Henrik Ibsen’s plays came at a pivotal moment in late nineteenth-century European modernity. They engaged his public through a strategic use of metaphors of house and home, which resonated with experiences of displacement, philosophical homelessness, and exile. The most famous of these metaphors – embodied by the titles of his plays *A Doll’s House*, *Pillars of Society*, and *The Master Builder* – have entered into mainstream Western thought in ways that mask the full force of the reversals Ibsen performed on notions of architectural space. Analyzing literary and performance-related reception materials from Ibsen’s lifetime, Mark Sandberg concentrates on the interior dramas of the playwright’s prose-play cycle, drawing also on his selected poems. Sandberg’s close readings of texts and cultural commentary present the immediate context of the plays, provide new perspectives on them for international readers, and reveal how Ibsen became a master of the modern uncanny.

**Mark B. Sandberg** holds the position of Professor, jointly appointed in the Department of Scandinavian and the Department of Film and Media at the University of California, Berkeley. He is currently President of the Ibsen Society of America and a member of the International Ibsen Committee, and is also a past President of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study. His research focuses on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century visual culture, including work in theater history, early cinema, paracinematic media and entertainment, and Scandinavian cultural history. He is the author of *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (2003) and numerous articles on international silent film, the plays of Henrik Ibsen, and other topics in Scandinavian literary and cultural history.
IBSEN’S HOUSES

Architectural Metaphor and the Modern Uncanny

MARK B. SANDBERG

University of California, Berkeley

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Contents

List of figures vi
Acknowledgments viii
Note on the text x

Introduction 1

1 Ibsen’s uncanny 18
   Ibsen’s unhomely 20
   The lure of hygge 25
   Christmas hygge 35
   “The master of unhygge” 44

2 Façades unmasked 56
   The model home 60
   Doll housing 68

3 Home and house 85
   True homes 87
   Mere homes 103
   Marginal occupants 115
   The resilience of home 122

4 The tenacity of architecture 130
   Ownership disputes 134
   Brand’s church 146
   Renovation and razing 153
   An architecture of forgetting 168

Conclusion 176

Notes 191
Bibliography 215
Index 223
Figures


7 *Dukkestue* used in the Norwegian Folk Museum’s display of “The Doll’s House 1879” interior in the *Wessels gate* 15 exhibit. Dollhouse created by a watchmaker in Kristiansand in the 1860s. Dimensions: H 53.5” × W 34.5” × D 15”. Source: Norwegian Folk Museum. Photographer: Anne-Lise Reinsfelt.
List of figures

8 Swedish _dockskåp_ from the 1860s–70s, from the display of dollhouses at the Nordic Museum. Dimensions: H 50” × W 44” × D 14.5”. Source: Nordic Museum (Stockholm). Photographer: Peter Segemark.


13 Betty Hennings posed in a studio actress portrait as Hilde Wangel in hiking clothes, as described in Act Two of _The Master Builder_. Production: Royal Theater (Copenhagen), prem. March 8, 1893. Owner: Theater Collection, National Library of Norway. (Photo is likely not original to the Daniel George Nyblin studio, whose photo frame surrounds the image.)


15 Close-up of the base of the Pillar of Shame. Author photo.

Acknowledgments

It has been a privilege in working on this book to have such an interesting ongoing conversation with so many insightful colleagues, talented researchers, and skilled librarians working within the field of Ibsen studies. I have received significant support from the Centre for Ibsen Studies in Oslo from the very beginning research phase of this project, and my thanks go to those who hosted me there during on-site visits (especially Frode Helland and Astrid Sæther) and to the center’s friendly and knowledgeable librarians, Máriá Faskerti and Randi Meyer, who gave me access to their substantial resources while I was there and fielded my follow-up questions about materials from abroad. Parallel to the life-span of this project, there was also a really remarkable expansion of resources for Ibsen studies overall, surely one of the most impressive in any author-based field of research. A new critical edition of Ibsen’s complete works appeared both in print and online; the Ibsen Centre’s extensive online bibliography of secondary literature continued to be developed; and under the capable guidance of Jens-Morten Hansen at the National Library in Oslo, the Ibsen website project (http://ibsen.nb.no) has developed into what now is surely one of the most ambitious repertoire, manuscript, and reception resources for the study of any world author. All of this has been an embarrassment of riches for researchers, and when I say that this project would not have been possible in the way I have done it without this rapidly developing and remarkable infrastructure, it is not the least bit hyperbolic. New kinds of intellectual overview and synthesis have been made possible by these powerful research tools, and my thanks go out to all of those in Norway who have worked so diligently to bring these initiatives to completion.

In addition to these material and digital resources, personal conversations were of course crucial to the development of my thinking as well. I am especially grateful to those who read this manuscript at different stages and commented so carefully on it, including Karin Sanders, Joan Templeton, Lisbeth P. Wærp, and Linda Rugg. Anonymous reviewers have also
provided valuable feedback, as have many other colleagues who have given their reactions to various presentations and intermediate written versions of this material along the way, including Narve Fulsås and others. Thanks go also to my Berkeley colleagues Karin Sanders and Anne Nesbet for cheerleading at a particularly difficult and crucial time. I am also grateful for the input of my Berkeley students to ongoing conversations about Ibsen in my classrooms, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

In researching the images for this book, I received special help on the Scandinavian history of dollhouses from Erika Ravne Scott, curator of the toy collection at the Norwegian Folk Museum, and from Ulf Hamilton at the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. It was a pleasure to be working with such knowledgeable museum professionals again in connection with this book, as I had done earlier on other projects. Trine Næss at the National Library in Oslo took the time to discuss the particulars of relevant pictures in its Ibsen-related theater collection and was a valuable source of information.

Portions of this manuscript rework and expand materials previously published elsewhere, though in substantially different form. These articles include “The Architecture of Forgetting,” Ibsen Studies 7.1 (2007), 4–21; “Doll Housing,” in Sanda Tomescu (ed.), Henrik Ibsen, special issue of Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Philologia (Cluj, Romania; November 2006), 53–60; and “Ibsen and the Mimetic Home of Modernity,” Ibsen Studies 2 (Spring 2001), 32–58.

My thanks go also to my sons, remarkable individuals all, who have grown into adulthood along with this book. All along the way, they have enriched my thinking about house and home and provided me with good reasons to argue back from experience against Ibsen’s deep skepticism of domestic life, while still appreciating the need for new forms of living to develop with each generation. And finally, my deepest appreciation goes to Betts for her patience, good humor, and compassion; our own common adventure in “home making” has given me the leverage I needed to work on this topic.
Preliminary note to text

There are two authoritative editions of Ibsen’s writings, the Samlede Verker edition (the so-called Hundreårsværtgave, or Centenary Edition), published in 1928–57, and the more recent comprehensive Henrik Ibsens Skrifter (Henrik Ibsen’s Writings), published by Aschehoug in collaboration with the University of Oslo in 2005–10. The latter is used here as the default source for cited material from Ibsen’s plays, poems, and letters and is the platform used for my translations into English as well. Since the references to Henrik Ibsens Skrifter are frequent, they will be abbreviated as “HIS” with volume and page number in both the notes and the bibliography. Moreover, since each volume comes in two parts, one for text and one for commentary, that information will be indicated as well (e.g., as 7.1 or 7.2). The earlier Hundreårsværtgave edition of Ibsen’s works has not been made obsolete by the new critical edition, however, and individual volumes will occasionally be cited here in shortened references, especially for information about play drafts and for textual and historical commentary at appropriate junctures.

Because of space considerations, it is not possible to provide full original citation material in Norwegian, the other Scandinavian languages, and German throughout the main text. However, since the argument here often revolves around nuance of usage and repeated patterns of discourse and metaphor, there are many moments where original terminology is essential and has been provided in brackets or in footnotes as a courtesy to those familiar with those languages. This seems especially important when the primary-source material might be less familiar. I have tried to keep interruptions of this sort to a minimum to facilitate reading flow, but I see some original language as necessary to the project.