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WHEN NORA STAYED

MORE LIGHT ON THE GERMAN ENDING

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis Group in *Ibsen Studies* on 11/05/2017, available online:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15021866.2017.1324359>

Embargo for nettpubl. av Accepted Manuscript til 11. 11. 2018

INTRODUCTION

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (*Et dukkehjem. Skuespil i tre akter*, 1879) owes its world wide reputation to the last scene, where Nora leaves her husband and children. A little less known is the German, alternative ending of *Nora* – the title commonly used in the German speaking world – where she stays. In the field of theatre studies, this ending is commonly recognized. The fact that Ibsen himself wrote it in 1879 – and tolerated its performance for a while – also belongs to established knowledge. The circumstances of the genesis and distribution of this very special piece of text have, however, not yet been presented in a manner giving attention to all aspects.

My main arguments are:

- a) The one to 'blame' for the alternative ending of *Nora* is not the actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, but rather the translator Wilhelm Lange and the theatre director Heinrich Laube.
- b) The conciliatory ending was necessary in order to accommodate the expectations of German theatre audiences around 1880.
- c) The alternative ending had a wider circulation than previously known.

It has been repeatedly claimed that the unwillingness on the part of a certain actress and a theatre director to let Nora go was the triggering reason for Ibsen to write this alternative, conciliatory ending (cf. e.g. HU 8, 265; OxI V, 287f.; Lohkrantz 2002, 66; HIS 7k, 222; Dingstad 2016, 112). Ibsen himself was the first to state this in public, and he still claimed this in 1891 (cf. his letter to Moritz Prozor

23 January 1891, HIS 15, 92–94), thereby cementing this story that still is retold – and warding off suspicions that he himself might have taken the initiative to alter the ending.

My supposition, however is that Niemann-Raabe was not a central agent, whereas others, especially the German translator Wilhelm Lange and the theatre director Heinrich Laube were eager to make Ibsen change the ending. And, furthermore that this was possible not only because the author lacked legal rights at that time, but because forces and discourses in the theatre world and society around 1880 made the new ending more or less necessary.¹

When *Et dukkehjem* entered the UNESCO list in 2001 as "Memory of the World", it was not the 'work', but the *manuscripts*, the various drafts, working manuscripts and notes produced by Ibsen. The motivation is not surprising: "[Nora] has served and serves as a symbol throughout the world, for women fighting for liberation and equality." (UNESCO, 2017) One of the Memories of the World is thus the altered ending, Ibsen's only original theatre manuscript in German; one must say that this variant undermines the importance of the play for modern feminism. The reworked final scene in a foreign language, goes like this, in James McFarlane's translation:

<NORA. ... Where we could make a real marriage out of our lives together. Goodbye.
[*Begins to go.*]
HELMER. Go then! [*Seizes her arm.*] But first you shall see your children for the last time!
NORA. Let me go! I will not see them! I cannot!
HELMER [*draws her over to the door, left*]. You shall see them. [*Opens the door and says softly.*] Look, there they are asleep, peaceful and carefree. Tomorrow, when they wake up and call for their mother, they will be – motherless.
NORA [*trembling*]. Motherless...!

HELMER. As you once were.

NORA. Motherless! [*Struggles with herself, lets her travelling bag fall, and says.*] Oh, this is a sin against myself, but I cannot leave them. [*Half sinks down by the door.*]

HELMER [*joyfully, but softly*]. Nora!

[*The curtain falls.*]

(OxI V, 287f.)

WILHELM LANGE'S ROLE

Ibsen started to work on *Et dukkehjem* in Rome at the end of 1878 and finished the play in Amalfi the next year. It was published, as was usual for Ibsen's dramas, before Christmas (first print 4 December 1879, 8,000 copies; second print 4 January 1880, 3,000 copies, HIS 7k, 223f.), and was translated by Wilhelm Lange into German only a few weeks later. (for further details about this rapid process, see HIS 7k, 225.)

Wilhelm Lange (1849–1907), the first translator of *Nora*, translated a large number of books from English, from Scandinavian, Romance, and Slavonic languages. For the German publisher Philip Reclam he translated four Ibsen dramas: *Die Stützen der Gesellschaft* (1877), *Nora oder Ein Puppenheim* (1880), *Der Bund der Jugend* (1881), and *Ein Volksfeind* (1883). Lange domesticated names and undertook quite a few other significant alterations in his translations.² Nora was for instance made a more independent, or perhaps more interesting woman when he turned her rather simple home work “arkskrift” (i.e. transcription, copying) into the translation of a novel. And, even more important, Lange altered the play's title from *Et dukkehjem* to *Nora / oder / Ein Puppenheim*, an epochal change, with consequences far beyond the German speaking world, since from then on it was known simply as *Nora*. Lange paved the way for *Nora* on the German stages, however, in competition with other word-for-word translations of the

title; in the period leading up to 1904, Fritz Paul notes, there were four different German translations of the play, but only Lange's bore the title *Nora*. *Nora* was gradually used more and more, in stagings and in many translations, and is at present the most widely used title on German language stages. There are no traces of protest against Lange's alterations from Ibsen, not even against giving the play the name of the main character. On the contrary, in his correspondence, especially with Germans, Ibsen adopts the new title immediately, even if he had expected another title from Lange: *Ein Puppenhaus* – which he mentions in a letter to the Swedish theatre director Gustaf Gustafson 18 November 1879. Gustafson had asked Ibsen for a suggestion for a Swedish translation of the title, but interestingly enough, Ibsen is not able to answer that question, and leaves the decision to Gustafson, whereas he is almost certain of the German translation *Ein Puppenhaus*, because “one cannot come closer in German to the original” (HIS 13, 523).

As for Lange's minor changes, even they were still in use years later, although accompanied by critical remarks in the press. The long term influence of Lange's translation lies in the title; in the early years of reception, however, his role in publishing and promoting *Nora* with both the original and the German endings provided his main impact on the reception of the play.

On 17 February 1880 Ibsen sent an open letter to the Danish newspaper *Nationaltidende*, which was published 20 February 1880 (HIS 14, 24f.). A few days earlier (11 February 1880, 2. ed.) this newspaper had reported about the opening night of the play in Germany on 6 February 1880 in the city of Flensburg, where the last

scene had been changed. Ibsen lacked the legal rights to interfere and therefore he reacted to this performance with the following words, in McFarlane's translation:

I see from a report from Flensburg [...] that *A Doll's House* [...] was produced there, and that at the performance the ending was altered – allegedly on instructions from me.

This last item is wholly incorrect. Soon after *Nora* had been published, I received a report from my translator and theatrical agent for North Germany, Wilhelm Lange of Berlin, saying that there were grounds for supposing that another 'translation' or 'adaptation' of the play might appear with a different ending, and that this might very easily be preferred by a considerable number of North German theatres.

To prevent any such possibility, I sent him – for use in an emergency – the draft of an altered ending, by which Nora does not leave the house but instead is forced by Helmer across to the door to the children's bedroom; a few lines of dialogue follow, Nora sinks down at the door, and the curtain falls.

I myself described the alteration to my translator as a 'barbaric outrage' against the play. If it is used, it is therefore completely against my wishes; but I cherish the hope that it will not be used in very many German theatres.

As long as there is no literary convention in force between Germany and the Scandinavian countries, we Scandinavian authors are completely powerless down here [...] I prefer – having learnt from earlier experience – to commit the outrage myself [...].
(OxI V, 454f.)

Ibsen claims to have felt forced to write the ending which Wilhelm Lange felt was necessary, even if he without any doubt wanted the original ending to be played, as he stresses on many occasions: "I wrote this play just because of its ending" (21 March 1880 to Günther von der Groben).³

The manuscript of the altered ending which was sent to Wilhelm Lange has not been preserved. But one autograph exists, the one Ibsen sent to the director of the Stadttheater Wien, Heinrich Laube on 18 February 1880 (HIS 14, 25f.), accompanying a letter in which Ibsen discusses the nature of the drama – again in James McFarlane's translation, this time from German:

I did not write the altered ending out of any sense of conviction, but solely to meet the wishes of a North German impresario and an actress who wanted to tour on North Germany in the role of Nora. I enclose a copy of this alteration, from which I hope you will realize that the impact of the play will only be weakened by using this ending.

I suggest you take no notice of the alteration but instead produce the play for the public in its original form. Yours faithfully, Henrik Ibsen.

(OxI, V, 455)

The name of the “impresario” is Chéri Maurice (i.e. Charles Maurice Schwartzberger, 1805–1896), Director of the Thalia-Theater, Hamburg. The actress is Hedwig Raabe (1844–1905, married Niemann-Raabe), who performed Nora on many stages in Northern Germany. In 1900 the journal *Das litterarische Echo* published a statement from Niemann-Raabe. The conciliatory ending was indeed written for her, she explains, but not solely on her own initiative; her words were used, she says, by Chéri Maurice to strengthen his own arguments for an audience friendly ending. In a conversation with him, she had claimed that she never would have left her children, which, still according to her, led Maurice to ask Ibsen for a ‘happy’ ending. Interestingly, Lange’s name is not mentioned in *Das litterarische Echo*.⁴

The staging in Hamburg had its first night on 4 September 1880, whereas the Flensburg staging in question in Ibsen’s letter to *Nationaltidende*, where neither Niemann-Raabe nor Maurice were involved, took place 6 February 1880. In Flensburg Nora was played by Helene Schneider, who also performed Nora in Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), with the same “versöhnlichen Schluss” (*Bromberger Zeitung* 6 October 1880). But Niemann-Raabe and Maurice may very well have had this conversation already in February, planning for the tour to Berlin, for which Chérie was probably responsible (Bänsch 1991, 62).⁵ However, as Bänsch highlights, Ibsen’s letter to Laube, dated 18 February 1880, the day after his letter to *Nationaltidende*, points at the impresario, not Lange, as the one who demanded the change. The difference between the letters might be explained, according to Bänsch, by Lange playing his cards well, making Ibsen believe that he was under pressure from different sides (Bänsch 1991, 62).

In its coverage of the very first German staging of *Nora* in Flensburg, the *Nationaltidende* 11 February 1880 reports that Lange had sent the director, Stanislaus v. Glotz (1843–1887), the conciliatory ending with an “injunction” to use it.⁶ If this is only halfway true – Lange might in reality have expressed himself in milder words – he seems to have had an interest not only in warning Ibsen against unauthorized endings on German stages, as we already know from the correspondence, but also in promoting a conciliatory ending. Lange's prompt reaction, which Ibsen describes in his letter to the newspaper 17 February 1880, reveals a translator who must have been most eager to make Ibsen's play acceptable to the German audience. Moreover, there are no other instances in Ibsen's entire oeuvre where a translator is able to convince the playwright to undertake such a major structural rewriting of a play.

As a theatrical agent, Lange was depending on good reviews and a fair amount of tickets sold. In the Reclam edition of *Nora* his position is clearly defined: Everyone who wants to stage the play, must negotiate with him. From Ibsen's point of view, the deal with Lange was a bad one. The income from the performances were to be shared between Ibsen and Lange; the royalties from the book sales were entirely Lange's, as Ibsen explained to H.E. Berner 18 February 1882 in a letter about the difficult financial conditions for Scandinavian authors in Germany at this time (HIS 14, 120–125).. Georg Brandes expressed sympathy with Ibsen in this respect in his article on *A Doll's House* (Brandes 1904, 267).

Ibsen had to accept these conditions, as he had no copyright for Germany at this time. “The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works,” which went into effect in December 1887, was not signed by Denmark until 1903. Further evidence of Lange’s interest in the softened ending of *Nora* is the fact that he published it as a variant in his Reclam edition.⁷ He thereby not only secured his stage rights also to the German ending, but even made public its status as an authorized text. As a consequence, the German speaking readers had both variants available, printed side by side.⁸

When one considers the distribution and numbers of copies of these handy and cheap Reclam books, the conciliatory ending must have been noticed by a large audience.⁹ Unfortunately we do not know what Ibsen thought of the ‘interactive’ solution in the Reclam edition, if he knew about it at all. Furthermore, the Reclam edition sold very well in Copenhagen as well. Ibsen was in his letter to his publisher Frederik Hegel at Gyldendal 22 January 1880 (HIS 14, 16–18) very concerned about the damage the edition caused in the Scandinavian market, where the Norwegian edition was in circulation at a much higher price than Reclam’s price of 20 Pfennige. Several of Lange’s translations on Reclam were distributed to book sellers in Copenhagen – according to Ibsen, in his letter to H.E. Berner 18 February 1882, 600–800 copies of *Nora* were sold by one single bookseller in Copenhagen. We do not know whether this was Lange’s own idea, but he certainly must have profited from it, although this part of his income from *Nora*, must have been modest compared to the tantièmes from the theatres.

*

A digression to a much later event, in November 1907, underlines the importance of securing rights and incomes for Lange (and probably for other translators of the time), as well as throws light on a forgotten incident. Shortly before his death Lange caused what was then named the “Theaterskandal”, a fight over translations and rights that reached its peak on stage; Agnes Sorma (1862–1927) gave a guest performance as Nora at Das kleine Theater unter den Linden in Berlin, which was then led by Victor Barnowsky (1875–1952). Lange had reasons to believe that she for this performance would use his translation, which she had been using until then, and not the newer one by Marie von Borch (first edition 1890, S. Fischer Verlag), as announced by the director. In the correspondence with Barnowsky Lange had asked why Sorma was, for this guest appearance, forced to learn a new text. Lange’s version was not free, so he hired two stenographers to document whether Sorma fell back into the old text, which would enable Lange to claim his rightful tantième. The actress was so much in distress by the mere presence of the stenographers that she wept uncontrollably in the intermission after the first act. Sorma could not calm down as she returned on stage to start the second act, she cried openly in front of the audience, the audience was upset, there were cries for the police, and the whole theatre finally descended into disorder. Sorma would not continue unless the stenographers left the theatre, and the performance went on only after they had left the building. In the following days several newspapers wrote about the incident.¹⁰ We learn about disputes about the rights to Lange’s translation that also involved Deutsches Theater, which, apparently had obtained the rights for *Nora* already, allegedly by means of a secret contract with Hr. Abel (who performed as Dr. Rank in Das kleine Theater). Sorma

had in fact – so the consensus suggests – used 4/7 of Lange’s translation, and the theatre was obliged to pay Lange a six Mark fine.¹¹

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The original ending was, in the middle of debates and experiments, used for the first time on 3 March 1880 at the Königliches Residenz-Theater, München, directed by Ernst von Possart (1841–1921), with Marie Ramlo (married Conrad-Ramlo, 1850–1921) as Nora.¹² Ibsen attended the rehearsals and the première, which was a success for the two first acts, but after the third left the audience and critics very much in doubt over the aesthetic and moral qualities. (HIS 7k, 247) In Scandinavia the alternative ending was never introduced, nor demanded, even if the general opinion was that Nora’s change during the third act is problematic, even “psychologically unexplainable”, as expressed in condensed form by Christian Molbech, the censor of The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. This, however, did not change his conclusion about the play as a whole: “unconditional recommendation” (HIS 7k, 238).

In Berlin, at the Residenz-Theater, where *Nora* had its opening night 20 November 1880 with Niemann-Raabe, the altered ending was used for a short period of time. As a parallel to the two versions in the Reclam edition, the audience, depending on which day they bought tickets for, encountered two different exits.¹³ Further changes were made in the final scene: The children were dragged out of their bedrooms, dressed up, presented to their sobbing parents, then Nora embraced them and the curtain went down (HIS 7k, 246). The critics were not enthu-

siastic. Even the audience did not like the play, but not primarily because of the ‘German ending’: rather, according to Georg Brandes, who attended the first night in Berlin at the Residenz-Theater, they disliked it because of the bad (i.e. domesticating) translation, the unsuitable acting (partly caused by the audience's negative response) (Brandes 1904, 265ff.). Brandes notes that Lange had insisted on an extra fourth rehearsal, whereas Niemann-Raabe was satisfied with only three. The effect of Nora’s behaviour was vividly described by another eye witness (whom Brandes had recognized in the theatre), the author and critic Friedrich Spielhagen. As the audience senses the mere possibility of her leaving there was a slowly growing anxiety, gradually turning into reservation, finally bursting out into a “condemning *vox populi*.” (Spielhagen 1880/1881) The voice of the people had expected Nora to stay, and not to be frank and overt in discussions with her husband.

After protests the theatre returned to the original ending. Ibsen wrote to Lange on 17 April 1880 that he is relieved to hear that Niemann-Raabe finally had made this decision – which might have some truth in it, but – again – she was probably not the only decision maker (HIS 14, 40f.). As Ståle Dingstad has accounted for, when it comes to attendance, “the varied endings made little difference” (Dingstad 2016, 115). *Nora* was a difficult piece of theatre; in comparison with the success of the German productions of *Pillars of Society* two years earlier, *Nora* must be regarded as unsuccessful.

Ibsen ended his relationship with Lange in the mid 1880s, apparently due to the latter’s mental condition, but also because of the quality of his work.¹⁴ Other rea-

sons for ending the alliance might be the fact that Lange did not manage to finish his translation of *Rosmersholm*¹⁵ and that Lange earlier had shown uncollegial behaviour and Ibsen felt uncertain about his reliability: He (and Emil Jonas) had offered theatres in Germany unauthorized translations of *Samfundets Støtter*, which prevented Ibsen from sharing the income with the translator. Ibsen wanted to forestall a new unauthorized translation from Lange, as he recalled in the above mentioned letter to H.E. Berner from 18 February 1882, and therefore entered into an agreement with him to publish his translation as “*einzig autorisierte deutsche Ausgabe*”. But there were far better translator-agents for Ibsen, as this set of complaints about Lange illustrates. A look into Bjørnson’s correspondence with Germans leaves us with the same impression of Lange as untrustworthiness (cf. Bjørnson 1986–1987, 105).

HEINRICH LAUBE

Bänsch is right in his intuition that Ibsen was under pressure from different sides as he wrote the German ending of *Nora*, but the undertone of accusation against Lange as the only source of pressure is misdirected, since there is no doubt, as we shall see, that also others had asked for permission to change the ending.

At Heinrich Laube’s theatre, Stadttheater Wien, the altered ending was used when *Nora* was staged for the first time in September 1881.¹⁶ Not, however, on the first night, 8 September 1881, but, as Jens-Morten Hanssen has pointed out, in the second and third performances (Hanssen 2017, 45).¹⁷ This fact demonstrates the danger of letting the first performance speak for all of the following.

Laube had asked for permission to change the ending over a year before the staging, and in a more explicit way than Ibsen's answer to him reveals. Brandes had already suggested in 1880 that Laube take an active part in convincing Ibsen to write a new ending; later others have pointed at Laube in the same way¹⁸ – surprisingly without any consequences for the myth about Niemann-Raabe's part in this matter. Affirmation is found in contemporary discussions, such as *Oesterreichisch-Ungarische Kunst-Chronik* 15 February 1880, where readers are informed of Laube's intention to stage *Nora* and of letters to three Scandinavian authors with requests to change the ending of their plays in a more conciliatory spirit:

[...] however, one has to wait for the new ending, which the author has promised to write. An awkward coincidence has led to the situation that Laube at present is corresponding with three Nordic authors about changes in the last acts of their plays, with Ibsen, Molbech, and Bjørnson. [...] All of these plays end in dissonance, and Laube has now requested that the authors write new, milder endings, for which our audience is more receptive. Ibsen and Molbech have agreed to follow the director's wish, Bjørnson, on the other hand, does not seem to be willing to comply with the request.¹⁹

Bjørnson's decision is easy to understand, as the heroine in *Leonarda*, true enough a divorced, non-believing woman in conflict with the double standards of her society, nevertheless ends up accepting her 'duties' as a married woman. Why this has to be softened, is not easy to understand from today's point of view. However, the audience in Mannheim²⁰ was not satisfied, or did not understand the end because *Leonarda*, despite her reconciliation with her husband, unexpectedly leaves for a journey as the play ends – which might have led Laube to ask for more clarity in the final act (Pasche 1979, 70).

Laube himself, however, did not come any further with the staging of *Nora*, as he had retired from the Stadttheater a year before the première, leaving it to Karl von Bukovics, his successor from 25 September 1880, to complete (but not necessarily direct) the production (Surmatz 1997, 176).

In Vienna, the actor and stage director Adolf von Sonnenthal (1834–1909) was also planning to direct *Nora* at the famous Burgtheater. Not knowing that his theatre had already rejected the play, he wrote to Ibsen for permission to use the conciliatory ending. Sonnenthal's letter to Ibsen is unknown. However, Øyvind Anker (1979–1981, 1, 246) refers to the newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* 25 May 1906 where Sonnenthal recalls Ibsen's answer: "This is impossible, they play must remain as it is, Nora must leave."²¹ The exact year of the correspondence between Ibsen and the Burgtheater is not known. Sonnenthal, however, in the newspaper article, dates it to the period during which Adolf von Wilbrandt was director, 1881–1887; Anker suggests in his letter edition 1879, 1880 or 1881, which makes 1881 a probable year.

Apparently, the demand for a happy ending was not restricted to Ibsen, nor to the theatres and authors mentioned here. The journal *Das litterarische Echo* compares the *Nora* case with the softening of the last scenes of Hermann Sudermann's *Ehre* (1889), which originally ended with a murder, and Erich Schlaikjer's *Hinrich Lornsen* (1900), originally ending with a divorce.²²

EXCURSUS. NORA'S SECOND CHANCE TO STAY

Adolph von Sonnenthal's 1881 staging of *Nora* in Vienna was not the last to make use of the altered ending. In 1891 – as the second, and much larger *Nora* wave had started in Europe after several years of disinterest – Eleonora Duse was about to give Nora to the Italian audience. The translator Luigi Capuana (1839–1915) asked Ibsen to authorize the changed ending. Ibsen answered with a protest, in a letter from 22 January 1891, appealing to the "very intelligent" and "sensitive" Italian audience, which "most certainly will understand my intentions" (HIS 15, 92).²³ The day after he wrote the following to his French translator, Maurice Prozor:

I see with regret that Mr. Luigi Capuana has been the cause of a good deal of unpleasantness for you with his proposal to alter the final scene of *A Doll's House* for use in Italian theatres.

I do not doubt for a moment that your variant would be much preferable to Mr. Capuana's suggestion. But the thing is I cannot possibly allow myself to give any direct authorization to any alteration at all to the conclusion of the play. I might almost say that it is precisely an account of the final scene that the whole play was written.

Moreover, I think Mr. Capuana is wrong in thinking that the Italian public is not capable of understanding or commending my work if it is produced in the theatre in its original form. In any case, it could be tried. If it then really becomes evident that I will not do, then Mr. Capuana can use your revised ending on his own authority, but without my formal recognition or authorization of such a step on my part.

(Translated by James McFarlane, OXI V, 455f.)

Prozor apparently had proposed his variant of the ending, which Ibsen would prefer to Capuana's suggestion. The text of this variant, unfortunately, is still unknown (HIS 15k, 137).

In the beginning of the 1890s Ibsen believed that such a change was a dead end. But there were more letters of the same kind to be answered, such as, for example, to an unidentified recipient 31 March 1891, where Ibsen repeats that the play was written for the sake of the ending, and that he does not believe that mutilations of

the ending takes place any longer.²⁴ Ibsen position was firmer now than in 1880, but he was wrong: such “mutilations” still, in fact, took place.

The French theatre director Aurelien Lugné-Poë (1869–1940) noted in his memoirs that Eleonora Duse used both endings (Lugné-Poë, 1938, 10).²⁵ Her first performance as Nora took place in Milan on 9 February 1891. Margherita Giordano Lokrantz argues convincingly that Duse not only used the original text, but had prevented the anxious translator Capuana from modifying the end (2002, 68).²⁶ D’Amico cites newspaper reports which clearly show that Duse did play the original ending (2013, 90). Could it be that Duse had used the original ending in Italy and the ‘German’ ending when on tour? With Duse’s integrity in mind, this does not seem very probable, but must nevertheless remain an open question in the present article.

We now, however, know for certain that Lugné-Poë himself, who served 1892–1929 as the director of the Parisian Théâtre de l’Œuvre, directed a “reconciled” Nora, a surprising fact that to my knowledge has not been described earlier. But as in Berlin 1880, Lugné-Poë had to abandon the German ending and return to the original after, according to a newspaper article, a “Storm of protest” from the audience, with outcries such as “Nora has to leave!”²⁷ In this article, the performance of *Nora* in question at Théâtre de l’Œuvre is said to be the first on this stage, i.e. probably 1903. *IbsenStage* lists 20 stagings of *Nora* by Lugné-Poë between 1903–1929. If the year/season still has to be confirmed by French sources, the fact that Lugné-Poë used both endings at Théâtre de l’Œuvre, is undisputable. A newspaper article of September 1913 recalls this (probably) 1903 staging in its

preview of the first *Nora* at the Théâtre Français with a mild warning against using the 'German' ending once more, as only the original, "pessimistic" solution would have an effect on the Parisian audience, and apart from that it was, according to the author of the article, the only logical one.²⁸

The alternative ending was, finally, used also, as Jens-Morten Hanssen has found, by touring companies in South-Africa in 1929 and Sweden in 1956 (2017, 44). In the United States it was used in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1882, in Louisville, Kentucky in 1883, and in New York in 1889 (HIS 7k, 249 and Dingstad 2016, 118; 120).

WHY WAS AN ALTERNATIVE ENDING DEEMED NECESSARY?

In the German speaking world, the question of the alternate ending was a part of the reception for a longer time than the first crucial year of reception, 1880.

Newspapers quoted in the present article demonstrate the relevance of the question some two decades later, and as late as September 1906 a Viennese journal brought the news of a conciliatory ending at the Wiener Burgtheater. Under the heading "Ein neuer 'Nora-Schluß'", readers are informed that the theatre can now take pride in having presented yet another variant of a reconciled Nora. The reason this time, however, was that the actress, Rosa Albach-Retty (1874–1980), due to a technical problem did not manage to open the entrance door as she was to leave her home. The actress's unsuccessful struggle to end the play in the right way is, of course, a funny little parenthesis in the history of *Nora*. It is nevertheless in itself and – because of the irony which the reviewer uses when he describes

this incident – evidence of the deep traces that the early productions and discussions about Nora's behaviour had left in the early years of the German reception.

The motives for the 'German' ending cannot, however, be explained through the actions of individuals alone. There are a number of possible explanations in a wider context that make the decisions of these agents plausible, which also involve the expectations of the audience, which was not prepared for the radical views on marriage presented to them by Ibsen in an unexpected dramatic form.

When Nora leaves after her marriage has gone through a crisis and she has begun to understand the real nature of her relationship with Helmer and that there is no chance that the "vidunderligste" – "the miracle of miracles" (the common English translation) – between them would happen, this is in radical opposition to the written and unwritten rules in European society. The woman was legally incompetent in marriage, and family law in Denmark was still governed by the act of 1687 from King Christian V's reign (HIS 7, 198). The legal relation between the sexes in marriage around 1880 was a part of the reception context, not only in Germany. As Giuliano D'Amico notes in his work on Ibsen's reception in Italy, *Nora* confronted "the general values of the European bourgeoisie of the late 19th century" (D'Amico 2013, 81).

The inspiration to deal with these injustices in a drama might have come from the friend of both Ibsen and his wife Suzannah, Camilla Collett, who dealt with these matters in several essays. Collett again had read and written about the period's most influential defence of women's equality in marriage and society, John Stuart

Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), a book that was translated the same year by Georg Brandes, and which the three of them must have discussed when Collett stayed with the Ibsen family in Dresden in 1872. Collett's observations on women's subjection, as she could observe in practice just walking around in the city of Dresden, are clearly marked by indignation (Collett 1913, v.2, 231f.).²⁹

Within the limitations of this article, however, Mill and Collett must serve as examples only of the much wider social and political context of *A Doll's House*: the growing fight for women's right in Europe in general; the development of realism and later naturalism in literature with its focus on social questions; the emergence of a leftist movement in literature and other public spheres; and the commonly known fate of author Laura Kieler, who bears resemblance with Nora, as well. The historical discourses, contexts and circumstances that were so important for Ibsen's reorientation towards his "samtidsdramaer" are dealt with by Narve Fulsås in his introduction to Ibsen's letters (see especially HIS 13, 23–69). Nevertheless, the following observations in the narrower context of theatre life, serving first of all as further explanations of the emergence of the German ending, may also add to the broader context of Ibsen's *Nora*.

The German critic Otto Brahm (1856–1912) had recognised the difficulties of presenting Ibsen's *Nora* at the Residenz-Theater of Berlin; Nora had, he comments, lost her way into the sphere of a certain "Dora" when she appeared at the Residenz-Theater of Berlin (HIS 7k, 308; see also Pasche 1979, 190). Brahm here alludes to the French author Victorien Sardou, who was very popular at the time, and to one of his most successful plays, *Dora* (1877), where the heroine is mis-

taken to be a dangerous femme fatale and a spy.³⁰ The audience probably also knew Carl Detlef's (pseud. Clara Bauer) novel *Nora. Eine Charakterstudie aus der deutschen Gesellschaft* published in 1871 (cf. HIS 7k, 308). Furthermore, the resemblance of Nora with Dora Spenlow in *David Copperfield* – both a “child wife”, as Dickens' Dora wanted to be called, is also worth noticing. The German speaking world was aware of this possible connection, as we see, for example, in an article in *Kölnische Zeitung* from 28 May 1915.

Even if the intrigue of the French play had nothing, and Detlef's *Nora* only a little to do with Ibsen's *Nora*, the expectations of the audience in Berlin were directed towards a farce or a comedy of manner with plot twists, easy going dialogues and a happy ending – which might explain why *Pillars of Society* met a far more enthusiastic audience in Germany. With this in mind one may assume that the alpha and omega of Lange's alterations to the play, the title and the ending, were a way of smuggling a difficult drama into the realm of the contemporary Doras and Noras with whom spectators were familiar.

Ibsen was well aware of the quality of the German theatre. He had lived in Dresden 1868–1875, in Munich 1875–1891 (with longer interruptions in Italy), and even if he did not deliver lengthy reports on the artistic standards of the theatres in his letters, there are some interesting remarks, for instance in his letter to his publisher Frederik Hegel 31 October 1868, where he tells about his frequent visits to Das Königliche Hoftheater zu Dresden, which he regards as one of Germany's best, but even so “far, far below” the taste and art of Det Kongelige Theater in Copenhagen (HIS 12, 311). He was probably also aware of the fact that, in

Dingstad's words, "It was common practice in many countries that the first staging was more concerned with pleasing the local audience than with staying true to Ibsen's text. Once Ibsen became a recognized dramatist, a result of many public debates and significant discord, different traditions were established to advance his works" (Dingstad 2016, 119).

Fritz Paul reminds readers in his description of Ibsen in Germany about the fact that "the first phase of translation and reception of the social plays coincided with the conditions of contemporary commercialized theatre of amusement, since the 1869 law of freedom of trade had made it possible to establish numerous private theatres with a new audience." He observes a causal connection between the changed ending and the "Kommerz- und Unterhaltungstheater", and the low artistic level of the German stages at that time.³¹ He even calls the early translations of *Et dukkehjem* trivializations, arguing that the theatres were simply not mature enough for *Nora* (Paul, 2011, 2541). And, likewise, Erika Fischer-Lichte states in her *History of European Drama and Theatre* "As the nineteenth century progressed, the situation in theatres across Europe grew more and more desolate. By about 1880, the literary level of theatre had reached an all-time low" (Fischer-Lichte 244).

Another important aspect that was perhaps not very much in the author's mind, is the fact that the average spectator expected to hear a certain type of spoken German. As Dieter Bansch points out, Ibsen's Norwegian had "the power and freshness of its national-romantic renaissance"; the German theatre language, however, was still "burdened with its classical-romantic tradition and at the same time suf-

ferred from the growing commercialization." This unsynchronized development of the two theatre languages is clearly demonstrated in Lange's first translation of the play: Ibsen's simultaneously highly stylized and casual Norwegian turns out both flat and stiff in German (Bänsch 1991, 58).³² Not only Lange, however, is characterized in this way; other translators as well, such as Ernst Brausewetter, the translator of *Vildanden* (1884), had, as Fritz Paul notes, surrendered to "a mediocre style" (Paul 2011, 2543, referring to H. Depenbrock).

The circumstances of the German ending should now be clearer, if not complete in all aspects. The reason for the changed last scene is, to sum up, only in part Frau Niemann-Raabe's views on a married woman's responsibilities, and can to a even greater degree be found in Maurice Chérie's anxieties, as well as in Lange's fears about failing as an agent, and in Laube's fear of provoking the audience in Vienna. These agents had a sense of the theatre situation and the audience's expectations that led them to support and even demand the violation of the drama's inner logic. They all wanted a changed ending of *Nora*, not primarily because of their possible personal conservative convictions, about which we do not know much – Laube was a radical in the 1830s who went to prison for his revolutionary sympathies –³³, but as a consequence of their insight into German theatres, their audiences, and the possibilities for a secure income.

Before the breakthrough towards the end of the 1880s when the original ending is staged in a more confident manner, came a first phase with so much uncertainty in the audience, amongst the agents, translators, directors, and actresses that one

might conclude with pointing at the *vox populi* as the true agent demanding a reconciled couple and judging Ibsen's play by its own standards of a popular plot.

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NOTES

¹ This study is partly based on findings in the Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, Universität zu Köln. I would like to express my gratitude for the very competent and friendly help I received from the staff during my two stays there in December 2015 and June 2016. – I am also most grateful for the valuable comments, advice and corrections from the anonymous referees.

² For instance Krogstad is renamed Günther and Torvald rendered as Robert, changes that were reused in the first production of *Nora* in the U.S.A., Milwaukee 2 June 1882 (Dingstad 2016, 117). Lange describes his translation strategy in a letter to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson 2 November 1876 as "deviating from the common view on fidelity". (Bjørnson 1986–1987, 94) Others have analyzed Lange's domestications thoroughly, see Frank (1989, 198).

³ "grade dieses Schlusses wegen habe ich das ganze Stück gedichtet" (HIS 14, 31)

⁴ The year 1905 was the 25th anniversary of the German ending, an event that coincided with the decease of Niemann-Raabe. Newspapers brought obituaries of the celebrated actress – and of "die versöhnliche Nora".

⁵ Reinhold Ortmann's book about Maurice and the Thalia theatre (Ortmann 1881) does not mention *Nora*. – The Flensburg theatre was depending heavily on guest performances: "Die Gastspiele reisender Gesellschaften prägten bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts die Theaterszene."

<<http://www.sh-landestheater.de/de/spielstaetten/flensburg.php>> Accessed 4 October 2016

⁶ "[...] at Oversætteren og 'Bearbejderen', en Hr. W. Lange fra 'Digterens egen Haand' havde tilstillet ham – Direktøren – en *forandret Slutning* på Stykket med bestemt Pålæg om at bruge denne."

⁷ Not, however, in the first print of 1879 (Bänsch 1991, 46). Ibsen's letter to Laube of 18 February 1880 was printed together with the variant. The first Reclam edition was in sale before new year 1880 (HIS 7k, 224), and therefore the variant must have been available at the earliest from the second print on, i.e. in March 1880. For the theaters, Lange had distributed a version "printed as manuscript" even before the first Reclam edition. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any copy of that earlier theatre version.

⁸ The text in the attachment to Ibsen's letter to Laube differs only slightly from the printed version in the Reclam Edition: A grammatical error in the manuscript ("nach ihre Mutter") was corrected (> "ihrer"), possibly by Wilhelm Lange.

⁹ Number of copies printed: v. Borch's translation until 1931: 130.000 (Paul 2011, 2542); Lange's until 1943: 589.000. (Keel 1992, 143) All in all Ibsen's dramas and poems were printed in more than 6 Million copies from 1877 to 1945. (Keel 1992, 132)

¹⁰ Cf. NN: "Eine gestörte Theater-Vorstellung", s.n., 2 November 1907 and P.W.: "Gestörte 'Nora'", s.n., [3 November 1907]. 25 years later the scandal was remembered in an article by C.R.S.: "Als Agnes Sorma die Nora spielte. 25 jähriges Jubiläum eines Theaterskandals", s.n. 2 November 1932.

¹¹ *Neuer Theater-Almanach* mentions Wilhelm Lange's death 15 December 1907, but not the scandal, neither in the 1908 nor the 1909 volume. Julius Berstl, dramaturg at Das kleine Theater, comments the scandal (1911, 16) and seems to be the source for Sándor Gulyás, who mentions it in his book about Das kleine Theater (1961, 37). In Julius Bab's book about Agnes Sorma, the year 1907 with Barnowsky at Das kleine Theater is mentioned, but not this incident. Berstl's history of Barnowsky's work in Berlin (Berstl 1930) does not contain anything about the incident.

¹² Ernst Possart himself does not even mention Ibsen, nor his plays, nor M. Ramlo, in his memoirs. (Possart 1916) The Vienna staging was not the first in Austria, Innsbruck was earlier: *Innsbrucker Nachrichten* 7 January 1881 announces *Nora*, the reporter cannot wait to see how it will end. ("Wir sind deshalb auf die Lösung sehr gespannt."). I have not managed to detect which solution finally was chosen.

¹³ "Auf diese Weise wurde 'Nora', wie Oscar Blumenthal damals schrieb, 'eine Art Durchhaus-Drama mit zwei Ausgängen.'" (Stein 1901, 9)

¹⁴ Cf. Ibsen's letters to Julius Höffory 8 November 87, and to Joseph Poestion 2 August 1894. – To find biographical information about Wilhelm Lange is difficult, but cf. HIS 13, 701, HIS14k, 809, and Frank (1992, 96): "Er war promovierter Philologe oder Jurist, arbeitete als Dramaturg und übersetzte nicht nur Theaterstücke aus mehreren Sprachen. Er setzte sich für die Rechte des Übersetzer- und Schriftstellerstandes ein." An inaugural dissertation by Wilhelm Lange for the dr. juris degree at the university of Straßburg could be a further proof of his interest in the field of rights: *Die Wirkung des rechtsgeschäftlichen Zwanges nach gemeinem Recht*. Leipzig: Roßberg, 1886.

(55 S.) Judging by Ibsen's letter to Høffory Lange was mentally ill at least the year after, and its questionable if he would have been able to write a dissertation, even of this length. Apart from that fact, his name is not uncommon, and so the author of this book might very well be a namesake.

¹⁵ Cf. Ibsen's letter to Frederik Hegel 26 January 1887. Lange's *Rosmersholm* was published 1899.

¹⁶ Tyrolt's history of the Wiener Stadttheater (Tyrolt 1889) does not contain any information about the ending.

¹⁷ On the basis of *Die Presse* and *Wiener Zeitung*, both 10 September 1881. – At this point I would like to thank Hanssen for sharing with me a chapter of his ph.d. work in progress. Hanssen has made an extensive account of German stagings with the alternative ending in the German speaking world. He was head of the database of Ibsen productions (*Repertoardatabasen*) at the National Library in Oslo, which now is the empiric foundation for his dissertation on the early German reception of Ibsen (and for the Ibsen stage performance database in progress *IbsenStage*).

¹⁸ Cf. Brandes (1904, 266), Halvorsen (1892, 64), Stein (1901, 8), McFarlane (1961, 278), Kindermann (1968, 22), and Bänisch (1991, 62).

¹⁹ "Zunächst beabsichtigt die Direction das Schauspiel 'Nora' von *Ibsen* zu geben, doch muss früher noch der neue Schluss abgewartet werden, den der Dichter zu schreiben versprochen. Ein merkwürdiges Zusammentreffen fügt es, dass Laube im Augenblicke mit drei nordischen Dichtern wegen Aenderung der Schlussacte ihrer Stücke in Correspondenz steht, mit *Ibsen*, *Molbech* und *Björnson*. Von dem Zweitgenannten soll ein in Kopenhagen mit grossem Erfolge gegebenes Stück: 'Ambrosius' und von Björnson die bereits an mehreren deutschen Bühnen gegebene 'Leonarda' zur Aufführung gelangen. Alle drei Stücke enden mit Dissonanzen und Laube hat nun an die Autoren die Bitte gerichtet, neue sanft ausklingende Schlusscenen zu schreiben, für welche unser Publicum mehr empfänglich ist. Ibsen und Molbech haben versprochen, dem Wunsche des Directors zu willfahren, dagegen scheint Björnson mit dem Ansinnen nicht einverstanden." (*Oesterreichisch-Ungarische Kunst-Chronik* 15 February 1880, 152)

²⁰ Björnson's *Leonarda* had its first German production at the Hoftheater Mannheim 26 June 1879, even before it was printed, 11 September 1879, in Norwegian. (Halvorsen bd 1, 318; 321)

²¹ "[Ibsen] hatte under der Direktion Wilbrandt seine 'Nora' zur Aufführung im Burgtheater eingebracht. Ich hatte mich mit dem Stücke zu beschäftigen und machte Ibsen in einem Briefe den Vorschlag, ob denn die Nora nicht bei den Kindern bleiben dürfe. Ibsen erwiderte mir bald sehr freundlich, aber bestimmt: 'Das geht nicht, es muß im Stück alles so bleiben, Nora muß fort.'" *Neue Freie Presse* 25 May 1906, 7. Unfortunately, this letter is neither mentioned nor included in Sonnenthal's correspondence. (Sonnenthal 1912)

²² The journal does not give more exact information about venues or contributors.

²³ "Das italienische Publicum ist hochintelligent und feinfühlig [sensitive]. Die Italiener werden schon meine Intentionen verstehen!" (HIS 15, 92)

²⁴ "[Ich bin] selbstverständlich nicht damit einverstanden, dass der Schluss [m]eines Schauspieles verstümmelt wird. Bezweifel[e] jedoch, dass eine solche Verstümmelung heutzutage wirklich irgendwo stattfindet." (HIS 15, 114)

²⁵ "Eleonora Duse hadde spilt begge slutnings-scener av 'Et dukkehjem', den hvori Nora forlater sitt hjem, og den tyske skuespillerinne Nieman-Rabbes [sic] som Henrik Ibsen hadde tolerert, hvori Nora blir i hjemmet av kjærlighet til sine barn." (Lugné-Poë 1938, 10) The Centennial edition argues that Eleonora Duse had wanted the ending changed, but that she finally gave up this wish (HU 19, 535) No sources for this are presented, neither, unfortunately in HIS14k, 137, where the opposite is claimed, that Duse wanted to keep to the original ending.

²⁶ Lokrantz refers to Cesare Molinari. 1985. *L'attrice divina. Eleonora Duse nel teatro italiano fra i due secoli*. Roma: Bulzoni, 144f.

²⁷ According to an undated German newspaper in Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, Universität Köln, collection of newspaper articles: *Henrik Ibsen. Nora – 1945*, folder: "Undatierte 'Nora'-Kritiken": "Dieser Tage nun hatte das Pariser Publikum zum ersten Male Gelegenheit, das Ibsensche Meisterwerk im Théâtre de l'Œuvre kennen zu lernen."

²⁸ „[...] im Oeuvre hat Director Lugné Poë beide Lösungen gespielt und konstatiert, daß nur die ursprüngliche pessimistische Lösung auf das Parise Publikum wirkt, weil sie allein logisch ist.“ Anonymous, unknown German newspaper dated September 1913 by librarian.

²⁹ [Dresden] Januar 1872

"Her i det tykke af Tyskland, hvor den friske Søvind, der omvifter vore nordiske Lande, ikke kan naa hen, faar man en kvalm Følelse af, at den aandelige Luftning i mange Henseender ogsaa mangler. Kvindesagen synes saaledes at staa paa et yderst primitivt, det vil sige fuldkommen urørt og urørligt Standpunkt. Bondekoner, spændte sammen med Hunde, foran tungt belæssede Kjærrer,

Manden bagefter ... Et Øienvidne har endog berettet mig, at det oftere har set denne sætte sig op paa Kjærren, naar det gik hjemad [...] At det kan taales, sees sløvt paa af en Befolkning! I disse Gader af en gammel, kunstberømt Stad kan man daglig se dette oprørende Optog drage forbi [...]. (Collett 1913, v.2, 231f.)

³⁰ According to Jens-Morten Hanssen *Dora* was one of the "ten most frequently performed plays in the German theatre season 1877/1878". (Hanssen 2017, 23)

³¹ "[...] die erste Übersetzungs- und Rezeptionsphase der Gesellschaftsstücke unter den Bedingungen des zeitgenössischen Kommerz- und Unterhaltungstheaters erfolgte, da die allgemeine Gewerbefreiheit 1869 zur Gründung zahlreicher Privattheater mit neuem Publikum geführt hatte." (Paul 2011, 2543)

³² "Das Heikle des Übersetzens resultiert hier aber nicht nur aus den Eigenheiten von Ibsens Sprache. Das Norwegische, in dem er schreibt, hat im ganzen noch die Kraft, Frische und Gedrängtheit seiner national-romantischen Renaissance, eines eben in Literatur sich hineinentfaltenden, noch unabgebrachten Idioms; das Deutsche, in das übersetzt werden muß, trägt noch an der Bürde der klassisch-romantischen Tradition und leidet zudem unter der stärker werdenden Kommerzialisierung der Bühne. Die Projekte und Versuche, es zu erneuern und mit ihm zusammen die ganze deutsche Literatur, sind erst Folgewirkungen der aus dem europäischen Norden und aus Frankreich nach Deutschland einbrechenden realistischen Moderne. Wie schwer diese Ungleichzeitigkeit der beiden Sprachen zu handhaben war, belegt schon Wilhelm Langes erste deutsche Übersetzung des Schauspiels [...] er verschiebt die körnige, trotz aller Lockerheit höchst disziplinierte Diktion Ibsens in die Nähe des zugleich flacheren und steiferen deutschen Gesellschaftsstücks." (Bänsch 1991, 58)

³³ "Heinrich Laube, der einstige 'Jungdeutsche', hatte sich frühzeitig von seinen politischen Idealen gelöst." (Bernhardt 1989, 229; cf. also Nygaard 1992, 162)