

REIMAGINING IBSEN'S WHISTLEBLOWER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARTHUR MILLER, SATYAJIT RAY, AND ERIK SKJOLDBJÆRG'S ADAPTATIONS OF *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE*

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History: Received June 2026 Accepted July 2026 Published October 2026 Keywords: Henrik Ibsen, adaptation, eugenics, McCarthyism, neoliberalism	This study aims to explore the ways three adaptations of Henrik Ibsen's <i>An Enemy of the People</i>—Arthur Miller's 1950 theatrical adaptation, Satyajit Ray's <i>Ganashatru</i> (1990), and Erik Skjoldbjærg's <i>En folkefiende</i> (2005)—deviate from the original, particularly in their endings and the transformation of the Ibsenite protagonist, Dr. Thomas Stockmann. Methodologically, the study employs a comparative critical analysis of the original play and its three adaptations, focusing on variations in the protagonist's tone and temperament without intersecting with popular theoretical approaches to the play. The analysis reveals that the remarkable digressions in these adaptations are driven by the socio-cultural and politico-economic contexts of their respective productions. Miller's adaptation reflects 1950s America facing McCarthyism, Ray's film responds to growing political awareness and youth activism in 1990s West Bengal, while Skjoldbjærg's version emerges from the neoliberal context of early twenty-first-century Norway. These diverse historical frameworks produce noteworthy variations in the final scenarios and peculiar versions of Dr. Stockmann. The study concludes that socio-political contexts stimulate the transformation of Ibsen's protagonist across disparate cultural and historical settings, thereby contributing to adaptation studies.

INTRODUCTION

What makes *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen an epitome of a problem play is its dramatic presentation of the universal dilemma of truth and the protagonist's tenacious pursuit of it against the avalanche of an ignorant and morally deprived public opinion of late 19th-century Norway, echoing the concurrent treble of materialistically evolving Europe. The play stages a serious psycho-social predicament in which truth seems not to exist absolutely; rather, the "damned compact liberal majority" determines what truth should be (Adler, 2010). It presents a stifling confrontation between individual conscience and collective moral corruption. In fact, Ibsen addresses the danger of democracy, or rather its frailty, by presenting a traumatizing conflict between the collective blindness of the "ignorant mass" and the whistleblower's commitment to truth and moral responsibility.

Moreover, the play's portraiture of the bleak sides of rapid and random industrialization, economic boom with extreme financial interest, and resultant media manipulation and serious moral compromise provides a context that justifies the dramatic ending and renders the protagonist's adamant intellectual egotism relatable. Noteworthy at this point, these predicaments addressed in Ibsen's original find remarkably varied manifestations in some of the most prominent stage and screen adaptations, especially in terms of the endings and the ideological stances of the protagonist. Obviously, this investigative endeavor centers around the point how Arthur Miller's 1950 theatrical adaptation, Satyajit Ray's *Ganashatru* (1990), and Erik Skjoldbjærg's *En folkefiende* (2005)—depart from Ibsenite version on their respective peculiar grounds and recontextualize the original issues like whistleblowing, public health, and the tyranny of the majority for different socio-political scenarios.

In fact, the adaptations' digressive treatments of the original dramatic conflicts suggest diversity in their endings, as well as the personalities of the protagonists appear parallel with significantly varying socio-cultural backgrounds. The adaptational variations comprising the vital departures from the original leave a scope of critical queries: (1) Why do the three adaptations display deviant denouements compared to the original? And (2) How are these adaptational deviations enabled by their distinctive socio-political contexts, and which particular aspects validate their creative reimagining of the original? Understandably, this analytical enterprise attempts to answer the questions above and thus enrich the bulk of adaptation studies centering on Ibsen.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Among the few seminal critical appraisals on the adaptations of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the*

People Mads Larsen's (2022) article "A liberal stand-off with deplorables: Adapting Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* from Nietzscheanism through Nazism to Neoliberalism" reflects a profound socio-cultural insight and an extensive intersection with noted global adaptations of the piece under discussion; in the article Larsen corroborates the argument that global adaptations (both film and stage) of Henrik Ibsen's 1882 play reveal how societies have shifted their views on truth, democracy, and the masses over the last several decades. It deals with core problems presented by Ibsen's play called 'The Enlightenment Question' regarding how to bring reason and truth to ordinary people without falling into tyranny or mob rule, which theoretically backgrounds 'The Modern Crisis' manifested in the way today's political apathy and populism label voters as "deplorables" and journalists as "enemies of the people," creating a modern stalemate.

Furthermore, Larsen attempts to show how different adaptations, along with the original, tend to reflect certain disparate socio-political contexts, implying an inevitable socio-cultural shift. Larsen thus endeavors to unveil how Ibsen's Original Play (1882) uses a Nietzschean elitist approach, drawing a rigid conclusion where the lone doctor fights public ignorance. Then he explains how Hans Steinhoff directed *Ein Volksfeind* (1937), a Nazi Adaptation claiming that only the Nazi Party can fix or control the confused masses. Subsequently, Larsen analyzes how Arthur Miller's adaptation (1978, dir. George Schaefer) turns the lead character (played by Steve McQueen) into a hero fighting for grassroots democracy. He also argues that Satyajit Ray's Adaptation (*Ganashatru*, 1989) exploits empathetic humanism to address religious extremism and challenge Eurocentric ideas in India. Finally, Larsen discusses the Norwegian Adaptation (*En folkefiende*, 2005, dir. Erik Skjoldbjærg), emphasizing the way it shows that in the neoliberal era, public rejection of scientific and moral reason threatens human survival. Thus, through a systematic perusal of these significant adaptations, Larsen ultimately argues that traditional human belief systems may no longer work to solve modern political divides, and he furthermore suggests we may need a brand-new storytelling framework to break our current twenty-first-century democratic stand-off, while addressing the socio-cultural and political shifts liable for the transmutation of the core Ibsenite conflict into the adapted variations extensively.

But what Larsen's study on the adaptations' role in signaling the social shifts entailed by the respective historical contexts does not necessarily involve is the aspect of how the endings of the adaptations crucially vary and how the protagonist accordingly evolves in every alternative version of the original, of course, to further corroborate the issue of socio-cultural shifts and the extensive effects of recontextualization of the original play through these

adaptations. Here, the current scrutiny finds a research gap to contribute by demonstrating how changed socio-political contexts stimulate the transformation of Ibsen's whistleblower across disparate cultural and historical settings, thus also validating the peculiar endings of each of the adaptations noted in the title.

Adding a different angle, Thor Holt's (2023) article "Ibsen Studies and Adaptation" appears to be a critical retrospection of 25 years of research on adapting Henrik Ibsen's works since 1998. Holt critically argues for moving past traditional metrics of literal faithfulness to explore how adaptations function dynamically across different media and cultural frameworks. In the process, he observes how early adaptation research focused heavily on whether a film or secondary work remained faithful to Ibsen's original, while Holt and contemporary scholars argue for leaving behind this restrictive "fidelity" lens. Holt's notion of the 'Historical Waves of [Adaptation] Research' categorized the second wave of adaptation research inspired by Linda Hutcheon as focusing on cultural contexts and transculturation. The article also applies Bakhtin's literary theory of Dialogism to look at "unannounced adaptations," character displacement, and how modern retellings reflexively change our reading of Ibsen's original plays. Despite Holt's focus on the nature and history of adaptation research, advocacy for beyond-fidelity frameworks and expanding media scope, his study does not elaborately engage with the socio-cultural aspects of Ibsen's creation, whereas our study in hand attempts to critically intersect with an Ibsenite play from that perspective, enabling the corollary diversity of endings as well as the contextual evolution of the protagonist.

Noteworthy in this regard is that Ibsen composed the concerned piece as a retort to the harsh criticism his previous play *Ghosts* (Ibsen, 1881/2008) received, and the play concerned records his scathing rejoinder to the ignominy levied upon the *Ghosts*' uncompromised revelation of truth, which exposes the hypocrisy of 19th-century morality and the majority's lack of integrity to concede the cruel truth. Dr. Stockmann, the unflinching moralist mouthpiece for Ibsen, relentlessly criticizes just the sort of liberal media, the social representative of public opinion, that forge the truth they choose not to recognize and reveal for some despicable interests that previously made them talk smack about *Ghosts*. For Dr. Stockmann, a lone revolutionary against the popular stream, "truth never rests with the majority", and he sarcastically revokes the opinion "truth rests with the majority" voiced by the anchor of the weekly TV program 'People's Choice' in the play. Showing symptoms of quite complex character dynamics, Ibsen's protagonist here remains not only a staunch moralist but interestingly also an arrogant elitist who doesn't even hesitate to banter the crude majority that rejects the truth as he exclaims: "The majority is never right. Never, I tell you! That's one of

those lies in society that no free and intelligent man can help rebelling against. Who are the people that make up the biggest proportion of the population -- the intelligent ones or the fools?" (Ibsen, 2021). During a time of economic panic, industrial pollution, and growing tension between individual integrity and mob rule in a rapidly modernizing Norwegian coastal setting, Ibsen critiques the late 19th-century complacency with the distortion of an emerging dream of a Liberalistic society that approves of prioritizing economic interest over public health concerns and moral liability (McConnell, 2009).

Moreover, Dr. Stockmann's candid affirmation "The most dangerous enemy of truth and freedom amongst us is the compact majority—yes, the damned compact Liberal majority" (Ibsen, 2021) suggests he is strong enough to be the lone ranger of truth even in the face of rejection by the stupid majority. For him, true freedom consists in being able to pursue truth freely, and truth here takes its own lonely path apart from the popular consensus. Individual freedom here clashes with collective opinion, when society tries to conceal the truth for a collective but unethical interest. At this point, out of disappointment and rather desperation to uphold his moral integrity against a formidable but foolish public opinion, Dr. Stockmann shows signs of elitist tendencies that interestingly side him with Eugenacists, who strongly advocate for improved human hereditary traits through selective breeding, including forced sterilization, rigorous social policies, and restrained intellectual polishing; in the tone of an intellectual supremacist, he proclaims, even without caring about hurting the public sentiment: "It is true we are the finest animals anyone could wish for; but, even amongst us, exceptionally fine animals are rare. There is a tremendous difference between poodle-men and cur-men" (Ibsen, 2021).

Ibsen's play thus ends with an optimistic overtone as the protagonist's moral integrity is emphatically sustained as we find him unequivocally avowing, "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone", and the family, including a friend, Captain Horster, at least a small bunch standing by him for the righteous cause; but alongside the protagonist's unflinching moralism, his cynical intellectual arrogance and elitist egoism expose a certain complexity in the composition of his character. An absorbed reader is startled to discover such conflicting elements in the protagonist, as if a Christ-like revealer of truth uncharacteristically turns into an insolent intellectual. Yet Dr. Stockmann's character composition, a literary alter ego of the author, does not seem irrelevant when we consider Ibsen's own struggle and defiance against the torrent of adverse criticism from the majority for unearthing unpopular truths through his late 19th-century compositions. Such complexity of character appears understandable in the context of 1880s modernizing, materialistically evolving Liberalist

Norway of Ibsen that promised the utmost freedom for the individual, even to pursue truth to its oddest extent. However, we see such complexity of Ibsen's protagonist extend into other dimensions in the adapted versions, where we find Dr. Stockmann meaningfully evolving in varying final scenarios as suggested before and will be explicated next.

METHOD

As a methodological approach, the inquiry in hand is based upon a comparative critical analysis of the original play and its three adaptations, aiming to excavate the reasons behind the variations of the endings along with the diversity of the protagonist's tone and temperament without intersecting with popular theoretical approaches to the play. For the critical analysis of the materials concerned, the Textual Approach has been limited to a close analytical reading of the original text along with a critical view of the adaptations for extracting relevant data to support the comparative grounds. More importantly, the Contextual Approach to the materials has been key in the sense that the approach aligns the adaptations with the original play in terms of their engagement with and reflection of the concerned, distinct socio-cultural contexts. In fact, the critical relevance of the materials to the pertinent authorial biographies, as well as the historical contexts of the text and adaptation's production, provides a critical perspective to establish the pivotal argument. Moreover, a Comparative-Interdisciplinary Approach has also been adopted, as the investigative process involves critical comparisons among productions belonging to different forms of artistic communication like literature, film, and stagecraft.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Arthur Miller's 1950 theatrical adaptation of the play (Miller, 1977), which was the closest among the concerned adaptations to the original's history but certainly had its own diverse socio-political context compared to the original's, presents a reimagining of the dramatic conflict tailored to address the struggling reality of 1950s American McCarthyism or Red Scare broadly resulting in an indiscriminate censorship of anti-authority intellectual activities (Berntzen, 2011). In adapting Ibsen's original, Miller made significant changes to make the play more accessible and acceptable to a 1950s audience with a more conservative outlook, rather than Ibsen's late-1800s liberalist audience. Major edits included not only the transformation of speech and language, but also the crucial changes to the character of Dr. Stockmann to avoid portraying him as a champion of eugenics that advocates genetic improvement through selective breeding and sterilization for an intellectually more developed

and physiologically more capable race of humans, as we find the protagonist propounding in the Ibsenite version (Garrard, 2007). Throughout Miller's adaptation, Dr. Stockmann consistently remains a Christ figure with conviction and commitment to upholding the truth.

Miller's protagonist instead occupies a middle ground between Ibsen's elitist defiance and Skjoldbjærg's modern despair and isolation. Contextualized during the peak of McCarthyism in the United States, which administered rigorous censorship of liberal intellectual activities in the form of anti-communist repression, Miller reframed the story as a defense of the individual's freedom of persist with truth against "the tyranny of the majority (or authority)" and political witch hunts (Bronsen, 1969). So, Miller thought it rather necessary to humble Ibsen's eugenic overtone, registering intellectual chauvinism from the late 1800s liberalist Norwegian context to extend Dr. Stockmann's standing as a champion of the lower and lower-middle classes, rather than a scientist with a belief in racial determinism and the importance of eugenics for "improving" people with superior intellectuality as well as essential genetic enhancement. In Ibsen's original, a portion of Dr. Stockmann's speech to the people connotes such racial elitism:

The masses are nothing but the raw material that must be fashioned into the people. Is it not so with all other living creatures on earth? How great the difference between a cultivated and an uncultivated breed of animals!... Don't you believe that the brain of a poodle has developed quite differently from that of a mongrel? Yes, you may depend upon that! It is educated poodles like this that jugglers train to perform the most extraordinary tricks. A common peasant-cur could never learn anything of the sort—not if he tried till Doomsday... we are animals... There is a terrible difference between men-poodles and men-mongrels (Ibsen, 2021).

In Miller's adaptation, no such eugenics-positive ideology is propounded. Miller sticks to Dr. Stockmann's moral ideals as a character and his commitment to facing off the hypocrisy of the aristocracy and bureaucracy, but transforms him into more of a democratic thinker and devoted socialist, while retaining some of the original character's ideas about the evolution of animals and humans in clarifying the core criteria as separate species, and the necessity of cultivating humane qualities to bring the masses to a more rational and educated level, so that they can fully participate in a democracy. In Miller's adaptation, part of the doctor's speech reads:

I put in a good many years in the north of our country. Up there the rulers of the world are the great seal and the gigantic squadrons of duck. Man lives on ice, huddled together in little piles of stones. His whole life consists of grubbing for food. Nothing more. He can barely speak his own language. And it came to me one day that it was romantic and sentimental for a man of my education to be tending these people. They had not yet reached the stage where they needed a

doctor. If the truth were to be told, a veterinary would be more in order (Miller, 1977).

Thus, in Miller's transcreation, Dr. Stockmann turns out equally idealistic but more grounded compared to Ibsen's arrogant, elitist and racial supremacist version; Miller, in fact, successfully transmuted Ibsenite 'superman' rhetoric and eugenicist overtones to make the protagonist more relevant for the contemporary audience as well as perfectly fitting in 1950s American socio-political realities. Accordingly, we can connect to Miller's Christ like portrayal of Dr. Stockmann as one sacrificing himself for the sake of truth only which can save the ignorant masses, and realize the significance of such utterance: "You are fighting for the truth, and that's why you're alone. And that makes you strong" (Miller, 1977) instead of Ibsen's "loneliest man" biting the ground with egotistical obstinacy and condescending audacity reflected through his proclamation: "If the only way I can be a friend of the people is to take charge of that corruption, then I am an enemy!" (Ibsen, 2021).

For Miller, the public remains vulnerable but not inferior and incorrigible; rather, it is misled by corrupt leadership, which explicitly contrasts with Ibsen's view of the "ignorant masses" and Skjoldbjærg's "neoliberal apathy". Besides, Miller's protagonist decides to stay and fight for the truth despite financial ruin, with hope of reigniting the spark of truth among people, which makes him obviously more optimistic than Skjoldbjærg's hero with a mindset of "I can't do it alone," but less isolated than Ibsen's disdainful "aristocrat of the mind" with a queer obstinacy reflected in his pronouncement: "No, even if the whole world goes to pieces, I will never bow my neck to this yoke!" (Miller, 1977). Contrarily, by moderating Stockmann's character, Miller made the doctor a sympathetic and vocal surrogate for intellectuals being blocked in 1950s America. Consequently, Miller's version remains focused on the whistleblower's duty to the public good rather than Ibsen's contemptuous supremacist. Critics often point out that Miller's version is more "palatable" for a modern democratic audience because it removes the more offensive, anti-democratic elements of the 1882 original while retaining the core message of pursuing uncompromised truth. Perhaps, as a theatrical reproduction, Miller's version felt more indebted to representing contemporary realities through a coherent reinterpretation of Ibsen's original that the 1950s live audience could connect with and confront intellectually (Haugen, 1979).

Endorsing a different socio-political scenario of 1980s Indian West Bengal, Satyajit Ray's Bangla film adaptation of the same play as *Ganashatru* (1990), deviating from the original's individualistic isolation of the protagonist, ends on a more optimistic note, where we see communal solidarity rebuilding through a group of young, educated students, and a theatre

troupe actively campaigning in favor of Dr. Ashoke Gupta, Ray's version of Dr. Thomas Stockmann, and thus joining forces with him in the mission of preaching the truth to the blinded majority (Biswas, 2016). Although the original by Ibsen is tinged with the slightest bit of optimism as the Stockmann family manages to stand the "tyranny of the majority" and does not give up their social hold even in the face of mob aggression and threats of further disaster, it seems more like selfless love and commitment of a dedicated wife, a filial piety and devotion of loving offspring for their revolutionary father, than their conscious determination and self-dedication to the cause of truth (Chatterjee, 2024).

Ibsen was well aware that the toughest battle is to swim against the social tide, and those who can afford it are quite scarce; success comes at a great cost. So, he dealt with the idealism of the protagonist in a rather pragmatic way. Whereas the faintest ray of hope and optimism we find in Skjoldbjærg's adaptation is only through Ejlif, Dr. Stockmann's only son in the film, who appears to hold tight to and be devoted to his father's conviction and sticks with him against the torrents of social pressure. Against Stockmann's stoic isolation, triggering self-superiority as the 'last man standing' alone for the truth, Dr. Ashoke appears sanguine about a collective regeneration and communal solidarity for the great cause, which enables him to exclaim: "I may be an enemy of the people, but I have a lot of friends" (Ray, 1991). Ray thus installs a "blueprint for hope" as the press and youth prepare to spread his message regarding Water contamination to larger cities and finishes his film remarkably with a greater optimistic flourish.

Furthermore, Ray's adaptation also reframes the original in an Indian religio-cultural context, transplanting the economic conflict of Ibsen's Norwegian baths into a struggle between the scientific rationalism upheld by few and the religious superstition sanctioned by the majority (Pal & Ghoshal, 2024). This slight but significant departure from the original is understandable in the context of 1980s West Bengal, where political consciousness and youth activism were emerging; Ray, the ever humanist, rather refused to let his protagonist end in defeat and felt it was improbable for a whistleblower to be wholly alienated in a time of politico-cultural flourish (Mukhopadhyay, 2017). Thus, Ray attempted and succeeded in recontextualizing the original play in a 1980s West Bengal scenario and saturating *Ganashatru* with both local colorism and geo-cultural relevance.

On the other hand, Erik Skjoldbjærg's 2005 film *En folkefiende* (Skjoldbjærg, 2005) is a relatively modern Norwegian film adaptation of Ibsen's masterpiece, which presents a significant recontextualization of the 1882 play about truth's dilemma in an early 21st-century Norwegian setting representing the contemporary neoliberalist realities endorsing political and

economic tendencies to prioritize free-market capitalism, deregulation of trades and commerce, privatization, and reduced government interference in the public's commercial affairs. In fact, during the late 20th century, Neoliberalism was emerging as a dominant socio-political ideology marking the popular propensity to champion economic growth and materialistic prosperity, deviating from the late 19th and early 20th century Liberalism advocating for the individual rights, liberty, consent of the governed, and equality before the law in a rather humanistic as well as moralistic vein (Brown, 2019). The ostracized truth-teller's predicament in the adaptation rather portrays the materialistic orientation of the modern world, where an individual's conscience, his values of honesty, moral commitments, and truth-uplifting integrity are found struggling in a Neoliberal Norway. Dr. Thomas Stockmann, the committed nutritionist, becomes the unequivocal mouthpiece of truth, castigated and cornered by the community he intends to save from collateral damage.

Though both Ibsen's 1882 original and Skjoldbjærg's 2005 adaptation center on Dr. Stockmann's social ostracism for exposing an unpleasant and financially disruptive truth, they reach fundamentally different conclusions about the protagonist's character and the hope for truth. In Skjoldbjærg's delineation of the ending, we find Tomas Stockmann devastated by the media and public pressure and resigning from the battle with the final utterance: "I can't do it alone" (Skjoldbjærg, 2005), that portrays him as defeated and deserted, quite unlike Ibsen's elitist Dr. Stockmann defiantly biting the ground and deciding to stay in town to "educate" the next generation of the "ignorant masses", affirming through his final words: "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone" (Ibsen, 2021).

Skjoldbjærg's version appears as a shocking disillusionment for the Ibsenite hero who could confidently argue: "Do you imagine that in a free country it is no use having right on your side? You are absurd, Katherine. Besides, haven't I got the liberal-minded, independent press to lead the way, and the compact majority behind me? That is might enough, I should think!" (Skjoldbjærg, 2005) and thus ends up discovering the bitter reality of humanitarian truth's relevance to a materialistically overwhelmed and dehumanizing neoliberal context. Here, the original and adapted versions of Stockmann differ substantially, signaling a shift from Ibsen's moral determination and assured optimism to the individual's failing struggle against the rock-bottom realities of neoliberal Norway and the corollary cynicism Erik suggests. It broadly marks a transition from late-19th-century Liberal optimism to early-21st-century Neoliberal pessimism. Skjoldbjærg's version turns into a cynical critique of the "neoliberal era," where the modern individual appears powerless against a society that prioritizes "brand" and economic survival over reason.

Ultimately, the play ends with a glimmer of pedagogical hope: the starting of the school to enlighten the “street urchins”. In contrast, the film is often described as having a “sad” and “unique” finish, emphasizing the impossibility of a single truth-teller surviving and succeeding in truth-pursuit in a modern neoliberal environment. From another angle, Skjoldbjærg’s portrayal of Tomas as a former celebrity TV journalist, replacing Ibsen’s Stockmann as a doctor, perhaps makes Tomas’ cynicism more relatable in view of his being a former media person with a comprehensive understanding of the role of public opinion in deciding truth’s validity; he is well aware of the near impossibility of establishing the truth against the choice of the public in an era of growing materialism and business-minded mass media. In fact, his own old “weapon”—the media—is turned against him by his brother Peter, which makes his downfall more public and humiliating than the 19th-century version, where he is merely a local doctor. Furthermore, Skjoldbjærg’s adoption of a device like the “Play-within-the-Film” through the characters’ local production of *Peer Gynt* serves to contrast Stockmann’s desperate devotion with the more complacent nature of Peer (Waerp, 2015), where Skjoldbjærg’s protagonist seems rather aligned with a ‘straight through!’ and ‘all or nothing’ sort of steadfast mentality, more like Brand from Ibsen’s another masterpiece, *Brand*.

Beside such modifications and creative readjustments of Ibsen’s original play, a major and suggestive deviation that Skjoldbjærg’s adaptation takes is near the finale of the film where Thomas Stockmann is forsaken by his family as well, as his wife Mrs. Katrine Stockmann smashes his arguments about truth and integrity as madness, on grounds of their son’s secured future which is financially intertwined with Stockmann company’s success mostly. She is seen transforming from a supportive wife into the closest antagonist to Dr. Stockman. (Skjoldbjærg, 2005). Whereas, in the original play, we find whole Stockmann family including Stockmann’s wife Katherine, daughter Petra and her siblings Ejlif and Morten standing tall together and extending unconditional support and commitment to Stockmann’s righteous stance and thus providing restorative mental shelter to Thomas who has already been forsaken by and alienated from the society he was trying to protect from disaster. Mrs. Stockmann’s assuring utterance in the original definitely aligns her with some of the classic ‘perfect spouses’ of global literature: “Then I will show them that an—an old woman can be a man for once. I am going to stand by you, Thomas!” (Ibsen, 2021). In Skjoldbjærg’s adaptation (2005), Mrs. Stockmann refuses to cling to Thomas’ moral stance for his stubborn adherence to truth at the expense of the welfare and a secure future for the family. The Water contamination that Thomas aimed to expose was mostly due to her adoptive father Morten Kiil’s fertilizer plant, which she could see but ignored for the pragmatic concerns of financial disaster for her and the family.

Another remarkable point of departure in Skjoldbjærg's film is the final return of Dr. Stockman to his wife, his helpless submission to the social unit or miniature society called family, admitting "I can't be alone", implying the ineluctability of a social shelter and validity for an individual to assure his sense of being and belonging, even the exigency of social or public recognition for the absolute truth. Skjoldbjærg's cinematization of the original text fits more into the modern Norwegian context, or rather into the circumstances of modern Europe in general, where the individual often feels the indomitable urge to uphold the truth. However, collective interest, social milieu, popular vogue, and prevailing customs compel him to compromise the truth for a place in the community that grants him social identity and privileges and endorses his validity in a socio-cultural context. It is indeed a gnawing clash between different philosophies of life, an inevitable conflict between idealism and materialism typical of a modern neoliberal dystopia culminating in the early decades of the 21st century.

Such a morally itching denouement is more fitting in a modern scenario where people frantically care only for themselves and for what they think belongs to them, with a fascination for financial gain and materialistic prosperity alone, as opposed to the 1880s world of Ibsen, when 19th-century morality and the liberalist dream still had their grasp over public thoughts and actions that left human values like family integrity, self-sacrifice, empathy and righteousness yet to be extinct. There has been, in fact, a complete cataclysm during this long period of more than a century between the first publication of *An Enemy of the People* in 1882 and a much later cinematization of it under the title *En Folkefiende* in 2005, where a crucial change in public perspective and propensity is understandable. From this angle, Skjoldbjærg's cinematic adaptations of the source can be called a proper contextualization, which is indeed a trademark of adaptations that usually aim at communicating a fresh audience with a particular socio-cultural orientation in a different context, through an essential recontextualization of the original story in a remarkably different scenario of a changed time, place, and perspective.

The final tone of the film *En Folkefiende*, whether affirming glimpses of optimism by showing a 'one-person army' standing morally upright against social cum familial ostracism, or rather evoking an undercurrent of pessimism implied by total isolation with no one, not even the family, to back him at least mentally in the moral battle, brings out the intriguing potentials of Ibsenite plays that, corresponding to the criteria of classic literature, often leave the troubling questions and unresolved issues open to the audience to handle the dilemma their way and draw self-convincing conclusions. In the original play, a family's stance against an entire community blinded by self-delusion exhibits the optimistic struggle for establishing humanitarian truth, which is often challenged and battered by the prevailing socio-political

pressures; yet, what makes the audience sanguine is that at least a handful of brave hearts still stand for the truth that they believe is worth dying for.

Afterwards, though, a shadow of frustration engulfs the audience as they come to realize the profound predicament of marginalized truth trapped in the mesh of an immoral majority and its struggle against the prevailing public opinion, which claims to preserve the absolute right to constitute the truth; they feel proud of the major characters' clinging to the morals of universal good and feel relieved at the noble insistence of Dr. Thomas Stockmann and his family on revealing the humanitarian truth. The original finale feels like a beacon of humanity burning bright to drive away the surrounding darkness and usher in a world lit with altruism and love, which is more emphatically reverberated in Ray's *Ganashatru* (1990) reverberates even more emphatically. In contrast, Skjoldbjærg's film ends in utter disdain, desolation, and despondency, with the protagonist forsaken by both society and family. It leaves an irresolvable ambiguity about his family's existentialist concerns about social and financial security, rather than a willing compromise of essential human values. Obviously, Erik's bleak ending implies a clear departure from the original. Thus, the 2005 film ends with an overtone of humanitarian failure and the formidable cost of truth in a modern neoliberal dystopia, prognosticating inevitable pessimism about humanity's moral future.

CONCLUSION

In fine, the endings of Miller's, Ray's, and Skjoldbjærg's respective adaptations in disparate socio-cultural settings depart significantly from Ibsen's original by modulating the protagonist's tone, texture, and temperament as an authorial mouthpiece. Ibsen's ostracized elitist softens into a more politically representative and Christ-like savior of the repressed class in Miller's, and Ray's version uplifts the scope of optimism through achieving moral solidarity. In contrast, Skjoldbjærg's hero becomes a cynical rebel who pays the price of pursuing unpopular truth in a relatively modern setting. In fact, Ibsen's intriguing presentation of the moral dilemma and the protagonist's development into a multidimensional personality leaves room for readers to interpret the play their way and draw relevant conclusions from the open argument. This is how all these adaptations approach the original, dealing with it as an absorbed reading and reimagining the fresh endings they meaningfully recreate in variegated socio-political contexts. To add a different perspective, it can be noted that shortly after he published his earlier play *A Doll's House*, Ibsen wrote to a professor buddy of his, "It appears to me doubtful whether better artistic conditions can be attained in Norway before the intellectual soil has been thoroughly turned

up and cleansed, and all the swamps drained off” (Ibsen, 1965). These adaptations explore, in different ways, the challenges of attaining ideal “artistic conditions” on the adulterated “intellectual soil” of diverse geo-cultural realities, transmitting socio-cultural transitions through the substantial evolution of Ibsen’s protagonist. Ultimately, the study overall suggests a wide scope of exploring how distinctive socio-cultural associations and diverse historical circumstances encourage fresh interpretations and make Ibsen’s protagonist evolve further in significant ways, as we observe across the three adaptations.

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