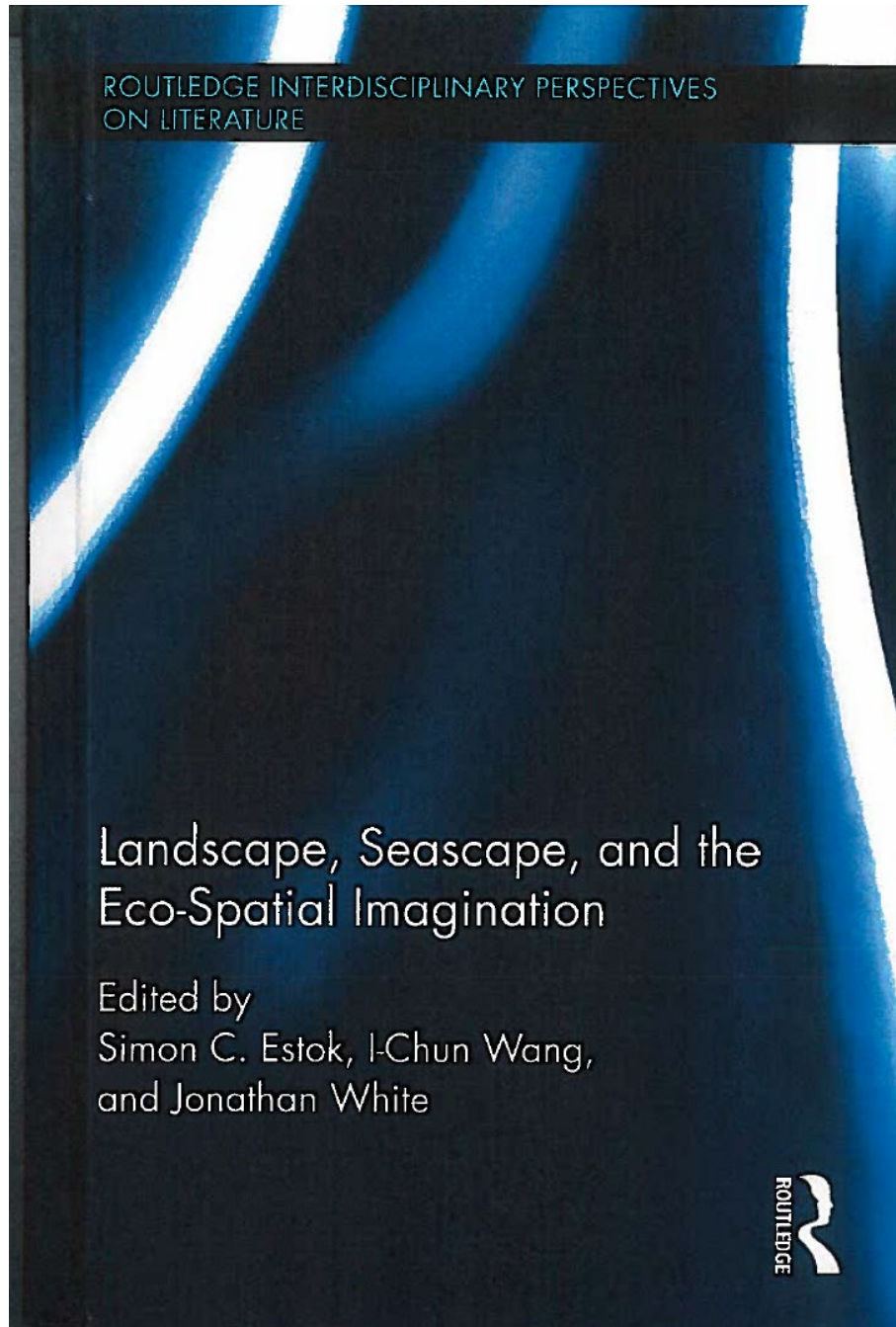


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11 The Changing Ethnic Landscape of Norwegian Theater

Baron Kelly

The island, named Utoya, pokes out of a glacial lake called Tyrifjorden 25 miles west of Oslo. This tranquil landscape, which many have described as “a piece of heaven on earth” was changed on the morning of July 22, 2011. The white supremacist, Anders Behring Breivik, shot 69 people dead at a Labor Party youth camp, littering the camp grounds with the resultant carnage. Just two hours before, Breivik had killed another eight people with a van bomb amid government buildings in Oslo. Intervening in the political process, far-right extremists whose voices fell silent right after the attacks are now back on blogs, peddling their hate. Although the anti-immigration Progress Party immediately condemned the actions of Breivik, who left their ranks in 2006, it lost a third of its support at municipal elections in 2011.

Antiracism campaigners say society failed to mount any real challenge to their views after Utoya, preferring to blame a lone fanatic rather than examine some of the more mainstream prejudices that shaped his world view. That Norway failed to turn a corner after Breivik’s massacre is a disappointment to many of his intended victims. In the months that followed the attack, it looked like the impact on the political debate would be profound. Contrary to the expressed desires of national governments, there is a public distaste in the European landscape towards the idea and policies of multiculturalism. This is evident elsewhere in Europe, which has seen certain frictions, e.g. the furor in Denmark during 2005 over Jyllands-Posten’s publication of the Muhammed cartoon and the attacks on Muslims in the aftermath of the July bombings in London.

The popular belief—that such conflicts represent a secularist backlash against the rising tide of religious fundamentalism (in the above cases, a form of Islamophobia), with or without racist undertones—needs to be examined. Often the social majority simply feels threatened by the changing landscape of minority ethnic citizens (Black or Asian), leading to an irrational fear—sometimes compounded by near-hysterical reporting in the media—that the country’s values and traditions are somehow under attack and in danger of being eradicated. There remain pronounced existential fears that far-right parties across the sparsely populated north of Europe exploit: a perception that traditional Scandinavian values of liberalism and Christianity are under

threat, in particular by radical Islam, despite a tiny minority of people airing such views. Norway is not alone. An anti-immigration party frequently polls as the third most popular in Sweden.

In theory, Norway should be immune to some of the more inflammatory rhetoric aimed at migrants elsewhere in the European landscape, where high unemployment leaves locals looking for easy scapegoats. The vast oil reserves discovered in the 1960s have transformed Norway into one of the richest nations in the world, with generous state benefits and enough jobs to go around. But can this material wealth address the question of how multicultural theater in Norway can stand as a positive example of social inclusion with regards to promoting full citizenship, both for the artists themselves and for the wider society? Unfortunately, for artists of color in Norway, and for the wider societal landscape, no visible change has yet been observed.

As Norway passed the century mark after Henrik Ibsen's death (2006), it could be said that *The Master* is very much present in Norwegian theater. That which threatened for years to become a hollow tradition and a museum has been turned into an exhilarating development of drama. The impulses for these developments come from abroad, creating new, less tradition-bound generations of directors. With these new impulses, a phenomenon has appeared in the Norwegian theatrical community. That phenomenon is the appearance of Norwegian actors of color. How will these actors of color fit into the Ibsen realist tradition that is perpetuated in Norway?

Norwegian theater still acknowledges and depends on Ibsen's greatness as a dramatist. Between 1982 and 1992, Ibsen's works constituted a remarkably high percentage of pieces being performed in Norway. A survey of these years shows that "Norske institusjonsteatre har hatt hele 18 av Ibsens dramaer på repertoaret" ("På Norske Scener 1987/88" 20) [Norway's institutional theaters have included a total of 18 of Ibsen's dramas in their repertoires]; in other words, 70 percent of his total works. This speaks for the Norwegian theaters' and the public's strong interest. But at the same time it has been and still seems to be necessary for Norwegian theater to emancipate itself from his impact, regarding the writing of plays and the style of acting and staging. The negative understanding of the "Ibsen tradition" may be prevalent among people in the Norwegian theater today who see it as an element that has retarded and inhibited the development of their theater.

Norway is still a land of conservative theater, and this affects not least the small but interesting sector of young dramatists who have been completely cut adrift from the psychological realism line. As in *Hedda Gabler*, the *pater familias*, in this case the long-dead dramatist, is omnipresent in Norwegian theater. Although the situation is no longer comparable to the period when anything that did not bear his invisible stamp was rejected, Ibsen's spirit still hovers over Norwegian theater. Although the free theater groups have a few stages in Oslo that welcome their experiments, success varies. An unsuccessful venture can bring a theater crashing to the ground. Professor Knut Ove

Arntzen states that "a new hybrid form of theatre has arisen where realistic effects are paired with modern dance, stylized body language, theatrical production techniques, and a dramaturgy which owes nothing to Aristotle. The theatrical expression is increasingly stylized in the direction of dance" ("På Norske Scener 1987/88" 20). In the 1990s, the watertight bulkheads between the free theater groups and the institutional theaters have given way to co-productions between the two types of theater.

The psychology of the Norwegian people is linked with their political and cultural life. Connection to the land plays a very important part in the psychology of Norway: the Norwegian geographical locality is an embodied presence in the plays of Ibsen as in the plays of Yeats and Beckett. Marker states:

Ibsen's concerns were that staging reflect truthfulness to nature. The illusion that everything is real and that one is sitting and watching something that is actually taking place in life. The drama of Ibsen and Bjornson was regarded as the foundation upon which a re-vitalized and distinctively Norwegian theatre culture should build. (173)

The Ibsen realist tradition has clearly influenced Norwegian theater. The word 'realism' should be used cautiously when applied to Ibsen. He never copied reality. He was not interested in the raw material of life as a recorder of facts but only as a creative artist. The purpose of Ibsen's realism is not merely to mirror the 'real world,' but also to demand that we scrutinize and judge the details we often ignore because of their surface reality. Ibsen began to write in a way that audiences accepted as "true to life." Nevertheless, every important playwright and every theatrical era must find a strategy for tailoring that artifice to seem as real as possible.

Drama, staging, and acting style have been dominated by realism, and several generations of dramatists and producers have attempted to loosen up, renew, or break away from it. They have only been partly successful, and realism continues to dominate the major stages of the institutional theaters. Norwegian playwrights trying means of dramatic expression different from those of the "Ibsen style" have complained that their plays have been refused by the theaters or given bad reviews. It seems that directors have a tendency to become tangled up in an Ibsen convention, expanding on what already exists rather than developing a new negotiation of terms such as space and place in the Ibsen tradition. They appear to have trouble freeing themselves from a strongly realistic interpretation of Ibsen. Therefore, new productions are directed according to an established and traditional Ibsen convention. Among Norway's directors, Ibsen is obviously given priority and valued as an intriguing dramatist. In addition to garnering the prestige and status afforded a recognized master of the dramatic world, Ibsen productions challenge a director's creative skills. Some directors display a desire and inclination to reinterpret Ibsen, but "outright revolutionary and

innovative Ibsen productions have hardly appeared on Norwegian stages during the past decade" (Arntzen interview).

Modern drama, it should be remembered, was emerging at the same time that Sigmund Freud was developing a psychoanalytic treatment that asked patients to speak in their everyday voices until they unwittingly revealed their unconscious feelings. Ibsen and his contemporaries exploited a similar insight. They created dramatic-sounding dialogue that divulged the truth about characters as surely as, and more 'realistically' than, an explicitly self-revealing soliloquy. Every hesitation, every slip of the tongue, every euphemism for Ibsen, as for Freud, has profound meaning. Norwegians consider the birth of modern theater as the 'Ibsen Tradition,' which means a way of acting, staging, and playwriting that is based in 'concrete reality.' Knut Ove Arntzen states that "the realist and naturalist convention of illusionist acting is partly founded on the discovery of the nineteenth century Stanislavski method of acting." Staging conventions were influenced by the "growth of naturalism, with its emphasis on the interaction of character and environment. Theater production endeavored to follow both the explicit and implied directions of the playwright to the letter" (Marker 164).

Theatrical realism in Norway is a conservative convention where the audience agrees to a set of conventions that precede the performance so that what is done may be accepted as a formal or definite process. The casting of an ethnic performer, where race or ethnicity is not germane to the character's or play's development, has never been done in a Norwegian theater production.

In the context of the theater (theatrical landscape), the Scandinavian countries and Finland have been accused of denying their 'actors of color' (ethnic minority artists) the opportunities they afford other citizens. Using Norway as an illustration, let us consider why this might be. It is only in the past 15 years that the 'issue' of ethnic minorities has appeared on the agenda in Norway. Up to the late 1960s, there were few immigrants in Norway from countries outside Europe; now there are (the landscape has) more than 100,000 such immigrants, and they constitute 2.5% of the population. In comparison with Sweden and the UK, Norway has few immigrants, but immigration and the new, multi-ethnic nature of the community have nevertheless occupied a central place in popular debate. The building of Norway as a nation, and the development of the welfare state in the twentieth century, placed great emphasis on cultural equality as the national cornerstone. Many believed that it was not citizenship as such, but a common history and origins that defined the national fellowship. With this in mind, an immigrant community poses many political and social challenges. While Norway has looked to the UK as an example of a society that has tried to implement policies of cultural diversity over longer periods, there remains a lack of an integrated arts strategy that might promote, and reflect, such cultural alternatives.

In Scandinavian theater, ethnic diversity (meaning the integration of black people on the stage) is now starting to be included in the public

discourses of multiculturalism. The success of multiculturalism lies in seeing 'equal opportunity' as a chance to generate genuine change within organizations and institutions rather than viewing it as a bureaucratic hurdle or constraint. In gender issues, Norway has shown success and commitment to promoting the importance of women's representation in politics and other sectors, yet this equality principle rarely seems to affect ethnic diversity in the theater.

No discussion of actors of color on the stages of Norway can exclude the career of Earle Hyman. Hyman is a distinguished African American actor who has been knighted for his work in *Othello* and his portrayal of Brutus Jones in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. He is best known for his television portrayal of Grandfather Cosby on "The Cosby Show" (later 1980s-early 1990s). His love of the works of Ibsen first led him to Norway.

To an earlier generation, here was a "real" black man who could lend authenticity to the black roles he was performing. The conundrum was that he was lauded as a great actor and embraced as a good friend of Norway, but the bulwark of conventional theatrical realism in Norway prevented him from performing in a non-traditional role in the work of his beloved Ibsen. Hyman began to perform in Norway, speaking the two official languages used in the theaters of that country. He appeared also on the stages of Sweden and Denmark, where he spoke Norwegian while the rest of the players spoke their native tongue. Hyman's first Norwegian performance was *Othello* for Den Nationale Scene in Bergen (1963). With *Othello*, Hyman made Norwegian stage history by being the first American to perform in Norwegian.

In the more than 50 years since Hyman first appeared on stage in Norway, questions of multiculturalism and non-traditional casting in Norway loom large. Majoran Vivekananthan, Advisor for 2008 Year of Diversity, says "the theatre leaders don't want change because they are concerned about their culture" (Vivekananthan interview).

The appearance of Earle Hyman on the stages of Norway preceded the first immigrant arrivals. After the late 1960s and during the 1970s, immigrants became more visible in Norway, and in the early 1970s the immigrants were obviously not going home. Many Norwegians felt that 'the stranger' was now within the city walls. There was a moral panic. New frameworks of identity were coming into question. There was a feeling that the nation was slipping away. Even though Norway still accepts refugees today, the *Innvandring Stopp* bill came about in Stortinget [Parliament] in the mid-1970s to stop the flow of immigrants. As the 1980s progressed, it became clear that Norway had a permanent minority population of non-European background. They looked different from ethnic Norwegians and, in many very important areas, they were culturally different. Consequently, an integration policy was formulated. 'Integration' means that minority groups participate in the common activities of the community—work, school, and politics—but reserve the right to remain culturally separate from the majority.

In Norwegian theater training, the policy of non-integration is quite apparent and hardly surprising.

In 1994, the National Theater did not even bother to look for a black actor to play the role of Belize in its production of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. A white actor was cast in the role and used brown makeup to darken his skin just enough so that he could give the appearance of being non-white. The casting of a white actor in the role set off a flurry of debate in the Norwegian press. Deputy Chairman of the Norsk kulturråd [Norwegian Cultural Council] Khalid Salimi stated in a *Dagbladet* article

The National Theatre ikke fant en svart skuespiller til «Euler i Amerika», or ingen stor katastrofe. ... Problemet er ikke at en hvit skuespiller ikke kan spille en svart rolle, selvfølgelig kan han det. Eller at problemstillingen har noe med rasisme å gjøre. For debatten dreier seg om hvorvidt norsk teaterliv har gjort sitt for å reflektere mangfoldet i samfunnet.

(Salimi, *Dagbladet*)

That the National Theater did not find a black actor for *Angels in America* is not a huge catastrophe. ... The problem is not that a white actor cannot play a black role; of course he can do that. Or that the issue has anything to do with racism. The debate is about how much Norwegian theater life has contributed in reflecting diversity in society.

Salimi's point was that the National Theater's failure to recruit a black actor does not reflect the diversity of Norwegian society, and this error in casting is where the fault lies.

Statens teaterhøgskolen [State Theater Academy] has only accepted three students of color in the whole of its 60-year existence. Typecasting in accordance with the realism principle, then, naturally, considers actors' skin color as of decisive importance. Viewed in this way, realism is part of institutional racism in the field of stagecraft. With issues of multiculturalism at the forefront of a changing Norwegian society, how will actors of color in Norway claim a piece of the artistic landscape?

In 2008, Norwegian Minister of Culture Trond Giske arranged an interview for me with his head of staff, Ms. Bente Møller, for the celebration and implementation of the 2008 Year of Multiculturalism in Norway. Ms. Møller stated unequivocally that Mr. Giske believed in the sustainability of multiculturalism in the arts. After my meeting, I wondered if it was indeed possible for the character of Solveig in *Peer Gynt* to be cast with a black actor in the role at a Norwegian institutional theater and for people to ignore that fact. I came to the conclusion that it would take a brave theater director to cast a black actor because Solveig presents the local hometown girl. She is the place.

Lavleen Kaur, who is of Indian descent and was poised to be a major star, could have been the actress to appear as Solveig, but because of various obstacles has disappeared from Norway's theatrical scene. Born and raised

in Norway, she worked for many years as a dancer, choreographer, and actress. During 2006, Kaur was presented in Norwegian media as Ibsen's first lady because of various new ethnic interpretations of Ibsen that were being staged during that time in Norway. During the Ibsen year, 2006, Kaur played the leading roles of Nora (*A Doll's House*), Hedda (in *Hedda Gabler*), and Ellida (in *The Lady from the Sea*) for the Central Theater, Riksteatret (Norwegian Touring Theater), and the National Theater, respectively. Despite being hailed as Ibsen's first lady, it is my opinion that she was unable to make a successful career in the theater. As of 2011, she was a PhD candidate in the Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law at the University of Oslo. Unsurprisingly, Kaur's research investigates the integration of minorities in Norway.

Although there may be a handful of Norwegian actors of color today—some trained in England—the brick wall of stereotyping in racially specific roles is the dominant rule. Actors recruited for the State Theater School come from white, upper-middle-class Oslo West. The audience and the actors in the institutional theater are made up of the cultural elite, thus elitism is played out in the theater. If productions of Ibsen from Caracas, Tokyo, or Beijing are performed at the Ibsen Festival, this is a reaffirmation of Norwegian cultural greatness. If actors of color are cast, they are hired based on their ethnic characteristics for a specific show and not part of the resident acting ensemble. Actors of color are almost always employed in 'colored roles'—for example, Pakistanis play Pakistanis—while classical theater roles are the preserve of white Norwegian actors.

One of the principle reasons for this, in purely artistic terms, is that realism dominates Norwegian stages (and films). It is, for example, unrealistic for Ibsen's character of Solveig to be black. Typecasting in accordance with the realism principle then, naturally, considers actors' skin color to be very important. Viewed in this way, realism is part of institutional racism in the field of stagecraft. Norwegian-produced soap operas and crime series have had a far higher representation of actors of color than the theater. In the television series *Fox Gronland* (2001–2003) on TV 2, the principle of race-specific roles was also broken. Actors of color played various parts—an unthinkable situation in a Norwegian production on the main stage at the National Theater. Television casting is an example of how the more highly cultural and serious the art form is, the more merciless the institutional racism.

Norway is a society that has changed drastically since Hyman began performing on the Norwegian stage. In a marginalized European culture that has prided itself on a cultural elitism founded in the nationalism created in the literature of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Ibsen among others, issues of multiculturalism and diversity are only now beginning to enter into the political vocabulary in the twenty-first century. What does the audience see with regard to race? How does the audience make sense of it? And how does the audience interpret it within the large scope of the theatrical visit when an actor of color is employed in nontraditional casting? Colorblind casting

assumes one can and should be blind to race. It also assumes that theater is a location that can enable a society to change long-held views of race. As a model that prides itself on its meritocratic roots (the best actor for the best part), colorblind casting assumes that an actor's color has no semiotic value onstage unless it is vested with one by the director.

Many issues that are currently being debated in European societies and the media are particularly relevant for the arts. The debates about migrants and (cultural) citizenship in general have led to a number of intercultural strategies and programs in the arts and education, most of which are more concerned about integration and social cohesion than about an open exchange of different values and world views. The introduction of "national cultural canons" can also be seen in this context, as well as increased concerns about protecting national heritage. There have also been intellectual debates on freedom of expression and "European values" that have been inspired by, for example, threats against writers and intellectuals; the murder of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands and Anna Politkovskaya in Russia; or the "Danish Caricature Conflict," which caused mass demonstrations and arson when the Prophet Muhammad was depicted in a series of satirical cartoons. The Danish cartoon turned into a symbol of the struggle over European values of tolerance and freedom of the press. There is a perceived new role of Islam and/or Islamist radicalism in Europe and immigration trends during the past three decades. Positions that are taken range from cosmopolitanism (mainly by intellectuals in Netherlands, France, and Germany) to multiculturalism (e.g. Sweden, UK).

In the past decade, an old argument that came from institutional theaters was a claim that actors of color are not trained or professional enough and that they cannot speak the language. The theater leaders try to impose their limited views of the issues related to a multicultural society. In November 2007, Oslo Nye's Artistic Director Svein Sturla Hungnes unintentionally came off as quite patronizing in an *Aftenposten* article when he discussed the dilemma of not being able to find an appropriate ethnic talent pool when looking for actors for his theater's production of *Elektra*. Hungnes continued to state the difficulty of casting options from a small talent pool when he said, "they are a bit more reserved in their expression and more refined." The word "they" appears to stick out condescendingly. It appears that Hungnes is saying that the quality of the casting pool is too low and that "they" cannot act "unrefined" enough. Subsequently, the role was given to white Norwegian actress, Pia Tjelta. Did Tjelta win the part because she was able to act "less refined"? Hungnes went on to say that "we found no one else like her" (Aubert, *Aftenposten*). I would have to ask where was the beautiful and talented Lavleen Kaur who garnered rave reviews in the Oslo Nye's previous production of "Bollywood Ibsen?" On second thought, I would have to say Lavleen would have been "too refined."

In many ways, the non-traditional casting of actors of color should not be an issue at all. How can theaters agonize over whether ethnic persons

can participate fully in productions when they are a full, active, and influential part of the Norwegian society? The state of Norwegian theater is such that producers worry about whether non-traditional casting will violate or change a play or will make a "political" statement. But isn't a play with an all-white Norwegian cast (which isn't about race issues or a specific culture) also making such a statement for the contemporary Norwegian society? Are plays that don't deal with race or similar issues so fragile as to be unable to accommodate artists of all ethnicities, physical capabilities, or genders? It is quite an indictment of the frailness of Norwegian creativity if they cannot. I would also argue that if opportunities for actors of color opened up, these opportunities could well make a significant impact in Norwegian cultural life.

The feeling that is perpetuated by the theater leaders is that audiences will be offended by the idea that a classical Norwegian drama—for instance, one by Ibsen—that features non-whites in particular roles might be offensive to their audiences. From an American point of view, the problem I always had with this is that it makes an assumption about the intelligence level of the audience that is not always borne out. It appears that casting decisions are made from a business standpoint, and a perception has been allowed to exist that assumes that because the majority of people who subscribe to these institutional theaters are white Norwegians, they will be offended by such casting.

It is very important to look at the role of theater and art in Norwegian culture, where the creators of the material perceive themselves as serving and maintaining tradition, or setting an agenda for the community based on their analysis of the its present condition. Within that context, it is very important for the Norwegian theater to move to a place where people can rehearse the reality that Norway has become a very complex demographic spread of peoples. There is no better place for this work to take place than in the theater. I am not talking about where one goes to the theater and sees one actor of color in an all-white cast. I say, what is that? Tokenism! It is a big job to do, but if Norwegians are to have a theater that truly represents Norway, an aggressive policy of getting an audience to the theater that is going to respond is required. Without a multicultural audience, it is really hard to get a multicultural theater to look like anything but a novelty act.

The institutional theaters of Norway should take the responsibility to prepare and train the culture. Norwegian artistic directors have the responsibility to bring their audiences to follow a vision, that is, the choice of plays, the way they are done, whether they are realistic or not. There should be more experiments that will stand solidly on their feet and say to people: don't be afraid. The audience comes to the theater to pretend, to make believe. They don't really believe that that guy up on stage is a Medieval Dane who happens to speak blank verse English.

Why is it not a goal in Norway to develop more inclusive theatrical visions? There are those who would say that in the Norwegian character.

the unofficial culturally embedded law of Janteloven promotes the middle—mediocrity. Every Norwegian is well familiar with Janteloven. Janteloven [Jante Law] was a concept created in the early twentieth century to preserve social stability and uniformity in the community. A citizen is not to be too high above or too far below others socially and economically. Looked at another way, Janteloven can be contagious, preventing Norwegians from fulfilling their potential and relegating their brightest to second place. Norway is at the forefront of progressive attitudes towards an array of social matters. Yet, the Janteloven mentality exists as a reactionary force that appears to be the natural opponent of this.

In 2001, the debate about casting to reflect the diversity of Norwegian society was continued and pressure was put on the Norsk kulturråd [Norwegian Cultural Council] to investigate the matter. In February, a conference was presented by the British Council in collaboration with Norsk kulturråd and the Arts Council of England. This conference, *New Stages*, was a joint initiative to address the need to re-visit and revise policy and practice within the performing arts scene in Norway with regards to developing projects to explore cultural diversity. Before the conference, Khalid Salimi stated that “seeking diversity in art in itself is neither new, nor should it be astonishing. But since ‘diversity’ has happened to be synonymized with ethnicity and colour, the discussion, unfortunately, has become racialized” (Brahmachari 5). Using Britain as a model, questions were raised and debated about the casting of actors of color in Norway, and not least what the consequences and responsibilities resulting from the conference should amount to. Again, unfortunately for the artists of color in Norway, no visible change occurred.

Another controversy concerning actors of color on an institutional stage in Norway occurred in December 2001. Mellika Melani, a bi-racial Swedish actress of Moroccan and Swedish parentage was cast in the role of Viola in the National Theater’s production of Shakespeare’s *Helligtrekonger-aften* [*Twelfth Night*]. In the newspaper *Morgenord* Ruth Krefting Enger wrote, “The National Theatre har aldri brukt innvandrere i hovedroller in annet en gjestespill. Mellika kan bli døraoner både på National og generelt i norsk teater.” [“The National Theater has never used immigrants in lead roles other than in guest performances. Mellika can open doors both at the National and in Norwegian theater in general.”] When asked if she was uncomfortable because of this responsibility, she responded, “I feel like I am under a microscope in Norway. In Sweden, we do not have issues of discrimination against immigrants in the theatre. When I was in theatre school, there were three students of color in my class. There are many opportunities with different kinds of theatre groups in Sweden. Actors of color are employed by Dramaten [Royal National Theatre] and other theatres in Sweden.” When Melani was cast in *Helligtrekonger-aften*, her ethnic characteristics were used to highlight the fact that Viola/Cesario was a foreigner in a strange land. When Viola is washed up on shore after the shipwreck, she is accosted by immigration authorities and questioned about her ethnic heritage. Many

of my Norwegian colleagues thought that the audience was hit over the head with this theme of immigration throughout the entire production.

Nordic Black Theater (NBT), established in Oslo in 1991, is particularly directed at Third World and immigrant artists. Nordic Black Theater’s mission is to make artists of color visible on its stage. The students are a multicultural group that focuses on alternative forms of theatrical expression of movement, dance, and voice. At the end of their two-year training at NBT, students receive a certificate. The catch is that the institutional theaters do not recognize NBT’s training as legitimate actor training. Nordic Blacks’ Artistic Director, Cliff Moustache, has repeatedly been quoted saying, “The Norwegian theater community should not complain about the small talent pool if that talent pool is not properly cultivated. One has to ask why Statens teaterhøgskolen [State Theater Academy] has only accepted a few students of color in the whole of its fifty years existence?”

From 1991 to 2001, NBT has presented a total of 30 professional productions. Professor Anne-Britt Gran argues, “these performances have been totally ignored by the critics. One of Norway’s largest non-subscription newspapers—*Dagbladet*—has never reviewed NBT. The other newspapers have only reviewed between one and five productions out of the 30” (Gran 94). A principle impression is that the critics expect black actors to be able to dance and sing brilliantly. Moustache commented that “critics use terms such as: astonishingly multicultural, strange and vital, beautiful dancing, colourful, hypnotic rhythms, to categorize performances at NBT to confirm the stereotypes of the black as the dancing, playing, authentic, energetic and colorful person” (Gran *ibid*). Gran states, “these reviewers are not necessarily intentionally racist. On the contrary, they are written with a supportive and sympathetic attitude towards the NBT performances. The problem is that the performances are judged on the basis of Western standards of art and different cultural expressions are viewed through Western stereotypes” (Gran *ibid*). The public experiences these performances as exotic, and it is only “difference” that is appreciated.

For a century, the argument in the Ministry of Culture has been that what is spent on culture is spent to protect Norwegian identity. In retrospect, it can be said that Earle Hyman was a great world artist who was in Norway before immigrants were threatening. Some of the same generation that acclaimed Hyman probably complain about the Vietnamese neighbors and how they don’t tidy up their gardens!

Norwegian socialism in the arts has turned into the ugly patronizing of people of colour. Actors of color are put into molds by the powers that be. Hannah Kvam, member of the theater group *Queendom*, says these molds are “a limited view of the issues in dealing with a multicultural society.” In the theater, as in everyday life, it is the actual color of a person’s skin that is the basis for exclusion. The challenge is for the imagery of the stage, film, and television to educate Norwegian people about different cultures and ethnicities. In my view, that challenge is essential.

Certainly, the initial efforts to incorporate non-traditional casting and disenfranchised artists fully into the Norwegian performing arts will seem highly conscious. It is a new way of thinking. When the cultivation of playwrights who write parts, perhaps deliberately, for all kinds of ethnic or mixed groups begins, then finally a point will be reached where the best talent can play any part. But as these artists become part of the fabric of Norwegian theater, film, and television work, such conscious decision-making will fade away. These artists will have become an established, productive part of the culture, and they will be recognized as artists first. In so doing, the Norwegian performing arts will have been transformed and the next level of creativity will begin.

Traditionally, Norway has managed to project an image of being a tolerant, liberal, and humane society. It has projected this image not only to the world, but to its own people, constantly propagating its own humanism and virtues. The support it has given to suffering people in the Third World, the international movement for solidarity, the fight against apartheid in South Africa, and the condemnation of the Vietnam War and the USA's unjust and discriminatory treatment of blacks has won it world-wide respect and recognition. An example of this country's humanitarianism is the Nobel Committee's selection of Laureates to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. How can a country that is known for such humanitarianism deny the development of its artists of color the changing cityscape?

Norway is a young, independent nation-state and a late comer in attracting immigrants from countries outside of Europe. Norway was originally colonized by Denmark; it then became part of Sweden, until it gained its independence in 1905. In contrast to migrants to older European countries such as Great Britain and France, the immigrants who started coming to Norway in the late 1960s had no colonial relationship with the country. Norway was more of an accidental choice where people could hope to better their economic situation.

Even though the growing presence of people of color has occurred within the past 40 years, injustices and discriminatory practices against ethnic minorities have been and are still a part of Scandinavian history. In the aftermath of Anders Breivik's terrorist attacks, which left 77 victims dead in Oslo and Utøya on the afternoon of July 22, 2011, many envisaged a new and more positive debate on a multicultural society shaping the new century's cultural landscape in Norway. The Norwegian prime minister's plea to meet the terrorist's acts with more decency and openness was televised world wide, and he was praised for urging people not to respond to violence with violence.

Before the prime minister and minister for justice officially revealed that the terrorist was a white Christian Norwegian, a terrorism researcher had suggested that Islamic terrorists were behind the attack, and reports of Muslims being harassed in the streets of Oslo spread through the Internet. Norwegian Muslims interviewed in the following days revealed that they had

been terrified by the thought of what would happen in Norway if Islamists had been behind the terrorist acts.

Now, more than four years later, it is difficult to say whether the terrible events of July 22 have contributed to an enduring change in trust levels in Norway or to gauge the extent to which they have influenced the Norwegian debate about immigration, religion, and integration. The Norwegian mask of decency and humanism has been pulled off by the presence of non-European, non-Christian immigrants and refugees. What we see now is the ugly face of racism, the growing popularity of right-wing movements. After July 22, the image of Norway as innocent and different in a broader European context was put under scrutiny. Breivik's manifesto and his contacts with racist and Islamophobic networks across Europe were evidence of the transnational adherence to such ideas. The terrorist acts brought to the surface the existence of new transnational networks fostering nationalist political ideologies in which Muslims, multiculturalism, and politicians seen as advocating multiculturalism were depicted as the main enemies.

Many of those who were born of immigrant parents and grew up in Norway are now young adults. Several of them have made positive contributions to society as politicians, debaters, writers, program leaders in television, and so on. These young people speak Norwegian without an accent and, consequently, can scarcely be considered as members of an alien culture who "can't speak the language" by those who oppose immigration.

As of January 2011, immigrants (including the second generation) composed 12.2% of the Norwegian population, and 28% of the people of Oslo were immigrants. The Pakistani minority, which was among the first and largest of the groups to arrive in the late 1960s, has the largest contemporary group of second-generation youth (Statistics of Norway).

The theater artist of color in Norway must be granted the same artistic freedom as the white Norwegian artist. In 1996–1997 Norsk kulturråd remitted a report to the Norwegian Parliament [Stortinget] to "promote multicultural expression under previously established schemes in art and culture, and to enhance opportunities for minorities to develop and participate in artistic and cultural life, on their own terms" (Brahmachari 7). In the next five to 10 years, we may see new Norwegian playwrights of color whose voices start to be heard from the institutional stages of Norway. The legacy of Earle Hyman must not be forgotten.

How can a country that propagates its own humanism and virtues, projects an image to the world and its people of being a tolerant, liberal, and humane society deny the development of its artists of color? The physical landscape of theater is the place to explore such issues—a space in which the very nature of *identity* and multicultural citizenship can be examined by artists. Multicultural theater within a changing Norwegian ethnic landscape opens up avenues of ethnic and cultural diversity as it demands of the audience that they possibly re-think their socially conditioned ideas of what constitutes their landscape of identity, the way they

live their lives, the ways they understand the world, and the ways theater can potentially intervene.

The new landscape in the production of new work or in the revisioning of classic work can facilitate an artistically productive negotiation with the power of place. Indeed, the very nature of who we are must surely be judged by the changing ethnic landscapes.

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