

- Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, BFI Publishing 1987, p. 33.
- 6 Gledhill, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Gledhill is here quoting David Grimstead.
- 7 Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- 8 *Op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.
- 9 *Op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 10 *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
- 11 *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
- 12 *Op. cit.*, p. 36.
- 13 *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
- 14 *Op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 15 *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
- 16 This does not mean, though, that Shaw himself did not see traces of melodrama in Ibsen: "Up to a certain point in the last act, *A Doll's House* might be turned into a very ordinary French drama". From *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* reprinted in James McFarlane (ed.), *Henrik Ibsen. A Critical Anthology*, Penguin Critical Anthologies 1970, p. 128.
- 17 E. M. Forster, "Ibsen the Romantic" in Charles R. Lyons, *Critical Essays on Henrik Ibsen*, Boston, Massachusetts 1987, p. 165.
- 18 Errol Durbach, "Ibsen the Romantic". *Analogues of Paradise in the Later Plays*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., London 1982, p. 2.
- 19 Brian Johnston, *The Ibsen Cycle: The Design of the Plays from "Pillars of Society" to "When We Dead Awaken"*, Twayne Publishers, The Library of Scandinavian Studies, Boston 1975, Preface, n.p.
- 20 The strikingly Hegelian language here used is not accidental; Johnston's approach to Ibsen cannot be understood without following the basic idea that "the twelve plays, from *Pillars of Society* to *When We Dead Awaken* [make] up a single cyclical work, an odyssey of the human spirit directly paralleling that charted by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of the Mind*". Brian Johnson, *Text and Supertext in Ibsen's Drama*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park & London 1989, p. 10.
- 21 Brian Johnston, "The Dangerous Seductions of the Past: Ibsen's Counter-Discourse to Modernity" in *Modern Drama*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4, Winter 1994, p. 662.
- 22 Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- 23 Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht. A Critical Account and Reevaluation*, London 1968, p. 45. See also Ronald Grey, Ibsen. *A Dissenting View. A Study of the Last Twelve Plays*, Cambridge 1977, pp. 55-58.
- 24 Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- 25 James McFarlane (ed.), *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. V, p. 214.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Op. cit.*, p. 213.
- 28 Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- 29 The financial condition of the characters is of major concern in almost all Ibsen's plays, and often, as I will show later in relation to *A Doll's House*, financial problems play a crucial role, both in the plot structure and on a signifying level.
- 30 *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. V, p. 201.
- 31 *Op. cit.*, p. 202.
- 32 Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze. Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis and Shakespearean Comedy*, Ithaca & London 1991, p. 1.
- 33 *Op. cit.*, p. 232.
- 34 *Op. cit.*, p. 226.
- 35 *Op. cit.*, p. 212.
- 36 *Op. cit.*, p. 226.
- 37 *Op. cit.*, p. 233.
- 38 Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- 39 *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. V, p. 215.
- 40 *Op. cit.*, p. 259.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 *Op. cit.*, p. 267.
- 43 Henrik Ibsen, *Samlede verker. Hundreårsutgave*, Francis Bull, Halvdan Koht & Didrik Arup Seip (eds.), Oslo 1936, Vol. VIII, p. 343.
- 44 *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. V, pp. 269-70.
- 45 *Op. cit.*, p. 209.
- 46 *Op. cit.*, p. 269.
- 47 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Minnelli and Melodrama" in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home is Where the Heart is. Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, BFI Publishing 1987, pp. 73-74.
- 48 Durbach, *op. cit.*, 1991, p. 70 (the italics are mine).
- 49 Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
- 50 Sigmund Freud, "Writers and Day-Dreaming" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, The Hogarth Press, London 1959 (reprinted 1991), Vol. IX, p. 153.
- 51 "The *Doll House* Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen" in *PMLA* 104, No. 1, 1989. Joan Templeton gives an illuminating presentation of the play's reception.

2. A Close Look at Ibsen

Symbolic and Allegoric Approaches to Ibsen

Two "Golden Age" Productions of *Rosmersholm*

Keld Hyldig

Symbolsk er enhver fremragende Personlighed i Livet¹

INTRODUCTION

The main subject of this article is the investigation of two different productions of *Rosmersholm* from 1905 and 1922 at Nationaltheatret (established 1899) in Kristiania/Oslo. In this I will make use of *allegoric* and *symbolic* as analytical concepts. Due to the modern confusion of these concepts, I will explain my understanding and use of them. This will be done through an account of Goethe's formulations of the allegoric and the symbolic. In my opinion Goethe, by means of these two concepts and the distinction between them, defined two main strategies of artistic expression and reception, as they can be found in the approaches to theatre in the period in question.

In the biographical material on Henrik Ibsen and in his plays many connections to German culture and to the romantic tradition, including Goethe, can be established.²

In the 1850s Ibsen was engaged in questions concerning nationalism through his writing and his practical theatre work. The material for his early fairy-plays and the his-

toric plays was drawn from old Nordic fairytales, ballads and Norwegian history. However, his dramatic form was inspired by dramaturgical theoreticians like J. L. Heiberg and Hermann Hettner, as well as romantic dramatists such as Oehlenschläger, Goethe, Schiller, Hebbel and the "romantic" Shakespeare.

In the 1860s Ibsen turned completely away from nationalism. Disappointed by political developments in Norway he left the country in 1864, and settled in Rome. The meeting with the classical heritage and the Italian culture exercised a decisive influence on Ibsen and his artistic development, as it had done on Goethe through his Italian journey.³ During his stay in Rome from 1864 to 1868 Ibsen frequented the Scandinavian Club. In the library of the Club he borrowed many books, including several volumes of Goethe's works.⁴

Between 1868 and 1891, when he returned to Norway, Ibsen lived mostly in Munich and Dresden, and his engagement in German culture evolved steadily in these years. In a letter of 1888 to the Danish Scandinavian

in Berlin, Julius Hoffory, Ibsen stated that he had turned away from nationalism to the recognition of Germanism, as the cultural context where he could enfold his artistic intentions:

Emperor and Gallilean is not the first play I wrote in Germany, but probably the first I have written under the influence of German culture. ... My view of life was, at that time [during the stay in Italy - K.H.] still nationally Scandinavian, and I could not find the approach to the foreign material. Then I experienced the great period in Germany, the year of war and the development afterwards. All this exercised in many ways a transforming power on me. Until then my view on the world history and the human life had been of a national kind. Now this was extended to a viewpoint of the tribe itself, and then I could write Emperor and Gallilean.⁵

The notion of "tribe" refers to Germanism, but this must not be misinterpreted as Ibsen's turning from Norwegian nationalism to a German nationalism. It must be understood as a turn to a wider cultural perspective than the national. Ibsen's twelve contemporary plays, from *Pillars of Society* (1877) to *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) have to be seen in the light of this wider Germanic perspective, even if the material was drawn from contemporary Norwegian life.

From the late 1870s until around 1910 Ibsen was a central dramatist in German theatre. His contemporary plays were important for the innovative experimentation at the many new small and intimate theatres in the European cities. This applies not only to the naturalist theatre, but also the neo-romantic/symbolist theatre.⁶

If we look to Norway around the turn of the century, we will not find any small avant-garde theatres performing Ibsen.⁷ It was at Nationaltheatret that the artistic standards of Norwegian theatre were set in the first

three to four decades of the twentieth century. The artistic development at Nationaltheatret in this period is often referred to as "The Golden Age" of Norwegian theatre history.

One of the main contributors to the development of Norwegian theatre in the decades around the turn of the century was Bjørn Bjørnson. After his training as an actor at the Conservatory in Vienna, where most of his teachers were actors from the Burgtheater, under the leadership of Friedrich Dingelstedt, Bjørnson was engaged in the company of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. In 1884 he became director at the Christiania Theater.⁸ Here he introduced a detailed and visually splendid realistic style in the fashion of his sources of inspiration, Dingelstedt and the Meininger company. This exterior-realistic style was primarily suited to historical plays, but it was also adopted in productions of Ibsen's contemporary plays, leading to a detailed and elegant drawing-room realism. The scene-painter Jens Wang was an important contributor to the development of this style. Wang maintained this detailed realistic style in his sceneries throughout his career at the Christiania Theater and at Nationaltheatret until 1918, when he retired and was succeeded by Oliver Neerland.

However, it was not Bjørn Bjørnson, but actors/directors like Johanne Dybwad and, in time, Halfdan Christensen, who came to be the important contributors to the development of the Ibsen style after the turn of the century. Like Bjørn Bjørnson Johanne Dybwad was inspired by German theatre. She often visited Germany, as a guest performer and as a theatre-goer, and she paid especially attention to the work of Max Reinhardt.⁹

Johanne Dybwad's Ibsen style, as it developed over the years, was marked by a stylistic transformation from exterior realism through psychological realism to a profound symbolic realism. With the productions of *Rosmersholm* in 1922 and *Ghosts* in 1925 this style, which some critics named "monumen-

tal realism", reached a peak.

Yet, in spite of Ms Dybwad's fame and the public's admiration of her as an actress, few really understood the profundity of her theatrical work, and she was criticized for moving away from "sound realism". Most of the leading theatre critics of the time were influenced by naturalistic ideas and simultaneously understood theatre as literary representation. This made them incapable of recognizing the theatre performance in its own artistic right and therefore also incapable of recognizing the uniqueness of Johanne Dybwad's artistic achievements. Her work with Ibsen in the 1920s was unique in Norway in its symbolic rendering of realism.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: SYMBOLIC AND ALLEGORIC APPROACHES

The concepts of symbol and allegory, and especially the distinction between them, was an essential feature of romantic aesthetics. In the pre-romantic aesthetics there seems to have been no distinction between allegory and symbol, and the distinction then vanished again in the post-romantic aesthetics, mainly because of Hegel's attack on romanticism and the idea of symbolic art. Hegel delimited idealistic and classical aesthetics from the ambiguous symbolic aesthetics of the Romantics, and rejected the receptional viewpoint, which was of decisive importance in the aesthetic *Anschauung* of the Romantics.¹⁰

Along with the Hegelian idealism/classicism positivism/scientific materialism came to be the dominating trends of aesthetics and art criticism in the second half of the nineteenth century. The distinction between idealism and realism replaced the distinction between the allegoric and the symbolic, and whenever the concepts of the symbolic and allegoric were used in art criticism, it was generally in a negative assessment.¹¹ The only exception to this was the aesthetic the-

ory that supported the symbolist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, this aesthetic theory was mainly formulated by artists (Charles Baudelaire, John Ruskin, William Morris, Andrey Bely etc.) and not by academic philosophers. The symbolist movement was an important link between Romanticism and the Modernism of the twentieth century.

Within the aesthetic theories of the twentieth century both the concept of the symbol and the allegory have reoccurred. The symbolic approach was developed by theoreticians like Ernst Cassirer, Roman Jakobson, Susanne K. Langer and Tzvetan Todorov. The allegoric approach was resurrected by, among others, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man.

Within the latest Ibsen research the concepts of the symbol and the allegory have also occurred as methodical concepts.¹² For example the Norwegian scholar Eivind Tjønneland has recently written several essays where he approaches Ibsen's contemporary plays from symbolic and allegorical viewpoints.¹³

The reoccurrence of the symbol and the allegory confirms the currency of both concepts. And the romantic distinction between allegory and symbol is the underlying historical and philosophical matrix for new approaches within modern and post-modern aesthetics. The preference for the allegoric or the symbolic is then a matter of aesthetic and ideological interest and not of epistemological rejection of the one or the other.

In my analytical use of these concepts I attempt not to use the noun forms *allegory* and *symbol*, but the adjective forms *allegoric* and *symbolic*. Symbol and allegory refer to works of art as objects, while the adjective forms refer to aesthetic-semantic strategies applied by producers and recipients of art. Theatre performances, and art in general, should in my opinion be considered as being constituted in the interaction between producers and recipients.

The German Romantics understood art

and aesthetics as an autonomous realm of expression and acknowledgement. Along with the new estimation of subjectivity, the notions of the allegoric and the symbolic were essential in this aesthetic discourse. The Romantics considered the symbolic to be the essence of art, while the allegoric was regarded as a form of expression based on reason and conventionalism. Among the German Romantics Goethe was the one who most explicitly formulated the distinction between symbolic and allegoric approaches.¹⁴

What distinguishes Goethe's aesthetics from the more speculative idealism of his contemporaries like Schelling or Hegel, is that his formulations were related to art and nature as physical phenomena. Goethe had genuine confidence in the senses as the mediator between the "objective" physical world and the "subjective" consciousness. He considered natural phenomena, as well as art, to be established in a unification of materiality, sensory perception and recognition, in a union of subjectivity and objectivity.¹⁵ Compared, for example, with Kant's and Hegel's abstract conceptualizations of the relation between the consciousness and the physical world, Goethe's understanding of the act of recognition and reflection was exceptionally "organic":

Throughout my whole life I have proceeded through mediation and observation, synthetic and then again analytic; the systole and the diastole of the human spirit was like a second breath for me, never separated, always pulsating.¹⁶

Here Goethe used his own bodily experiences, the breathing and pulsation of the bloodstream, in a very concrete metaphorical way to express how he perceived and contemplated the world around him. This "naive" but human way of searching for knowledge can be seen as Goethe's natural inclination, but also as a reflection of his reservation about abstract intellectualism in

favour of the live acquaintance with art and nature in all their varieties. Goethe understood the symbolic approach as a natural, intuitive and artistic form of human expression and understanding. In an article from 1796, Goethe defined a distinction between symbolic and allegoric treatment in painting. About the symbolic he wrote: "The objects represented ["dargestellt"] in this way appear to exist for themselves alone and are nevertheless significant at the deepest level".¹⁷

The symbolic artwork is autonomous, seemingly enclosed in itself, and at the same time open for significance beyond the boundary of its singularity. This paradox of the symbolic is related to the fact that symbolic significance not only depends on the artwork itself and its elements, but also on the beholder's abilities to contemplate and recognize it.

It is truly symbolic, when the particular represents the general, not dreamlike or shadowy, but like a living momentary revelation of the unexplorable ["lebendig-augenblickliche Offenbarung des Unerforschlichen"].¹⁸

Here Goethe pointed to the inevitable metaphysical or even mystical aspect of symbolic signification, as a kind of revelation ("Offenbarung"). Therefore, symbolic significance can never be exhaustively understood and defined absolutely in abstract terms. Like nature symbolic art is inscrutable; it will maintain secrets to be discovered and contemplated in the future. In contrast to the symbolic, Goethe defined the allegoric as expressions and modes of understanding based upon abstract concepts, preconceived ideas and conventions:

It is a great difference whether the poet searches the singular for the general or beholds ["schaut"] the general through the singular. From the former of these approaches, allegory is born; in this the

singular has value solely as an example of the general. The latter is, nevertheless, properly the nature of poetry; it expresses the singular, without thinking of, or indicating, the general.¹⁹

Goethe did not reject the allegoric approach, but he pointed out the strategic differences between this and the symbolic approach. In the case of the symbolic approach, meaning is revealed organically-metaphysically from within the contemplated work of art. In the case of the allegoric approach, meaning is known beforehand and is tied up with the expressive material:

In this [the allegoric - K.H.] there is more of accident and arbitrariness, or even of conventionalism, inasmuch as the meaning of the sign must be communicated to us before we know what it is.²⁰

The allegoric approach rests within the universe of the logical and abstract reason, and the allegoric interpretation is grounded on foreknown conventions or on the completely free and arbitrary play of interpretations.

An allegoric approach often expresses some kind of *explanation*. This is never the case with the symbolic, where it always is a matter of *understanding*. In the allegoric approach there is something (concepts, ideas etc.) outside the phenomenon itself, but related to it. This "something" can appear as an explanation of the phenomenon in consideration; or it can be the other way round, the phenomenon is an explanation of, for instance, a philosophical or ideological standpoint. Thus, the answer or the explanation is somehow given beforehand to the allegorist. This is never the case for the symbolist, who attempts to understand something not known beforehand.

Nevertheless, the symbolic and allegoric are not incompatible. The allegoric can, through artistic treatment, be "moved" toward the symbolic, and the symbolic can be moved toward the allegoric, and the two

approaches can be intermingled. From a receptional point of view the beholder of the work of art can, so to say, choose and alternate between allegoric and symbolic approaches, but the perceiver will, of course, be more or less "manipulated" by the approach taken by the artist(s).

The allegoric and the symbolic are conceptualizations of two different expressive and receptional approaches which point in opposite directions. The symbolic points to a contemplation of the inner coherence of the work of art, while the allegoric points away from it, making it represent something outside the work of art itself.

SYMBOLIC EXPOSÉ IN THEATRICAL PRODUCTION

The focus of theatrical research is theatre performances and not play texts as literature. This means that whenever play texts are being read, this is done in the light of *theatre history*, from a *dramaturgical* viewpoint or within the context of a specific *theatrical production*.

In the production of a performance, a play text is transformed into a living artistic event. A lot of other theatrical "raw material", for instance actors' bodies, voices, costumes, make-up, decorations, props, lighting, sounds etc. are also involved in this production process. This means that the text is no longer there as a text in the performance. What is there is the live action of characters and visual-spatial elements realized in the interaction between theatre producers and the spectators. Even though a theatrical performance is not "real life" but performed life, it is still a living event. And as such, it has the possibility of being genuinely symbolic in the Goethean sense, something which a literary text can never really be, at least not in the same way.

Ibsen's contemporary plays have a realistic level representing physical circumstances, characters, milieus and socio-political

questions, but step by step in the writing of these plays Ibsen undermined this realistic level with psychological subtleties and secrets. This interior, or sub-textual, dramaturgical tendency of the texts makes all exterior references, realistic, historic or socio-political, secondary, yet necessary as a frame for the drama.

Consistent performances can, and have been produced with dramaturgical focus on the realistic level and the socio-political topics represented here. This approach can bring out an illusion of real life, simultaneously expressing a socio-political criticism in the form of allegoric representation. Nevertheless, this approach will have to emphasize the subjects represented by the realistic surroundings and the secondary characters, at the expense of the more subtle features of the main characters.

Most of Ibsen's secondary characters are "flat characters" without soul. The lines of these characters do not provide the actors with any aid in establishing an inner life. The search for deeper meaning for these characters ends up as representations of socio-political types and standpoints. In *Ghosts*, for instance, Pastor Manders represents Christian conservatism and Engstrand, the carpenter, represents proletarian vulgarity. In *Rosmersholm*, Kroll, the headmaster, and Mortensgaard, the editor, are representatives of socio-political forces (parties), namely the Conservative and the Liberal respectively.

Recognition of the differences between the secondary and main characters, and the distinction between the realistic surface and the inner secrets seem to be prerequisites for a symbolic interpretation of Ibsen's contemporary plays. The main entry into such a symbolic interpretation is the psychological development of the main characters. In their profound inner life lies an abundance of possible theatrical life and symbolic significance. This has always made these characters interesting challenges for actors, providing them with opportunities for comprehensive psychological penetration and expressions.

It is, however, not only the inner life of the main characters, but also the secondary characters and the scenic elements that have to be represented in a specific way, if a performance of one of Ibsen's contemporary plays is to have symbolic significance beyond the realistic and socio-political representation. Thus, the moulding of an artistic totality with symbolic significance is dependent upon the dramaturgical co-operation between the director, the set designer and the actors. The crucial point is not only how the actors playing the main characters succeed in exposing the psychological secrets, but also how the secondary characters and the scenic milieu are treated dramaturgically in relation to the dramatic inner life of the main characters.

It is exactly this kind of artistic, dynamic co-operation between acting, direction and design that can be found in Johanne Dybwad's theatrical work at Nationaltheatret in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Her style of acting and directing led from exterior realism, through psychological penetration toward symbolic exposé. Johanne Dybwad's Ibsen work, however, was unique compared to the main line of development of the Norwegian Ibsen style, which led from exterior realism through psychological realism toward an intimate naturalism. Any symbolic revelation of psychological secrets was generally avoided in this realistic/naturalistic mainstream, by subordinating the inner life of the characters to the representation of recognized psychological, sociological and political topics.

Realism/naturalism was established as the main convention of the Norwegian Ibsen tradition. This convention was in an obscure way intermingled with a literary convention, giving the text the status of an ideal for the performance, while at the same time demanding realistic representation of the performance.²¹ This two-sided conventionalism of realism and literature was the general attitude toward theatre among the critics at the turn of the century. And it was

through this attitude that what I define as allegoric interpretation was emphasized at the expense of the symbolic.

The realistic approach was prevalent till around 1910, when a criticism of realism started to emerge.²² Between 1910 and 1930 two positions among the critics can be identified. On the one hand there were those who adhered to naturalism or to "sound realism", and on the other hand there were those who wanted new approaches to Ibsen and a renewal of the established Ibsen style.

Johanne Dybwad's production of *Rosmersholm* in 1922 was to be the first to violate the established realistic conventions through a conscious symbolic stylization. Throughout the 1920s she directed and acted in a number of outstanding productions at Nationaltheatret, including *Rosmersholm*, *Ghosts*, *The Vikings at Helgeland* and *Brand*. The style of these productions was characterized by central theatre critics as "monumental" or "monumental realism", a characterization, which has been taken up into the general historiography of Norwegian theatre.²³

Johanne Dybwad both directed most of these productions and performed main parts in them. This placed her in a unique artistic position, where she had the opportunity to establish artistic coherence between the inner life of the character and the totality of the production. Another important contributor to Johanne Dybwad's productions, was the scene-painter Oliver Neerland, who seemed to adapt very well to the artistic intentions of Johanne Dybwad.²⁴

In the following analysis of the two productions of *Rosmersholm*, I will make use of material from theatre reviews on the one hand and from the theatre archives on the other (programmes, the script, directing manuals, stage plans, photographs etc.). These two sources cover the two aspects of a historical performance, the presentation by the theatre producers and the reception by the spectators, represented by the critics. As I consider a theatrical performance as an artis-

tic event taking place in the interactions between the producers and the spectators, my analysis will take the form of a combination of these two aspects, production and reception. In the end, the interpretation will, of course, be my own, but my endeavour is to uncover, as far as possible, the interpretation presented by the producers and that expressed by the critics, and to show where these two coincide and where they do not.

As a structure in the analysis I use three categories to reconstitute the performance: *the set, the characters and dramaturgy of performance*. When I speak about dramaturgy of performance and not of production, I do this because, as I stated above, my use of the term performance covers a combination of production and reception, and because the main sources for a recognition of dramaturgy of the production actually come from the receptional side, which means the reviews, and not from the productional side.

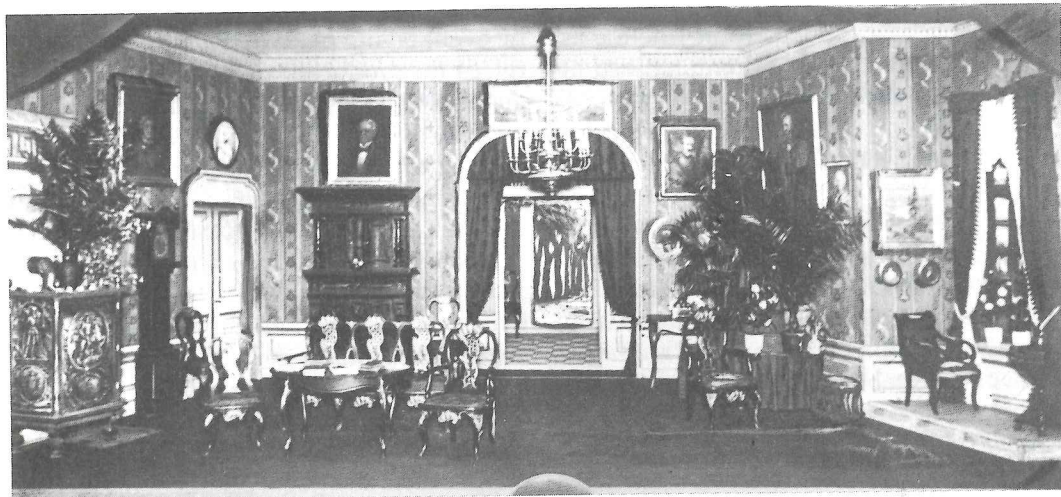
ROSMERSHOLM AT NATIONALTHEATRET IN 1905²⁵

This production had its first performance on 15 November 1905, and was performed 17 times between 1905 and 1909. Olaf Mørch Hansson directed the production, and the set was designed by Jens Wang.

Participating actors: Halfdan Christensen (August Oddvar from 5 December 1905) as John Rosmer, Johanne Dybwad as Rebecca West, Harald Stormoen as Headmaster Kroll, Gustav Thomassen as Editor Mortensgaard. Agnes Christensen (Sofie Reimers from 5 December) as Madam Helseth.

The Set

In the reviews there is very little written about the set. This lack of attention to the set was typical for critics of the time. The visual design was considered as less artistically important than the text and its delivery by the actors. Of course, an appropriate décor was



The set for Acts I, II and IV: "The living room at Rosmersholm, spacious, old-fashioned and comfortable. In front on the right wall, a stove decorated with branches of birch. Further back a door. On the back wall a folding door to the entrance. On the wall to the left, a window, and in front of that a centre-piece with flowers and plants. By the stove, a table with a sofa and armchairs. Round about on the walls hang portraits of clergymen, officers and public servants in uniform. The window is open. So is the door to the entrance and the outer door. Outside, old trees along an avenue leading to the estate can be seen. It is a summer night, the sun has gone down."²⁶



The set for Act II: "The study of John Rosmer. The entrance is on the left. In the background a doorway with drawn curtains, leading to the bedroom. A window to the right, and in front of that a writing desk, covered with books and papers. Bookshelves and cupboards along the walls. Shabby furniture. An old-fashioned settee with table in the front to the left."²⁷

expected, but if that was in order, then it was almost invisible and non-essential. Gunnar Heiberg was the only one to comment on the set, and then only because it was not in accordance with the stage directions of the text.

In spite of this lack of comments by the critics, the photographs and the stage plans provide us with a good impression of the set. However we do not know how this was perceived by the spectators.

A comparison of the photos on the previous page with Ibsen's stage directions, reveals how closely Wang followed them. The set was obviously intended as a representation of the text and as an illusion of a real life milieu. Yet, the photos also provide us with an unmistakable impression of Wang's typical decorative style. This applies not only to the detailed realism, but also to the architectonic setting. Shaped around a central room, the set offered the spectators insight into other rooms of the house and the exterior of the house. The actors could use the different spaces of the set in very naturalistic ways; they could move between the rooms, and still remain more or less visible in the adjoining rooms and in the exterior.

The abundance of details and props was typical for Wang, but was also the common means of creating realistic illusion. However, none of the details or props nor the set as a whole, seem to have had any intended expressiveness or meaning beyond the realistic illusion.

The set was a tasteful and appropriate representation of Ibsen's directions. It functioned as the frame around the actors' playing of the characters and performance of the action.

The Characters

All the critics had a basic understanding of the characters as falling into two groups:

Beside the representatives of the events of the time and the atmosphere of the day, the writer has, in the main charac-

ters of the play, created two figures of a finer and more complicated human race, who stand above and outside daily life ... There is a strange glow and soft atmosphere over the portrayal of these people and their life together. In the masterly formed lines there is an abundance of noble thoughts, pure feelings and beautifully sounding words. At the same time there is something remote and subdued, something unreal and abstract, - like a veil of symbolism and mysticism over these two figures, as if they belonged to a different world than the others ... When in the end, the two figures, in a kind of ecstasy or hysterical desperation take one another's hands and "happily" throw themselves into the Mill Race, we are left with a feeling as though two shadows are disappearing. (Aftenp.)

Like some of the other critics, Kristofer Randers found Rosmer and Rebecca unreal and shadow-like figures who lack realistic portrayal, in contrast to the other characters, whom he found realistic. Randers criticized Ibsen for having left "sound realism" both in *Rosmersholm* and in others of his later plays.²⁸ The "veil of symbolism and mysticism" prevented Randers from mobilizing any deeper understanding of Rosmer and Rebecca and their actions:

As little as our interest is captured by Rosmer - this weak, naive drawing-room character, who only lives in fantastic ideals - so little, also, are we able to understand and reconcile ourselves with Rebecca's contradictory double nature. (Aftenp.)

Randers' approach to the play (and the performance) was historical-biographical. He understood Kroll and Mortensgaard as realistic "representatives of the events of the time", namely the political events of the 1870s and 1880s: "In the lines of Headmaster

Kroll, Editor Mortensgaard, seconded by Brendel's fantastic performance ... we feel the aftermath of the harrowing process of impeachment". (Aftenp.)²⁹

Randers' historical-biographical approach is allegoric in that the characters and their actions are understood as representations of certain political and historical events. However, Randers was disturbed in his understanding by the "symbolism" and "mysticism" of the main characters.

Another, and more politically radical critic, Fernanda Nissen, understood the strangeness of the main characters and their actions as

the relation between the individual and the society and the transformation that can take place within a human being during the fight for a goal, which leads to his no longer wanting the goal when it is reached. (Soc.Dem.)

For Nissen the play was about society and how it "kills the finer nature with the great goals" (ibid). This socio-political understanding is allegoric, but of another kind than Randers' historical allegorization. Nissen explained Rosmer's and Rebecca's inner development in terms of a general sociological understanding, as the natural consequence of the loss of one's (political) goals. Nissen emphasized the political conflicts, "personalized" in Headmaster Kroll and Editor Mortensgaard, between whom Rosmer ought to have found his social way of acting, rather than in inward resignation and suicide. As we will see later, Nissen also, like Randers, related the performance allegorically to actual political events, but then to contemporary events. Nissen was the critic who most explicitly assessed Kroll and Mortensgaard as socio-political characters:

Every figure in the play is markedly individual and markedly typical. Headmaster Kroll, who, through his conservatism, only understands the pre-

servation of authority, is the fanatic right-wing attitude in this country, while Peder Mortensgaard is the leader and lord of the future. Peder Mortensgaard is capable of living a life without ideals. (Soc.Dem.)

Nissen was very enthusiastic about Gustav Thomassen's performance as Mortensgaard, who

quietly moved him from the rank of scoundrels into the crowd of sensible politicians of western Norway, a man who senses exactly when the road leads to the goal, and when it leads to the abyss ... And Thomassen's Mortensgaard appeared almost sympathetic, because he was natural and clever. (Soc.Dem.)

Fernanda Nissen was more critical to the way Headmaster Kroll was performed by Harald Stormoen, while other critics were more enthusiastic about the presentation of Kroll. Lars Hansson wrote that Harald Stormoen simply incarnated Kroll "as we have seen him with his fanatic passionate immovable opinions, brutal and splendid walking around absolutely alive among us" (Dagbl.). The reactionary conservative was obviously a well-known figure from the political reality of the time, portrayed very precisely by Stormoen:

Mr Stormoen has made a masterly figure of the reactionary Headmaster Kroll. His treatment of lines is excellent. In mimicry and movement he provides such a detailed and natural presentation, that the person is completely alive all the time, as if you knew him in and out from daily life. (Chr.Int.)

Kroll and Mortensgaard were very recognizable to the critics, "absolutely alive", "markedly individual and typical", "as if you knew him from daily life". This kind of rep-

resentation and recognition of real life characters in a performance is the essence of realism. However, the characters can be interpreted allegorically or symbolically. In this case the tendency was allegoric, when Headmaster Kroll was understood as the *typical* reactionary and Editor Mortensgaard the *typical* politician of western Norway.

When it came to Rebecca West and John Rosmer, most of the critics had problems with recognizing them and identifying with them. Something must be definitely wrong, when one ends up by committing suicide. This needs explanation rather than understanding and identification, which means allegoric and not symbolic interpretation. The explanation can be sought for in "society" and its representatives. Yet, there is something wrong about Rosmer himself. His delicacy and fragility make him incapable of participating in social and political life. Confronted with the facts of life, he ends up in delusions, which finally leads him to commit suicide. In spite of Rosmer's weakness, the critics still expected him to be performed as a real human being: "Rosmer has a tender and refined spirit and never laughs, yet he need not be colourless" (Soc.Dem.). Gunnar Heiberg wrote that Halfdan Christensen

makes Rosmer unreal, anaemic. We are left with no interest in him as a human. Christensen makes him refined, pure and noble, but not as a human being with these characteristics ... Rosmer is very close to being decadent, a kind of decadence of the conscience. Christensen represents power and health - in body as in spirit. Therefore, he portrays one who is afraid of losing these blessings, rather than a Rosmer who is missing them and longing for them.³⁰

Similarly Lars Hansson stated:

An objection can be made about his performance, that he makes Rosmer rather white and almost automatic, while the

"brooder" with noble scruples in his account of himself and the liberal tolerance towards others is not emphasized enough. (Aftenp.)

The critics seemed to have agreed that Halfdan Christensen, in spite of his recognized artistic talent, was not the right actor to play the part of Rosmer. He was not able to make this refined and tender, almost decadent character come alive. However, the critics' difficulty with Rosmer was caused not only by Christensen's performance; but also by the character as such, Rosmer was "abstract", "unreal", "shadowy" etc. Only three weeks after the first performances, August Oddvar took over the role.

Johanne Dybwad played Rebecca West. In her comments on Ms Dybwad's performance, Fernanda Nissen's naturalistic-allegoric viewpoints became very explicit. She found Rebecca too

suspicious and fateful. Mrs Dybwad focused too strongly on one thing, namely that Rebecca in the final act declares that Rosmersholm has broken her down ... We should have noticed more of the complexity rather than an inherited refinement. She and Rosmer seem to grow from exactly the same soil. (Soc.Dem.)

Fernanda Nissen wanted to see the difference between Rebecca's and Rosmer's family- and class-background represented.

Other critics, particularly Lars Hansson and Gunnar Heiberg, were more enthusiastic in their appreciation. They focused on the psychological aspects of the play and especially on the psychology of Rebecca.

Lars Hansson, for instance, wrote that he had

never understood this female figure as after Ms Dybwad's performance. She compels us to believe that this woman with her doubtful past, her sensual de-

sire, lust for power and unscrupulous choice of means, caught up by the Rosmerian view of life with its demands of self-denial and purity of the mind, really has come under the law of transformation, so that she happily sacrifices her life to get the man whom she loves with all her gained and acquired purity. Ms Dybwad makes us see both the original and the clipped will-power. She even made me see the ghost-like "white horses" appear at Rosmersholm. (Dagbl.)

Hansson saw Rebecca as a psychologically sick woman who is caught in the ambivalence between an (original) will-power and a clipped will-power, which in turn causes her to see ghostly white horses and to take fatal actions in life together with Rosmer. Rebecca's morbid state of mind and her fatal actions were explained by occurrences in her past. This psychological understanding remains within the context of realistic causality and precludes any aesthetic and symbolic understanding of Rebecca's psychology. It is an explanation rather than understanding, and it expresses a chauvinistic point of view; the woman is sick, and that is it!

Hansson's psychological realism is allegoric like the socio-political interpretation, but it is as an allegorization of the psychological and of the gender. The character on stage represents something which is not present on the stage, the "unhappy childhood" – as the cause of the woman's morbid state of mind.

Gunnar Heiberg also had an essentially psychological understanding of the play and the characters, but his viewpoint was aesthetic, and he wrote a very detailed and profound analysis of Johanne Dybwad's performance.

As a realistic actress Ms Dybwad throws herself like a beautiful wild animal over her booty. Here is extravagance. This abundance of psychology is something for her. These thousands of details are

something to develop, to sink down into and to raise into the light ... With happy, shaking hands she managed to untangle all the threads and to twine them even finer and longer.³¹

Heiberg was the only critic who was able to see through the technical brilliancy of Ms Dybwad's detailed realistic performance, and pointed out that developmentally this could not be her final performance of Rebecca:

here, where Ms Dybwad showed us her art in its fairest flourish, we were tempted to ask her to replace the many fine accentuations, all the hundreds of shifts, all the thousands of rich details with one big grey simplicity, veiling all the psychological details in a way that would make us feel them without seeing them.³²

It is obvious that Ms Dybwad "defended" Rebecca and performed her in a way which not really was recognized by the critics. When Fernanda Nissen pointed out that Rebecca was performed as an equal to Rosmer, this gives us an idea of the direction of Ms Dybwad's interpretation of Rebecca (see quotation from Soc.Dem. above). Ms Dybwad's Rebecca was not the sick and demonic woman that most of the critics expected Rebecca to be. Lars Hansson, and to a certain degree Fernanda Nissen, defined the woman Rebecca as the lost "child of nature" ending up in disordered relations to her fellow human beings, especially men. Nevertheless, the case was that Ms Dybwad was searching for a deeper understanding of Rebecca's spiritual nature to make her an equal counterpart to the noble man, Rosmer. This search led Ms Dybwad to her new performance of Rebecca West in 1922.

Dramaturgy of Performance

It is always difficult to grasp the intentions and work of the director of a theatrical production of the past. Unless you have a detailed script from the director, directing is the most inaccessible aspect of a performance. Since we have no such script or notes from Olaf Mørch Hansson, it is hard to state his dramaturgical intentions.

Neither do the critics give us much information about the directing, because they evaluated this aspect of the performance in a rather superficial way. They presented what "the play is about", what it "demands" of the actors, and evaluated the actors' success in making the plot and characters come "alive".

The text and the acting were the two pillars of the critics' dramaturgical understanding of the production, and this was also most likely the two pillars of Hansson's direction, the text of the play and the illusion of real life as the frame for the actors to "fill up". Thus, the only way to the dramaturgy of this performance is through the viewpoints of the critics, and here three different interpretative approaches can be confirmed: a historical-biographic approach, one of socio-political actuality and a psychological approach.

The historical-biographical approach was expressed by B.G. (the critic writing in *Christiania Intelligenssedler*) and Kristofer Randers:

Much water has run into the sea since Ibsen wrote "Rosmersholm" in the 1880s, and I suppose, that in many cases, we now have a much more liberal view of the different facts of life. (Chr.Int.)

Originating after the writer's summer in Norway – mainly around Molde – in 1885, the play constitutes the change from the reformatory-polemic period in his authorship, ending up in the deep misanthropy and pessimism of "The Wild Duck", and the works of a lighter,

but sorrowful resigned view of life, resulting in the sublime symbolism of "The Master Builder". In "Rosmersholm" there are still reminders of the preceding times of fighting. (Aftenp.)

This approach is mainly concerned with the text and not the performance as such. The performance, as textual representation, is expected to mirror or represent the contemporary time, which the author "thought about" when he wrote the play. A problem for the historical-biographical approach is that a play conceived from this point of view will always go out of date. The only reason for still performing "outdated" plays must be a kind of pietistic preservation of the cultural heritage.

The viewpoint of socio-political actualization is similar to the historical approach, but maintains that the questions treated in a play are still relevant or can be made relevant. Fernanda Nissen represented this point of view. After describing Kroll as representative of "fanatic conservatism", she continues:

In June and July we would have laughed, unbelieving, at this conservative insanity – now in November we no longer laugh at this powerful, resurrected character. Through Ibsen we know that he is dangerous and mighty ... "Peder Mortensgaard is capable of living a life without ideals. And that – you see – is the great secret of action and victory." These are Brendel's words written by Ibsen in the 80's. Today they could stand as motto over Norwegian politics. The temptations and dangers of party politics is depicted in these words. Politics leads to the loss of ideals. (Soc.Dem.)

Here Fernanda Nissen established an allegoric relation between the plot and characters of *Rosmersholm* and the politicians/political events in Norway in 1905, especially with the Norwegian prime minister Christian Mi-

chelsen. In spite of political antagonism and dispute, 1905 was a year of national gathering in Norway. Christian Michelsen attempted to maintain a position above party politics. In 1905 he established a coalition government with members from the Liberal Party (Venstre) and the Conservative Party (Høire), thus keeping the Labour party out of governmental positions.³³

When Fernanda Nissen wrote about the resurrection of conservatism, she referred to the referendum on monarchy or republic held two days before the performance. As a writer for *Social-Demokraten*, Fernanda Nissen was in favour of a republic and considered the preference for a monarchy to be "conservative insanity". To Nissen, the union between Headmaster Kroll and Editor Mortensgaard depicts allegorically the contemporary union between the liberal and the conservative wings under the leadership of Christian Michelsen. In the light of Prime Minister Michelsen's betrayal of the political ideals, Rosmer becomes an allegoric figure of the lost homo politicus, "no longer want(ing) the goal when it is reached".

The psychological approach was presented by Lars Hansson and Gunnar Heiberg. Hansson wrote that

Rosmersholm is in a particular degree a drama of emotions. ... In the portrayal of the inner life of the individuals, rooted in ancestral heredity and manifested in their thoughts, the atmosphere, their purposes and decisions, there is a stronger sincerity than in most of Ibsen's other plays. (Dagbl.)

However Lars Hansson's psychological understanding of the play does not lead to any aesthetic understanding of the performance. Hansson explains Rosmer's noble mind and Rebecca's morbid state of mind allegorically by means of a general theory of heritage and gender.

Although Gunnar Heiberg operated within the convention that a performance is a

representation of the text, his psychological approach was specifically related to the theatricality of the performance.

The old master of psychology very consciously made the figures realistic. But they have nothing to do with naturalism. They were put together with a precise intention. The secret will of the poet was serving an artistic purpose, which was that the play should be an emblematic image of life. Filled with real human beings of the real world, the work of poetry should be a great symbol of all human conduct. Transferred to the theatre, this does not mean that the actors should perform symbolically or conventionally, nor that at any moment they should not perform realistically, but only that they must always give the impression of being in the service of an idea, feeling themselves as secret accomplices of the poet.³⁴

Heiberg looks through the psychology of the characters to the universal emblematic level of the play, which he expected to come out if the actors performed their characters as if they were real human beings. The way to bring this emblematic meaning out, is to be an accomplice of the poet.

Heiberg's subtle understanding of the relation between realism and the emblematic meaning of the play, which is symbolic in the Goethean sense, together with his profound analysis of Ms Dybwad's performance, was almost prophetic of the way she came to perform Rebecca West in 1922. Heiberg himself was a "secret accomplice of" Ms Dybwad's art.

Together with her co-workers, especially August Oddvar, Johanne Dybwad continued to explore the inner psychological and dramatic secrets of Ibsen's plays. This artistic development reached a peak with the productions of *Rosmersholm* in 1922 and *Ghosts* in 1925.

ROSMERSHOLM AT NATIONALTHEATRET IN 1922³⁵

This production had its first performance on 15 November 1922, and was performed 45 times between 1922 and 1928. Johanne Dybwad directed the production, and the scenic design was done by Oliver Neerland.

Participating actors: August Oddvar as John Rosmer, Johanne Dybwad as Rebecca West, Harald Stormoen as Headmaster Kroll, Gustav Thomassen as Editor Mortensgaard, Stub Wiberg as Ulrik Brendel and Sofie Reimers as Madam Helseth.

The Set

The set was quite naked and created a large space. Even if the scenery was essentially shaped in a realistic manner, it was at the same time something more.

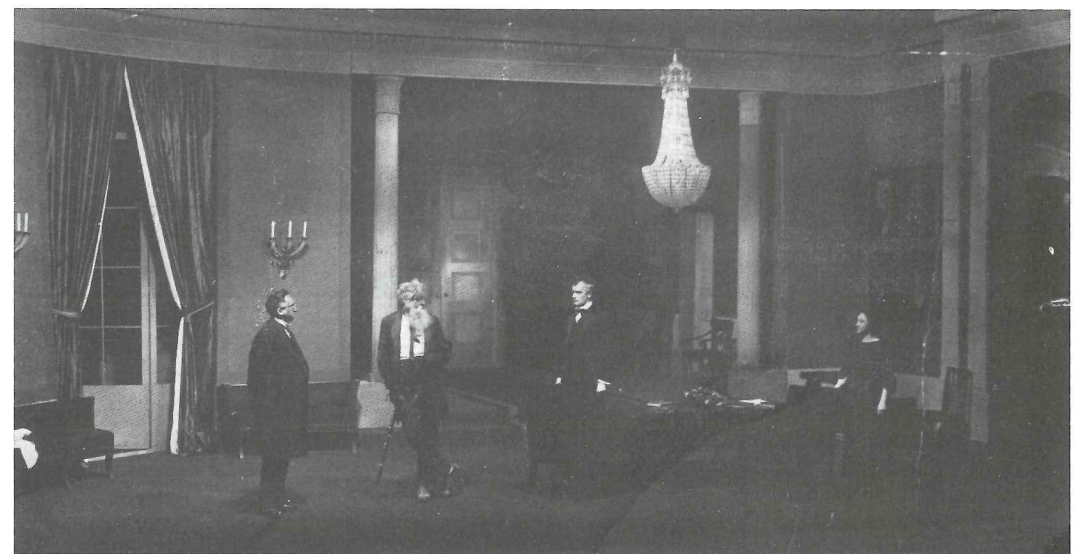
The environment was dignified and archaic with classical references, Greek columns, friezes, and busts of Greek poets or philosophers:

To create the atmosphere of an ancient tragedy of retribution, Oliver Neerland designed a set in blue with the Greek quality brought out by columns. It was an attractive parlour, but it did not seem Norwegian or correct for the period.³⁶

In spite of the simplifications and the classical elements the set did not really break away from Ibsen's directions. It did however break away from the conventional design for an Ibsen performance, namely the detailed realism.

A subtle doubleness in the whole set was established through ambiguous and oppositional elements. This doubleness was an integral part of an emblematic or symbolic style.

The living room was decorated with white flowers, but not many. In the beginning of the performance these flowers expressed a kind of naturalness and joy of life related to the presence of Rebecca. However, during the course of the action the flowers changed in significance from being decorative nature



Act I: Kroll, Brendel, Rosmer and Rebecca. "Brendel: ... when new, giddy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me, - and fluttered around me on supporting wings, I shaped this in poems, visions, in images. In large outlines of course, as you can understand. / Rosmer: Yes, yes."³⁷

elements to become cultural signs, namely Rebecca's and Rosmer's wedding and funeral flowers. The shift in the meaning of the flowers is marked out already in the first act in the dialogue between Rebecca and Kroll, where Rebecca relates the flowers as "fresh and living" to Rosmer and as "lovely, stupefying" to herself. Kroll immediately connects the flowers with his sister-in-law, Rosmer's former wife Beata, who could not stand the scent, and, as we know, committed suicide. Life and death are symbolically linked together by means of the flowers.

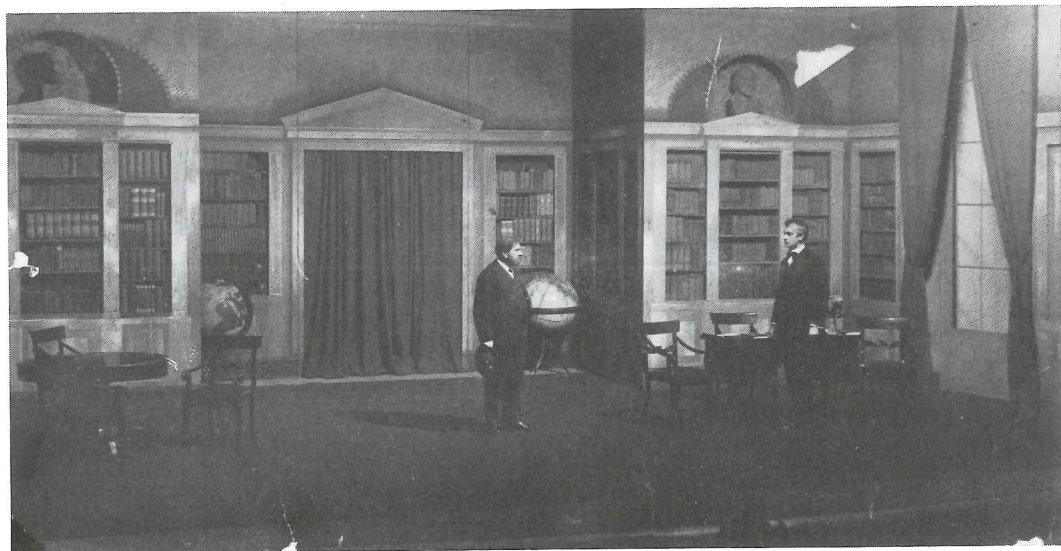
In the photos of the living room we see dimly a painting on the back wall of the entrance hall. This painting, which is not a part of Ibsen's directions, depicted a wilderness with a waterfall.

From the spectators' viewpoint this pictorial representation of wild and untamed nature was framed by two Greek columns. The wilderness, and the columns as representations of culture were visual parallels to

the situation of the two main characters, Rebecca the "nature child" framed in by the cultivated Rosmersholm and its refined owner John Rosmer.

Yet, the strongest dualism in the set was the division between the exterior and the interior. The exterior landscape, seen through the window and the door, was the decisive contrast to the cultivated and dignified interior of Rosmersholm. It is from "out there", that visitors from the world of reality enter and disturb the spiritual tranquillity at Rosmersholm, and it is "out there" in the untamed wilderness, in the Mill Race, that Rosmer's and Rebecca's final celebrational reconciliation and sacrifice will take place.

Anyhow, this meaning of the scenic elements only comes apparent in the light of the performance as a whole, and especially in the light of how the roles of Rosmer and Rebecca were performed. Without a consideration of the dramaturgical coherence neither the flowers, the wall painting, the columns



Act II: "Mortensgaard: Can I write in 'The Lighthouse' that you have come to a new standpoint, - that you have joined the cause of liberalism and progress?"³⁸

nor anything else on the stage would be anything but the decorations of any stately home.

The Characters

All of the secondary characters, maybe with the exception of Ulrik Brendel, who in his own way was transformed spiritually, were rooted and remained within the realm of social and physical reality.

Headmaster Kroll and Editor Mortensgaard were performed as realistic portraits of typical representatives of sociological and political forces, the conservative and the liberal. As such they were parts of the milieu around the main characters.

Madam Helseth functioned as an "informant" about the history of the Rosmerian family through her conversations with Rebecca. Like Kroll and Mortensgaard she was a character with no inner life.

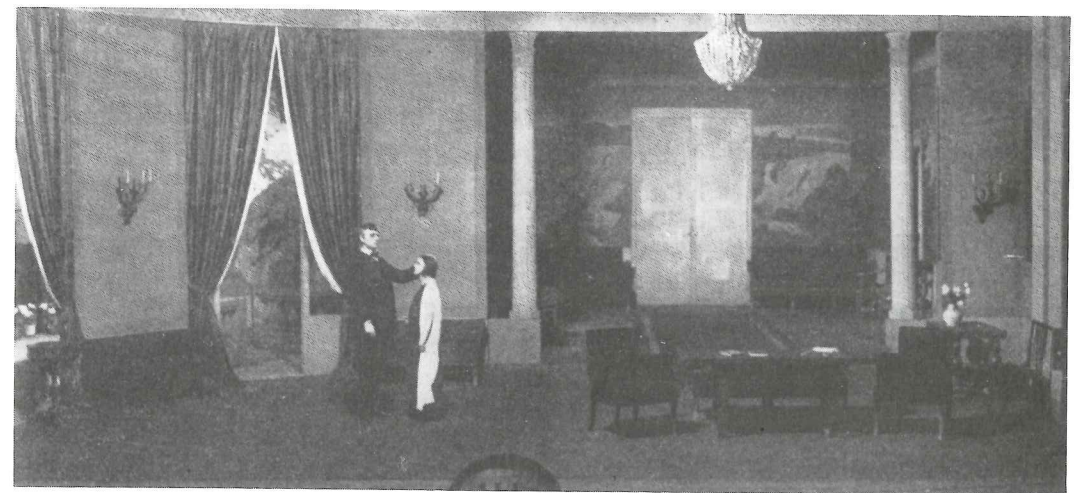
None of the critics focused on the secondary characters, because they were inessential to the dramaturgical focus of the performance, the inner dynamic and development of Rosmer and Rebecca. The critics only po-

inted out whether these secondary roles were well performed or not, e.g.:

Gustav Thomassen gives a detailed natural image of the editor, who secretly directs and controls many things ... And as his opposite the authoritative and self-assured headmaster, the spokesman for the established order and inherited privileges, the highest refinement and the orthodox bourgeoisie, performed by Harald Stormoen with never failing realistic art. (Aftenp.)

Nevertheless, these characters were made significant through tableau-like arrangements around Rebecca and Rosmer. An example of this was the scene in Act III where Kroll accuses Rebecca of having caused Beata's death and in the same breath indicates that Doctor West, her supposed foster-father, was her father, which in Kroll's mind is the proof of her immoral background. Rebecca reacts very emotionally, and "confesses" her guilt shortly thereafter to Kroll and Rosmer:

She confesses her guilt; she reports with the responsible sincerity of the firm de-



Act IV: "Rosmer: Rebecca - now I put my hand on your head ... And take you as my lawful wife."³⁹

cision, how she poisoned the sickly mind of Beata, and drove her step by step into the Mill Race ... Now the burdens have been taken from Rosmer's weak shoulders; now he can feel free again! Johanne Dybwad's art maintains, in this wonderful scene, an intense vibrating life in a monumental form. The absolutely excellent interplay with Oddvar's Rosmer and Stormoen's Kroll makes this scene just so emotional and magnificent, as filled with destiny as presumed in the author's fantasy. (Aftenp.)

The "vibrating monumentality" applies not only to Rebecca, but also to Kroll and Rosmer. One can imagine this as a dramatic tableau, where Rebecca's grand elemental will-power, emerging under the pressure of Kroll and her affection for Rosmer, was exhibited visually through the arrangement of the three characters.

August Oddvar performed Rosmer as a tender, refined and "inner" aristocrat:

the warmth of conviction permeates the figure; the impression of spiritual purity is reflected in his look. There is a scene in the second act between Rosmer and Mortensgaard. As they stand there counterposed, although both spiritually "liberated", this is an image of the abyss between the spiritual aristocrat and the plebeian ... It is from within that the difference comes forth. (Mbl.)

August Oddvar gives an astonishing image of Rosmer through his looks, his facial expressions and movements. The sterile naiveté in his grandness comes across very well. Oddvar is Rosmer more than he plays him; but the lines are often spoken in a rigid and hard manner. Rosmer's emotionalism and his delicate mind ought to have come out in stronger variations of the tone of his voice. (Dagbl.)

These descriptions indicate Oddvar's non-naturalistic and monumental acting style. It was a kind of simplified style, where the inner life and feelings were expressed through the visual appearance rather than the voice. Oddvar's acting style was both old-fashioned and modern at the same time, but never naturalistic. His style of acting was well suited to the visually emphasized dramaturgy of the performance.

Oddvar's Rosmer was a tragic hero with a flaw:

seeing his confidence undermined by unknown and hostile forces, he is brought to his knees under the burden of something he is unable to carry. The painful self-examination and lingering absorption in enigmatic questions makes Oddvar's Rosmer a relative of Hamlet. (Aftenp.)

Rosmer's cultivated and refined state of mind is marked by a spiritual infertility and lack of will power. In the end he realizes that the only way to overcome this is through reconciliation with the elemental in human nature. Rosmer does not have the natural force of passion within himself, but Rebecca does. Rosmer's tragedy is the awakening, step by step, through a number of defeats, to the recognition of the necessity of reconciliation. In the end he reaches the point where, paradoxically, he has to sacrifice himself along with Rebecca to be healed from his flaws. He surrenders with the words: "now we two are one".

As performed by Johanne Dybwad Rebecca West had a strong will-power; a will-power which was steadily transforming and growing throughout the performance:

There was a rising power in Ms Dybwad's performance. Little by little as the action proceeded, more power was steadily brought into play, and from the settlements with Kroll in the third act,

we stood face to face with the mighty sovereign of the stage. (Soc.Dem.)

Ms Dybwad plays on all the strings that she masters: cleverness, authority, the big outbreaks and the quiet sincerity. When Rebecca's pagan path of love is transformed through Rosmer's purity into a silent inner glow, and she then, in "the hour of settlement", undresses the past, and throws it into the fire, you would expect the sacrificial smoke to lie like a heavy shadow over the room and the confessions to come with silent words. On the contrary, Ms Dybwad lets it flame up again in short vehement flickers, and in the way she interprets the role, she gives these outbursts with a wonderfully virtuoso abundance of moods. (Mbl.)

Dybwad's acting is extremely moving, when it is quiet, and incandescent with inner feeling ... in the big scene in the final act, it is as if some of the old sensual desire is flaming up, radiant almost frightening, but at the same time subdued by an innocent and helpless amorous humility. A long and painful development is here given in a concentrated abbreviation in some few seconds that are saturated with expression. (Dagbl.)

During the course of the action Rebecca's will power was transformed from an unconscious urge to a concentrated and conscious will-power enabling her, in the end, to pass beyond the boundary of death.

This ability to concentrate and control everything from within in decisive significant moments is an example of Ms Dybwad's superior and truly symbolic acting style. However, in the context of this specific production it is not Ms Dybwad's acting style as such, but the dramaturgical importance of the "incandescent" moment in the performance we must be aware of.

Ms Dybwad did not perform Rebecca as a

morbid minded woman or as a woman whose sexuality was suppressed and destroyed under the pressure of a patriarchal culture. Her performance was about the transformation of erotic instincts to conscious will-power. Rebecca's passions were not annihilated, they were transformed to an incandescent will-power. In the final climax, where Rebecca and Rosmer give themselves to one another, all aspects of Rebecca's and Rosmer's development came together in a highly symbolic significant expression. They had become more than two human beings in a difficult love affair.

Dramaturgy of Performance

Johanne Dybwad's dramaturgical interpretation as director of the production revealed the tragic and symbolic dimensions of the play.

The critics were highly impressed and overwhelmed by the dramaturgy of the performance. They were inspired by the performance, and when, in the conventional manner, they started their review with a description of "what the play is about", they did not really write their predetermined interpretation of the play, but wrote, at least in part, the interpretation actually expressed through the performance. When Helge Krog, a political radical, wrote the following, he expressed an understanding of the play, which was strongly influenced by the performance:

like the Titans stole the fire from the Gods, the greatest writers, and among them Ibsen, have stolen the Word, which according to the Bible rested with God, and was a God itself, because it, like the fire, was the creative and life giving principle. Each of these plays is a complete world in itself. ... One day in the future they will stand alone as surprising monuments of our time, like Sophocles' and Shakespeare's works from

antiquity and the Renaissance. ... in this sense it is without importance that the plays are bound to a specific place and time. The milieu is only a frame, which now and then symbolizes the story. The story is always of an inner nature; the scene is the human mind. (T.T.)

Here Krog points out how the realistic milieu was used as means of expressing the inner life of Rosmer and Rebecca. At decisive moments the exterior elements were arranged into emblematic tableaux, which revealed the tragedy of Rosmer and Rebecca.

The ambiguous and oppositional elements of the setting mentioned above were highlighted by the actions and the arrangements of the characters, in a way that made Rosmersholm appear not only a stately home, but also a kind of spiritual temple. The single elements of the set were not symbolic in themselves, but became part of the total symbolic exposition of the production.

The notion of "image" steadily reoccurs in the critics' descriptions of not only the individual actors' performances, but also of their interplay and the arrangements of them on stage. In decisive dramatic moments the characters were posed in significant tableaux. Through these arrangements the secondary characters gained symbolic significance in Rebecca's and Rosmer's inner drama. Thus Rebecca's and Rosmer's development, their transformation, reconciliation and sacrifice were expressed not only through the individual acting, but also through the arrangements of visual tableaux.

Rosmer and Rebecca went through a development by defeat, but they were never really defeated; they became transformed. They "fertilized" one another, and were both highly potent, when in a final ceremonial action they threw themselves into the Mill Race, which became their death bed and their wedding bed.

Helge Krog questioned the way love was treated in the play/performance, but he

addressed his criticism to Ibsen and his attitude toward sexuality:

he distinguishes in an arbitrary and almost dogmatic way, between the purely mental and physical love, which hardly ever appear united and organically melted together in free, "self-glorious" display by Ibsen, but are opposed like hostile contrasts ... there is something pietistic in this, which stands in glaring antagonism to his teaching about the joy of life as the improving factor in life. The highest expression of love for Ibsen is self-sacrifice, but this does not necessarily have anything to do with love between man and woman. (T.T.)

Helge Krog points out the two kinds of love, the physical Eros and the spiritual Agape. However, he rejects Agape, and, therefore, also the conflicts and dialectics between the two forces, which in fact is a decisive theme both in *Rosmersholm* and in many of Ibsen's other plays. Einar Skavlan also pointed to the dialectic between Eros and Agape, when he wrote that "it is like a spiritual gender fight, a platonic eroticism" (Dagbl.). In this light, Rosmer's and Rebecca's common suicide is not a pitiful finale for two lost individuals, but a reconciliation after the fight between human and universal forces.

In the course of the action, Rebecca and Rosmer withdrew themselves further and further away from the context of physical/social reality into a spiritual and universal dimension. The play rose from realistic representation to a tragic-ritual event. Rosmer and Rebecca became more than carnal man and woman, they became symbolic exponents of the universal tension between the Pagan Eros and the Christian Agape.

One can ask, then, whether one of these forces conquers the other. On one hand it is the Pagan eroticism of Rebecca that in the end conquers Rosmer's infertility and at the same time draws him into death. On the other hand, the Christian Agape, with its de-

mand of sacrifice of "lower" instincts, is also a victor in the end. I would say that neither of these forces conquers the other. They culminate in a potent tension, in ambiguous symbolic signification.

Thus Rosmer's and Rebecca's common act of jumping into the Mill Race is both an act of love and a sacrifice. It is a symbolic representation of the reconciliation of opposites between Rebecca and Rosmer, man and woman, culture and nature, masculine and feminine, spirit and body, life and death and between Eros and Agape in a condition of permanent fertile tension.

CONCLUSION

Through my analysis I hope to have demonstrated how the use of *symbolic* and *allegoric* as analytical concepts can reveal decisive strategies of expression and reception in the development of an important period of Norwegian theatre; a period when theatre was apparently dominated by realism supported by allegorical interpretations of theatrical representation.

Yet, Johanne Dybwad's Ibsen work, as well as much of her other theatrical work in this period followed a line of development toward theatrical stylization and symbolism. This was generally not recognized by the critics, although they were impressed by it. Some Norwegian critics were well informed about the latest developments in European theatre (e.g. Einar Skavlan), and estimated the work of Ms Dybwad in the light of that, while other critics rejected the new trends in European theatre, and maintained the demand for realism and naturalness. Kristian Elster, for example, was very critical to any kind of theatrical stylization, especially in the Ibsen style. In her artistic efforts, Ms Dybwad was more in tune with the trend of re-theatricalization in European theatre than with the prevailing realistic/naturalistic conventions in the Norwegian theatre culture. Her engagement in the process of re-the-

atricalization and symbolism can be traced back to the time around 1906, where she made her debut as a director with Maeterlinck's symbolist play *Pelléas and Mélisande*. In 1907 she guided a North European Ibsen tour from Nationaltheatret. Among other cities, the tour visited Berlin, and here the contact between Ms Dybwad and Max Reinhardt was established. This contact was maintained throughout the years and became an important source of inspiration to Ms Dybwad. In many interviews given throughout her career she expressed her specific theatrical and symbolic viewpoints on, for example, the plays of Ibsen. In 1912 she was asked what was the most important element in her art, and she replied: "The undercurrent, I suppose, that which lies behind or beyond. The flight of the imagination. This idea of daily life and natural speech and such things is really boring if the other is not also present."⁴⁰ One problem for Johanne Dybwad as a director seems to have been the imposed collaboration with the permanent scene-painter Jens Wang. Throughout his career Wang continued to create detailed historical-realistic sceneries, and it seems to have been out of the question that the director could influence the style of Wang's sets to any degree worth mentioning. When, in 1918, Jens Wang was succeeded by Oliver Neerland, a marked shift in the style of scenic design can be noticed, and that applies especially to the productions directed by Ms Dybwad. Through the collaboration with Oliver Neerland she could display her theatrical imagination of what lies beyond the "boring" realism of "daily life", not only through her own acting, but also through the total production of a performance including the set.

Ms Dybwad's Ibsen production, along with much other of her theatrical work, make her a prominent representative in Norway of the movement of re-theatricalization in European theatre. Yet, this aspect of her work was in general not recognized by her contemporaries. She was admired as an ac-

tress, but not really as a director. Following her own artistic line of development, she was out of step with the realistic main-

stream in Norwegian theatre. Johanne Dybwad was a forerunner of later modern and post-modern approaches to Ibsen.

NOTES

- 1 Henrik Ibsen, *Samlede verker. Hundreårsutgave*, Vol. XV, Oslo 1930, p. 162. From a theatre review of 1857.
- 2 See for example Bernhardt Rüdiger, *Henrik Ibsen und die Deutschen*, Berlin 1989.
- 3 Daniel Haakonsen, *Henrik Ibsen, mennesket og kunstneren*, Oslo 1982, pp. 84–101.
- 4 The files of the library indicate that Ibsen borrowed and re-borrowed several volumes of Goethe's works, e.g. *Wahlverwandtschaften*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Faust* and Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*. In the last mentioned one can find several statements of Goethe's understanding of the allegoric and the symbolic. See Øyvind Anker, "Ibsen og Den skandinaviske Forening i Roma", *Edda*, 1956, pp. 170–177.
- 5 Henrik Ibsen, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 154, Oslo 1949 (my translation).
- 6 David E. R. George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, Göttingen 1968.
- 7 This trend of smaller theatres did not reach Norway until the 1920s. The first theatres of this kind were Intimteatret (1921–26) and Balkongen (1927–28) in Oslo, where Agnes Mowinckel directed several modern plays and plays by Ibsen.
- 8 Bjørn Bjørnson's engagement at the Christiania Theater lasted until 1893. In 1899 he became the first manager of the newly established Nationaltheatret, a position he held until 1907 and later again from 1923 to 1927.
- 9 Berit Erbe, "Max Reinhardt in Norwegen", in Leisler & Prossnitz (eds.), *Max Reinhardt in Europa*, Salzburg 1973.
- 10 G.W.F. Hegel, "Vorlesungen über Ästhetik", *Werke im zwanzig Bänden*, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, Vol. XIII–XV. See also Bengt Algot Sörensen, *Allegorie und Symbol. Texte zur Theorie des dichterischen Bildes im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a. M. 1972; Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, New York 1982; Dorthe Jørgensen, *Aber die Wärme des Bluts*, Århus 1996.
- 11 See Christer Westling, *Idealismens Estetik*, Uppsala 1985.
- 12 There is of course an extensive tradition of literary studies of Ibsen's symbolism. For example Arne Duve, *Symbolikken i Henrik Ibsens skuespill*, Oslo 1945; J. R. Northam, *Ibsen's Dramatic Method*, London 1952; Kurt Wais, "Henrik Ibsens Sinnbilder und die Krise seines Jahrhunderts", *Edda*, 1956; Fritz Paul, *Symbol und Mythos: Studien zum Spätwerk Henrik Ibsens*, München 1969; Horst Bien, *Henrik Ibsens realisme*, Oslo 1973.
- 13 "Selvmordene i Henrik Ibsens 'Rosmersholm'", *Profil*, No. 2, 1992; "Organisk symbolikk kontra allegori i *Vildanden* – en kritikk av Paul De Man", *Agora*, No. 2/3, 1993; "Allegory, Intertextuality and Death – the Problem of Symbolism in Ibsen's 'The Master Builder'", *Proceedings VII International Ibsen Conference*, Oslo 1994.
- 14 Perhaps the Schlegel brothers and Novalis were more sublime in their writing on aesthetics, but they did not formulate the distinction between the symbolic and the allegoric as explicitly as Goethe did. See Todorov, *op. cit.*
- 15 Weinhandel, Ferdinand, *Die Metaphysik Goethes*, Berlin 1932, pp. 136–261.
- 16 "Einwirkung der neuern Philosophie", *Goethes Naturwissenschaftlichen Schriften*, Vol. XI, Weimar 1893, p. 49. This and the following quotations from Goethe are translated by me.
- 17 "Über de Gegenstände der bildende Kunst", *Goethes Werke*, Vol. XXXVII, Weimar 1896, p. 91. This article was not published till after Goethe's death.
- 18 "Maximen und Reflexionen", *Goethes Werke*, Vol. XXXII, Part 2, Weimar 1907, p. 151.
- 19 *Op. cit.*, p. 146.
- 20 "Entwurf einer Farbenlehre", *Goethes Naturwissenschaftlichen Schriften, op. cit.*, Vol. I, Weimar 1896, pp. 357ff..
- 21 It is astonishing how this two-sided conventionalism in the Ibsen tradition resembles the double conventionalism of the neo-classical dramaturgy. The one side of the neo-classical

doctrine was the ideal of the Greek drama and the other side was the demand for mimetic resemblance to reality ("vraisemblance"). In the Ibsen tradition the text was given the status of the absolute ideal for the performance, while the doctrine of "vraisemblance" was continued in the demand for realism and naturalness.

- 22 Critical articles on the style at Nationaltheatret can be found in the periodical *Scenen*, from 1912 to 1915. Einar Skavlan, who later became manager at Nationaltheatret from 1928 to 1930, criticized the old-fashioned and overloaded decorative style of Jens Wang (*Scenen*, No. 20, 1914), the lack of conscious direction (*Scenen*, No. 13, 1914), and indicated Max Reinhardt's stylistic efforts as ideal. Max Reinhardt visited Kristiania with guest performances in 1915 and 1920. These visits had a decisive influence on many theatre artists as well as on theatre critics. See Erbe, *op. cit.*
- 23 Axel Otto Normann, *Johanne Dybwad*, Oslo 1937; Anton Rønneberg, *Nationaltheatret gjennom femti år*, Oslo 1949, p. 52; Carla Rae Waal, *Johanne Dybwad, Norwegian Actress*, Oslo 1967; Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas*, Bd. IX, Salzburg 1970, pp. 546ff..
- 24 Compared with his predecessor Jens Wang, Oliver Neerland introduced a new approach to scenic design. Inspired by designers such as Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig, Neerland's sets were "simpler" and "cleaner" than the traditional realistic detailism. He often used abstract, plastic elements, levels and stairs and, instead of painted wings, single-coloured flats and draperies.
- 25 Documentation and sources: From the archive at Nationaltheatret: Program, 15 November 1905; 2 stage plans with inventory; 3 photographs. From the University Library of Oslo: Regiprokol 1903–06. Critics from *Christiania Intelligenssedler* (Chr.Int. – B.G.), *Social-Demokraten* (Soc.Dem. – Fernanda Nissen), *Aftenposten* (Aftenp. – Kristofer Randers), *Dagbladet* (Dagbl. – Lars Hansson) all from 17 Nov. 1905. All quotations translated by me.
- 26 This photograph and the following three (plates 2, 3 & 4) are kindly lent out from the archive at Nationaltheatret.
- 27 Both quotations from Ibsen, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 345 and 372 (my translation).
- 28 The term "sound realism", which actually was borrowed from Ibsen himself, was frequently used in the criticism not only of Ibsen's juxtaposition of realism and symbolism in his later plays, but also of tendencies toward stylization and symbolism in theatre productions, for example by the critics Chr. Collin and Kristian Elster.
- 29 In the general election of 1882 the Liberal party (Venstre) gained the majority in the Norwegian parliament. This escalated the conflict between the parliament and the Swedish King Oscar II, and his appointed conservative dominated Norwegian government. The impeachment process of 1882–84, where several cabinet ministers were sentenced, was an expression of the newly gained parliamentary power. In 1884 the parliament forced the king to hand over the control of the government to the parliament, and a new liberal dominated government was appointed.
- 30 Heiberg, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
- 31 *Op. cit.*, p. 38.
- 32 *Op. cit.*, pp. 39–40.
- 33 On 7 June 1905 the Norwegian government informed the Swedish King Oscar II that he was no longer king of Norway. On 12–13 November 1905 a referendum on the choice between a monarchy or a republic was held. Approximately 80% voted in favour of a monarchy.
- 34 Heiberg Gunnar, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
- 35 Documentation and sources: From the archive at Nationaltheatret: Program 15 November 1922; 6 stage plans; 4 photographs; Regiprokol No. 5. Critics from *Morgenbladet* (Mbl. – N.V.), *Dagbladet* (Dagbl. – Einar Skavlan), *Aftenposten* (Aftenp. – Sigurd Bødtker), *Tidens Tegn* (T.T. – Helge Krog), *Social-Demokraten* (Soc.Dem. – Anders Stiloff), all from 16 November 1922.
- 36 Waal, *op. cit.*, p. 285.
- 37 Ibsen, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, p. 362 (my translation).
- 38 *Op. cit.*, p. 385 (my translation).
- 39 *Op. cit.*, p. 483 (my translation). The photograph is reproduced from Axel Otto Normann, *Johanne Dybwad*, Oslo 1937.
- 40 *Scenen*, Vol. I, 1912. Here quoted from Waal, *op. cit.*, p. 236.