged one through the hereditary bonds. Moreover, Aunt Julle makes constant, implicit references to Hedda's pregnancy, assuming maternity as an existential project, not as much for her nephew's wife, but for herself: "I also do need to have someone to live for. Ah, well, God is good...and I fancy there'll soon be a few things for an old aunt to do here in this house, too."²⁹ Pointing to the temporal proximity of the maternal condition, Aunt Julle, as well as Brack, seems to imprison Hedda in the motherhood's territory even before she really becomes a mother. Her repetitive refusals are accompanied by a corporeal dynamism easily remarkable on stage and indicated in the stage directions, since Hedda constantly "moves irritably", "impatiently", "frees herself"³⁰ or is "crossing to the stove"³¹, while Tesman is constantly "following her"³². Thus, she tries to avoid both her husband's emotional harassment and the Aunt's pathetic gestures, since she does not want to be caught in such a "history", but rather interpolates and mocks it, revealing its flaws. Consequently, she tries to create or to permanently keep the distance from whatever could block herself in a definitive captivity, explaining her repugnance regarding maternity as what theoretically should be "stirring experience"³³. The body carries not only its own (hi)story, but the Other's (hi)story as well, and maternity is the most explicit example of carrying further the genealogical roots. But for Hedda this would rather mean a corporeal betrayal of her own

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

principles, an absurd irony of being “everlastingly” caught in a genealogical territory she has no “vocation” for:

“BRACK: No, well we won’t talk about that. But then when you’re faced with...what I may...perhaps a little pompously...refer to as sacred and...exacting responsibility ? [*Smiles.*] A new responsibility, my little lady.

HEDDA [*angry*]: Be quiet! You’ll never see anything of this sort!

BRACK [*carefully*]: We’ll talk about that in a year’s time...at the very latest.

HEDDA [*shortly*]: I’ve no aptitude for such thing, Mr. Brack. No responsibilities for me, thank you!

BRACK: Why shouldn’t you, like most other women, have a natural aptitude for a vocation that...?

HEDDA [*at the glass door*]: Oh, be quiet, I say!...”³⁴

Yet another interesting reference regarding a potential human fulfilling through having children is made by Aunt Julle in a discussion with Tesman regarding the empty rooms in the house:

“MISS TESMAN [*with a smile*]: Ah, my dear Jørgen, you might find a use for them....when the time comes.

TESMAN: Why yes, Auntie Julle, you’re got something there! As I gradually add to my collection of books, then...Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Precisely, my dear boy. I was thinking about your books.”³⁵

It is quite easy to perceive the irony here, since Miss Tesman is not at all alluding to the “books”, but what we understand from this dialogue is the importance of the maternal territory, not only in an abstract, symbolic way, but architectural as well. There is a physical territory designed for maternity, and the emptiness of it reveals both a positive and negative potentiality. What is even more striking is Tesman’s intention to fill those rooms with books, while not understanding that those should probably be children’s rooms, so the metaphor child-book/manuscript is not specific just when discussing the relationship Thea-Løvborg. While Thea’s only child is a book, alluding to Løvborg’s intellectual paternity, Hedda’s future child is a corporeal one, showing that Tesman’s paternity is only a physical one, pointing to the fact that he is incapable of creating something new in his field.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Thus, maternity and paternity in *Hedda Gabler* are not blessed dimensions/territories meant to express the sainted role of the family, but they express rather a defective genealogy.

Thus, it is the “child” image of Løvborg’s manuscript which confirms the patriarchal dimension of the historical approach he is proposing. And, after all, the couple Thea-Tesman, represented in the end of the play as a ridiculous enacting of the relationship between a muse and a creator, evokes the same patriarchal image, where history’s reconstruction from Løvborg’s manuscript is nothing but an ironic illustration of genealogy. In the end, Tesman becomes the step-father of the manuscript, losing at the same time his quality as biological father through Hedda’s suicide, while Thea remains the blessing mother of a lost child she tries to revive. In this context, the protagonist remains both outside this strange genealogical “research” and inside a family she sees and understands as being part of a rigid and insensitive epoch. Hedda’s dialogue with Tesman in the end of the play reveals a protagonist who is both inside and outside her conjugal life as a married woman she does not seem to have ever belonged to, at the same time abandoned by her husband who decides to devote his life to the reconstruction of the manuscript together with another woman (Thea).

4. Marriage and sexuality as territories. Adultery

Moreover, love, marriage and sexuality can be seen as territories, since the protagonist builds her identity and her body in a clear contrast with the normative dimension of maternity, as a reaction to the sexual-patrimonial claims of belonging to the Tesman family: “you’ve *won* the wife of your heart”³⁶. Thus, she refuses the identity she just seemed to accept willingly, even if the price of her caprice proved to be her own freedom. Thus, the body of this woman who refuses to accept her own pregnancy and the fact that her own sexuality is subordinated to her husband, or, moreover, refuses the implicit sexual proposals made by judge Brack – represents, from this point of view, a vulnerable territory that Hedda still tries to keep under control. Denying Tesman’s “occasion”³⁷ of seeing her in intimate contexts her husband pretends to have, but denying others’ corporeal references or proposals as well, because there is no space for any “kind of

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

unfaithfulness"³⁸, Hedda tries to eliminate any possible dependence and vulnerability in relationship with others (other men, in this context). But, still, there is no free corporeality in (the protagonist) Hedda Gabler up to the moment when she decides upon her own life and, consequently, upon her body. Moreover, what the reader perceives as perversity and vice in Hedda is actually the fact that the protagonist ironically shows that she knows that the world she lives in is perverted and vicious, that she recognizes its subtle mechanisms and the ideology governing it, trying to (out)play it.

Thus, Hedda does not want a sexual affair, but she rather feels contempt and disgust regarding the corporeal subordination both in marriage and outside of it. Her main obsession is not with finding a man to entertain her physically, but with the world outside, with getting out of the closed territory she is supposed to live in because of the social norms. Thus, there is certainly a delimitation between the men's and the women's territory, underlined both when Hedda is talking to Løvborg and to judge Brack, describing the masculine public dimension, as hidden and even forbidden to their feminine counterparts, a "world that (...) she isn't supposed to know anything about"³⁹. This explains Hedda's desire to participate at conversations "on all manner of lively topics"⁴⁰, her "roundabout questions"⁴¹ to Løvborg, as well as her wish to "come along as an invisible onlooker"⁴², "to hear a little of your liveliness...unexpurgated"⁴³, and all these attitudes express, after all, a terrible impulse of getting out of the social, emotional, gender territory she was ascribed to. What Hedda really understands is that she is *outside* of a dimension/territory associated with the possibility of freedom to act - namely the manly public sphere, while being at the same time (imprisoned) *inside* another territory whose boundaries are again closed and very difficult to surpass - namely the womanly private sphere. What Hedda actually tries is to find a breach for each of them, allowing her to move freely between those spheres, while not belonging completely to any of them. Hedda is not interested in a scandalous breaking up with the norms, but she is rather an observer, obsessed to see/gaze at while obsessed of not being seen/gazed at. And since her wish

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

is mostly connected with men as belonging to another horizon, the adulterous potentiality is naturally and wrongly involved from the men's perspective. Both Løvborg and Brack understand Hedda's "conversational" intent as a sexual dialogue as well. Thus, adultery as territory expressing sexual imprisonment is linked to dependence and power (as all others territories) and while Hedda understands clearly the two men's suggestions, she is both ironic and distant when it comes to their potential enactment, clearly denying it.

5. Architectural/spatial territoriality

But the most important fact is that the notion of territory has, first of all, a concrete, physical meaning, since the house where Hedda and Tesman live, the widow's Falk villa, functions as a strange and estranged territory at the same time. Moreover, the play has an important focus on the spatial horizon from the very beginning, since the action takes place in the same room during all the four acts. What is ever more striking is the long, detailed, accurate description in the beginning of the Act One, focused on the numerous doors and rooms, separated but also linked one to another, and on the windows and curtains that function as "doors" leading to/separating different spaces as well:

*"A spacious, handsome, and tastefully appointed reception room, decorated in dark colours. In the back wall there is a wide doorway with the hangings pulled back. This opening leads to a smaller room in the same style as the reception room. In the wall to the opposite wall, to the left, is a glass door, also with the curtains drawn aside. Through the windows we see part of a covered verandah outside, and trees in autumn colours."*⁴⁴

Moreover, anytime Hedda is annoyed, irritated, angry or simply preoccupied by something, the stage directions indicate that she "moves across" this space impatiently, nearby the windows or the doors, as if she would really try to escape from a place that holds her prisoner, while being conscious of the impossibility of this fact. Here are some of the most obvious examples that describe Hedda's spatial and corporeal dynamism on stage as expression of her need for freedom not only as a mental dimension, but as

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

an architectural one as well, since the environment of the house is both a sign of (physical/mental) confinement and openness:

(1) "HEDDA *walks about the room, raises her arms and clenches her fists as though in a frenzy. Then she draws the curtains back from the verandah door, stands there and looks out.*"⁴⁵

(2) "HEDDA [*half under her breath, getting up*]: Oh, these everlasting aunts!

TESMAN: Eh ?

HEDDA [*crossing to the glass door*]: Nothing. (...)

HEDDA [*nervously, walking across*]: Oh, you know how it is... these things just suddenly come over me. And then I can't resist them."⁴⁶

(3) "HEDDA [*rises impatiently*] Yes, there we have it! It's these paltry circumstances I've landed up in...! [*She moves across.*] That's what makes life so pitiful! (...)"⁴⁷

(4) "HEDDA [*standing and looking out*] Boring myself to death. So now you know. [*Turns, looks towards the inner room, and laughs.*] (...)"⁴⁸

(5) "HEDDA [*clenches her hands as though in desperation*]: Oh, it'll kill me... it'll kill me, all this! (...). All this...farce..."⁴⁹

(6) "HEDDA: In your power, all the same. Subject to your will and your demands. No longer free! [*She gets up violently.*] No! That's a thought that I'll never endure. Never."⁵⁰

(7) "HEDDA *goes into the inner room and pulls the curtains together behind her.*"⁵¹

(8) "HEDDA, *dressed in black, is walking aimlessly about the darkened room. Then she goes into the inner room and is lost to view to the left of the doorway. A few chords from the piano are heard. Then she emerges again and goes back into the reception room.*"⁵²

The doors, the windows (with their curtains included) can be both closed and opened, hence the ambiguity of this space, whose structure definitely points to the possibility of deterritorialization or at least suggests the potentiality of a play with the notion of territoriality as both a "closed" and

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 247.

“open” dimension. In this context, the fancy parties Hedda dreams of, where she imagined herself as a “hostess...presiding over a select group of friends”⁵³, the “footman”⁵⁴, the new piano and the “saddle-horse”⁵⁵ meant to take her outside the house are desires/gestures supposed to create a line of flight for the subject who wants to escape the territory. Moreover, in the volume *Ibsen’s Houses*, Mark B. Sandberg points to Hedda’s impossibility to see the villa as more than „merely a home”⁵⁶, since „she had hoped to maintain a house [føre hus]”, which is to say, to entertain at a certain level of social elegance.”⁵⁷ For Hedda, the house is not supposed to be a mere domestic, feminine territory, in the way that Aunt Julle suggests that it could be – “this house of life”⁵⁸ - , but clearly a social one, expressing the wish for and the exercise of her freedom: “The agreement was that we were to live a social life. Entertain.”⁵⁹ The contradiction implied in this segregation between the house as a public space and as a private dimension is, however, also a sign of ambiguity, and another concrete example showing it is Aunt Julle and judge Brack’s reference to Hedda’s pregnancy. In fact, paraphrasing Sandberg, I would say that the Lady Falk’s villa is “merely a house”, since in Hedda there is no feeling of “home” in the sense of belonging there. Even the expression “Hedda’s house”⁶⁰ is rather ironic, since the place has no special meaning for the protagonist, there can be no discussion about sentimental attachment or even social appraisal. What is even more ironic is the fact that everyone around her is talking about “her” house, while she does not even care about the place itself:

“BRACK: Yes...among other thing, because you’ve got just the home you wanted.

HEDDA [*looks up at him and laughs*]: Do you also believe that fairy story? (...)

HEDDA: Yes, well, then we came past this house one evening.(...) And then...to help him along a bit...I happened to say, just on the impulse,

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Sandberg, Mark, *Ibsen’s Houses. Architectural Metaphor and the Modern Uncanny*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 109.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵⁸ Henrik Ibsen, *op.cit.*, p. 247.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

that I'd like to live here in the villa. (...) But in this ardour for Lady Falk's villa, Jørgen Tesman and I met in mutual understanding, you see! It brought on engagement and marriage and honeymoon and the whole lot. (...)

BRACK: (...) And perhaps you didn't really care about the place at all?

HEDDA: No, God knows I did not."⁶¹

From this perspective, the marriage between Hedda and Tesman is based on/appears as a territory-house which proves to be a sort of prison, representing the premise for the protagonist's wish to create breaches of freedom in a space she perceives as estranged. As Sandberg underlines: „Seemingly married accidentally, she is also the accidental inhabitant of a house that everyone else thinks is her dream home. As the play opens, she literally has no history there -(...) it is easy to lose track of the fact that she has only slept there one night and will end up living in “Hedda's house” for just a couple more, the most temporary of the house's inhabitants, actually.”⁶² What is called „Hedda's house” is, however, a very atypical territory, since „the whiff of domesticity that clings to this alien home is intolerable for Hedda.”⁶³ This strange combination of „domesticity” and „alienation” provokes the protagonist's deterritorialization, since Hedda cannot afford a fixed position within the territory, but experiences a continuous movement along a line of flight, from a room to another, from a curtain to another curtain, from a window to another window. Moreover, it is easy to notice that even her suicide does not take place in a central area of the house/stage, but in a secondary one, hidden and willingly closed (the curtains are drawn, so that we are not able to see Hedda in the end of the play), where she has symbolically gathered her own previous, alternative history/genealogy: the pistols, the piano and her father's portrait. There is nothing in that little room that does not belong to Hedda: even her own death belongs to her, since it happens beautifully with a shot in the temple. Thus, Hedda's death is just as ambiguous as death generally is, but mocking, besides, the other's impossibility of seeing not necessarily beyond the boundaries of the world they live in, but not even within them.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

⁶² Mark Sandberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-111.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

6. Conclusion

Thus, what we actually witness through Hedda's suicide is a territorial transgression where death is understood as deterritorialization. That is the reason why Tesman's and Brack's lines in the end will never function as a real understanding or explanation of the meaning of Hedda's suicide: "TESMAN [*yelling at BRACK*]: (...) Shot herself in the temple! Think of that! BRACK (half prostrate in the armchair): But, good God Almighty...people don't do such things!"⁶⁴ In fact, these lines describe the characters as associated with a clear territory they are not able to escape, defined even by their own lines, while their perspective over the protagonist's gesture is influenced and determined by this territorial horizon they ontologically belong to. Thus, Hedda becomes for them nothing more than an object situated now completely outside, because „people don't [usually] do such things”, like “shoot[ing] herself in the temple”, hence her decision is beyond explanation in a “territorial” meaning. This is the “power” she always refers to: there is no strength in choosing a territory, in choosing a normative power that will always rule over you, because the true essence of existence lies beyond the norms, in the individual's own power to get out of the territories that attempt to imprison it. Thus the deterritorialization becomes, practically, a manner of winning one's own freedom, expressed precisely in Hedda's ideal of having “vine-leaves in (...) [the] hair”⁶⁵, and portraying Hedda as a victim of the society as much as a victim of her own wish for freedom.

⁶⁴ Henrik Ibsen, *op.cit.*, p. 264.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

References:

- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. Milles Plateaux*. Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980.
- Deleuze Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia. A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinéma 2. L'image-temps*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit. 1985.
- Ibsen, Henrik. *Four Major Plays. A Doll's House. Ghosts. Hedda Gabler. The Master Builder*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Parr, Adrian. *The Deleuze Dictionary. Revised Edition*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- Sandberg, Mark. *Ibsen's Houses. Architectural Metaphor and the Modern Uncanny*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Templeton, Joan. *Ibsen's women*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.