

*John Lingard*

## **To Elgeseter and Beyond: Ibsen, History, and the Inner Stage**

During the first half of his career — from 1850 to the early 1870s — Ibsen was occupied with what could be called the matter of Rome and the matter of Norway. A series of saga plays, ballad plays, historical tragedies, and dramatic poems, for the most part concerned with Viking and medieval Norway, are framed by two Roman plays, *Catiline* (1950) and *Emperor and Galilean* (1873). Then, with characteristic abruptness, Ibsen abandoned history as a source of dramatic material and entered what he had called “the misty world of the present” (*The Oxford Ibsen* III, 38)<sup>1</sup> to write, after a few years’ silence, his great cycle of modern plays.

The curious dichotomy in Ibsen’s dramatic output has been vividly described in Rolf Fjelde’s introduction to the modern cycle. Fjelde compares the complete plays to a town with an Old Quarter and a New:

The salient feature of the Old Quarter ... is its diversity of styles; we pass first a Roman villa, then several gnarled stave churches, moated towers and archaic guildhalls in the Viking manner, interspersed with a ruined cabaret, a rustic summer-house and a gay contemporary honeymoon hotel ... and there are more imposing works to come: two large ducal palaces, one austere and forbidding, but impressively powerful in conception, the other baroque and spaciouly fantastic, with pennants flying; beyond these a small clapboard civic information booth; then a vast Romanesque cathedral with, like Chartres, two contrasting unequal spires. Next we cross a brief arid open space, the width of a couple of vacant lots, and suddenly arrive in what appears to be a model town of virtually identical row houses that extend to the city line. (x)

In terms of Fjelde’s architectural metaphor, this discussion is about the Old Quarter and the open space: that is to say, it is concerned with Ibsen the national-historical or national-romantic dramatist, and with his reasons for abandoning history. My point of theatrical reference is

the inner stage and the way Ibsen uses it to embody different versions of the past. The term “inner stage” is often used of the putative “discovery space” in Elizabethan theatres. Ibsen’s inner stage, however, is more akin to the palace of Greek theatre as we imagine it from our reading of the surviving tragedies. In the plays of the Old Quarter, the inner stage is usually an implied upstage interior — a chapel or hall, for example — which can be entered or left through practicable doors. A significant variation on the “architectural” interior is a “natural” upstage area such as a hillside or forest. The most useful Greek analogies to these types of inner stage are the palace and sacred grove in Sophocles’s Theban plays. Whether built by man or natural forces, Ibsen’s inner stage is invariably associated with lost religious, national, or personal value: with what J. Hillis Miller has called the “time of harmony” that “is always past” (215). The inner stage is, or can be made into, a shrine, whereas the downstage area is and remains a secular or neutral space. The conflict between past and present, that is so persistent in Ibsen’s drama, is, then, represented scenically by two areas: one visible and close to the audience — the present; the other more or less hidden from the audience’s view — the past.

Ibsen’s first significant inner stage is an “*old-style log house*” (OII, 207) in Act I of his fairy-tale comedy, *St. John’s Night* (1852). This “broken down old shack” (OII, 208), inhabited by the heroine’s wise grandfather and a Puck-like *nisse* or goblin, stands for what Ibsen, according to Halvdan Koht, felt at the time to be “the deepest truth in life, the truth that is revealed only in folklore” (Koht 80). The log house is placed *upstage* of “*a big house in the finest modern style*” (OII, 207). This immediate scenic contrast between past and present is enhanced by the older building’s gothic associations. When Mrs. Berg, the owner of both houses, remarks that the older one should have been “pulled down long ago,” her daughter Juliane replies:

Oh, but that would have been a shame, mother! That old house reminds one so vividly of those parsonages in Swedish novels. It’s probably haunted by goblins from the old days ... and there’ll be some beautiful young girl with an idyllic name like Thekla or Linda or something like that. (OII, 208)

In the second act, the setting is a forest path, and the upstage building is replaced by “*a rounded hilltop on which the remains of a bonfire periodically flares up*” (OII, 234). This hilltop will shortly be used for a spectacular transformation scene:

*Soft background music. The hill opens and reveals a large brilliantly lit hall. The mountain king sits on a high throne in the background. Elves and mountain fairies dance round him. (OII, 238)*

The vision is seen by those sensitive to "the truth that is revealed only in folklore." To the insensitive, including a self-proclaimed folklore expert who asserts his "primitive Self" by wearing a sheath knife and spelling phonetically (OII, 231), the fairies appear as drunken revellers dancing round the bonfire (OII, 238).

The dialogue and plotting in *St. John's Night* are immature, and Ibsen would not allow it to be printed on the grounds that the play was "unrelated" to the rest of his work (OI I, 686). Despite this pronouncement by the author, I would argue that the inner stage technique is already quite strong, and that log house and hillside are significant archetypes for Ibsen's later versions of the inner stage.

His next play, *Lady Inger of Østråt* (1854), is much more technically assured, though Ibsen's visual sense is still ahead of his ear for effective dialogue. Turning now from folklore to history, Ibsen selects a crucial evening in 1528 which, in the play at least, offers Norway her last chance to escape the "four hundred year night" (McFarlane, 2) of Danish rule.<sup>2</sup> The story of Lady Inger is doubly tragic since she is trapped by circumstances into ordering the murder of her own son and betraying her country. In selecting a national-historical subject of this kind, Ibsen was very much a child of his time. Commenting on *Lady Inger*, Koht points out:

There was a growing concern in the 1850s with the question of why Norway had lost her independence in the late Middle Ages. In every field scholars sought bridges between medieval and modern Norway .... To discover the nation that had existed in the past and to make it live again in the future became the quest of historians, scholars, and men of letters. They felt their work was a matter of life and death for the whole people, a question of its very will to exist. (85)

In *Lady Inger*, "the nation that had existed in the past" is enshrined in the knights' hall (*riddersalen*) which, in the first two acts, is the play's inner stage. When the curtain rises for Act One, we see:

*A room at Østråt. At the back through an open door, the knights' hall can be seen, lit by a faint moonlight that gleams intermittently through an arched window set deep in the opposite wall. (Samlede Verker I, 95)<sup>3</sup>*

In an unusual variation on his normal inner stage technique, Ibsen moves the action *into* this hall for the last three acts. The stage

directions for Act Three suggest that the hall is a combination of armory and portrait gallery:

*The roof is supported by massive, free-standing wooden pillars which, like the walls, are hung with a wide variety of weapons and armour. Pictures of saints, knights and ladies hang in long rows round the hall. (SV I, 116)*

In a rhythm of action that will recur, with variations, throughout the later plays, this national shrine is first violated (by the removal of weapons for an abortive uprising against the Danes), and then becomes a place of a sacrifice. In the last act, Lady Inger, now half-crazed by an unbearable conflict between maternal love and patriotic duty, mounts the high-seat to await the coronation of her son, Nils Stensson, as king of a free Norway. She is horribly deluded. The singing that draws near the hall is not, as Lady Inger believes, a coronation anthem (SV I, 145) but Nils Stensson's funeral hymn. A sinister case of mistaken identity has led to his execution at Lady Inger's command. His coffin is brought into the hall, and Lady Inger collapses weeping over her son's body as the curtain falls.

The most obvious technical advance in *Lady Inger* is Ibsen's successful integration of a powerfully visualized inner stage area with the action of the whole play. The "modern Ibsen" might well have pushed this advance one step further by eliminating that somewhat clumsy move into the hall itself. The moonlit attic of *The Wild Duck* (1884), which is in many ways the modern "descendant" of Lady Inger's *riddersalen*, is stronger for being glimpsed, not shown. In G. Wilson Knight's words, "it is as though the whole universe were packed into this loft: space and time, life and death, forests and sea, animals, civilization, and art" (55-56); and the illusion of symbolic compression is sustained precisely by keeping the attic as an *inner* stage.

For some years after *Lady Inger*, Ibsen's work tends to fall into the category of ballad or saga play rather than historical drama. He remained, however, an enthusiastic student of history. Referring later to the 1850s he wrote: "I was driven to steep myself in the literature and history of the Norwegian Middle Ages .... I tried my best to enter into the spirit of the time, its customs and habits, its thinking and feeling and modes of expression" (qtd. in Koht, 86). The reward of this sympathetic research was *The Pretenders*, Ibsen's first masterpiece, and arguably the finest historical tragedy since Schiller's *Wallenstein* (1799). In this dramatization of the thirteenth-century power struggle between Haakon Haakonsson and Earl Skule, Ibsen tempered what

James Walter McFarlane terms “the Norwegian myth” of “vanished glory” (*OII*, 1-2) by exposing atavism as the protagonist’s tragic flaw. A strong pretender to the throne of Norway, Earl Skule is betrayed by his own allegiance to Viking tribalism, “the old saga” (*SVI*, 295). The play’s action centres on Skule’s painful unlearning of this saga to the point where he is ready to sacrifice himself for “the future saga” (*SVI*, 295) of a united Norway.

Like *Lady Inger*, *The Pretenders* opens in front of a sacred inner stage, in this case the Church of Christ in Bergen:

*The church is in the background, its main door facing the audience. In the foreground to the left stand Haakon Haakonsson ... and several noblemen and chieftains. Directly opposite them stand Earl Skule ... and [his] followers. (SVI, 255)*

This tableau is accompanied by the sound of church bells and psalm-singing from the church where Haakon’s mother Inga is “holding the bar of red-hot iron” to prove her son’s legitimacy and right to the throne. As if miraculously, her hands are unmarked by the iron, but Ibsen makes it clear that miracles and faith are confined to the sacred inner stage which represents not just another space but another time. Even when Inga emerges from the church to display her unmarked hands, she fails to bridge the gap between the sacred and secular worlds. Her sacrificial gesture is cruelly ignored, while the two factions exchange threats and insults: the prelude to a prolonged civil war.

A symbolic use of architecture is not confined to the opening scene:

Imposing Gothic settings dominate the stage as the action moves from thirteenth-century Bergen to Oslo and finally to the medieval coronation town of Nidaros. Church portals and palace interiors provide a visually impressive backcloth to Ibsen’s exploration of political jealousy and intrigue at a crucial point in Norway’s history. (Thomas, 38)

As David Thomas suggests, there is an alternation between secular interiors (Fjelde’s “archaic guildhalls in the Viking manner”) and scenes acted downstage of sacred facades. Arguably the strongest scenes are those which use a church or chapel as an inner stage. In Bishop Nikolas’s splendidly gothic death scene, for example, Nikolas dies near a chapel where masses are being sung for his soul. Before his death, he succeeds in tricking Skule into continued doubt about Haakon’s legitimacy, a move which the evil cleric hopes will create a “*perpetuum mobile*” of faction in Norway’s saga (*SVI*, 281). At the moment of his death, so the terrified monks report, a satanic voice cries out, “We have him!” and all the candles in the chapel are blown

out (*SV I*, 284). This humorously sinister scene ends appropriately with the chaplain's words: "The Bishop asked for seven extra masses; — I think it will be safest if we make it fourteen" (*SV I*, 285).

An equally spectacular violation of the sacred will takes place in Act Five. For some time now, Skule has had the upper hand in the war with Haakon, but even in victory, he is plagued by doubt and superstition, just as Bishop Nikolas had planned. A particular obsession with Skule is the need to be proclaimed king, in public, before St. Olaf's shrine: "Next time I come to Nidaros, the shrine must come out; it shall stand under the open sky, if I have to reduce St. Olaf's Church to rubble" (*SV I*, 296). It is, however, Skule's son Peter who risks damnation by carrying out "the deed":

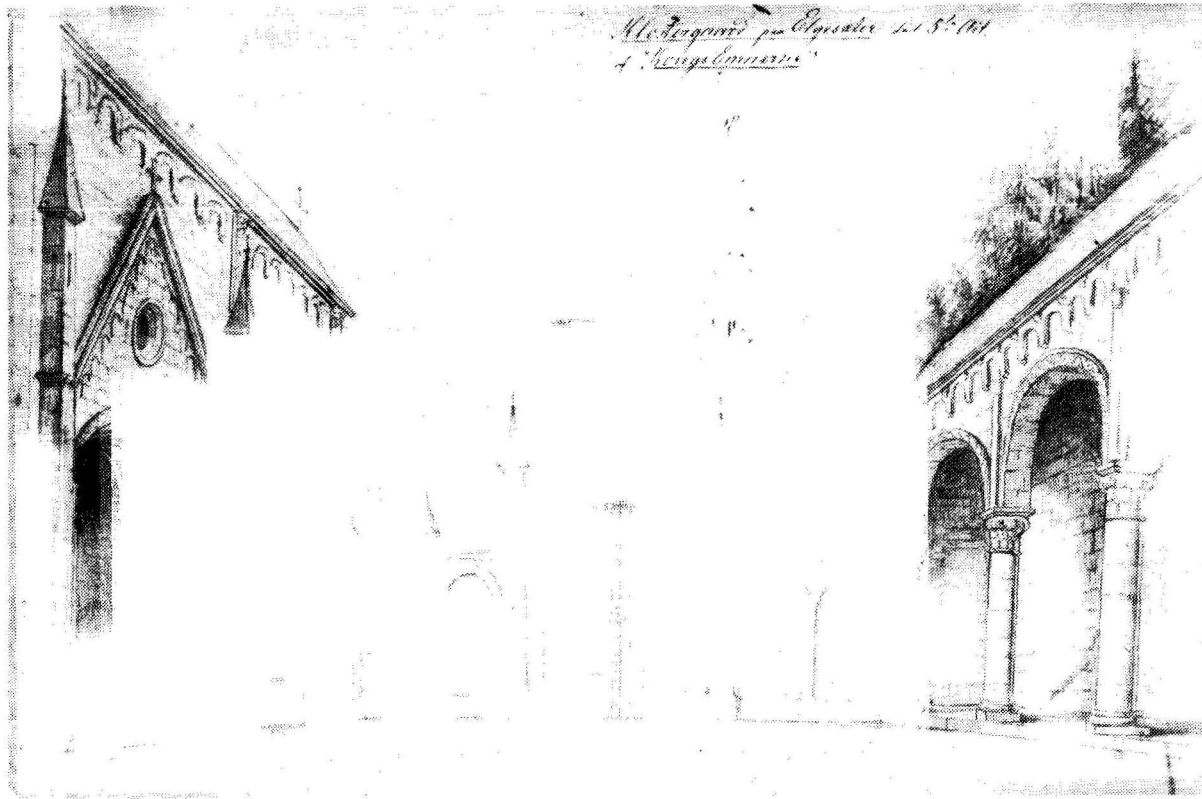
PETER: I had to do it. No man's loyalty can be trusted until you are legally acclaimed. I begged, I pleaded with the monks; they would not help me. Then I broke down the church door; no one dared to follow me. I leaped onto the high altar, grasped the shrine by its handle and braced my knees against it; it was as if some mysterious power gave me superhuman strength. The shrine broke loose. I dragged it after me down through the church while the curses whistled like a storm high up in the arches. I dragged it out of the church. Everyone scattered, clearing me a path. When I reached the centre of the palace square, the handle broke; here it is!

KING SKULE: [*quietly, terrorstricken.*] Sacrilege! (*SV I*, 306-7)

Peter's sacrilege is almost certainly viewed by Ibsen as a type of that violation of the past — that attempt to drag meaning from history by force — which he had come to see as the central danger in national-romanticism.<sup>4</sup> For Skule, the sight of Peter holding up the handle broken from Norway's most sacred shrine must appear as a shocking mirror-image of his own bad worship of the past. Skule is understandably terrorstricken by the deed. There is a clear modulation from the melodrama of the son's narrative to tragic recognition in the father's quietly spoken, "Sacrilege!"

The tide of civil war now turns and Skule flees for sanctuary to the convent at Elgeseter, above Nidaros. As he travels there, he is met by the ghost of Bishop Nikolas who makes a last bid for Skule's soul. But Skule is now fortified against damnation with an inner certainty. After the baffled ghost dwindles into the fog among the trees, Skule says: "Now I know the way myself, both to Elgeseter and beyond" (*SV I*, 312).

The play's last scene is set in:



*Design by P.F. Wergmann for the last scene of The Pretenders,  
Christiana Theatre, 1864. (Royal Theatre Library)*

*The convent courtyard at Elgeseter. To the [audience's] left is the chapel with its entrance from the courtyard. The windows are lit up. Along the other side of the courtyard are some lower buildings. The convent wall is in the background with a strong gate which is closed. It is a clear moonlit night. (SV I, 312)*

A beautifully executed design for this scene by P.F. Wergmann from 1864 has been preserved in Denmark's Royal Theatre Library.<sup>5</sup> Frederick J. and Lise-Lone Marker are right in claiming that Wergmann's drawing "seems in perfect harmony with the carefully visualised directions of Ibsen's text — itself directly inspired by the playwright's reading of ancient Norwegian history" (7). The design is helpful in two important ways. First it shows more clearly than Ibsen's stage directions a deliberate displacement of the play's obvious sacred inner stage — the chapel — and a refocusing of audience attention on the convent gates which are placed firmly upstage centre in a high wall. Secondly, Wergmann has enhanced Ibsen's concept by sketching in the beginning of a high forest wilderness beyond the convent walls. The scenic rhetoric of both dramatist and designer points to a new inner stage technique based on a creative tension between architecture and nature, a tension that also informs Skule's speech to his sister, Sigrid, and Margrete, his daughter and Haakon's wife:

There are men created to live, and men created to die. My will always took me out of the path shown me by God. That's why I never saw the way clearly until now. I have forfeited my quiet life at home; I cannot win that back again. My sins against Haakon, those I can atone for, by freeing him from a king's duty that would separate him from the dearest thing he owns. The men from Nidaros are outside; I will not wait for King Haakon! My own men are near; they will not relinquish their purpose, so long as I am alive; if they find me here, I can't save your child, Margrete. — Look, look up! The glowing sword that was drawn against me in the sky is growing pale and vanishing. — God has spoken, and I have understood him, and his anger is stilled. It is not in the shrine at Elgeseter that I must cast myself down and beg for mercy, from an earthly king; — it is the great church with its arch of stars that I must enter and beg mercy for all my life's deeds. (SV I, 316)

As Skule thinks his way through the pattern of his life to national martyrdom, we realize why Ibsen has chosen to shift his audience's attention away from the sacred to the natural/secular inner stage. History, setting, tragic recognition, and artistic breakthrough are all held in balance at this moment in the play. Behind Skule's understanding that he must not force Haakon to break sanctuary in Elgeseter, can be sensed the dramatist's own painfully won freedom from the Norwe-



gian Myth. For both protagonist and playwright, "salvation" lies not in Elgeseter convent on already "consecrated ground" (*SVI*, 313), but beyond. For Ibsen the dramatist, "beyond" would mean first the mountains and forests of Norway, which are explored by Brand and Peer Gynt, and then the "identical row houses" of the modern world. Brand himself will echo Skule when he locks up his new church and tries to lead the congregation "into the great church of life," whose floor is "the green earth, vidda, meadow, and sea and fjord," and whose roof is the sky (*SVII*, 109), words that are also foreshadowed in the dialogue between Sigrid and Skule:

SIGRID: ... [*Pointing to the gates.*] Listen, they are breaking the lock!

KING SKULE: [*Pointing to the chapel.*] Listen, they are singing loudly to God for salvation and peace!

SIGRID: Listen, listen! All the bells in Nidaros are ringing —!

KING SKULE: [*smiling sadly.*] They are ringing a king to his grave.

SIGRID: No, they are ringing in your true coronation now! ... Go in, go into the great church and take the crown of life! [*She rushes into the chapel.*]

[*Singing and bellringing continue.*] (*SVI*, 341)

In compliance with Sigrid's words, Skule now opens the convent gates, and goes out with Peter to face the men of Nidaros, who have come to prove their allegiance to Haakon. As in Greek tragedy, the play's most violent action is not seen on stage:

[*They go out in hand; the gates are closed.*]

A VOICE: Don't aim, don't spare them; — hack them where you can!

KING SKULE'S VOICE: It is dishonourable to deal with chieftains so!  
[*A brief clash of weapons; then the sound of bodies falling to the ground; then silence for a moment.*]

A VOICE: They are both dead! [*The king's trumpeter is heard.*]

ANOTHER VOICE: Here is King Haakon with his men!

.....  
HAAKON: [*stopping.*] There's a corpse in my way!

DAGFINN BONDE: If Haakon Haakonsson wishes to go forward, it must be over the body of Skule Bardsson!

HAAKON: Then, in God's name! [*He steps over the body and enters.*]  
(*SVI*, 317)

Instead of violating already consecrated ground, the chapel, Skule and Peter have consecrated the ground of Norway for Haakon and "the future saga." This means that Haakon, as Dagfinn Bonde tells him in the play's closing moments, "can go to the work of kingship with free hands" (*SVI*, 317).

This reading of the scene should help us reassess Ibsen's abandonment of national-historical drama immediately after creating a masterpiece in the genre. Just as Skule knows he cannot use the chapel for sanctuary, so Ibsen was too strong and too honest a dramatist to re-enter medieval Norway once he had moved his scene to Elgeseter and beyond. In his biography of the dramatist, Michael Meyer writes that from 1864 Ibsen

occupied part of his time in planning a new historical drama to succeed *The Pretenders*; some notes have survived which he copied from history books about Magnus Heineson, a sixteenth-century freebooter from the Faroe Islands who ended his life on the executioner's block. But he never completed or, as far as we know, even began this work. (214)

Halvdan Koht also describes Ibsen "vainly trying to work on the play about Magnus Heineson" (177). Norway-Sweden's betrayal of Denmark after the Prussian invasion shocked Ibsen profoundly, but this *alone* would not explain why as late as 1866 he was still tinkering with the Heineson story (Koht, 204) and finding himself still unable to "make it live again." Equally plausible is the thought that his own Skule and Sigrid were whispering that this was the wrong road. Certainly both political and artistic realism inform his letter of March 22, 1866, to John Greig, concerning *The Pretenders*:

In our own country poetry must, unfortunately, strike into another path now. At present there is really no call or need to reawaken our historical memories. What has occurred in the last two or three years in our country — or rather what has not occurred — sufficiently demonstrates that there is no more connection between the Norwegians of today and those of the great days of old than there is between the Greek pirates of modern times and those ancient Greeks who had courage and faith and strength of will — and therefore the gods too — on their side. (*Letters and Speeches*, 55)

In his chapter on "Ibsen's and Bjørnson's farewell to the national-historical drama," Bjørn Hemmer quotes this letter to Greig and remarks that, after 1864, Ibsen no longer "turns to Norway's past, but goes back to the mythical origins of all mankind" (56).<sup>6</sup> If history has become "a corpse in the cargo" (*SV I*, 400), then the dramatist must look for a hero who, like Brand, will throw a bridge "with a bold human faith/from the flesh to the source of the spirit" (*SV II*, 19), or, like Julian, will seek "the kingdom of the spirit" in a rediscovered Eden (*SV II*, 338). Such a romantic quest is the controlling idea behind *Emperor and Galilean: A World-Historical Play* (1873). Part One, "Caesar's Apostasy," opens at the Easter Vigil in Constantinople. In

the background is the imperial chapel, brilliantly lit, from which we hear a choir praising Christ's victory over the serpent (SVII, 307). But as Brian Johnston demonstrates, music, light, and shrine are ironically contrasted with the downstage world of petty factions, treachery, and fear (236-8). Christian fights Christian outside the chapel, while the emperor Constantius spends divine service plotting the murder of his cousin Gallos, understandably afraid that bloody serpent's eyes will glitter in the communion wine (SV II, 309): a violation of the sacred that prompts Julian's famous pagan revival.

In *The Pretenders*, Ibsen had been able to turn the alternation between "church portals and palace interiors" into a dialectic that is essential to meaning and form. In *Emperor and Galilean*, an analogous juxtaposition of Christian and pagan architecture somehow fails to cohere. In Part Two, "The Emperor Julian," Ibsen's stage directions are so obviously impractical in theatrical terms as to suggest that the *dramatist* has already abandoned his world-historical play, leaving the historian and his scholar-hero to wander for a while among the ruins of antiquity. That such an idea is not wholly fanciful is suggested in two key scenes where a pagan temple is the inner stage. At the end of Act Two, Julian is about to enter the temple of Apollo at Antioch to offer sacrifice. He is, however, prevented by a blind old man, Bishop Maris, who stands Teiresias-like below the temple steps and utters a curse on Julian's paganism:

BISHOP MARIS: [*in a loud voice.*] Be you accursed, Julian the Apostate! Be you accursed, Emperor Julian! The Lord God has spat you out of his mouth! Cursed be your eyes and hands! Cursed be your head and all your deeds! Woe, woe, woe to the apostate! Woe, woe, Woe — [*A hollow rumbling sound is heard. The roof and pillars of the temple start to sway, and are then seen to collapse with a thunderous roar, while the whole building is enveloped in a cloud of dust. The crowd utters screams of terror. Many flee. Others fall to the ground. There is a breathless silence for a moment. The cloud of dust gradually sinks and we see the temple of Apollo in ruins.*] (SV II, 405)

At the end of Act Three (after three more set changes) the scene becomes:

*A moonlit night at the ruined temple of Apollo. The Emperor Julian and Maximus the Mystic, both in long robes, appear among the overturned pillars in the background.* (SV II, 421)

For Julian, the ruins are simply a corner of a world that has become "a heap of rubbish." Pointing to the overturned statue of Apollo he says:

Look at this face without a nose. Look at this shattered elbow, — these splintered thighs. Does the sum of all this ugliness add up to the full former beauty of divinity? (*SV II*, 421)

When Maximus points out that even “the former beauty” was only in the eye of the beholder, Julian kicks Apollo’s head in reply (*SV II*, 422).

Julian at the ruined temple of Apollo is like an actor picking his way through the pieces of an inner stage setting that has just been “struck,” or Ibsen surveying the “ruins” of romantic nineteenth-century theatre. In July 1871, Ibsen had promised his publisher that “the positive *Weltanschauung* which the critics have long demanded of me will be found” in his new play (*OI III*, 603). It is hard, however, to find such optimism in the completed *Emperor and Galilean* where the more deeply felt passages are in the vein of Julian’s remarks on the broken statue, or this passionate outcry from the last act of “The Emperor Julian”:

Oh, if I could lay waste the world! Maximus,—is there no poison, no consuming fire, that can lay creation waste as it was that day when the lonely spirit hovered over the waters? (*SV II*, 449)

A letter of September 1871, from Ibsen to Georg Brandes, has a similar tone:

There are actually moments when the whole history of the world reminds one of a sinking ship; the only thing to do is to save oneself.

Nothing will come of special reforms. The whole human race is on the wrong track. That is the trouble .... All of human history reminds me of a cobbler who doesn’t stick to his last but goes on the stage to act. (*Letters and Speeches*, 114)

Even closer to Julian is the famous poem from 1869, “To my Friend Who Talks of Revolution!” where Ibsen offers to “torpedo the ark” (*SV I*, 374). In such passages, Ibsen is not so much advocating universal anarchy as clearing “the decks” of his art of all *direct* reliance on history. The past, in the form of nature, myth, and history, *is* of course there in the modern cycle, but it is as if it were “buried” under the realistic, contemporary surface. Comparing Ibsen and Wordsworth as poets of nature, E. M. Forster writes:

Wordsworth fell into the residential fallacy; he continued to look at his gods direct, and to pin with decreasing success his precepts to the flanks of Helvellyn. Ibsen, wiser and greater, sank and smashed the Dovrefjeld in the depths of the sea, the depths of the sea. He knew he would find it again. (68)

With history, as with nature, Ibsen came to see the value of not looking "at his gods direct." Instead he looked for artistic strategies of "sinking and smashing" the past below the surface of his modern cycle, the most notable being his adaptation of romantic inner stage technique to the late nineteenth-century bourgeois living rooms and gardens that are the predominant settings of his modern plays. This adaptation is especially successful in the so-called "psychological" dramas from the middle of the cycle. In Hedvig's attic, the millrace in *Rosmersholm* (1886), the carp pond in *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), and Hedda Gabler's inner room (1890), we see Ibsen miniaturizing, to powerful effect, the bolder romantic inner stages of the earlier plays.

## NOTES

1. Subsequent references to *The Oxford Ibsen* will use the initial form *OI* followed by volume and page numbers.
2. The "four hundred year night" lasted from the reformation to the dissolution of the union with Denmark in 1814. See also Derry (1-16).
3. Subsequent references to *Samlede Verker* will use the initial form *SV* followed by volume and page numbers. Translations from this edition are my own.
4. For Ibsen's hostility to popular national-romanticism in Norway, see the so-called "Epic" *Brand* (1865) where the Norwegian Myth is described as a giant corpse infecting the present (*OI* III, 37), and the poem, "Open Letter" (1859) which compares the national-romantics to an archaeologist who "drags" a mummy from a pyramid (*SV* I, 342).
5. The design has been previously printed in Marker (7). Wergmann depicts the convent as Romanesque in architectural style.
6. My translation.

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