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978-1-107-03392-4 - Ibsen's Houses: Architectural Metaphor and the Modern Uncanny

Mark B. Sandberg

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IBSEN'S HOUSES

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.

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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 Babeş-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.

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Preliminary note to text

There are two authoritative editions of Ibsen's writings, the *Samlede Verker* edition (the so-called *Hundreårsutgave*, 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 *Hundreårsutgave* 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.