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and chronological in its treatment. Still, the book offers important insights in its best chapters and is especially of value for the questions Regal opens up to us in them.

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EGIL TÖRNKVIST. *Ibsen: A Doll's House*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995. Pp. xv, 210, illustrated. \$54.95; \$16.95 (PB).

Ibsen: A Doll's House is part of a series devoted to "Plays in Production." Since the editorial purpose is to select plays that "are likely to receive regular performance" (x), *A Doll's House* is a natural choice, being perhaps the most frequently produced modern play. This study lists 11 film, 11 television, 12 radio, and 93 *selected* stage productions, a drop in the ocean of all stage productions since 1879.

Commentators on *A Doll's House* tend to agree in their focus on Nora Helmer and to disagree over whether she is: (1) a feminist heroine (Lou Salomé and Katharine M. Rogers); (2) a courageous, possibly tragic, human being (Henrik Ibsen and Sandra Saari); (3) a spoiled brat whose decision to leave her home and family is just play-acting (Torvald Helmer and Hermann Weigand). Törnkvist, while sympathetic to feminist readings, comes closest to the second category, though he questions Nora's status as a tragic heroine (48-49). The value of his book, however, is that it places any consideration of character and genre in the context of production and performance.

In the first chapter, *A Doll's House* is seen against the background of the Laura Kieler affair, Ibsen's ambivalent attitude to women's rights, and his notes and first drafts of the play. Chapter 2 is an excellent analysis of the drama text, including a close reading of the *dramatis personae* that demonstrates how the men are identified by profession – Lawyer [advokat] Helmer, Doctor Rank – and the women by first name – Nora, married name – Mrs. Linde, or domestic function – The Maid. The setting is illustrated by a floor plan of the Helmers' apartment, to emphasize the fact that there are "no fewer than four doors, one of which leads to a fifth and a sixth. This raises the question of whether this is an open or closed environment" (19). Of special value to readers and directors alike is the division of the play into seventy-seven "transitory," "key," and "plot" sequences. Törnkvist pays particular attention to Nora's soliloquies – defined as plot sequences – that show us her "true self, a self hidden to the other characters" (27). His reading of Nora's "small 'female' world, where emotions are essential," is rewarding; I would, however, question the idea that "Nora represents a natural view (in the Darwinian sense), Helmer a social one" (29, my emphasis), since much the same could be said, with greater justice, of Laura and the Captain in *The Father*.

In his chapter on English translations, Törnkvist refuses to "select a prize-winner on holistic grounds" (52). Instead he examines problems faced by translators, especially "the fact that plays, unlike novels, are written for two kinds of recipients: readers and spectators" (53). He also puts to rest the odd theory that *A Doll House* is a more accurate rendering than *A Doll's House* of *Et dukkehjem* by quoting Einar Haugen's com-

ment that Ibsen's title "does not mean a house for dolls, which in Norwegian is *dukkehus* or *dukkestue*. Before Ibsen, *et dukkehjem* was a small, cosy, neat home; his play gave it the pejorative meaning" (54).

The central discussion of *A Doll's House* as a stage play begins with an historical analysis of designs – ranging from "idyllic realism" to a 1922 Moscow setting where "everything was collapsing, everything was going to the devil, down and out" (68). There follows a fascinating discussion of what one nineteenth-century reviewer called "the Nora split" (75) between the squirrel of the opening scene and the mature woman of Act 3. We learn, for example, that Betty Hennings's 1879 interpretation "fell into two parts," where some years later she made Nora's transformation "seem the most natural thing in the world" (74). Similarly, in 1975, Liv Ullmann discovered that: "In the first acts Nora is not just the songbird and the squirrel; neither is she pure wisdom and feminine strength in the last" (78).

Up to this point, Törnkvist evinces a keen sense of the moment-to-moment *reality* of Ibsen's characterization, the precision of his stagecraft, and the cumulative power of his theatre language. I do not, then, understand why he should select for detailed analysis three stage productions – one by Hans Neuenfels and two by Ingmar Bergman – which negated those very qualities. Törnkvist has just shown us how much is conveyed by Nora's gesture of lighting Rank's cigar and the latter's "*tak for ilden*" ("thanks for the light"), where "*ilden*" means both "the light" and "the fire":

Knowing at this point that she will never see Rank again, Ibsen's Nora dares to respond to his earlier declaration of love. And Rank thanks her for it. (58)

Why, then, should the author praise Neuenfels's "post-absurdist" production where "the characters were puppets pulled by unseen strings" (88), and Rank "never let his cigar be lit by Nora but, on the contrary, crumbled it" (90)? And why choose *two* effectively similar productions by Bergman who "diminished the characters [and] turned them into dolls" (69), flattened the stage perspective, and cut nearly one third of the dialogue (93)?

This one fall from grace apart, *Ibsen: A Doll's House* is a valuable book, not least on account of its expert and accessible approach to the semiotics of drama in different media. The work includes twelve well-chosen photographs (in no. 11 two guests at the fancy dress ball in Patrick Garland's film version are incorrectly identified as Mrs. Linde and Helmer), a select list of productions, and a sequence chart. It can be strongly recommended to a wide variety of readers.

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