

ART AND IDEOLOGY IN CHINA'S POSTSOCIALIST STAGE PRODUCTIONS OF *A DOLL'S HOUSE**

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222 Socialism in China involved a series of social and political experiments in which attempts were made to reinvent class structures, replace traditional cultures, and reengineer human relations. The methodology for these experiments was to test certain models, and if they worked, they would be used as prototypes for wider applications. Such a methodology was used in almost all fields of building a socialist society, including literature and art.

Looking back at the history of China's socialist construction, historians and art critics have noted that the "eight model plays" created during the Cultural Revolution in 1967-76 were not the first attempts at such a construction. They were endorsed as "revolutionary models" that aimed to negate previous attempts, even those made in the 1950s, and extend others that were used to promote proletarian values and cultivate a new heroism according to Mao's idea of socialism. As early as the mid-1950s, there were already attempts to theorize China's socialist literature and art. These attempts were ingenious in reconceptualizing literary and cultural creative works as reexaminations of class struggles (Tam, "From Social Problem Play" 387-93). For example, the heroic figures of the theatre were limited to workers, peasants, and soldiers because only these classes deserved to be called revolutionary heroes. In such socialist works, external descriptions were preferred to interior descriptions that demonstrated psychological complexities. The heroes were externalizations of revolutionary concepts at the expense of their inner struggles. Such approaches to the portrayal of the hero were based on the concept of materialism, in which the hero's feelings were viewed as reflections of the class to which they belonged.

Because of the nature of these sociocultural experiments, China's socialist construction in literature and art necessarily fell into a pattern of reproduction by replication. In this way, cultural production was dictated by formulaic models and

politics. Ensuring the success of this mechanical cultural (re)production required a powerful administrative structure with the ideological power to control artistic practices. In the field of drama, the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing and the Shanghai Theatre Academy have served since the 1950s as training grounds for theatre professionals, while theatres in other Chinese cities have served as stages for experimental performances.

PERFORMING FEMININITY IN *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

In modern Chinese drama, Ibsen's social plays, such as *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People*, have functioned as models for plays on the themes of women's independence and the quest for the iconoclastic self. In the May Fourth era, when individualism was championed as a remedy for Confucian collectivism, *A Doll's House* was regarded as promoting individualist self-identity (Tam, "Ibsen and Modern Chinese Dramatists" 45-53). However, in the 1930s, when proletarian collectivism was needed to promote a working-class consciousness, *A Doll's House* was cited in many novels that called for women to leave home and join the working class as a way to seek personal independence and freedom. Productions of the play were also meant to advocate for women's emancipation.

223

Among Western writers, Ibsen's immense popularity in China in both the Republican and socialist eras has been exceptional (Tam, "Decoding Literary History" 263-73). He was the only Western author whose works survived the political turmoil in China, and his work has been well received, both despite and because of conflicting ideologies and interpretations. What makes *A Doll's House* so popular for stage adaptation and why is it so appealing to Chinese audiences? The play has been performed in various historical periods with emphases on different elements of the construction of the female character. The three most significant representations of womanhood in *A Doll's House* occur in the following scenes:

1. In the opening scene, Helmer calls Nora a songbird, but criticizes her as a spendthrift. It is in this scene that the relation between Helmer and Nora is shown to be based on pretensions, as well as on the assumption that Nora is Helmer's pet. Nora knows how to please Helmer by performing the role of a doll so that she can manipulate him and make him trust her with his money. Helmer is pleased to be the teacher who instructs Nora. Nora knows how to make advances by engaging Helmer in a coquettish play, in which she always plays the role of the helpless, which is her weapon to soften Helmer.

2. When Nora practices the tarantella, she is on the one hand trying to delay the opening of the mailbox, which will reveal her crime, while on the other hand she is preoccupied by her thoughts of committing suicide in order to bear the blame and save her husband. Even as she dances, she is deeply troubled and contemplates a drastic action to save Helmer by drowning herself. Her feeling of helplessness is shown in

her plan of suicide and even in the tarantella, a dance of death.

3. In Nora's final confrontation with Helmer, three things occur. The first is Nora's awakening to the fact that Helmer will not sacrifice himself to save her; the second is her changing of the power relations in their family; and the third is her decision to leave the house. She returns her ring to Helmer and slams the door as she leaves.

These three scenes can be used to illustrate different aspects of Nora's character, such as her manipulation of Helmer, her fear, her anxiety, and her awakening at the end. By privileging one scene over the others, such as the ending in which Nora confronts Helmer, a director may choose to emphasize the change of power relations between Helmer and Nora, or Nora's maturity from "childhood" to womanhood.

224 In the history of Chinese performances of *A Doll's House*, various productions have placed different emphases on these scenes so as to illuminate different aspects of Nora's femininity. For example, in the 1935 Shanghai stage production of *A Doll's House*, emphasis was placed on the ending scene so as to project Nora as an image of a revolutionary figure who fights for independence, not only from a patriarchal husband, but also from a bourgeois family. This production was made in response to a Marxist call for women to leave home to join the working class and prepare for a revolution in China. Mao Dun's novel *Rainbow* (Hong, 1930) also outlines such a call, to which many women responded as a result of the influence of *A Doll's House*.¹

CHINA'S SOCIALIST MODEL OF *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

A 1956 production of *A Doll's House* became an international collaboration when Norwegian director Gerda Ring was invited to advise on the performance (Tam, "Ibsen in China"). This production, including its stage design, was to become the model for all later productions of the play in socialist China. In this production, several stage devices were used to highlight the change of power relations between Nora and Helmer. First, the stage is designed in such a way that the stage floor is divided into two parts, with the upstage raised to a level higher than the downstage. Whoever stands on this part of the stage is visually on a higher ground, which gives him/her the visual advantage over those on the lower level. During the tarantella dance scene, Nora is seen in the downstage, which is one level lower than the upstage on which Helmer is watching and guiding Nora and Rank is playing the piano (Figure 1). This presents a visual sign that Nora is subjected to the gaze of two men who are directing her actions in the dance. The lower level downstage is an area of play and an area of subjugation, where Nora's fear and anxiety are hidden in her dance, which has gone out of her control. Because she is standing, however, Nora appears taller, countering the dominance of Helmer and Rank. The power struggle is thus visually presented on the stage.



Figure 1. Nora practices the tarantella. *A Doll's House*, China Youth Art Theatre, Beijing, 1956. Photo permission by National Library of Norway.

The original text provides no indication as to how the stage should be designed. The division of the stage in the 1956 Chinese production was a visual manipulation with an ideological intent to emphasize Nora's being placed at a lower level and being subjected to the gaze of Helmer and Nora. Here is the text in the play:

NORA. I can't dance tomorrow if I don't practice with you now.
 HELMER (*goes over to her*). Are you really so frightened, Nora dear?
 NORA. Yes, terribly frightened. Let me start practicing now, at once—we've still time before dinner. Oh, do sit down and play for me, Torvald dear. Correct me, lead me, the way you always do.
 [...]
 HELMER. But, Nora darling, you're dancing as if your life depended on it.
 NORA. It does.
 HELMER. Rank, stop it! This is sheer lunacy. Stop it, I say!
Rank ceases playing. Nora suddenly stops dancing.
 HELMER (*goes over to her*). I'd never have believed it. You've forgotten everything I taught you.
 NORA (*throws away the tambourine*). You see!
 HELMER. I'll have to show you every step.
 NORA. You see how much I need you! You must show me every step of the way. Right to the end of the dance. Promise me you will, Torvald?
 HELMER. Never fear. I will. (77-78)

The model of performance established by the 1956 Beijing production was followed by another production in Shanghai in 1962, in which the same device of Nora being subjected to the gaze of Helmer and Rank is used when Nora dances downstage (Figure 2). Both productions rely on the visual elements that elevate Nora to a higher position, created in part with an upper level and a lower level on the stage floor:



Figure 2. Nora dances the tarantella, *A Doll's House*, Shanghai Theatre Academy, 1962. Photo permission by Ibsen Studies Centre, Shanghai Theatre Academy; courtesy of Liu Minghou.

Compared with the earliest stage production of *A Doll's House* by the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen in 1879 (Figure 3) and the Russian production in 1903 (Figure 4), in which Nora is seen as directed by Helmer in her dance and Rank is playing the piano with his back facing Nora, the 1956 and 1962 Chinese productions place more emphasis on the male gaze to which Nora is subjected.



Figure 3. Betty Hennings dances the tarantella at the world première, the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, 1879. Picture permission by National Library of Norway.



Figure 4. Vera Komissarzhevskaya dances the tarantella in the Russian production, St. Petersburg, 1904. Photo permission by National Library of Norway.

227

In the last scene, when she confronts Helmer, Nora is shown to be overwhelming Helmer by being placed on a higher level of the stage. Because the stage is divided into two parts, with the floor at the upstage raised, Nora is physically shown in a position in which she overpowers Helmer. As Nora goes up to the higher level of the stage, she returns the wedding ring to Helmer (Figure 5). In this scene, the power relation between Helmer and Nora is reversed, metaphorically and visually. Nora looks sideways with her head tilted up in a gesture hinting at contempt when she hands the ring back to Helmer. Nora's hand, which holds the ring, is in a higher position than Helmer's, which visually positions Nora at a higher level both morally and ideologically.



Figure 5. Nora returns the wedding ring to Helmer. *A Doll's House*, China Youth Art Theatre, Beijing, 1956. Photo by Kwok-kan Tam.

In the 1962 Shanghai production by the Shanghai Theatre Academy, Nora returns the ring to Helmer in the same way that she does in the 1956 production, but this time with Nora standing and Helmer sitting so as to highlight Nora's higher position (Figure 6).² Nora's expression is much more determined in this production, while Helmer looks down at the floor. The lack of eye contact between Nora and Helmer signifies not only the lack of understanding between them, but also the impossibility of reconciliation.

228



Figure 6. Nora returns the wedding ring to Helmer, *A Doll's House*, Shanghai Theatre Academy, 1962. Photo permission by Ibsen Studies Centre, Shanghai Theatre Academy; courtesy of Liu Minghou. Reprinted from Kwok-kan Tam, *Ibsen in China 1908-1997: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, Translation and Performance*.

Using the same device with Nora standing on a higher level of the stage, Nora's leaving is visually presented in a commanding position, and hence is more powerful (Figure 7). This level is symbolic of her moral higher ground when she decides to leave Helmer. In this last scene, Nora is presented as facing the audience, while Helmer is seen with his back to the audience, with his hand holding the wedding ring. Nora is thus presented in positive lighting, contrasted with Helmer in negative lighting and his face half hidden in the dark. Helmer is overpowered by his own dark shadow, which is a suggestion of his dark self.



Figure 7. Nora leaving Helmer. *A Doll's House*, Beijing 1956.
Photo permission by National Library of Norway.

Figure 8 depicts the 1890 Moscow production, one of the earliest in which the return of the wedding ring is treated with visual details. Helmer is taller than Nora, and is placed in a higher position; his hands are in a higher position than Nora's when he hands the wedding ring to Nora. In this Russian production, no visual manipulation is used to give Nora a higher position on the stage, and hence no emphasis is added to make Nora appear visually overwhelming.



Figure 8. Vera Komissarzhevskaya playing Nora, returning the wedding ring to Helmer.
A Doll's House, Moscow Art Theatre, 1890. Reprinted from Kwok-kan Tam,
“*A Doll's House* and the Politics of Staging Women in China.”

In the original text, there is also no emphasis on the scene in which Nora returns the wedding ring to Helmer:

NORA. Listen, Torvald. When a wife leaves her husband's house, as I'm doing now, I'm told that according to the law he is freed of any obligations towards her. In any case, I release you from any such obligations. You mustn't feel bound to me in any way however small, just as I shall not feel bound to you. We must both be quite free. Here is your ring back. Give me mine.

HELMER. That too?

NORA. That too.

HELMER. Here it is.

NORA. Good, well, now it's over. I'll leave the keys here.... (103)

What is noticeable in the dialogue is Nora's change of tone. Now it is Nora who is instructing Helmer on matters of law and obligations. The dialogue shows that Nora has power over Helmer when she is intellectually in a higher position, giving instructions. A characteristic of Chinese socialist productions of *A Doll's House* is their adherence to the original text in dialogue and in plot, albeit with some manoeuvres in stage design so as to emphasize the ideological underpinnings of the production.

230 The opposition between Nora and Helmer at the end is often presented in polarized extremes with facial expressions of contempt in Nora and innocence in Helmer, so as to highlight dramatic tension on stage. Chinese productions of *A Doll's House* generally follow the tradition in Chinese theatre of polarizing oppositions between good and evil.

POSTSOCIALIST PRODUCTIONS OF *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

The opening up of China since 1978 has given stage productions the opportunity to move beyond the socialist model, especially in international collaborations that are endorsed by the Ministry of Culture in China. The repertoire of Ibsen has greatly expanded, and has included plays such as *Peer Gynt*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *The Master Builder*. Three particular stagings of *A Doll's House* have made obvious attempts to transcend the socialist model. Two of these are international collaborations: the first funded locally by the China Experimental Theatre in 1998 with a Norwegian actress playing the role of Nora, the second by the Ibsen International in 2010 with an international cast, and the third a completely Chinese local production by the China National Centre for the Performing Arts in 2014 and 2017.

The 1998 China Experimental Theatre production deviates from the original in that it is not so much about the gender differences between Helmer and Nora as it is about the cultural differences between the Chinese husband and his Norwegian wife. As a backdrop, the production is centered around the theme of cultural conflicts between traditional Chinese patriarchal values and Western feminism that was brought to China as a result of the influx of Western culture. Because of its departure from the original text and its focus on racial issues, this production will not be discussed further in this essay.

The other international production that deserves a closer look is the adaptation of *A Doll's House* into a dance drama, a collaboration initiated by the Ibsen International, a company supported and funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture to promote Ibsen performances. In this Chinese/Norwegian co-production, the choreographer, stage designer, the music composer and half of the cast are Norwegians, while the lead roles of Nora, Helmer, and Krogstad are played respectively by the Chinese-German ballerina Jin Xing, Chinese dancer Han Bin, and Chinese dancer Wang Tao. The Norwegian actors speak Norwegian and the Chinese actors speak Chinese.

Because this production is a dance drama, messages are conveyed through body movements, though voiceovers serve the purpose of narration for scene transition and giving voice to Nora's thoughts. For example, in the prologue, the narrator says in a female voice: "I am, first and foremost, a human being." The narration sets the tone of Nora's quest for her identity and her assertion of autonomy and individuality. The bulk of the play seems to present an illustration of this theme.

Identity is a matter of the mind, which in a dance drama must be expressed with the body. The production does not rely on dialogue, but on visual elements presented on the stage, of which body performance and stage movements are a part. In other words, the interiority of a character must be expressed through its exteriority. In *A Doll's House*, the scene of the tarantella uses the same device to express Nora's inner feelings through her body movements. This Chinese dance adaptation of *A Doll's House* can thus be considered as an extension of the tarantella device in portraying the character of Nora, both inside and outside.

In this version of *A Doll's House*, the tarantella is replaced by a Mongolian dance, in which some of the hand movements remain the same (Figures 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d), but the piano is replaced by a gramophone with a large horn. The red paper cutting in the backdrop is a Norwegian design, but it is also Chinese. In its attempt to merge Chinese and Norwegian traditions and customs, the performance succeeds in creating a new experience in which it is no longer necessary to distinguish the Chinese from the Norwegian. Chinese actors interact with Norwegian actors in a seamless manner despite speaking different languages.



Figure 9a.



Figure 9b.

232



Figure 9c.



Figure 9d.

Figures 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d. Nora dances the Mongolian dance. Her movements are directed by Helmer and Rank. *A Doll's House*, Ibsen International and Jin Xing Dance Theatre, Beijing 2010. Photo permissions by Ibsen International.

Nora is subjected to the gaze of Helmer and Rank when she dances on the front stage, which is one flat level without being divided into upper and lower levels. Helmer and Rank are not one level higher when they are watching Nora and directing her steps in the dance. The power relations to which Nora is subjected are fully shown as Helmer and Rank give her instructions for her movement. Unlike in the 1956 production, Helmer and Rank do not sit down on a chair or lean on a piano to appear as bystanders watching Nora's performance. In this production, Helmer and Rank watch and participate in the performance, drawing attention to Nora being watched, instructed, and directed by two men.

The sexual desire aroused in Helmer when he watches Nora dance the tarantella in the Christmas party is stated explicitly in the text, as well as visually presented in this version of *A Doll's House* (Figure 10):

HELMER (*follows her*). You've still the tarantella in your blood, I see. And that makes you even more desirable. Listen! Now all the other guests are beginning to go. (*More quietly*.) Nora—soon the whole house will be absolutely quiet.

NORA. Yes, I hope so.

[...]

HELMER. [...] When I saw you dance the tarantella, like a huntress, a temptress, my blood grew hot, I couldn't stand it any longer! That was why I seized you and dragged you down here with me—

NORA. Leave me, Torvald! Get away from me! I don't want all this.

HELMER. What? Now, Nora, you're joking with me. Don't want, don't want—? Aren't I your husband? (87)



233

Figure 10. Helmer drags Nora to the bed. *A Doll's House*, Ibsen International and Jin Xing Dance Theatre, Beijing 2010. Photo permission by Ibsen International.

NORA'S MULTIPLE SELVES

In the original text, while practicing the tarantella dance, Nora contemplates a plan to commit suicide so as to bear the blame for forging her father's signature. How is this achieved in a dance drama in which what is seen on the stage is Nora's body movement, but not her mental state? For this production, Nora's inner turmoil is represented by a group of dancers dressed in white who act behind the transparent screens as if they were grieving in a mourning chamber (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Dancers dressed in white to represent Nora’s inner state of contemplating death. *A Doll’s House*, Ibsen International and Jin Xing Dance Theatre, Beijing 2010.

234

Photo permission by Ibsen International.

This is a visual presentation of Nora’s troubled self in the face of death—“death” in her relation with Helmer, and “death” in life. With its name derived from the poisonous spider tarantula, the tarantella in the original text is a dance of death. Although it is replaced by a Mongolian dance here, it is still presented with the same sense of death. Ironically, Helmer only sees Nora as an object of desire and does not realize the dance’s implications.

The imminent death of Rank is presented with the same device of dancers dressed in white (Figure 12). Nora’s plan to commit suicide as a solution to her problem is actually prompted by the information which Rank confided to her about his incurable illness. The bed on which Rank sits is a love bed for Helmer, but a death bed for him (Figure 13):



Figure 12. Dancers in white symbolize Nora’s plan to commit suicide. *A Doll’s House*, Ibsen International and Jin Xin Dance Theatre, Beijing 2010.

Photo permission by Ibsen International.



Figure 13. Rank sits on the bed. *A Doll's House*, Ibsen International and Jin Xin Dance Theatre, Beijing 2010. Photo permission by Ibsen International.

The ending of the play follows the original plot in presenting the tension between Helmer and Nora. However, this version of *A Doll's House* presents a Nora with multiple selves, which are represented by the five dancers dressed identically in the same Norwegian crochet as Nora. These dancers, the multiple selves of Nora, are engaged in a confrontation with Helmer, each speaking one part of the dialogue when arguing against Helmer's ideas about a woman's duty (Figure 14). The multiple Noras, with their hands raised to the chest and stretched out, forming a cross (Figure 14), say "No" to Helmer. In the original text, Nora says, "Millions of women have done it" (102). The multiple Noras are the "millions of women" presented as a collective self. Compared to the beginning of the play (Figure 15), the later Nora has visually changed from a singular self to multiple selves:

235



Figure 14. Nora represented by five identically-dressed dancers. *A Doll's House*, Ibsen International and Jin Xin Dance Theatre, Beijing, 2010. Photo permission by Ibsen International.



Figure 15. Nora as a singular character at the beginning.
A Doll's House, Ibsen International and Jin Xin Dance Theatre, Beijing, 2010.
Photo permission by Ibsen International.

236

In this production, Nora does not return the wedding ring when she leaves the house, but her multiple selves appear when she turns her back and vanishes behind the screens (Figure 16):



Figure 16. Nora in multiple selves leaves by vanishing behind the screens.
A Doll's House, Ibsen International and Jin Xin Dance Theatre, Beijing, 2010. Photo permission by Ibsen International.

CHINESE (RE)PRESENTATIONS OF NORA

Since the 1920s, many Chinese women have been inspired by Nora to leave home and seek independence. Because of this, Ibsen has become a household name in shaping

modern Chinese culture, and Ibsenism a performative discourse for women's independence in China. In the 1920s and 1930s, the number of divorce cases initiated by women rose substantially in Chinese cities. Between 1921 and 1925, the number of divorces in Shanghai rose to nearly 15%; between 1928 and 1934, divorces initiated by women were about 66.1%. In addition, many women would leave home to find jobs.

Every time Ibsen's works are performed, audiences look for messages about new directions in society, and influential Chinese thinkers and theatre artists engage in heated debates. Writers such as Lu Xun, Hu Shi, Mao Dun and Nie Gannu, and theatre directors such as Zhang Min (*A Doll's House*, Shanghai 1934) have all contributed to making Ibsen an iconoclastic hero in China. New ideas of feminism have been disseminated in China in productions of *A Doll's House* directed by Wu Xue (Beijing, 1956), Wu Xiaojiang (Beijing, 1998), Un-Magritt Nordseth and Jin Xing (Beijing, 2010) and Ren Ming (Beijing, 2014). The 2014 Beijing production of *A Doll's House* is no exception in its (re)presentation of Nora in China's new social reality. In this performance, the lead roles of Helmer and Nora are played by a couple, Wang Ban and Cao Ying, who bring their real-life experience to the stage. This postsocialist production presents a new interpretation that, though it follows the plot of the original play, is distinct from previous productions in its staging of the interactions between Nora and Helmer. The stage and costume designs are Western (Figure 17), similarly to the 1956 *A Doll's House* directed by Wu Xue and Gerda Ring.

237



Figure 17. Stage design of *A Doll's House*, Beijing 2014. Photo by Kwok-kan Tam.

Helmer is not presented as the subject of gaze in the tarantella dance scene, but as a participant in the dance who enjoys giving instructions to Nora, while Nora is distracted and cannot focus on the dance (Figure 18a, 18b). In this scene, Nora seems to have lost control of herself in the later part of the dance when she climbs up the sofa and dances on it. She appears as a lonely dancer, becoming more helpless and emotionally distraught.

238



Figure 18a.



Figure 18b.

Figures 18a, 18b. Nora dances the tarantella. *A Doll's House*, Beijing 2014.
Photos by Kwok-kan Tam.

The scene in which Nora returns her wedding ring to Helmer includes subtle details of the characters' emotions that are not seen in other postsocialist productions. As Nora walks toward Helmer, both holding the rings in their hands, they look at each other with expressions of regret in Helmer, but determination in Nora (Figure 19a). Helmer's change in facial expression is visibly noticeable, as he bows down his head and appears half in shade (Figure 19b).



Figure 19a.



Figure 19b.



Figure 19c.



Figure 19d.

239



Figure 19e.

Figure 19a, 19b, 19c, 19d, 19e. Nora takes her ring back from Helmer and returns hers to him. *A Doll's House*, Beijing 2014. Photos by Kwok-kan Tam.

In this scene, Nora takes the initiative in a series of actions. First, she takes the ring from Helmer, who reluctantly lets her take it (Figure 19c). She then gives her ring to Helmer, who reluctantly opens his palm and lets her put it in (Figure 19d). The action is completed with the crucial moment as Nora's right hand pushes Helmer's back in

rolling up its fingers to envelop the ring in his hand (Figure 19e). These details demonstrate not only Nora's resolve, but also Helmer's puzzlement, as if the adult Nora teaches the childish Helmer how to live without her. When she puts her hand on top of Helmer's, she literally has the upper hand in the change of power relations. In an interview, both Wang Ban and Cao Ying, the actors who play Helmer and Nora, have said that they attempted to depict the real feelings of a separating couple ("Cao Ying and Nora").

240 Unlike previous performances, the 2014 version of *A Doll's House* does not rely on any theoretical approaches to the play. Instead, the director Ren Ming and the actors stress that they wish to deemphasize feminist ideas in their production ("Cao Ying and Nora"). As a production to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the premiere of *A Doll's House* in China, the 2014 version by the National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing represents a new milestone in China's reception of Ibsen: a return to the basics with more human nature and less theorization. It is in the subtle details of performing the body that Nora is presented as an awakened woman, who takes command at the end. This approach is perhaps a way out beyond socialism. In a sense, being apolitical is a political attitude.

NOTES

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1. For details, see Tam, "The Politics of Staging Women."
2. I would like to thank Professor Liu Minghou 劉明厚 of the Shanghai Theatre Academy, who has given me assistance in obtaining permission for the use of photos of the Chinese productions of *A Doll's House*.
3. Ibsen International is a cultural organization set up in 2006 with funding support by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture for the promotion of Ibsen performances outside Norway, particularly in Asia. Its most recent performances are primarily in China.
4. See Tam, "The Politics of Staging Women" for a full discussion of the 1998 Chinese *A Doll's House* produced by the China Experimental Theatre.
5. The scene of the tarantella is one of the most dramatic in *A Doll's House*, as it depicts Nora's hidden frustration and anxiety as fully displayed in her body movements. Nora's self is inseparable from her body.
6. For details, see Cheng 程 and Sun 孙.

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