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## The revolutionary elements in Ibsen's plays

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THE REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS IN  
IBSEN'S PLAYS

A Thesis

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
Indiana State Teachers College  
Number 443

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education

by  
Alice Peters  
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The thesis of Alice Peters,  
Contribution of the Graduate School, Indiana State  
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is hereby approved as counting toward the completion  
of the Master's degree in the amount of 8 hours'  
credit.

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## INTRODUCTION

### IBSEN, THE VIKING OF THE DRAMA

A hand wielding a hammer--this is the symbol that appears on Ibsen's grave. It is generally considered an inspired sculptural idea, and it undoubtedly conveys the conventional view that so often describes his contribution to the theatre and to society in terms of utility. According to this idea, which is based on that small portion of his work which is called realistic, Ibsen wore overalls; sometimes he was part of a wrecking crew methodically dismantling ramshackle edifices, and at other times he was just as methodically driving bolts into a rising skyscraper. This designation is partly valid, and it covers some of his activities, particularly with respect to the laborious manner in which he constructed his plays, tore down old façades, and created new mansions for the spirit.

There is still another view, favored by some theoreticians of the proletariat, which, on the contrary, denies him a union card. According to that, he worked for a brief period, but only as a dilettante. They see him lending a hand to both the wrecking and the construction gang, but only as a means of self-expression and with only a vague notion of why he was banging at the timbers and of what kind of building was to be constructed in place of the old one. No! he was only a gentleman worker or, to use

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a more recent pant phrase, a fellow-traveler, deserving signal honors for deserting the Park Avenue district but still not to be listed among the men with the hammer. Ibsen's assault on society and his constructive ideas tend indeed to be wayward.

Still, if symbols are useful in helping us to grasp the character of this prolific father of the modern drama, neither the man with the hammer nor the man with the silk hat will do. Perhaps the only image which would cover the whole range of his career is that of a Viking standing at the prow of his tilted boat with the sea widening before him. The cynic might like to clap a top hat on this figure, add some convexity to the visceral regions, and hang an umbrella on one of its arms. And it must be conceded that the temptation to accept the caricature is strong at times. But under the impediments of his exterior Ibsen is a viking none-the-less. One sees him brushing the soil off his feet, setting his face toward distant shores, stopping at times to ravage some sedate settlement with fire, and finally plunging into the uncharted Atlantic with only a hazy notion of where he would come to rest, if ever. His work is precisely such a voyage of adventures, depredations, and explorations. Perhaps some admirers who refer to him as a poet come closest to defining him. Even in his realistic middle Rosmersholm, he is a poet of the sea, of the life of men very long. He discovers the possibilities of

period, if we look closely enough, he remains essentially a poet, just as realism at its best is a kind of poetry.

At first we find him in his native Norway, his blood boiling with desire for the open sea as he moves among the solid burghers of his family and their neighbors, pursues a profession, studies at the university, and enters the narrow theatre of his day. This is the period of his mild romantic plays which are supplemented by radical journalism and lyricism. Soon, after much provocation and growling, he takes a long journey--geographically only to Southern Europe but spiritually to the far corners of the world. In Brand he announces his departure from the congregation of landlubbers with a fanfare; and in Peer Gynt he adds the brash taunt of laughter.

Then suddenly he swoops down upon the settlements of the slumbering bourgeoisie. He burns their "dolls' houses" amid loud outcries from those whom he has so rudely evicted. This is the period of his Pillars of Society, League of Youth, Doll's House, Ghosts, and Enemy of the People.

But he is himself a portion of the humanity which he has scorned. Pity overcomes him; doubt reduces his self-assurance, and he begins to look tolerantly upon human frailty. He writes works like The Wild Duck and Rosmersholm. Yet he cannot endure the placid habitations of men very long. He discovers how easily the rust of drama

compromise and complacency eats its way to the core.

Returning to his former scornful manner, he rebukes the weaklings and gives warning examples of their compromises in plays like Little Eyolf and When We Dead Awaken.

Back in his long-beaked boat, he sails out again, his destination vague, his heart a trifle troubled, and his aging eyes a shade dim but still resolute.

Whether one takes this chronicle to mean that Ibsen was a "petit bourgeois" in the uneven and sometimes ambiguous course of his revolt or that Ibsen was simply a necessarily limited human being who could waver and ask more questions than he could answer, the effect of his work is essentially the same. Like all great writers he was a warrior and a voyager, and the upshot of his struggle is an unavoidably flawed but noble body of drama which expresses modern man.

In the course of both grappling with realities and sometimes evading them in his own peculiar way, Ibsen inaugurated important modifications in modern dramatic practice. More than any of his immediate predecessors, he discarded at long last the "well-made play" of graduated intrigue and obvious plotting which Scribe and his followers had put on the market in the nineteenth century. He built a number of plays that gave the illusion of undistorted reality, enabling the playgoer to observe the characters and ponder the ideas or implications of a drama instead of watching the gyrations of the plot. And

although Ibsen did not actually invent the drama of ideas, he ensured its triumph in the modern world. He did this by applying himself boldly to ideas of broad relevance to man and society and by projecting them in defiance of conventional taboos. His was no timid, comparatively philistine intellect like the younger Dumas' and Augier's. They believed they were dealing with great problems when they were actually conventional meliorists, and his ideas were no dribblets of warmed-over concepts.

Ibsen stands supreme among the moderns as the most thoughtful, systematic, and influential of writers for the stage. Passing from legendary and romantic plays in verse to social and symbolic plays in prose, he inaugurated a new epoch in the history of the theatre. Through his later work in particular he powerfully affected his contemporaries and successors. He united literature with stagecraft; he combined ideas with story; he brought ethics and sociology out of the closet, challenging playgoers to think as well as to feel. Having made the drama unwontedly real by his dealings with the problems of everyday living, he proceeded to make it unreal again, yet true in a deeper sense, by revealing beneath the surface of common situations symbolic meanings. In these regards, Ibsen induced fresh developments both in subject matter and in dramatic form.

## CHAPTER I

## INNOVATIONS IN DRAMATIC FORM

It is my purpose in this study to compare the theatre preceding Ibsen with that of Ibsen, and to determine the revolutionary elements in Ibsen's drama. I shall attempt first to show the innovations he introduced in dramatic form, - in structure, technique, conventions, scenery, etc., by comparing his work with that of the representative dramatists before him, especially Corneille, Racine, Hugo, Shakespeare, Molière, and Schiller.

The French theatre of the seventeenth century favored spectacles, pageants, opera, and comedies, particularly when they were light and avoided criticism. In order to succeed, tragedy had to entertain not by exciting the passions, but by framing them delicately. Moreover, the frame would have to exhibit certain formal features that are prima facie inimical to naturalness; Poetic practice and dramatic theory conspired to make French tragedy as artificial as possible; Blank verse is practically impossible in French, and rhyme virtually indispensable. The plays had to be written in rhymed hexameters (the alexandrine), with every four lines exhibiting a fixed difference between the first and second couplet; The first, called "masculine," had to end in a full vowel sound counting as one of the twelve syllables of the line; the second, called the "feminine," had to end in a weak sound counting as only one syllable.

"feminine," had to close with a mute "e", "es", "ent", etc. The one effort to create plausibility in plays was the insistence on the unities of time, place, and action. In rationalizing their adherence to these rules, which were actually accepted because they appeared to be classical and because they introduced order into the drama, the French claimed they were making the theatre credible; A play, in other words, would become more believable if its action transpired within a day or preferably less than a day, and if the scene remained unchanged. Drama was to possess the formal beauty of a jeweled cameo; The play was to exhibit as little action as possible; events were to be reported by messengers; characters were to reveal their emotions by conversing with those nuisances of the French theatre the confidantes; and drama was to be confined to a central situation;

Corneille's conception of drama--as of life--was invraisemblable. All his plots culminate in a "crisis"--as all French classical tragedy does--and he constantly confuses the spectator by multiplying the obstacles which his heroes have to overcome. He adheres to the unities of action and time and confines all acts to a single and unchanging scene.

Striving as he does for concentration, it is not difficult for Racine to observe the unities. Having chosen the "crisis" which he wishes to present, Racine leads up

to it in his first two and solves it in his last two acts, thus determining the plot. This settled, the unity of place is of no importance; the place is usually an apartment in a palace; As for the unity of time, this is coincident with the "crisis" and the events which immediately precede and follow it. In all respects, Racine's plays had the advantage of obeying the classical rules as outlined by d'Aubignac and Boileau.

When Ibsen began to make plays, the art of the dramatist had shrunk into the art of contriving a situation. And it was held that the stranger the situation, the better the play. Ibsen saw that, on the contrary, the more familiar the situation, the more interesting the play. Shakespeare had put ourselves on the stage but not our situations. Our uncles seldom murder our fathers, and cannot legally marry our mothers; we do not meet witches; our kings are not as a rule stabbed and succeeded by their stabbers, and when we raise money by bills we do not promise to pay pounds of our flesh. Ibsen supplies the want left by Shakespeare. He gives us not only ourselves, but ourselves in our own situations. The things that happen to his stage figures are much more important to us than those that happen to Shakespeare's. Another is that they are capable both of hurting us cruelly and of filling us with excited hopes of escape from idealistic tyrannies, and with visions of intenser life in the future; Ibsen substituted a terrible

art of sharp-shooting at the audience, trapping them, fencing with them, aiming always at the sorest spot in their consciences;

As a consequence of making the spectators themselves the persons of the drama, and the incidents of their own lives its incidents, the old stage tricks by which audiences had to be induced to take an interest in unreal people and improbable circumstances fell into disuse in Ibsen.

Of all the conventions in the drama, none had a more interesting history than the soliloquy, the speech in which a character talks aloud, not to any person on the stage with him, but directly to the audience. And one of the most striking changes which has taken place in the drama of our own time is the sudden disappearance of the soliloquy. It is Ibsen who sets the example of renunciation. Time was when the playwright found it very convenient to have the villain lay aside his mask and bare his black soul in a speech to himself. But now this device, convenient as it may be, is discarded. No longer does a character come down to the footlights for a confidential communication to the audience, telling them his thoughts, declaring his intentions, and defending his acts. The argumentative monologue which Victor Hugo bestowed on the king in Hernani is one of the longest soliloquies discovered in all dramatic literature: (This introspective oration is a superb specimen of Hugo's swelling rhetoric, splendid and stately with soaring figures each of the chief characters of the drama.)

of speech.)

Shakespeare was a practical playwright, up to every kind of trick of his trade, making his profit out of every convention acceptable to his audiences. The soliloquy was far too convenient a device to be given up. In scarcely any of his strongest plays, has he taken more trouble with his plot, with its structure, with its conduct than he has in Othello; and in scarcely any other is the soliloquy more frequently employed. He uses it again and again to let Iago reveal his own villainy, as if he did not want the turbulent groundlings to be in any doubt as to the wickedness of Iago. And so it is that at the end of the first act, Iago simply talks aloud to the audience, frankly taking them into his confidence and exposing his own dark designs. In the middle of the second act, and again at the end of the act, Iago explains his schemes to the spectators, as his plans take shape in his foul brain.

The fact is that when Shakespeare and Molière came to the theatre, they found the soliloquy a labor-saving contrivance. Shakespeare lets Romeo overhear Juliet's soliloquizing on the balcony; and Molière does the same in the Miser.

The device of the confidante, which was acceptable for two centuries or more, found no place in Ibsen's plays. Freely employed in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the chorus shrank to a single attendant for each of the chief figures in the classicist tragedy of the

French. Thus in Racine's masterpiece Phèdre, Phèdre is ever accompanied by Oëone, Aricie by Ismène, and Hippolyte by Theramène; and to these they can unbosom themselves freely. These confidantes are colorless creatures, sketched in vague outline only and existing for the sole purpose of being talked to. Mere shadows of their masters and mistresses, they share the same fate; and in the tragedy which is rehearsed in Sheridan's Critic, when the heroine goes mad, the confidante unhesitatingly goes mad too.

A liking for the unusual and for the violent is not uncommon among the tragic dramatists, many of whom felt that nothing is really dramatic unless it is strange and unheard of. Corneille, for example, deliberately sought for the most unlikely combinations and searched history to find them, not unsuccessfully, since fact is often stranger than fiction. Again Schiller allows Karl Moor, in The Robbers, to believe the worst on a mere hint from his villainous brother, although the hero is well aware that no dependence ought to be placed on anything from such a source. Victor Hugo also constantly made use of very improbable coincidences. In his Ruy Blas, almost every character is more or less arbitrary, and hardly a single incident occurs except by the more or less obvious intervention of the author.

Ibsen, on the other hand, sought to express the inner significance of the commonplace and to disclose the

tragedy which may lie latent in the humdrum. The arbitrariness of incident and the frequency of coincidence, which are raised to the maximum in Hugo's romanticist pieces, are reduced to the minimum in Ibsen's realistic social dramas. But even Ibsen is sometimes a little disconcerting; and the startling transformation of Nora in the final act of The Doll's House has seemed to some critics, if not actually in contradiction to her character, at least not satisfactorily prepared for. Perhaps also the confession and self-abasement of Consul Bernick in the Pillars of Society is not what the author had led us to believe or expect from a character so self-seeking and so smugly self-complacent. In both of these plays of Ibsen's, however, this element of the arbitrary is to be found only in the last act, after our interest has been aroused and sustained by the veracity of all that has gone before.

The traditions of the medieval stage survived for a long while, and they are visible abundantly, in Shakespeare's plays and in the plays of Corneille. In the theatre of Ibsen, the change of scenery may be consecutive; the scene of the second act may be different from that of the first act, and the later acts may each have its own setting. But on the medieval stage, especially in France, the traditions of the earliest performance of the passion play in the church had led to a wholly different arrangement. In the church, the several episodes were acted in

several places, each of which was known as a "station"; and in France, when the mystery was thrust out of the church, these stations were all erected in one long line at the back of the platform on which the performance took place, and they were known as "mansions". Thus it was that the French theatre came to have the "simultaneous set", all the places needed in the action being then in sight at once, not displayed consecutively as is the custom today. It is this tradition of bringing together places actually remote which Shakespeare follows in Richard III, when he sets on the stage at the same time the tent of Richard and the tent of Richmond.

When Corneille adopted the Cid from the Spanish, he employed this simultaneous set, erecting on the stage the mansions required for his plot, and letting the stage itself serve as a neutral ground where all the characters might meet as they entered each from his own dwelling. This was absolutely in accord with the medieval tradition.

Not only does the dramatist condense the speech of his characters, but he clarifies it also. Every person in a play is supposed to be capable of saying just what he means the first time of trying, and in the fewest possible words; and this is a very violent departure from the practice of everyday life, where our speech is uncertain, halting, ragged. Every character uses also the best possible words to voice his thought, and every other character immediately takes his meaning without hesitancy;

and this is again a variation from the fact, since we are continually failing to catch the intent of those with whom we are talking. Praise is abundant for the verisimilitude of the dialogue of Ibsen's dramas, and for the skill with which Ibsen has given to every one of his characters the actual vocabulary which that character would use.

The convention underlying Shakespeare's tragedy is that his characters belong to a race of human beings whose speech is blank verse, the unrimed decasyllabic iambic. Yet in some of his earlier plays, Shakespeare varies from this convention, frequently dropping into rhyme, while in certain of his other plays, he makes another departure, and we find the heroic figures employing blank verse, the less distinguished characters using a stately rhythmic prose, while the populace appropriately sinks into the every-day speech of the common folk. The corresponding convention underlying the tragedies of Corneille and Racine (and the comedies of Molière), is that the characters belong to a race of beings whose habitual speech is the alexandrine, with alternating couplets of masculine and feminine rhymes. The following is an example:

Tu n'as fait le devoir que d'un homme de bien,  
Mais aussi, le faisant, tu m'appris le mien,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Marty-Laueaux, Œuvres de Corneille, Tome Troisième, Le Cid, (Paris: Charles Lahure et Cie., 1862), p. 156.

says Chimène in the Cid to the lover whom fate has made  
the slayer of her father.

Having discarded most devices from the old theatrical  
bag of tricks, Ibsen won his audience by the fidelity  
of his representation, by the vitality of his people,  
and, by the technical innovations he introduced, changed  
the course of the drama.

who had descended to use the language of  
ends, is moved by the fact that

## CHAPTER II

## INNOVATIONS IN SUBJECT MATTER

Ibsen, it is clear, was notable both as dramatist and dramatic philosopher. What differentiates his theatre from that of his predecessors is his emphasis on ideas. Expert as he became in stagecraft, he employed such talents to develop a consistent philosophy. Unlike Shakespeare, he did not embroider an ancient story for the sake of the story, or find delight in exhibiting through the interactions of characters the heights and depths of being. Unlike his propagandist disciple Brieux, he did not, on the other hand, attempt to expose social evils and suggest for them specific remedies, thus sacrificing character to doctrine. There came to him, first as a rule, the concept of a moral or social truth, which he would then incorporate in a series of situations, clothing the abstract in the concrete. More and more, latter-day playwrights have followed his example, inspired as was he by the humanitarian and scientific movements of the time. Apostles of the theory of l'art pour l'art have struggled vainly against the tendency. Even d'Annunzio, who would denounce the drama of ideas, has written such a drama in Gioconda, making eloquent appeal for the artist's right to live his own life in the service of his art.

That Ibsen was a dramatist rather than a philosopher who had condescended to use the theatre for doctrinal ends, is proved by the fact that his philosophy is not

so novel as to account for the esteem in which he is held. He contends merely that the spiritual life should be preserved at all costs, that hypocrisy and deception should be rejected, that love should not be sacrificed for worldly considerations, that the will should be left free, and that such freedom entails responsibilities. He scorns those who refuse to scrap outworn faiths, formulas, and institutions, and those who, professing one thing, do another. Above all, he is concerned to indicate the right relation of the individual to society, stressing the need for self-realization and also setting it proper bounds.

Previous to the time of Ibsen, there had been very little change in the matter of dramatic content. European drama continued to be influenced largely by the traditions of the French classical theatre. The drama of French classicism based its standards on the dogma and traditions of antiquity. In the dramas of Euripides especially, modified by the Renaissance Senecan tendencies, in the legends and history of Greece and Rome were sources of material for the plays: Pseudo-Aristotelianism held sway particularly in the tragedy. It came largely from Italian critics and commentators on Aristotle. The rules of tragedy, formulated in the sixteenth century, were partially adopted in France in that century and were later revived. From Italy, too, and from Spain, came much of the actual material used

by men of letters. Spain gave plots to plays and to stories and above all supplied Corneille with the problems of conduct and the characters, which, blended with stoicism, he portrayed in his tragedies.

The theory of French drama in the seventeenth century revolves to a considerable degree about the idea of vraisemblance, a verisimilitude or probability, often coupled in discussion with le nécessaire. The famous rules of the unities were merely a way to secure enhanced verisimilitude or probability of action. The dramatic poet was to present his story, not with photographic realism, but in such a way as to remain within the bounds of likelihood and consistency. These theories of drama, of course, go back to Aristotle, and the origins of vraisemblance are to be found in Aristotle's Poetics. There it is stated that the function of the poet is to relate, not what has happened but "what may happen"--what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity." Aristotle's interpretation was a transcendent, suprasensible view of life, as tragedy portrayed the great stories of mythology. The French turned this into realism, though their idea of aristocratic decorum made them avoid sordid realism. But the general tendency of French critics in the seventeenth century was to make vraisemblance much narrower than the verisimilitude of Aristotle, and to use the unities as a means to enforce this narrower vraisemblance.

A restriction from which French tragedy suffered quite as much as from the unities was a narrowing in meaning of part of Aristotle's description of tragedy as an imitation of characters of a higher type. The characters of tragedy as of the epic, according to Aristotle, are to have heroic grandeur. In the French aristocratic age the Greek notion of moral grandeur was interpreted as meaning social grandeur. The personages were kings and heroes of high degree. They alone were considered worthy of being subjects of tragedy, as if the lowly were not good enough to experience emotions and undergo tribulations, but could only be subjects of comedy. "In France," says the Abbé d'Aubignac, "people born or brought up among the great deal with lofty sentiments and tend to noble purposes. Hence their life is in harmony with what tragedy depicts. On the other hand, the populace, virtually wallowing in filth, do not rise above the buffonery of farces."<sup>2</sup>

No formal regulations hampered the choice of content, but it was more or less understood that love between the sexes was the chief wonder of the stage. Contemporary themes were excluded, and characters were expected to be types rather than distinct personalities.

For the purpose of comparing French classical drama with that of Ibsen, a discussion of the works of Corneille

<sup>2</sup> Abbé d'Aubignac, Pratique du Théâtre, Bk. II, Ch. I, ad finem.

and Racine will follow, for they are obviously the best expression of French classicism. Corneille embodies the spirit of the first half of the seventeenth century. The vigor and dash of the war-like age of Richelieu combine with the turgid and romanesque influences and the complicated plots of the Spanish drama. In his earliest success, The Cid, one sees more distinctly than before Corneille's use of material and his adaptation of it to suit the French temperament and growing classicism. Corneille takes a passionate Spanish love-story permeated with a fierce honor or pride. This story he proceeds to rationalize and to harmonize with the rules. His next few plays, Horace, Cinna, and Polyeucte, also give evidence of yielding to structural regularity by obedience to the unities and by a plot of vraisemblance. Corneille tries, then, to rationalize his men and women, and to introduce at least an elementary psychology. He wishes to make them heroic embodiments of a feeling, say of honor or duty, and to display them face to face with some great crisis which they surmount by strength of reason or will power. Consequently, in Corneille character is emphasized which depends on a psychology however crude. It is precisely this desire to show the heroic conflict of the superman that leads Corneille to the exaggerations of later plays. In Rodogune, Cleopâtre was exposed to the criticism that strength of will becomes mere violence, and the exceptional rather both are. In Horace, the hero is a man of a single idea, and the heroism is a mere display of force.

than the great becomes the object of portrayal. Corneille's fondness for portraying the volonté, the will, and the strong-willed characters or supermen, and his desire to show them grappling with obstacles leads him to prefer what is invraisemblable. So, in the preface to Héraclius, he reaches the often quoted conclusion that the subject of a fine tragedy should not be vraisemblable, because unusual ones are best adapted to awakening pity and fear. Thus the melodramatic side of Corneille is explained and accounted for, and we have the raison d'être of a character such as Cléopâtre in Rodogune. Moreover, in spite of the Cid, love should occupy a secondary place in tragedy, the dignity of which calls for some great state interest, or a more noble and vigorous passion than love, such as ambition or revenge. Corneille replaces love plots by historical intrigues and political dissertations in dramatic form. Love is the embellishment rather than the material for a tragedy.

Corneille's characters are contending forces of will, impulse, pride, and duty--and the greatest of these is duty. If love triumphs in the Cid, it is yet true that in the intellectualized atmosphere which these characters breathe, individual impulse must always submit to public duty. With his next two plays, Horace and Cinna, Corneille chose subjects better suited to illustrate his theme. Both plays deal with Roman history, both are termed "tragedies". The combat between the Horatii and the Curatii is turned into a mental conflict

because ~~the~~ two families are bound by marriage and love: Horace, more patriot than lover, wins out; whereas Curiace, less heroic but more human, dies in battle--leaving his beloved to be slain by her own brother, Horace, for cursing his patriotism. In Cinna, the main struggle occurs in the mind of Augustus, swaying between magnanimity and vengeance as regards the conspirators against his life, and choosing magnanimity as Prospero does in the Tempest--but with more rhetorical emphasis:

Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers,  
Je le suis, je veux l'être.<sup>3</sup>

In Polyeucte, Corneille carries the theme of duty into the field of religion. The Christian martyr, Polyeucte, has a Roman wife whom duty teaches to love her husband, and finally as a Christian convert to win others to his cause. In all this there is an overstrain, a tendency to carry the victory of the human will to an extreme, to produce admiration rather than pity and fear as is generally the case in tragedy. In the four plays mentioned we see the genius of Corneille at its best. Enamored of spiritual strength in the service of society, he had portrayed it under the guise of family, country, monarchy, and religion, in original and enduring dramatic form.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Marty-Laueaux, op. cit., Cinna, p: 459  
 Lachmann-Pichler, 1881.

Rodogune, Corneille's own favorite, called forth over a century later the special criticism of Lessing.<sup>4</sup>

Only the strictest attention, it is true, will enable the spectator to follow the complicated motivation of the first four acts of this tragedy--never did Corneille "invent" more--but the fifth act in which the Medea-like heroine, Clèopâtre, stands revealed has some of the majestic terror of ancient tragedy. And like an idyll, in the midst of so much horror, Corneille has set the fraternal love of Clèopâtre's two sons both in love with Rodogune, their mother's rival, yet each longing to sacrifice the other.

Corneille belongs definitely to the Classical period. His dramas bristle with the word vertu. It has been claimed that his characters are modeled on real life: Richelieu, Retz and Turenne, being heroic in the Cornelian sense. But this is merely to say that in his quest of life he sought the exceptional. His was an age of action, of strength, of rapid and simple decisions, when men were struggling to realize an ideal, and intelligence and will power were in the ascendancy. Of such a view of humanity Corneille's dramas are the quintessence: in their constant appeal to the reason, in their over-

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<sup>4</sup> Gotthold E. Lessing, Hamburgische Drama-turgie. Lachmann-Muncker Edition (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1901.)

emphasis on the will, in their complex yet swift-moving plots, and in the crashing rhetoric of their style; may even in the vanities, the preciosity, and the pettiness they contain.

Corneille's muse was the Reason, not my reason or yours, but the "socialized reason" which was the peculiarly French contribution to the Renaissance. Of this the four great dramas, the Cid, Horace, Cinna, and Polyeucte, are a continuous illustration. Each has a great subject, timely and yet universal--honor, patriotism, absolutism, and martyrdom--and each problem Corneille solves by a victory of the will, before which all other considerations, no matter how human they may be, give way. Indeed, his failures may be explained by the fact that one cannot multiply such victories indefinitely and write successful plays.

As a consequence, Corneille's characters are Neo-Platonic types, actuated by a superimposed rational self. They do not succumb to Fate; they make Fate subserve their particular ends. The poet's interest in them may be psychological; they themselves are generally poor psychologists. They understand but one thing and strive for it in a straight line. Horace, exasperated by his sister, justifies his fury with the strange words:

"C'est trop, ma patience à la raison fait place;

Va dedans les enfers plaindre ton Curiace."<sup>5</sup>

And the villains of Corneille's plays are similarly motivated; rarely, as in the case of Fèlix in Polyeucte, do they show any criminal subtlety or political astuteness. This masculine simplicity is of course unfavorable to the portrayal of women types, and but for such notable exceptions as Camille (Horace) and Emilie (Cinna), Corneille's heroines are not womanly in the usual sense of the word. Either, like Pauline in Polyeucte, they are "obedient" to the point of mysticism, or they are furies with scarce a vestige of humanity, like Clèopâtre in Rodogune.

When we come to Racine, we reach the perfection of the classical school, and a theory of dramatic poetry which harmonizes without difficulty with the most stringent rules of the critics. To begin with, the plots of Racine are simpler, and depend for their interest not so much on situations as on characters. They are plays of psychological realism, concerned with Racine's age, even though the characters and plots seem to belong to mythological or heroic times. They portray single crises, so that the action is concentrated and brief, and the unities of time and place are no longer hindrances.

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<sup>5</sup> Ch; Marty-Laueaux, op. cit., Horace, p. 340.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Racine, Andromaque, etc., Paris, Librairie de la Pléiade, 1904, p. 77.

The action was as far as possible personal and original, for Racine's theory of invention was "faire quelque chose de rien."<sup>6</sup> He found his starting-point in an état d'âme of some person or persons, usually in antiquity, and developed it. Almost invariable it was a love-crisis. Consequently, the complication was in the workings of human souls and not in adventures and hairbreadth escapes. The whole plot had to follow strict vraisemblance under the guidance of reason. So the tragedies of Racine offer us a simple but impressive plot, representing characters on an heroic scale, undergoing plausible and realistic psychological experiences, usually connected with the passion of love, set forth in dignified and polished poetry.

The triumph of Racine's Andromaque is a parallel to that of the Cid. Love is the theme, but unlike his contemporaries Racine treats this subject dramatically and with the utmost simplicity. The plot turns on the maternal love of Andromache for her son. As Andromache causes Pyrrhus, jailer of her son and victim of her charms, to hope or despair, so Pyrrhus approaches or leaves Hermione, who in turn calls or repels Orestes. Orestes kills Pyrrhus, and Hermione, unable to live without him, hurls at his slayer the reproach:

"Ah! fallait-il en croire une amante insensée?"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Abbé d'Aubignac, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Racine, Andromaque (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), p. 78.

whereupon Orestes goes mad on learning of her death. Racine took his material from the poets of antiquity (Homer, Euripides, Virgil). As he himself said, Racine offers us a historical play in Britannicus, bereft of unnecessary incidents, conforming absolutely to the unities, and concentrated into one powerful action, the unchaining of the brute in the character of Nero. The situation, drawn from the Annals of Tacitus, is political, and it is domestic. Nero, still young enough to fear his mother, Agrippina, (who has committed every crime for his sake) and his "tutor" Burrhus, is tempted by the innocence of Junia, betrothed to Britannicus. He knows the evil of such a passion and confesses it to himself:

Et c'est cette vertu, si nouvelle à la coeur,  
Dont la perèrance irrite mon amour.<sup>8</sup>

During three acts he hesitates. In the fourth, Agrippina makes a last effort to bend him to her maternal will. Narcissus, Nero's depraved counselor, shatters all opposition; Britannicus is poisoned; Narcissus is slain; and Junia becomes a vestal virgin, while Agrippina foretells the burning of Rome.

Racine's next play Bèrènice contains a tremendous struggle; the renunciation of each other by two royal lovers for reasons of state. Titus gives up Bèrènice because the inexorable laws of Rome forbid an emperor

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Racine, Britannicus (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), p. 32.

to marry a foreigner. Thus in the little room of the palace, where the scene is laid, the destinies of empires, are decided and the tragedy of royalty is laid bare.

Bajazet is Oriental not only in subject but also in the display of violence. With Iphigénie Racine returns to the Greeks. No play of Racine's is more regal. Phèdre, Racine's masterpiece, is a complete recast of the Euripidean Hippolytus. Racine's first and most significant change is the emphasis he places on the heroine. Phèdre, the most powerful rôle in all French drama, is a female Nero; but with one important difference: she has a searching, Jansenist conscience. In other words, Phèdre is not only a tragedy of jealousy but also one of remorse; it is a picture of sinning and suffering humanity driven by fate to its doom. And yet this Christian Phèdre remains intrinsically Greek. Never does Racine allow us to forget her origin. This harmonizing of civilizations, Greek, Christian, and French, is the pinnacle of Classicism. Athalie, the last of Racine's plays, is one of his greatest. Here the protagonist is God; the plot relates how the child Joash triumphs over his enemies--the enemies of church and state--including the frenzied and heretical Athaliah. The dramatic situation is not so intense in Athalie as in Racine's secular tragedies, but his choruses, modeled on the Greek drama, heighten and relieve the action.

As a writer of the 17th century, Racine's illusions to his Greek models are

As a writer of stage-plays, Racine aims primarily at one thing; namely, at dramatic effect. He is not historical in the Cornelian sense; for he alters history in behalf of simplicity, and he will add a non-historical character in order to strengthen the plot.

Thus in Corneille and Racine we see the culmination of dramatic effort in the seventeenth century.

In contrast to the subject matter, drawn from history and antiquity, of the classical French drama, Ibsen deals in his plays with such sociological problems as heredity, political corruption, marriage, divorce, inherited disease, excessive individualism, and the position of woman in society.

In the play Peer Gynt Ibsen portrays a rascal named Peer Gynt, an idealist who avoids Brand's errors by setting up as his ideal the realization of himself through the utter satisfaction of his own will. Peer keeps his ideal for himself: it is indeed implicit in the ideal itself that it should be unique--that he alone should have the force to realize it. For Peer's notion of the self-realized man is not the saint, but the demigod whose indomitable will is stronger than destiny, the fighter, the master, the man whom no woman can resist, the mighty hunter, the knight of a thousand adventures. However, Peer, being imaginative enough to conceive his ideal, is also imaginative enough to find illusions to hide its unreality, and to persuade

himself that Peer Gynt, the shabby country-side loafer, is Peer Gynt, Emperor of Himself, as he writes over the door of his hut in the mountains. Peer is the incarnation of everything that is vacillating and unstable in man, and appropriately his story is told in the spirit of picaresque fancy.

Peer appears first as an incorrigible liar and fantasist, the very "devil's storyteller." He goes wooing with blithe insouciance, after perching his protesting mother Ase on the roof of their cottage. He steals another man's bride under his very nose, takes her up a mountain path, and then abandons her. Pursued by the villagers, he takes time off to engage in more amatory details, dancing off with three girls towards the mountain tops. Next he courts the gross daughter of the supernatural troll king and almost becomes the latter's son-in-law but for his refusal to renounce his greatly treasured human personality. A specialist in self-delusion, he has no difficulty in accepting the ugly creature as a beauty and in idealizing the unsavory habits and food of the trolls, but he balks at having his eyes permanently distorted in deference to the troll king's wishes. An encounter with the great Boyg, a super-natural incarnation of public inertia, teaches the youth a lesson that he hardly needed to learn--namely, to "go roundabout;" Peer pressing against the Boyg overcomes him only because "there were women behind him"--a detail

that anticipates Ibsen's great faith in the liberation of mankind by the other sex. Real love comes to him only when he meets Solvieg, who has cast off her parents for him. But again Peer proves that he lacks the stamina to hold on to what he desires, being confronted by the troll king's daughter who has by now borne him an unwanted child, fearing to be plagued by responsibilities for it, and feeling that he is too sullied for his pure new love, he abandons the cottage where Solvieg and he were making their stay. He comes home only to find his mother dying and to comfort her poignantly with his irrepressible fantasies.

When we next meet him he has degenerated in accordance with his weak nature. He is an ex-slave trader who prospered in America and is now yachting on the coast of Morocco. It is true that he had found the business "on the outer verge of the allowable," but it was hard to break away from it. Then he hit upon a suitable substitute in the best traditions of laissez-faire business when he shipped idols to China every spring and missionaries every autumn! He could salve his conscience at the same time that he made a substantial profit: for every idol that he sold a missionary got a coolie baptized--"So the effect was neutralized." Now he is planning to become Emperor of the world, and since he needs additional gold with which to realize his ambition, he is turning to international finance. Greece

has revolted against Turkey; therefore, in accordance with good business practice, his partners are to go to Greece where they are to fan the flames of revolution while he lends money to the Turks! His partners being men of the "Gyntish" stamp themselves, however, rob him of his pelf and abscond, leaving him stranded. The next adventure displays him as a middle-aged, fatuous roué, and all his subsequent experiences underscore his spiritual bankruptcy. Cheated by the Mohammedan beauty Anitra, trapped in an insane asylum, nearly drowned on the voyage to his homeland, Peer returns as a greatly cheapened egotist. The law of deterioration is inherent in the world's weaklings! Then comes retribution in the shape of the button-molder, and Peer, the individualist, learns much to his distress that he has been a very ordinary person, fit to be "merged in the mass." Immediately the old exaltation of the self-realizer is changed into an unspeakable dread of the button-moulder Death, to avoid whom Peer has already pushed a drowning man from the spar he is clinging to in a shipwreck lest it should not suffice to support two. At last he finds a deserted sweetheart of his youth still waiting for him and still believing in him. In the imagination of this old woman he finds the ideal Peer Gynt; while in himself, the loafer, the braggart, the confederate of sham magicians, the speculator, the false prophet, the dancing-girl's dupe, the bedlam emperor, the thruster of the drowning

man into the waves; there is nothing heroic: nothing but commonplace self-seeking and shirking cowardice and sensuality, veiled only by the romantic fancies of the born liar. With this crowningly unreal realization he is left to face the button-moulder as best he can.

A brilliant satire on second-rateness, with incidental thrusts at pedantry and business ethics, Peer Gynt at once took its place as the most daring extravaganza of the modern theatre. Ibsen never quite overcame either his taste for symbolism or his search for broad dramatic concepts. But in Peer Gynt he had moved to the farthest reaches of his fantasy, he had discharged himself of his poetic impulse, and he had announced his general philosophy for the second time, having expressed it both positively and negatively in Brand and Peer Gynt respectively. It remained now to embody both his protest against the narrow life and his vision of liberated humanity in concrete social studies. These were to be written in everyday prose and were to deal with situations, as well as characters, that were rooted in the ordinary world. Realistic writing was by then making its appearance in the drama, and no one was more fitted to bring to the new style the mental and emotional vigor without which it could only remain a drab kind of photography.

But, as a matter of fact, Ibsen had one more comprehensive philosophical inquiry or statement which he felt

compelled to discharge in the drama. He had pondered the question of Christianity versus paganism for a long time. Now he came to the conclusion that what was needed was a "Third Empire" representing a synthesis of paganism and Christianity, a combination of the joy of life or freedom for the individual with the ethical claims of the spirit. His idealistic character, Julian the Apostate in the two formidable parts of Emperor and Galilean tries to establish paganism again and fails. The battle is between the "First Empire" of pagan sensuality, and the "Second Empire" of self-denial; the one is outworn since our first innocence cannot be recaptured; the other is unnatural since it suppresses individuality and happiness. The victory falls to "the Galilean", and the day when the genuine values in Julian's faith will be fused with those of Christianity, when both "Emperor" and "Galilean" will disappear in the new synthesis, is still to come. Maximus the philosopher proclaims this unity, but only the future will give it realization.

"The Emperor and the Galilean' might have been appropriately, if prosaically, named 'The Mistake of Maximus' the Mystic'. It is Maximus who forces the choice on Julian, not as between 'the old beauty that is no longer beautiful and the truth that is no longer true,' but between Christ and Julian himself." <sup>9</sup> Maximus knows

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<sup>9</sup> G. B. Shaw, Quintessence of Ibsenism, (New York: Brentano's, 1915), p.72.

that there is no going back to the "first empire" of pagan sensualism. The "second empire," Christian or self-abnegatory idealism, is already rotten at heart. The "third empire" is what he looks for: the empire of Man asserting the eternal validity of his own will. Thus throughout the first part of the double drama we have Julian prompted step by step to the stupendous conviction that he no less than the Galilean is God. His resolution to seize the throne is expressed in his interruption of the Lord's prayer, which he hears intoned by worshippers in church as he wrestles in the gloom of the catacombs with his own fears and the entreaties and threats of his soldiers urging him to take the final decisive step.

Once on the throne Julian becomes a mere pedant-tyrant, trying to revive paganism mechanically by cruel enforcement of external conformity to its rites. In his moments of exaltation he half grasps the meaning of Maximus, only to relapse presently and pervert it into a grotesque mixture of superstition and monstrous vanity. Christ appears to him, not as the prototype of himself, as Maximus would have him feel, but as a rival god over whom he must prevail at all costs. It galls him to think that the Galilean still reigns in the hearts of men while the emperor can only extort lip honor from them by brute force; for in his wildest excesses of egotism he never so loses his saving sense of the realities of things as to mistake the trophies of persecution for the

fruits of faith. He is galled out of all comprehension by the rivalry of the Galilean, and asks despairingly who shall break his power.

Maximus's idea is a synthesis of relations in which not only is Christ God in exactly the same sense as that in which Julian is God, but Julian is Christ as well. The persistence of Julian's jealousy of the Galilean shows that he has not comprehended the synthesis at all, but only seized on that part of it which flatters his own egotism. And since this part is only valid as a constituent of the synthesis, and has no reality when isolated from it, it cannot by itself convince Julian. In vain does Maximus repeat his lesson in every sort of parable. Julian can only exclaim while his fleet is burning on the borders of Persia:

"The third empire is here, Maximus. I feel that the Messiah of the earth lives within me. In that glowing, swirling pyre the crucified Galilean is burning to ashes; and the earthly emperor is burning with the Galilean. But from the ashes shall arise phoenix-like, the God of earth and the Emperor of the spirit in one, in one, in one.

At this point he is informed that a Persian refugee, whose information has emboldened him to burn the ships, has fled from the camp and is a manifest spy. From that moment he is a broken man. In his next and last emergency, when the Persians fall upon his camp, he throws himself into the fighting, thinking he sees the Nazarene. He is unlike himself: that is to say

struck down in the name of Christ, by one of his own soldiers. Both pagan and Christian legions charge the enemy, while Julian, sinking back from a vain effort to rise, exclaims: "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean."

Julian dies in his tent with a peaceful conscience; and Maximus is able to tell the priest at the bedside the world-will will answer for Julian's soul. Against the spurious Christianity of asceticism, starving that indispensable prior conviction, Julian rightly rebelled; and Maximus rightly incited him to rebel. But Maximus could not fill the prior conviction even to fulness, much less to overflowing; for the third empire was not yet, and is not yet. The interest for us in the play lies in Ibsen's interpretation of original Christianity.

Ibsen had now written two immense dramas dealing with the effect of idealism on individual egotists of exceptional imaginative excitability. This he was able to do while his intellectual consciousness of his theme was yet incomplete, by simply portraying sides of himself. But, at last having completed his intellectual analysis of idealism, he could now construct methodical illustrations of its social workings, instead of, as before, blindly projecting imaginary personal experiences which he himself had not yet succeeded in interpreting. Further, now that he understood the matter, he could see plainly the effect of idealism as a social force on people quite unlike himself: that is to say, on everyday people in

everyday life: on shipbuilders, bank managers, parsons and doctors, as well as on saints, romantic adventurers and emperors.

With his eyes thus opened, instances of the mischief of idealism crowded upon him so rapidly that he began deliberately to inculcate their lesson by writing realistic prose plays of modern life. His skill as a playwright and his genius as an artist were thenceforth used only to secure attention and effectiveness for his detailed attack on idealism.

The first of the series of realistic prose plays is called Pillars of Society in which Ibsen denounces the hypocrisy and pretence of the respectable. In the person of Consul Bernick, whose reputation is based on two ~~low~~ deceptions, all society is indicted. Bernick, a "pillar of society", in pursuance of maintaining the respectability of his father's firm of shipbuilders, has averted a disgraceful exposure by allowing another man to bear the discredit not only of a love affair in which he himself had been the sinner, but of a theft which was never committed at all, having merely been alleged as an excuse for the firm's being out of funds at a critical period. Bernick is an abject slave to the idealizings of one Rösund, a schoolmaster, about respectability, duty to society, good example, social influence, health of community, and so on. When Bernick falls in love with a married woman, he feels that no man has a

right to shock the feelings of Rörland and the community for his own selfish gratification. However, a clandestine intrigue will shock nobody, since nobody need know of it. He accordingly adopts this method of satisfying himself and preserving the moral tone of the community at the same time. Unluckily, the intrigue is all but discovered; and Bernick has either to see the moral security of the community shaken to its foundations by the terrible scandal of his exposure, or else deny what he did and put it on another man. As the other man happens to be going to America, where he can easily conceal his imputed shame, Bernick's conscience tells him that it would be little short of a crime against society to neglect such an opportunity; and he accordingly lies his way back into the good opinion of Rörland and Company at the immigrant's expense.

There are three women in the play for whom the schoolmaster's ideals have no attractions. First, there is the actress's daughter, who wants to go to America because she hears that people there are not good; for she is heartily tired of good people, since it is part of their goodness to look down on her because of her mother's disgrace. The schoolmaster, to whom she is engaged, condescends to her for the same reason. The second has already sacrificed her happiness and wasted her life in conforming to the Rörland ideal of womanliness; and she earnestly advises the younger woman not to commit that

folly, but to break her engagement with the school-master and elope promptly with the man she loves. The third is a naturally free woman who has snapped her fingers at the current ideals all her life; and it is her presence that at last encourages the liar to break with the ideals by publicly telling the truth about himself.

The comic personage of the piece is a useless hypochondriac whose function in life as described by himself is "to hold up the banner of the ideal." This he does by sneering at everything and everybody for not resembling the heroic incidents and characters he reads about in novels and tales of adventure. But his obvious peevishness and folly make him much less dangerous than the pious idealist, the earnest and respectable Rörland. The play concludes with Bernick's admission that the spirits of Truth and Freedom are the true pillars of society, a phrase which sounds so like an idealistic commonplace that it is necessary to add that Truth in this passage does not mean the nursery convention of truth-telling satirized by Ibsen himself in a later play. It means the unflinching recognition of facts, and the abandonment of the conspiracy to ignore such of them as do not bolster up the ideals. Ibsen urges the recognition of all facts. The word Freedom means freedom from the tyranny of the Rörland ideals.

And Ibsen was indeed becoming increasingly aware that

civilization could not be free while one half of the race was still in legal bondage--a state of affairs particularly applicable to the provincial society which he was exploring. Moreover, it seemed to him that civilization could only be saved by women; they were less directly attached to the world of venal enterprise, and it was from mothers that man first received his training. Women, in short, were to become the "pillars of society."

In the next play Ibsen returned to the charge with such an uncompromising and outspoken attack on marriage as a useless sacrifice of human beings to an ideal, that his meaning was obscured by its very obviousness. Ghosts, the tragedy of Mrs. Alving, whose observance of the conventions of marriage bound her to a wayward and syphilitic husband, startled the world by introducing the subjects of heredity and venereal disease into the theatre. It is the story of a woman who has faithfully acted as a model wife and mother, sacrificing herself at every point with selfless thoroughness. Her husband is a man with a huge capacity and appetite for sensuous enjoyment. Society, prescribing ideal duties and not enjoyment for him, drives him to enjoy himself in underhand and illicit ways. When he marries his model wife, her devotion to duty only makes life harder for him; and he at last takes refuge in the caresses of an undutiful but pleasure-loving housemaid, and leaves his

wife to satisfy her conscience by managing his business affairs while he satisfies his cravings as best he can by reading novels, drinking, and flirting with the servants.

Mrs. Alving feels that her place is by her husband for better or for worse, and by her child. Now the ideal of wifely and womanly duty which demands this from her also demands that she shall regard herself as an outraged wife, and her husband as a scoundrel. And the family ideal calls upon her to suffer in silence lest she shatter her innocent son's faith in the purity of home life by letting him know the disreputable truth about his father. She falters in her duty for one moment only. Although she had been in love with a highly respectable clergyman, a professor of her own idealism, named Manders, she contracts this marriage for the sake of her family. In the humiliation of her first discovery of her husband's infidelity, she leaves the house and takes refuge with Manders; but he at once leads her back to the path of duty from which she does not again swerve. With the utmost devotion she carries out an elaborate scheme of lying and imposture. She so manages her husband's affairs and so shields his good name that everybody believes him to be a man of public spirit and a citizen of the strictest conformity to current ideals of respectability and family life. She provides for the servant he has seduced, and brings up his illegitimate daughter as

a maid in her own household. As a crowning sacrifice, she sends her son away to Paris to be educated there, knowing that if he stays at home, the shattering of his ideals must come sooner or later.

Her work is crowned with success, and her own martyrdom is brought to an end at last by the death of her husband in the odor of the most sanctified reputation, leaving her free to recall her son from Paris. But when her son returns, she finds that he has inherited his father's love of enjoyment, along with the diseases which the latter's pleasures have brought him. He carries poison in his pocket against the time when general paralysis of insanity will destroy his faculties. In desperation his mother undertakes to rescue him from this horrible apprehension by making his life happy. He shall have as much champagne as he wishes. If he loves the girl, he shall marry her even though she be his half-sister. But the half-sister, on learning the state of his health, leaves the house; for she, too, is her father's daughter, and is not going to sacrifice her life in devotion to an invalid. When the mother and son are left alone in their dreary home, with the rain falling outside, all she can do for him is to promise that if his doom overtakes him before he can poison himself, she will make a final sacrifice of her natural feelings by performing that dreadful duty, the first of all her duties however, that always has a real basis. When the sun finally appears and

and the young man asks her to give it to him to play with, she sees that the ideals have claimed their victim, and that the time has come for her to save him from a real horror by sending him from her out of the world, just as she saved him from an imaginary one years before by sending him out of Norway.

Broadly conceived, then, Ghosts combines the bleakest realism with an intense protest against everything that shackles the individual in his pursuit of happiness and integrity. Ibsen followed this track to a point at which he could even pity Mrs. Alving's husband. Despite her bitterness against him, Mrs. Alving notes that the conventions of early training, which made a frigid woman of her, were responsible for his looking for love beyond matrimony. He, too, was frustrated! The same line of reasoning also leads Ibsen to deplore Mrs. Alving's sacrifice of her happiness for the sake of family respectability when she failed to leave her husband; and by the same token the author approves the healthy-minded girl Regina's refusal to stay with Oswald and minister to his ailing body. Ibsen would have agreed with his champion Shaw that there is nothing in society so mean as "forcing self-sacrifice on a woman under the pretence that she likes it." As a tragedy of congenital disease, this play is Ibsen's least pleasant and most impressive. The fact remains, however, that everywhere Ghosts was hailed by those

intent upon breaking with the traditional drama. It became a stock piece on all experimental stages.

The attack upon formulas for conduct, evident in Ghosts, was continued with greater finesse in The Wild Duck, which showed the futility of attempting to impose ideals upon others from without, and criticized specifically such formulas as "Sacrifice what is dearest to you," and "Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." According to Ibsen, sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice is folly, and truth-telling, while desirable in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases, may in the thousandth prove immoral. He had preached the necessity of truth and freedom in The Pillars of Society, but in The Wild Duck he sought to reprehend those who would deduce from his earlier play any hard and fast law of conduct to be applied externally to every situation. He would show that circumstances alter cases. Gregers Werle, the unintelligent reformer, with his cant about the claim of the ideal, is a fool to expose the past of simple-hearted Mrs. Ekdal to her husband, and a greater fool still to bid Mrs. Ekdal's little girl sacrifice what she holds dearest in order to win back the love of her supposed father. Misery results for all.

The household to which we are introduced in The Wild Duck is not, like Mrs. Alving's, a handsome one made miserable by superstitious illusions, but a shabby

one made happy by romantic illusions. The only member of it who sees it as it really is is the wife, a good-natured Philistine who desires nothing better. The husband, a vain, petted, spoilt dawdler, believes he is a delicate and high-souled man, devoting his life to redeeming his old father's name from the disgrace brought upon it by imprisonment for breach of the forest laws. This redemption he proposes to effect by making himself famous as a great inventor when he has the necessary inspiration. Their daughter, a girl in her teens, believes intensely in her father and the promised invention. The disgraced grandfather cheers himself by drink whenever he can get it; but his chief resource is a wonderful garret full of rabbits and pigeons. The old man has procured a number of second-hand Christmas trees; and with these he has turned the garret into a sort of toy forest, in which he can play at bear hunting, which was one of the sports of his youth and prosperity. The weapons employed in the hunting expeditions are a gun which will not go off, and a pistol which occasionally brings down a rabbit or a pigeon. A crowning touch is given to the illusion by a wild duck, which, however, must not be shot, as it is the special property of the girl, who reads and dreams while her mother cooks, washes, sweeps, and carries on the photographic work which is supposed to be the business of her husband.

askin Mrs. Ekdal does not appreciate the highly strung

sensitiveness of Hjalmar's character, which is constantly suffering agonizing jars from her vulgarity, but then she does not appreciate that other fact that he is a lazy and idle imposter. Downstairs there is a disgraceful clergyman named Molvik, a hopeless drunkard; but even he respects himself and is tolerated because of a special illusion invented for him by another lodger, Dr. Relling, upon whom the lesson of the household above has not been thrown away. Molvik, says the doctor, must break out into drinking fits because he is daimonic, an imposing explanation which completely relieves the reverend gentleman from the imputation of vulgar tippling.

Into this domestic circle there comes a new lodger, an idealist of the most advanced type. He greedily swallows the daimonic theory of the clergyman's drunkenness, and enthusiastically accepts the photographer as the high-souled hero he supposes himself to be; but he is troubled because the relations of the man and his wife do not constitute an ideal marriage. He happens to know that the woman, before her marriage, was the cast-off mistress of his own father; and because she has not told her husband this, he conceives her life as founded on a lie, like that of Bernick in Pillars of Society. He accordingly sets himself to work out the woman's salvation for her, and establish ideally frank situations between the pair, by simply blurting out the truth, and then asking them with fatuous self-satisfaction whether they

do not feel much the better for it.. This wanton piece of mischief has more results than a mere domestic scene. , The husband is too weak to act on his bluster about outraged honor and the impossibility of his ever living with his wife again; and the woman is merely annoyed with the idealist for telling on her; but the girl takes the matter to heart and shoots herself. The doubt cast on her parentage, with her father's theatrical repudiation of her, destroy her ideal place in the home, and make her a source of discord there. She sacrifices herself, thereby carrying out the teaching of the idealist mischief-maker, who has talked a good deal to her about the duty and beauty of self-sacrifice, without foreseeing that he might be taken in mortal earnest. The busybody thus finds that people cannot be freed from their failings from without. They must free themselves and as Relling assures us: "Life would be quite tolerable if we could only get rid of the confounded duns that keep on pestering us in our poverty with the claims of the ideal."<sup>10</sup>

The Wild Duck is notable for its combination of reality and poetry. Against its realities of characterization and family life shimmers the lovely, slightly heartbreaking, illusory world of Hedwig and her grandfather, who plays Nimrod in a garret. The latter is, in a sense, all humanity when he is content to let four or five withered Christmas trees make his forest. The

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<sup>10</sup> William Archer, The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, The Wild Duck (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 400.

pity of life is in these characters, as well as in the inebriated theological student Molvik, who dreams that he is "daimonic"; and it is cardinal in Dr. Relling's philosophy that the average man cannot exist without "life-illusions." The understanding which is the basis of all true compassion is not withheld even from Gregers Werle, whose preoccupation with the "call of the ideal" grows out of his conditioning by a sick mother. One can only pity his warped personality further when his ideal of truth-telling shatters in his hands, even while one despises him for destroying the happiness of the Ekdals and the life of little Hedwig by revealing Gina Ekdal's past affair with his father.

In this great and moving play, the richness of characterization and the tender, bitter, humorous, tragic story keep us unaware of the author's doctrine until we have felt it as well as thought it. Here the symbolism of the pet bird wounded by the old reprobate and retrieved from the marsh by his dog is merely insinuated as a parallel to the situation of that strange family in the photographer's gallery, wounded by old Werle, rescued from its comfortable world of self-deception by his foolish son, and maimed the more.

Ibsen's next play, though it deals with the old theme, does not insist on the power of ideals to kill, as does The Wild Duck. It rather deals with the origin of ideals in unhappiness, in dissatisfaction with the real.

The subject of The Lady of the Sea is the most poetic fancy imaginable. A young woman, brought up on the sea coast, marries a respectable doctor, a widower, who idolizes her and places her in his household with nothing to do but dream and be made much of by everybody. Even the housekeeping is done by her step-daughter: she has no responsibility, no care, no trouble. In other words, she is an idle, helpless, utterly dependent article of luxury. The lady from the sea feels an indefinite want in her life. She reads her want into all other lives, and comes to the conclusion that man once had to choose whether he would be a land animal or a creature of the sea; and that he has carried about with him ever since a secret sorrow for the element he has forsaken. The dissatisfaction that gnaws her is, as she interprets it, this desperate longing for the sea. When her only child dies and leaves her without the work of a mother to give her a valid place in the world, she yields wholly to her longing, and no longer cares for her husband, who begins to fear that she is going mad.

At last a seaman appears and claims her as his wife on the ground that they went years before through a rite which consisted of their marrying the sea by throwing their rings into it. This man, who had to fly from her in the old time because he killed his captain, and who fills her with a sense of dread and mystery,

seems to her to embody the mystic attraction the sea has for her. She tells her husband that she must go away with the seaman. Naturally the doctor expostulates -- declares that he cannot for her own sake let her do so mad a thing. She replies that he can only prevent her by locking her up and asks him what satisfaction it will be to him to have her body under lock and key while her heart is with the other man. In vain he urges that he will only keep her under restraint until the seaman goes -- that he must not, dare not, allow her to ruin herself. Her arguments remain unanswerable. The seaman openly declares that she will come; so the distracted husband asks him whether he supposes he can force her from her home. To this the seaman replies that, on the contrary, unless she comes of her own free will there is no satisfaction to him in her coming at all: the unanswerable argument again. She echoes it by demanding her freedom to choose. Her husband must cry off his law-made, church-made bargain; renounce his claim to the fulfillment of her vows; and leave her free to go back to the sea with her old lover. Then the doctor, with a heavy heart, drops his prate about his heavy responsibility for her actions, and throws the responsibility on her by crying off as she demands. The moment she feels herself free and responsible, all her childish fancies vanish: the seaman becomes simply an old acquaintance whom she no longer cares for; and the doctor's affection produces its natural result. In short,

she says no to the seaman and takes over the house-keeping keys from her stepdaughter without any further maunderings over that secret sorrow for the sea.

"Freedom under responsibility" is the basic vision of The Lady from the Sea. Ellida, however, is most interesting as a battleground between conscious adjustment to life and unconscious drives as represented by her dreamy attachment to the only half-real sailor with the fish-eyes. Her subjection to the pull of the sea and the tug of mysterious freedom represented by the man with the fish-eyes is motivated by her sheltered marriage to a middle-aged physician. Until Dr. Wangel fortifies her self-respect by allowing her freedom to choose between herself and her dream, until she achieves individuality and a sense of responsibility in remaining with him, she is herself only half-real.

Foregoing symbolism and concentrating directly on human character, Ibsen created a masterpiece in Hedda Gabler. Hedda is a crystal-clear example of a maladjusted woman. She has sisters in every city, for she belongs to the widely dispersed sorority of moderately comfortable women whose restlessness and envy arise from their false standards of happiness, as well as from their egotism and uselessness. Hedda, the daughter of General Gabler, belongs to the aristocracy by birth, but hers is no aristocracy of the spirit. She had no ethical ideals at all, only romantic ones.

She is a typical nineteenth-century figure, falling into the abyss between the ideals which do not impose on her and the realities she has not yet discovered. The result is that though she has imagination, and an intense appetite for beauty, she has no conscience, no conviction: with plenty of cleverness, energy, and personal fascination she remains mean, envious, insolent, cruel in protest against others' happiness, friendish in her dislike of inartistic people and things, a bully in reaction from her own cowardice.<sup>11</sup>

Vague aspirations agitate her, but these are sterile and lead to no valid course of action. At the same time, like so many of her sisters, she is basically a philistine: wanting comfort and security, she plays safe. She marries the plodding scholar Tesman and covets a university position for him even while she resents the narrow professional world in which she finds herself. She dreams of a gloriously intoxicated life but cannot venture the experience; she likes a garland of "vine-leaves," so long as someone else wears it and pays the price for it. Lacking courage for experience and being too much the egotist and frigid woman to give herself to love, she naturally feels frustrated. Pregnancy, which she detests, only exacerbates her sense of frustration.

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<sup>11</sup> G. B. Shaw, op. cit., p. 126.

that the two pairs are both...

To amuse herself she forms an underhand alliance with an elderly gallant who quite understands how little she cares for her husband, and proposes a ménage à trois to her. She consents to his coming there, but she keeps her pistols in reserve in case he becomes seriously importunate.

Meanwhile Lö<sup>X</sup>berg is drifting to disgrace by way of drink. He finally takes a position as tutor to the children of Sheriff Elvsted, whose bride was their governess. Lövberg does not dare tell Mrs. Elvsted about his dissipations, but he does tell her about his unwritten books. She does not dare remonstrate with him for drinking, but he gives it up as soon as he sees that it shocks her. At last, Lövberg, quite reformed, publishes one book which makes him celebrated for the moment, and completes another, copied in the handwriting of Mrs. Elvsted. He goes off to town with his pockets full of the money the published book has brought him. Knowing that without him her life will not be worth living, Mrs. Elvsted sees that she must go.

Now it happens that Hedda's husband is an old friend and competitor for academic honors of Lövberg, and also that Hedda was a schoolfellow of Mrs. Elvsted, or Thea. In order to keep Lövberg away from the bottle, Thea asks the Tesmans to invite Lövberg to their house so as to keep him in good company. They consent, with the result that the two pairs are brought under the same roof, and

the tragedy begins to work itself out.

Lövberg's experience with Thea has enlightened his judgment of Hedda, and he immediately tries to get on romantic terms with her by impressing her with the penetrating criticism that she is and always was a coward. She admits that the virtuous heroics with the pistol when he tried to make advances to her were pure cowardice; but she is still so void of any other standard of conduct than conformity to the conventional ideals, that she thinks her cowardice consisted in not daring to be wicked. That is, she thinks that what she actually did was the right thing; and since she despises herself for doing it, and feels that he also rightly despises her for doing it, she has a passionate feeling that what is wanted is the courage to do wrong. This leaves Hedda to conceive that when Lövberg tried to seduce her he was a hero, and that in allowing Thea to reform him he has played the miscreant. In acting on this misconception she is restrained by no consideration for any of the rest. She gratifies her intense jealousy of Thea by deliberately taunting Lövberg into breaking loose from her influence by joining a carouse at which he not only loses his manuscript, but finally gets into the hands of the police through behaving outrageously in the house of a disreputable woman whom he accuses of stealing the manuscript, not knowing that it has been picked up by Tesman and handed to Hedda for safe keeping. Hedda's jealousy is

is of Thea's power of making a man of Lövberg, of her part in his life as a man of genius. The manuscript which Tesman gives to Hedda to lock up safely is in Thea's handwriting. It is the fruit of Lövberg's union with Thea: he himself speaks of it as "their child." So when he turns his despair to romantic account by coming to the two women and making them a tragic scene, telling Thea that he has cast the manuscript, torn into a thousand pieces, out upon the fiord; and then, when she is gone, telling Hedda that he has brought "the child" to a house of ill-fame and lost it there, she deceived by his posing, and thirsting to gain faith in the beauty of her own influence over him from a heroic deed of some sort, makes him a present of one of her pistols, only begging him to "do it beautifully", by which she means that he is to kill himself in some manner that will make his suicide a romantic memory to her. He takes it unblushingly, and leaves her with the air of a man who is looking his last on earth. But the moment he is out of sight of his audience, he goes back to the house where he still supposes the manuscript to be, and there renews the wrangle of the night before, using the pistol to threaten the woman, with the result that he gets shot in the abdomen, leaving the weapon to fall into the hands of the police. Meanwhile Hedda burns "the child." Then comes her elderly gallant to disgust her with the news of the deed which Lövberg promised her to do so beautifully, and

to make her understand that he himself has now got her into his power by his ability to identify the pistol. She must either be the slave of this man, or else face the scandal of the connection of her name at the inquest with a squalid debauch ending with a murder. Thea, too, is not crushed by Lövberg's death. Ten minutes after she has received the news with a cry of heartfelt loss, she sits down with Tesman to reconstruct "the child" from the old notes she has piously preserved. Over the congenial task of collecting and arranging another man's ideas Tesman is perfectly happy, and forgets his beautiful Hedda for the first time. Thea is still mistress of the situation, holding the dead Lövberg, gaining Tesman, and leaving Hedda to her elderly admirer, who smoothly remarks that he will answer for Mrs. Tesman not being bored while her husband is occupied in putting the pieces of the book together. However, he has again reckoned without General Gabler's second pistol. Hedda shoots herself then and there, and so the story ends.

Hedda, the type of woman who so often finds her way to a psychoanalyst's door nowadays, is a supreme creation. Ibsen, the portrait artist, is both analytical and compassionate, mercilessly objective and yet by no means exultant over his subject's shortcomings. Combined with vivid portraits of the pedant Tesman, the daimonic Lövberg, and the complete woman Mrs. Elvsted, Hedda Gabler is a masterful character drama. Ibsen wrote much that was more

ambitious but nothing greater.

Ibsen's attempt to combine the natural and the symbolic was continued more effectively in The Master Builder. As a drama of ideas, The Master Builder expounds two notions: the peril of selfish individualism (already shown in *Hedda Gabler*) and the struggle of age against youth. Ibsen, conscious of advancing years, felt the inevitable passing of power from the older to the younger generation. He felt both the fear and the fascination of youth, especially in his innocent affair with Emilie Bardach, a girl of eighteen whom, at the age of sixty-one, he had met on a summer visit to the Tyrol. He has universalized these personal sentiments, setting forth the problem of every man who lives long enough to regret what is slipping from him. This particular conflict Ibsen associates with that between individualism and altruism.

Solness is a memorable character who embodies all the qualities of an aging man and artist. Memories weigh him down, and he is tied to his frustrated wife who never used her talent for "building up the souls of little children" after her little twins died. Then, too, their death is on his conscience, since he had willed the fire that was indirectly responsible for their illness. Grown sick in conscience, he can no longer mount, as once, to the tops of his finished structures. He once built churches with high towers (much as Ibsen built great

historical dramas in verse). He has come to the end of that and built "homes for human beings" (much as Ibsen took to writing prose dramas of modern life). He has come to the end of that, and has turned to a fantastic type of architecture, uniting the two.

He is mortally afraid of the younger generation when there is any likelihood of its competing with him; he fears that his young assistant Rognar Brovik is going to supplant him by conceiving new styles of architecture. He refuses to let young Brovik build on his own account, and, as a ruse to hold the youth in his office, he has employed the latter's sweetheart and captured her affection. Then, Hilda Wangel comes knocking at the door. She is the younger generation personified, both his enemy and his friend. She prompts him to loose the bonds of the pair in the office, and to be valiant as of old. So incited and inspired, Solness ascends the tower that crowns his own new house, but reels and crashes to the ground.

The Master Builder again dramatizes aspiration or the exertion of the will in defiance of inhibiting circumstances. Only, as we noted, it is heavy with a realization of the defeat of life. It contains great beauty and is richly suggestive. But like Master Solness it possesses an only partially realized life, and it suffers a catastrophe when it climbs the height of symbolism.

Ibsen's prime concern in these realistic and symbolic plays was, as I have attempted to show, with the "gay

science" of human happiness for the sake of which he felt the necessity of destroying or remolding old foundations in man's spirit and society. Hence, for example, his dynamiting of old concepts of duty, to which he opposed the concept of self-realization. Finally, the great innovations in dramatic content which Ibsen introduced may be clearly seen when one compares the subject matter of the old French classical theatre with that of Ibsen's theatre.

### CHAPTER III

#### IBSEN OVER EUROPE

Ibsen's spirit brooded upon the theatre and brought forth a progeny that multiplied itself prodigiously. It exhibited, and continues to exhibit, much variety and inequality of talent, and it is not easy to put the post-Ibsen playwrights into well-labeled pigeonholes, which is no doubt a good thing. One Ibsenite, that Aristophanes of modernity whom no one will fail to identify as Bernard Shaw, equaled his master's stature, and one antagonistic Scandinavian--Strindberg-- was his equal in genius, if not in execution. Many of them were timid, cautious, or greatly limited men like Jones, Pinero, and Sudermann. These writers marketed sugar-coated capsules of realism and threw exceedingly well. Others like Brieux and Hauptmann sometimes inflated themselves and have been for some time deflated. Some playwrights like Schnitzler, Synge, and Chekhov made no effort to storm heaven and hell, but attained much sweetness and light. Also among the highly respected laborers in the vineyards of the bacchic lord were the associated artists of the theatre Antoine, Brahm, and Stanislavsky, who translated the new texts into the stage movement.

As we have said, Ibsen influenced to a great extent the theatre that followed his. The writers of

this period, however, had form but not substance. Three are worthy of attention: Jones, Pinero, and Shaw. A lower middle-class provincial, Henry Arthur Jones was the most typical dramatist of the new British middle classes. Saints and Sinners, written in 1884, is laid in provincial surroundings, among the sordid, shop-keeping lower middle class, bound to a hypocritical and empty puritanism, formalist in their religion, and avaricious and unjust in their life. If one looks at play as a modernized melodrama, these would be the villains of the piece. Then there is the heroine who is seduced and dies, and a high-minded lover who arrives in time to vow his eternal love in spite of what has happened. This heroine is the daughter of the Vicar, and everything takes place against the parish background. All this was quite enough for the play to cause a scandal and let loose controversy. Although Jones disclaimed any influence from Ibsen, it is difficult to see how his attack upon the respectable institutions of society can be dissociated from the influence of Ibsen's Pillars of Society. Both expose a society built upon lies and hypocrisy, and both contain confession scenes, of which Jones became fond in later plays. There is concrete evidence, in fact, that Jones toyed with the very ideas first used in drama by Ibsen,-- heredity, environment, and social responsibility. In 1884 he produced an English adaptation of The Doll's House,

entitled Breaking a Butterfly.

To the blending of the comic and the imaginative, so purely English, Sir Arthur Wing Pinero brings that same vague, yet not bitter background of melancholy which we have noticed in his comedies of manners and problem comedies. We also find it again in the dramas, which are not always the best part of this author's work, but are the best known and which make him a more salient figure in the development of modern English drama.

His first attempt at serious drama was The Squire (1881), followed by The Profligate, written in 1887 and performed in 1889. The latter is the story of a man who, after having spent a good part of his life in satisfying the most disorderly impulses, is unexpectedly brought to realize the tragic effects of his misdeeds on the life of a woman. The theme is cleverly developed up to a final crisis of remorse, in front of which Pinero found himself perplexed. The drama had to end either in the high domain of tragedy, with the suicide of the protagonist, or else in the grim, opaque atmosphere of Ibsen fatality, with the indication of a severe immanent Nemesis. Neither solution was really suited to Pinero's talent, who wrote both of them, leaving the choice to the company; and for two or three years, as if disheartened, he stopped writing and retired to meditate on the master who was then being revealed to

the new generations of the theatre--Ibsen.

The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893) was the result of these meditations, and it had a great success, especially among the young. Pinero was encouraged to compose the play by the presentation of Ibsen's Ghosts in London in 1891. Although Pinero did not take over the Ibsen technique, the impulse to write a serious play, dealing with a serious subject, came to him from Ibsen. This problem play, plainly inspired by Ibsen, was influential in substituting for the narrow conventions of the English drama the freer atmosphere and sounder methods of continental dramaturgy. This frank study of a woman with a past was somewhat shocking to Victorian prudishness, but its liberalizing influence was not wholly wasted.

Shaw, who criticized and continued to puncture the successive plays of Pinero, was then a furious militant Ibsenite, a socialist and a reformer in all fields and at all costs. In comparison with him, Pinero was certainly a soldier in the rear guard, who involuntarily betrayed his own army. To appreciate Pinero one must forget, not only Ibsen, but all that rebellion of the middle classes against themselves, of which Marx was one of the prophets, and of which Shaw was later, in England, the dramatist and bard in one. "Pinero is a bourgeois who studies his own class and his own soul, without rebellion. He studies them, and displays their

errors, horrors, contrasts, and the ridiculous or tragic perplexities of their lives, because he has a human, sympathetic, observing spirit; because he has that happy talent for the stage, that art of seeing and constructing the representable. Nevertheless, he does not entirely escape the influence of Ibsen, for traces of Ibsenism are visible here and there in his work.

Shaw is the outstanding figure of this period and the foremost proponent of Ibsenism. That philosophy of the citizenship of the artist for which Ibsen stood finds a true expression in his life. He, too, was interested in the reconstruction of society, and he attempted to deal with many of the issues that Ibsen dealt with, such as various sociological problems.

We have seen how all the most characteristic middle-class writers of this period have felt Ibsen's influence to some extent. Jones and Pinero, to quote the two greatest, gave to the modern English middle classes a realistic and thoughtful drama, sometimes also satirical or controversial, but always keeping itself within the main dictates of middle-class mentality and convention. They accustomed the middle classes to come to the theatre to think; sometimes they also accustomed them to contemplate themselves without the veil of preconceived commonplaces. It was the Ibsenites who were to challenge the middle classes with an aggressive, hostile, and fierce criticism, and almost force them to declare themselves

morally defeated.

The controversy that raged over Ibsen throughout Europe and in America has lost its interest because it was so thoroughly decided in Ibsen's favor. Far more important is the fact that advanced spirits everywhere rallied to Ibsen's defense; that he found formidable champions in men of the stamp of Georg Brandes, George B. Shaw, William Archer, Edmund Gosse, Hermann Bahr, Ludwig Fulda, Leo Berg, Otto Brahm, and Emile Zola.

Although his work was occasionally suppressed in Germany and he was forced to placate respectability by adding a nappy ending to A Doll's House, Ibsen won his first important victories in that country. Wherever the insurgent German theatre raised its head, it bristled with Ibsen, and the greatest stage directors and actors presented his plays during the eighties. No important German playwright could afford to neglect his example.

In France his triumph was limited by the French temperament and by the inadequacy of his translator, Count Moritz Prozor, a Lithuanian by birth, who knew German better than French. But the great critic Jules Lemaitre noticed Ibsen with interest, and Emile Zola recommended his work to the enterprising young producer André Antoine. Antoine presented Ghosts in 1890 and played Oswald himself. In the other Latin countries Ibsen's example proved less galvanic. Yet he did not lack followers even in Spain and Italy.

Skirmishes in the eighties made him known in England

largely owing to the interest of William Archer, the Scottish critic who had Scandinavian relatives and had learned Norwegian in childhood. Archer, who met Ibsen in Rome in 1881 and in Scandinavia in 1887, translated his Pillars of Society as early as 1880 and printed it in 1887. Mrs. Eleanor Marx-Aveling, Karl Marx's gifted daughter, followed suit with translations of Ghosts and An Enemy of the People. A volume containing the three translations in 1888 won many adherents. Next year A Doll's House was produced in another Archer translation, and a year later J. T. Grein defied the censor by giving a single performance of Ghosts at his Independent Theatre. Both plays aroused spirited controversies that brought Ibsen to the foreground. Archer wrote in his defense, and Shaw contributed the heavy artillery of his Quintessence of Ibsenism to the cause. By 1900 Ibsen was already so completely accepted as the father of modern drama that he was actually being regarded as a moderate.

In summary, the whole modern development in the theatre may be summed up in the innovations which Ibsen introduced both in subject matter and in dramatic form. In discarding the devices and conventions from the classical French theatre, Ibsen simplified and concentrated the external action, reduced the number of scenes, hushed the bustle on the stage, avoiding there deaths or violence, and abandoned the soliloquy. The habitual speech of the characters in the drama of Corneille and Racine is the alexandrine verse form. Ibsen made

dialogue more natural by giving to every one of his characters the actual vocabulary which that character would use. The arbitrariness of incident and the frequency of coincidence, which are raised to the maximum in the dramas of Corneille and Hugo, are reduced to the minimum in Ibsen's realistic social dramas.

Ibsen created a theatre of social criticism and individual awakening, dealing in his plays with such sociological problems as heredity, political corruption, marriage, divorce, inherited disease, excessive individualism, and the position of woman in society. What differentiates his theatre from that of his predecessors is his emphasis on ideas. He would incorporate the concept of a moral truth in a series of situations, clothing the abstract in the concrete. Certainly Ibsen has exerted upon the stage production of others in ideas, subject matter, and technique, an influence more potent than that of any save Shakespeare.

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