

Et Dukkehjem in Arabic translation

Introduction

As has often been noted, authors of original works make 'national' literature, while translations (and translators) make 'world' literature. Ibsen's plays were translated from Norwegian into English, German, French, Russian, and other European languages, and only from these relay translations into languages of the world beyond. And it was in such a 'world literature' framework the plays were translated into Arabic, in series such as "Masterpieces of World Drama", "World Theatre", and "Library of world dramatic work".

In this article, I will discuss some translations of *Et Dukkehjem* (*A Doll's House*) into Arabic. To begin with, I shall provide a short literary, cultural/political and linguistic background for framing these translations in the Arabic literary 'polysystem'. Next, I will discuss some challenges encountered when trying to map Arabic Ibsen translations and their sources, before I present 'my' translations of *A Doll's House* and make some textual comparisons with a focus on certain key linguistic and cultural items.

Drama and the Arabic cultural context

Drama, or more precisely, the theatre play as a literary genre, was introduced to the Arab world in the nineteenth century, in the period of the *nahḍa*, the movement of Arab 'awakening', or 'renaissance'. The *nahḍa* as a cultural movement had indigenous roots, in the urban milieus of Cairo and Beirut, but was largely motivated and influenced by the contact with modern Europe, France in particular. Muḥammad 'Alī, the governor in charge of the Ottoman province Egypt after the Napoleonic invasion was driven back (1801). encouraged translations of European works, military, scientific, and, with time, literary. *Madrasat al-alsun*, the School of Languages, was set up in 1835, with a translation training focus.

Drama was not part of the Arab literary heritage - the 'high' culture of the Arab-Islamic empire in the 'high' language, *al-'arabiyya* (*al-fuṣḥā*). There existed, however,

alongside the 'high' cultural tradition preserved in written form, a popular, oral tradition in the vernacular - such as poetry (*azjāl*) or rhymed prose. This popular tradition also encompassed what we would call theatrical art forms: shadow plays, dramatic narrative, and simple farcical performances in sometimes crude language, which were often satirical, critical and entertaining.

With the translation of European plays from the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and an emerging indigenous drama from the early 1900s, the choice of language variety (standard or vernacular) was a central issue - precisely linked to the grounding of the modern drama in the 'high' or 'low' tradition. The 'father of modern Arab drama', the Lebanese Mārūn al-Naqqāsh (1817-1853), wrote his first and most popular play, *The Miser* (al-Bakhīl, 1847), in the 'high' language, with occasional colloquialisms for humorous effect, while the 'father of Egyptian drama', Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ⁱ (1839-1912), wrote in the vernacular, sometimes mixing varieties and languages, with no concern for orthographic or grammatical consistency. We should bear in mind, says Moosa, that Ṣanū‘’s plays "were written to be performed, not read", a point to which I shall return below (1974, 428).

Translations from European sources at this early stage were mostly composed in literary, formal, Arabic, often in rhymed prose (*saj‘*). In Egypt, however, the two most prominent and prolific drama translators opted for the Egyptian vernacular. When Jalāl ‘Uthmān Jalāl (1829-1898) translated works of Molière and Racine into Egyptian vernacular rhymed prose, he sought to cater to the taste of the target audience for entertainment in a language that they could easily understand (Bardenstein 2005, Hanna 2005). Many early translations were adaptations (*ta‘rīb*, "arabisation"), with domestication of context and milieu.ⁱⁱ Many of Molière’s plays were completely 'egyptianised' (*tamṣīr*) - famous is the adaptation of *Tartuffe* to *al-Shaykh Matlūf* (1873).ⁱⁱⁱ This might involve change of the plot, and even, genre. Often, songs were composed and interpolated in the plays, as popular singers drew large audiences. In response to the Egyptian public’s expectation that they be amused when going to staged performances, the first translator of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (Tanyūs ‘Abdu, 1901) adopted both songs and a happy ending – thus the title of Sameh Hanna’s article: “Hamlet lives happily ever after in Arabic”!^{iv} Now, while the singing parts of *Hamlet* were indeed an innovation by

‘Abdu, Margaret Litvin recently discovered that the source text of his translation was not Shakespeare’s English play, but in fact a French adaptation by Alexandre Dumas père from 1840 - with happy ending and all (Litvin 2011b).

The Language Issue

A new translation of *Hamlet* appeared in 1920, by the Lebanese/Egyptian poet, drama translator and theatre director Khalīl Muṭrān (1872?-1949)^v into "elegant standard Arabic"; his *Macbeth* translation in 1917 was reportedly in such a high flown Classical style that even well cultured people in the audience did not understand the dialogue (Litvin 2011, 50).

Jaquemond refers to the polarisation in the Egyptian theatre "between 'vulgar' or 'commercial' theater - which attracted the public but was derided by the critics - and the 'serious' theater that was prestigious but that only appealed to limited audiences and therefore had to rely to greater or lesser degrees on public generosity for funding" (Jaquemond 2008, 7). With the establishment of the state sponsored National Company in 1935, supported by the conservatives and classicists in the Egyptian Language Academy, theatre had become a respectable genre in the 'high' cultural domain, written in the standard variety for "serious purposes". Faraḥ Antūn (1874-1922) and Ibrāhīm Ramzī (1884-1949), however, writing their plays in the early decades of the twentieth century, claimed "the need for drama to deal with the reality of Arab and indeed Egyptian society", and opted for the vernacular for the sake of naturalness and authenticity (Badawi 1988, 71). Some, such as the most prominent Arab dramatist, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), composed 'contemporary' dramas in the vernacular, while historical and philosophical plays were written in the 'high' language variety.^{vi} Al-Ḥakīm was, from his earliest plays, explicitly concerned about having "the drama genre accepted by the littérateurs of the Arab world as literature rather than as mere entertainment" (Allen 1984, 97).

According to Sasson Somekh (1991), the plays written in the vernacular served directly as a basis ('Vorlage') for performance, while plays written in standard Arabic were meant for reading. However, "the playwright would often be required by the performing theatre to make changes or even translate the entire play into AM [the

vernacular] in order to render its dialogue "natural" and compatible with the social scene it portrays" (Somekh 1991, 39).^{vii}

To the Egyptian writer and intellectual Louis ‘Awaḍ, the use of the vernacular was above all intimately bound with the progressive social and political agenda of engaged drama; he speaks of narrowing "the gap between art and life and between the creative artist and the people" (1975, 187). In times of political mobilisation such as the Egyptian national 'revolution' in 1919, and again under the 'revolutionary' phase of the Nasserist regime, he argues, playwrights would address their plays, in the vernacular, to the people. Using the 'low' variety was also connected to humour and the strong tradition of satirical plays in the vernacular (from Ṣanū‘’s time). Even No'man Ashour,^{viii} "the father of realistic social drama in Egypt [...] wisely realized that to put across any social or political message effectively, one had to coat it with thick layers of humour" (Selaiha 2012, 117-18).

For translated plays, however, the issue of realism and naturalness in dialogue did not apply. In an article in *al-Hilāl* (March 1924), the playwright Ramzī writes about the language of dialogue in drama:

Spoken Arabic must be the language of modern plays, irrespective of the type of character speaking [...] But when a play happens to be historical, dealing with ancient times, or when it is about far-off peoples such as the Chinese, the Russians or the English, and it is serious drama, literary Arabic must be the language to use [...] and because of its local characteristics, spoken Arabic might damage the serious intent of foreign drama. (quoted in Badawi 1988, 85)

Years later, Somekh confirms that "[f]or plays with historical themes as well as translated plays, then, the use of [standard Arabic] has become a stable tradition, although exceptions occur" (1991, 39). According to ‘Awaḍ, "there has always been a tradition in Egypt that translated plays are presented in Classical Arabic, and therefore with very few exceptions have always yielded a very poor box-office." He mentions, however, experiments with translating into Egyptian Arabic, and that, for instance, plays by Peter

Weiss translated into the vernacular met with "an astounding success in the State-owned Pocket Theatre" ('Awad 1975, 187).

Promoting Ibsen

In view of the close rapport with French culture and literature enjoyed by the Egyptian and Levantine literate elites at the time, one could have expected that the great fascination in Paris in the 1880s and 90s for Nordic theater would have been echoed in the Arabic press at the end of the nineteenth century. Ibsen and Strindberg (and a few others) were celebrated as modernist and symbolist playwrights from an exotic North (Briens 2015). Through French translations and performances, Nordic plays attained international fame; from being provincial productions they became part of world literature. This flourishing in France and beyond, however, coincided with a dramatic setback for the theater in Egypt under the reign of khedive Tawfīq, with political and social unrest (such as the 'Urābī revolt in 1882 and the ensuing British occupation). Louis 'Awad deplors that at his death in 1894, Tawfīq "left Egypt virtually without a theatre". When the theatrical tradition came to be revived, it was largely in the hands of "men of Levantine origin", claims 'Awad, men who preferred Classical to vernacular Arabic, adaptations rather than translations of European classics, and "the choice of benign themes [with] no social or political implications, like the themes of Saladin, Romeo and Juliet and Oedipus Rex" ('Awad 1975, 181).

Jaquemond suggests that the dearth of translation in the early decades of the twentieth century ('the colonial period'), may be due to the high level of competence in French, and to a somewhat lesser extent, English, by leading intellectuals which made much European literature directly accessible to them, or accessible via relay versions in these 'lingua franca'. Thus, while "inspired by the [symbolist] plays of Ibsen and Pirandello they had seen in Paris [...] this literary avantgarde did not contribute much to the translation of such models into Arabic" (2008, 112).

The motivation for translating modern world literature into Arabic would eventually come from an impulse to enrich Arabic literature and to help create an indigenous modernist culture, such as was promoted by the leading Egyptian cultural personality in the interwar period, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. It seems to have been largely through

the works of George Bernhard Shaw that Egyptian intellectuals found their way to Ibsen. All early mention of Ibsen in my sources^{ix} also include mention of Shaw. Shaw's influential *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891) was widely read among the literary elite in Egypt, and was possibly even translated into Arabic (*Ibsen al-Aṣlī*, "the authentic Ibsen").^x

The earliest translation of Ibsen I have found documented in the sources, is *ʿAdūw al-shaʿb* (*En Folkefiende/An Enemy of the People*) from 1932, translated by the playwright Ibrāhīm Ramzī, (in collaboration with the above mentioned Muṭrān and based on the English translation of F. Sharp). Ramzī, who studied in London around 1907-10, also translated Shakespeare and Shaw (Badawi 1988, 75). He would consider Ibsen very much in line with his own reformist agenda and the belief in the 'civilising force' of drama (Badawi 1988, 72).

Two years earlier, in 1930, a (first?) presentation of Ibsen is published in the Egyptian journal *al-Majalla al-jadīda*. It was written by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus (1910-89), the first Arab professor of folk literature and folklore, a translator^{xi} and journalist, and coeditor of *al-Majalla* with its founder, the radical thinker Salāma Mūsā.^{xii} The article praises Ibsen as the greatest writer since Goethe, and foregrounds Ibsen as a playwright dedicated to the radical transformation of society, which will be brought forth by the coming together of two social groups, namely women and workers (citing a speech given by Ibsen at a workers' club (Yūnus 1930, 1328). There is quite a touch of Nordic exoticism in the description of the Norwegian playwright's background - raised in dramatic, wild, and beautiful nature, total night all winter and total light all summer - a description Yūnus has adopted from the "extraordinary" Norwegian author Jorgenson.^{xiii} From the kind of personal opinions he expresses on them, it seems that Yūnus, although blind from his teens, has 'read' or had access to, the Ibsen plays which he summarises, but he also refers the reader to Bernard Shaw, "who knows more about Ibsen's principles than Ibsen himself" (Yūnus 1930, 1329). Yūnus is particularly fascinated by Nora in *House of the dolls* (sic, *bayt al-dumā*, plural), "whose case is the case of millions of women who make sacrifices for their husbands and families" - and he writes that he would like to contribute a detailed summary of this "eternal" play in the near future... (Yūnus 1930, 1332).

A Doll's House was not yet translated into Arabic when Yūnus was presenting Ibsen to the readers of *al-Majalla al-jadīda*. Neither does Salāma Mūsā (1887-1958) refer to an Arabic text version of *A Doll's House* in his chapter on Ibsen in 1953: *Henrik Ibsen... dā'iyat al-shakhsiyya* ("Henrik Ibsen - the champion of the personality").^{xiv} Mūsā refers to the play both as *bayt al-dumya* ("the house of the doll") and as *lu'bat al-bayt* ("the plaything/doll of the house").^{xv} The first known performance of the play, in October 1953, by the Free Theatre Group (*firqat al-masrah al-hurr*) on the stage of the Opera House in Cairo, was launched as *lu'bat al-bayt*: a dim photo from the performance, under the latter title, is reproduced in the 2006 reproduction of the first *A Doll's House* translation (see below). Salāma Mūsā was a leading Egyptian leftist intellectual who lived in France for three years from 1906 and later four years in England, where he joined the Fabian society.^{xvi} In his 1953 book wrote about his intellectual heroes (besides Ibsen, personalities such as Voltaire, Marx, Bernard Shaw, and Darwin). He strongly supports the feminist vision he finds in Ibsen (and Shaw): woman must enter the world outside to become experienced and mature and gain a perspective that transcends the home arena. He specifically praises "the new American woman", who has become liberated mainly through new technology and equipment in the home. He links the feminist vision to early promoters of women's issues in Egypt, such as Qāsim Amīn and Hudā Sha'rāwī, and supports the liberating ethics in Ibsen applicable to both men and women, the equality of all human beings.

Writing in the Lebanese leftist journal *al-Ādāb* in 1956, the Iraqi journalist Khālid al-Qishtayni (b. 1929), refers to an ambitious program for translating all of Shakespeare, and emphatically calls for translating Henrik Ibsen as well, of whom he has seen several plays performed the last year in London, into Arabic. "Since we do not have any of Ibsen's plays with us", he writes, "I feel obliged to present the readers with samples of his work". He also reports that he himself had started to translate *A Doll's House* - *bayt al-lu'ba* this time, for a theatre group in Baghdad, but the group unfortunately dissolved before he got to the task.

Translating Ibsen

According to the prominent Egyptian theatre critic Nehad Selaiha, until 1950 Henrik Ibsen was "virtually unknown in Egypt" (apart from a few individuals). In the early 1950s, however, "a brilliant crop of English language graduates, led by Abdel-Halim El-Bashlawi, Salah Ezzedin, and Kamel Youssef, pioneered a movement to introduce Ibsen to Egyptian readers and started producing Arabic versions of the available English translations of his plays" (Selaiha 2011, 118). These earliest Arabic translations were mostly published by *Maktabat Miṣr* (the Library of Egypt publishing house), and "though most of them are now out of print, they are still widely circulated among students of drama in the form of photocopies" (Selaiha 2011, 118).^{xvii} Between 1957 and 1962, the cultural radio program ("Channel 2") of the Egyptian broadcasting service "treated listeners to excellent radio versions of many of Ibsen's best-known plays" (Selaiha 2011, 118).^{xviii}

'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Bashlāwi, one of the "brilliant English language graduates" mentioned by Selaiha, appears as consultant and writer of prefaces and introductions to several Ibsen plays. Various sources credit him with being translator of Gorky, of Tennessee Williams and of Strindberg's *The Father* and *Miss Julie* (1958). He also translated works on Ibsen, such as Robert Brustein's *The Theater of Revolt* (1964 > *Al-masraḥ al-thawrī*, 1977), and oversaw the translation of M.C. Bradbrook's *Ibsen the Norwegian* (1946) into Arabic (1964) by Fu'ād Kāmil and Kāmil Yūsuf - the latter we shall meet as the first translator of *A Doll's House*.

The sociopolitical and cultural context which facilitated and soon provided a framework for this translation activity, was the coming into power of the so-called "Free officers" under the leadership of Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir (Nasser) in 1952. The new regime had an ambitious agenda of land reform and of social and educational reform, and promoted and encouraged cultural expression to mobilise support for the revolution. "The 1950s and 1960s were the golden age of literary translation in Egypt", says Jaquemond, who argues that "[t]he Nasser regime extended the aims of acculturation that the modernist elites of the liberal age had struggled for" (2008, 119). Litvin reports that in the period up to 1964, the government promoted "countless new government-run periodicals and book series and over a dozen new theatre companies" came into being (Litvin 2011, 35 and 200, n.4). She writes:

Playwrights and directors of the period [...] balanced two sometimes conflicting revolutionary goals. The first had an international referent: to bring Egyptian theatre up to world (i.e. Western and Eastern European) standards [...] the effort mirrored Nasser's nonaligned nationalism: it called for creating a "world class" (*'alā mustawā 'ālamī*) Egyptian theatre that would foster greater respect for Arab culture and greater self-respect among Arabs. The government invested in cultural institutions, funded study-abroad missions [...] and launched a program of literary translations into Arabic. Meanwhile, theatre people strove both to master a canon of translated works (Shakespeare, Molière, Sophocles, Ibsen, Sartre, and Chekhov led the list) and to generate an indigenous canon of high-quality scripts in Arabic. (Litvin 2011, 47-8)

Arabic versions of *A Doll's House*

I have made some effort to establish an inventory of Ibsen translations into Arabic, including their sources.^{xix} However, the printed Arabic translations only rarely inform us as to what language or relay version they are translated from. This may not matter much to the Arab reader, but to the study of travelling texts and transcultural connections, it represents a challenge.

Another problem when trying to collect the various versions for comparison, is a notorious lack of accuracy in registering dates and the unreliability of publication lists. When in Cairo in 2012, I went to the National Library and requested copies of Ibsen translations, I found in the registers a translation of *A Doll's House* by Maḥmūd 'Izzat Mūsā from 2004. I happily returned with the copy kindly provided me, but opening the document in preparation for this article, the front page was indeed from the play I had asked for, while the text was a version of *The Lady from the Sea* (*Hūriyyat al-baḥr*). I also found no trace of a registered 2001 Egyptian translation by Muḥammad Shākīr.^{xx} Later, I identified a brand new version of *A Doll's House*, translated by Zaynab Mubārak and with a new introduction by Dr. Kamāl al-Dīn 'Id, which was announced on the cultural internet page *Moheet* to have been released on May 19, 2013 by the publishing house *Al-100kitāb*.^{xxi} Bookshops in Cairo were searched by friends and colleagues, and the publisher contacted, only to discover that the book in fact has not been published.

The Arabic versions of *A Doll's House* on which this article is based, are the following:

1) KY: the Kāmil Yūsuf version. *Bayt al-dumya*, ("The doll's house/home") a translation from the early 1950s (1953?) by Kāmil Yūsuf. Yūsuf also directed the play in October 1953, performed by the Free theatre group (*Firqat al-masraḥ al-ḥurr*) on the stage of the Opera house in Cairo, allegedly the first Ibsen performance staged in the Arab world.^{xxii} It was staged, as mentioned above, under the name of *Lu'bat al-bayt*. The title was changed to *Bayt al-dumya* when it was published by the national Egyptian publishing house (Maktabat Miṣr) as number 3 in the series of *Maktabat al-funūn al-drāmiyya* ("The library of dramatic works") - in the company of, inter alia, Maxime Gorki, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill (Yūsuf 2007, 7). The aim of the series is "to fill a big gap in the Arab "library" (*al-maktaba al-'arabiyya*) [...] It aims at publishing the most outstanding international plays as well as everything that concerns dramatic productions, namely acting, writing and directing" (Yūsuf 2007, 5). (The only other Ibsen play published in this series, as far as I could see from their list, is *Vildanden/The Wild Duck* (*al-Baṭṭa al-barriyya*) also translated by Kāmil Yūsuf, number 16.^{xxiii})

In 2006, the *A Doll's House* translation by Kāmil Yūsuf was reprinted in the first volume of a new series, *Mukhtarāt Ibsen* (Selected works of Ibsen), published by the Egyptian High Council for Culture, with funding from the Norwegian embassy, in connection with the centennial celebration of Ibsen's birth.^{xxiv} In 2007, the translation was reproduced again, this time in a series called *al-Kitāb lil-jamī'* ("The book for all"), and published by Dār al-madā lil-thaqāfa wal-nashr (Beirut and Damascus) and distributed free of charge as a supplement to the leading *al-Ḥayāt* newspaper (Saudi financed, international Arabic newspaper). Both editions have reproduced also the prefaces of the original (of course, not dating them - both translation and introductions appear as if they were fresh that day). The only change I noticed in the texts was that Dār al-madā had corrected the name of Nora's husband to Helmer from the former edition's unfortunate "Himler" (that is, himlr > hilmr).^{xxv}

The translation has two prefaces, one by the prominent series editor, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Bashlāwī (mentioned above), who presents the play as an important contribution to the

women's movement, but also emphasises Ibsen's break with conventional drama, citing Bernhard Shaw and claiming Ibsen's fundamental influence on the latter. In the second preface, Kāmil Yūsuf, the translator, goes directly into the dark intensity of Ibsen's world, the moral issues tormenting his characters, the obstacles to freedom and happiness represented by hypocrisy, selfishness, ambition and fanaticism. Yūsuf is fascinated by Ibsen's way of composing dialogue, how it flows freely and naturally, but also the outbursts of interrupted speech, "emotions released in moments of pain and crisis." Ibsen may well be a moral guide, says Yūsuf, but he is first and foremost a "genuine artist" (*fannān 'aṣīl*) (Yūsuf 2007, 12-14).

2) DA: The Dar al-Anwār or Damascus version. The second translation is *Bayt al-dumā* ("the dolls' [plural] house/home") translated by Al-Anwar Translation & Studies Section at the publishing house *Dar al-Anwār* ("House of Enlightenment/Lights"), Damascus 2005.

No information is given about which relay text this Arabic translation is based upon, nor any names of the translators behind it. The cover (both front and back pages) has a gloomy picture of a broken doll's face. There is no introduction with information about the play or about Ibsen. However, facing the cast of characters, there is the formula in calligraphy: *bi-smi llāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (In God's name the Compassionate, the Merciful) and following the last line in the play: *tammam bi-'awn allāh ta'ālā* "the end, with God's assistance". So apart from the English title on the cover, nothing marks this publication as anything else than a play by a pious Syrian with a strange name. Or should we rather suppose that Ibsen is so well known in this cultured land as to need no introduction? The reference to God's assistance to end the play may reflect a heavy translation task, or a relief that this terrible woman finally left the stage. Reflecting local pronunciations, the <g> in Krogstad is written with a /k/ in Damascus and a /j/ > /g/ in the versions from Cairo.

3/4) NSA/NEA: the Norwegian/Standard Arabic and Norwegian/Egyptian Arabic version. *Bayt al-dumya* (The doll's house). The third and fourth version of *A Doll's House* is the double volume with both standard Arabic and Egyptian vernacular versions

translated from the Norwegian by a team consisting of Norwegian/Egyptian freelancer Shirīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Egyptian councillor Randa Ḥakīm, as part of a translation project (involving multiple languages) under the auspices of the Ibsen Center and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, and published 2012 by *Dār Merit*, Cairo. There is no introduction to this version; on the back cover there is an extract from the decisive and final dialogue between Nora and Helmer. The front cover photo is "I Kirken" ([a woman] "at church"), by Anders Beer Wilse (1904), clearly framing the play in a foreign context. The decision to translate into the Egyptian variety, as well as into the formal, standard Arabic, was taken by the project organisers in Oslo, as a means to reach a wider audience, to translate directly for the stage and to bring dialogue closer to the colloquial style of Ibsen’s dialogue. The translators first translated the Norwegian text into formal Arabic and thereafter into the vernacular, then adjusting both versions in the light of the other (personal communication).

5) SIN: Finally, *Bayt dumā* (A doll’s house/House of a doll) is translated by Samīr ‘Izzat Naṣṣār (b. 1935), a Jordanian graduate in English literature, a teacher and creative writer, as well as publisher and translator of nearly a hundred books in the fields of literary prose and drama texts.^{xxvi} This translation was published in Amman in 2007, by the publisher *al-Ahliyya lil-nashr wal-tawzī‘*, in the series *World drama (silsilat al-masrah al-‘ālamī)*; my copy is a third edition from 2016. The preliminaries explicitly mention the Penguin version (by Peter Watts, 1984), Michael Meyer’s translation and the one by Rolfe [sic] Fielde (1965, 1991) as the English translations on which this translation "is mainly based".

Textual Comparisons

With regard to finding out the English relay texts of KY and DA, I first nominated the following candidates: Archer (1889) and Farquharson Sharp & Eleanor Marx-Aveling (1949) for Kāmil Yūsuf, and for the Damascus translation, in addition McFarlane (1961), Meyer (1965), Fjelde (1965, 1991), and Watts (1965).

Even from the very first stage descriptions, it became clear that the Syrian team have based their work on McFarlane, whom they follow quite literally (to the extent that they reproduce the pragmatic adverb "simply" in its full meaning "in (full) simplicity" (*bil-basīṭa*), for instance McFarlane, 83 "I simply don't know".) Kāmil Yūsuf translates somewhat more freely; however, the phrase *ba'da qalīlin* = "shortly afterwards", is found only in Sharp, not even in the Norwegian original. This is confirmed in the very first dialogue between Nora and the porter, where they talk in terms of local currency:

Norwegian: "50 øre" and "en krone":

Archer and MacFarlane: "fifty øre" and "crown";

Sharp : "sixpence" and "shilling"; while

Meyer : "a shilling" and "half a crown" (a hybrid system)

Fjelde: "fifty" and "a crown"

Watts: "fifty øre" and "a krone" (using the local denomination)

The Arabic versions have:

KY *sittat bensāt* (six pence)/*shillinan* (shilling) (< Sharp)

DA *niṣf krawn* (half a crown)^{xxvii}/ *krwānan kāmīlan* (a whole crown; masc.)

NSA/NEA: *khamṣīn ūreh* (fifty øre)/ *krawna* (fem. ending *-a* reflects the Norwegian final vowel in *kron-e*)

SIN: *khamṣūn 'ūr / krawn*

On this evidence, I dropped Archer and Meyer, and Sharp and MacFarlane were hypothesised as *vorlage* for KY and DA, respectively.

Otherwise, *Et Dukkehjem* contains relatively few cultural markers, that is, items specific to a certain cultural environment, and which are not easily transferred. That is to say, when the setting is not domesticated in translation, neither in the stage descriptions nor the names of the characters, there are not many references unknown to target culture readers - in this case in Egypt and Syria/Jordan - who are perfectly well acquainted with notions and practices of Christmas and Christmas trees. The Helmers drink wine - *nabīdh*, *mashrubāt* (drinks), and champagne. Nora sneakily helps herself to biscuits (*bīskwīt*) and sweets (*ḥalawayāt*). DA gives *qubbaratī* ('my lark') for the relay 'skylark' with a footnote explaining that it is a kind of small bird, and *sinjābī* ('my squirrel') - with

'my' well chosen for endearment. SIN also uses *qubbarati al-ṣaghīra* ('my little lark') and *sinjāb ṣaghīr* (little squirrel'), while KY domesticates to 'nightingale' (*bulbul*) and 'rabbit' (*arnab*). The direct translations from Norwegian use 'my nightingale' and 'the squirrel' for the standard version, and 'my lovely bird' (*ʿaṣfurtī l-gimīla*) and 'my lovely squirrel' for the vernacular version.

Some slight accommodation takes place when Nora is questioning her own 'articles of faith' as preached by the pastor or priest at the protestant confirmation: KY has *kāhin* (priest, soothsayer) and *yawm al-i-tirāf* ("confession day"), while DA has "pastor of the parish" (*rāʿī al-abrashiyya*) reflecting local Syrian Christian terms. NSA use *qiss* (used in Egypt) and paraphrases the 'confirmation' with *yawm hafl ta'kīd al-ʿīmān* ("the day for celebration of confirming the faith"). SIN has *qissīs* ("priest"), and *hīnamā thubīta ta-mīdī* ("when my baptism was confirmed").

One of the glee of translation studies is, of course, to find funny mistakes based on inaccuracies or misunderstandings of certain items, such as when in the very first stage direction of the play, table cutlery (NSA) and large copper forks, knives and spoons in copper (NEA) are plastered all over the living room of the Helmers' apartment: here 'kobberstikk' (= engravings) has been confused with 'bestikk av kobber' (= copper cutlery).

A general problem, however, in translation between Arabic and English/Norwegian is the interpretation of bivalent modal volitional/future-marking verbs, such as *will*, sometimes also confusing deontic and epistemic modality (*shall, may, must*); thus, when Nora says she no longer believes in the most wonderful thing/the miracle to happen, McFarlane has Helmer say: "But I will believe." DA renders it as future "*sawfa u'minu bihā*" > "I shall/am going to believe in it". Similarly, when Nora tells Helmer that "she will not see the children" (*vil ikke se barna*), SIN interprets the "will not" as a negated future: *lan 'arā 'atfālī*, i.e. "I shall not be seeing my children (in the future)". And again, when Nora says to Rank: "men De skal ikke gå ind til Torvald nu, for jeg tror, han har noget at bestille", (you mustn't enter Torvald's room) NSA, 72, interpretes 'skal' as future marker: you will not be going (*'anta lan tadhhab 'ilā Tūrfāld*) in to Torvald at this moment. The Egyptian vernacular version, NEA, 207, on the other hand, has got it right: *mish hayinfa' tidkhul li-Tūrfāld*, ("it's not worth going in to

Torvald") and also KY, 61: *lā 'anṣaḥuka bil-tawajjuh 'ilā* ("I don't recommend you approach"). More seriously, SIN misses the point when Helmer says "I'd gladly work night and day for you, Nora" (Watts, and Fjelde nearly the same) and turns into a future form of the verb "I am going to work night and day for you" (*sa-'a 'mal layla nahār*) and messes up the following sentence, as well ("but which man is not going to sacrifice his honour for the woman he loves" for "men det er ingen som ofrer sin ære for den man elsker"/ "but no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves" (Watts).) The Damascus team has been careless in some places, for instance when Nora explains how she stopped loving her husband, and DA drops out the negation from McFarlane's "Yes, very easily. It was tonight when the miracle didn't happen" > "Yes, easily. Only tonight the miracle happened".

Of less importance is the variation in the numbers of women who have sacrificed themselves for the person one loves: Nora says "hundretusener" (= "hundreds of thousands"), correctly rendered by the direct translations NSA and NEA; McFarlane "hundreds and thousands" > DA "hundreds, no thousands", Watts and SIN have "thousands", while the American translator, Fjelde, has "millions"!

Some key notions and words

The title of *Et Dukkehjem* and its Arabic rendering deserves comment. Ibsen is playing on the variation of the Norwegian term "dukkestue" for the plaything "dollhouse" or dolls' house, combining it with the warm associations of a "home" (hjem). The title of the Arabic versions we are discussing here, are:

Bayt al-dumya, literally: "the house - or home - of the doll" (KY 1953 and NSA/NEA 2012 + Mūsā 2004 and Mubārak 2013) and

Bayt al-dumā, literally: "the house/home of the dolls (plural, definite)" (DA 2005) and

Bayt dumya, literally: "a house/home of a doll" (SIN 2007)

Most of the other translations I have identified are titled *Bayt al-dumya*. In the general literature referring to the play, this is also the most common designation.

The common Arabic (at least Egyptian) term for the plaything, dollhouse, is *bēt al-'arā'is*, that is "house/home of the dolls (plural, from sing. 'arūsa). I suggest this

could motivate a rendering of the plural form. Translating from English, where *A Doll's house* seems to have been stable (after *Nora*), of course motivates the use of singular *dumya*. Fjelde, in the introduction to his own translation, *A Doll House* (1965), insists that the title *A Doll's House*, this "awkward and blindly traditional misnomer", is misleading and leads to a onesided feminist reading of the play rather than about a conventional relationship, where man and woman are both dolls: In *Et Dukkehjem*, "the two of them at the play's opening are still posing like the little marzipan bride and groom atop the wedding cake" (Fjelde 1991 [1965], xxiv). It is in fact probable that SIN has translated the title from Fjelde, word by word, indefinite + indefinite, doll + house > *bayt + dumya*.

Another innovative, and creative, word combination by Ibsen is "lykkebarn" (child of fortune) - with its connotations of innocence and happiness. In a final, flirting, scene, but also the one where Rank reveals the final verdict from his medical doctor, Nora asks doctor Rank: "Tell me, what do you think the two of us should be at the next [masquerade] party?" After Thorvald pathetically tries to tone down the tension between them, Rank answers:

DH: (III, 9)"Jo, det skal jeg si Dem: De skal være lykkebarn"

McFarlane: Lady Luck > DA: *al-sayyida al-mahzūza* ("the fortunate lady")

KY and NSA : *fī zayy ḥūriyya fātina* ("dressed as a charming/seductive houri")

Watts: - you shall be a mascot > SIN: *satakūnīna jālibat ḥazz* (115) ("you shall be someone bringing luck/fortune").

Again, DA follows McFarlane closely, while SIN reflects Watts' rather uninspired choice of 'mascot'. The Oxford English-Arabic Dictionary uses the same lexical item to render 'mascot' ("something one believes brings luck (*yajlib al-ḥazz*) to someone"). Naṣṣār's choice is still perhaps the most appropriate, shall we say fortunate, when it comes to rendering an innovative, original expression, as it occurs in the original.

"Det vidunderligste"

The most intriguing phrase in *A Doll's House* - hanging in the air, so to say, used and abused over and over again, is "det vidunderligste". This key notion of *A Doll's House* has been notoriously difficult to render with the same intensity and complex connotations. Among many other Ibsen interpreters, Lisbeth P. Wærp demonstrates how Nora uses "vidunderlig" throughout Act I - until she conceives "det vidunderlige" (Act II) and "det vidunderligste" (Act III) (Wærp 2003). The English translation by McFarlane does not follow this linked semantic chain. He gives "marvellous", for Nora's "vidunderlig", and one instance of "life is a *wonderful* thing", then in Act II passes to "something miraculous", and in Act III to "a miracle" (which does not happen) and the climax "only by a miracle of miracles". Of the English relay versions relevant to our discussion here, I find Sharp's solution to be the most attractive: he uses "wonderful" where Nora says "vidunderlig", and "a wonderful thing" for "det vidunderlige" - and "the most wonderful of all" for "det vidunderligste". It is remarkable, however, that all the Arabic translations fall in line with the notion of 'miracles' for Helmer's final line, while they use more varied options for the expressions of "wonderful" in the earlier part of the drama.

There are several Arabic semantic clusters of words that cover to some extent or other the field of "the wonderful" and "marvellous". The most general term^{xxviii} appears to be *'ajīb* (adj.) and the noun *'ajība* (and *u'jūba*) for a wonder, something remarkable, or a marvel. Also *badī'* is high on the list for this entry. *rā'i'* is related to fear (*raw'*) - something like "awesome". When it comes to "miracle" the strongest term (with religious overtones) is *mu'jiza*. Its semantic 'core' has to do with "being incapable (of imitating an act)", and is found in the dogmatic notion of the inimitability of the Qur'ān, *i'jāz al-qur'ān*, which is in itself a miracle, a *mu'jiza*. In the context of Nora's yearning, the word has extended meaning, but has these connotations - as with the English miracle. Nora, however, does not talk about a miracle.

Nora Leaving

Naturally, Nora's decision to leave her children was shocking at the time it was written (as we know, Ibsen was forced to write an alternative conclusion), and still hurts the feelings of many of us. The Arabic translations stay true to the story; however, one line in

particular appears to be unacceptable to the earliest translator, Kāmil Yūuf, namely the mother refusing to even take a look at her children on leaving:

NORA

(binder hatten fast).

[...] Farvel, Torvald. Jeg vil ikke se de små. Jeg véd, de er i bedre hænder end mine. Således, som jeg nu er, kan jeg ingenting være for dem.

(MacFarlane): [...] Goodbye, Torvald. I don't want to see the children. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can never be anything to them.

(Sharp:)

[...] Good-bye, Torvald. I won't see the little ones. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can be of no use to them.

(KY):

Goodbye, Torvald, *I am not worried about the children, because* I know that they are in safe hands that will take better care of them than I. At this time, I am not able to be of any use to them. (do them any good)

[(DA)

Goodbye, Torvald. I do not wish to see the children. I know they are in safer hands than mine. I am nothing with regard to them as long as I am the way I am now.

NSA/EA:

Goodbye, Torvald, I do not want to see the children, I know they are in safe hands that will take better care of them than I, the way I am.]

SIN: Goodbye, Torvald [tūrfwld]. I shall not be seeing my children, I am certain that they are in better hands than mine, in this state of mine, now, I am not good [ṣāliḥa] for them. (136)

The most recent version, by Naṣṣār, renders the verbal construction with an explicit negated future tense, reflecting his confusing modal and volitional *will* in the relay text.

In all these versions, Nora slams the door behind her - or one hears the door downstairs being shut (Sharp and KY) and with a loud bang (the rest). Naṣṣār (2007/2016, 139) includes the alternative ending, reluctantly produced by Ibsen for the German staging, but

adds that Ibsen - rightly - found it disturbing and later rejected it.

To stage directors, the degree of slamming is symbolic of the resolution of Nora's leaving, it seems. Nehad Selaiha mentions a performance in Alexandria, where the ending is softened by Nora simply going out leaving the door open behind her. As Selaiha comments, this suggests that "all is not quite, quite lost, and there may still be a chance to bring the family together once more. Besides", she adds, "banging the outside door would have brought the whole wispy, delicate décor down round the actors' ears" (2011, 121).

Some Problems of Style and Interpretation

I have presented some Arabic versions of the text of *Et Dukkehjem* - printed versions, to be read - or as a *Vorlage* for a staged performance. I have been hesitant to evaluate the relative merit of the respective versions, in terms of literature. It requires a somewhat different approach, necessarily involving judgments of native speakers/readers. I did, however, find some differences in style and tone in the standard Arabic versions, with the most 'high flown' language in DA and SIN, and the least formal tone in the 'classic' version of Kāmil Yūsuf,^{xxix} with the 2012 direct translation roughly in between. Typical style variants include the use in DA and NSA of the literary style *widā'an* vs. KY's more commonly used and shared *ma'a s-salāma* for "farewell/goodbye"; the adverb in DA, SIN and NSA *ḥasanan* vs. KY more colloquial *ṭayyib, gā'iz* for "well, OK".

The vernacular version of this translation, NEA, in Egyptian Arabic, naturally comes closest to everyday speech, and seems to flow quite well - but how well does the specificity of the characters' speech, their 'stylised features' from the pen of Ibsen, come through? How well are different levels, dialects/sociolects and idioms in the Egyptian vernacular (referred to by Ramzi) exploited? To answer that question, I will need to scrutinize closer the characters' individual style in the original as well as in the translations.

One of the markers of orality and informal speech, as opposed to standard written mode and formal speech, is the occurrence of small pragmatic words "to invest a declarative statement with a set of wide-ranging subtle nuances" (Anderman 2005, 334-5). Alderman mentions particles in Swedish (*ju, nog, väl*), that modify the meaning in

terms of suggesting surprise, or doubt, or anxiety, and typically are used to reflect the psychological mood of characters. The subtle nuances carried by these particles are notoriously difficult to render in translation, as they rarely have direct equivalents in the target language, and as semantically 'void' lexemes, they are often left out by translators. Kristian Smidt draws attention to the many subtle meanings of the adverbial modifier *jo* as typically used by Nora in *A Doll's House*, and how translators into English have dealt with, or rather *not* dealt with, them, missing out, or obscuring, some delicate distinctions (2002, 198-201). The Arabic translations naturally follow their English relay versions, thus Nora's "Og han efterlot deg jo ikke noe å leve av?" where the particle *jo* implies that Nora has prior knowledge of her friend's misfortune, becomes in McFarlane's translation: "And didn't he leave you anything?" and in DA: "Or didn't he leave you anything?" (*aw lam yatruck laki shay'an?*). The finer point is lost in the direct translations, as well: '*a-lam yatruck laki shay'an* (NSA) and "*huwwa ma sāblakīsh ḥāga?*" (NEA). While standard Arabic, as a formal and non-spoken norm, has a very limited repertoire of such pragmatic particles, spoken Egyptian vernacular is rich in means to signal various modes through words such as *ba'a*, *bass*, *'ām*, *ya'nī*. These are, however, largely absent from the vernacular translation, and I suspect it may be a consequence of the translators' strategy of transferring the text into the vernacular after having done the standard Arabic version.

Let me end this section with another case of a discourse marker which caused problems for some of the Arab translators:

NORA (BP 1, 24) (går hen imod ovnen).

Ja, ja, som du vil, Torvald.

In this case, Nora's use of *ja, ja* is an expression of resignation, of submission to her husband's point of view. The English translations render this meaning by an equivalent expression: not "yes, yes", but "very well":

Very well - as you please, T. (Archer); Very well, T. As you say. (Meyer); Very well, just as you say, T. (McFarlane), Very well, T., if you say so (Watts, 5), while Fjelde has "Yes, whatever you say, T".

The direct translation from Norwegian, NSA, uses Arabic *na‘am* ("yes") in a nonidiomatic way: *na‘am, na‘am, kamā turīd yā T.* "yes, yes, as you wish, T.", while the same translators in the vernacular version, NEA, choose an expression which fits the mode: *ṭayyib, ṭayyib, ya T., zayyi ma inta ‘āyiz.* "Ok, ok, T., as you like".

The Arabic translations from the English relay versions also reflect problems of interpretation. Kāmil Yūsuf gets the meaning right with the idiomatic expression: *‘amrukal‘amrak, yā T:* "as you please, T" (lit. (I am under) your command, T."), while DA follows the letter of McFarlane and misses the sense of resignation, there is just enthusiasm here: *ḥasanan jiddan ! kamā qulta tamāman, ya T.* ("very good! Just as you (have) said, T."). And SIN, 10 is even further off the mark, in his word-for-word rendering of Watts: *ḥasanan jiddan yā T, in ‘anta qulta hādihā,* "very good, T, if you say this".

Concluding Remarks

As I argued above, the norm which has established itself in contemporary drama, is that foreign plays are translated into standard Arabic, but may be transferred (or not) into various levels of the local vernacular language on stage. By *not* vernacularising the text, by using "a linguistic medium sufficiently removed from ordinary speech" (i.e. standard Arabic) "one openly acknowledges the foreignness of the text"; whereas by translating into the vernacular one draws the represented reality closer to the audience and signals its local relevance. While this in a general sense may be true, it is not the whole matter. Selaiha illustrates this in her assessment of two versions of *Bayt al-dumya* performed in Egypt in 2006. The more prominent performance, namely at the National Theatre, was linguistically adjusted to the Egyptian vernacular, but "failed to create a convincing, realistic presentation of Nora's drama", while the Nora of the lesser performance, was, in Selaiha's evaluation, closer to the audience, although "palpably foreign in dress and language (delivering her lines in simple, spotless classical Arabic" (2011, 123). And as a matter of fact, when I listened to the audio version of the play as performed on the second channel of Egyptian radio in the 1960s – it was announced that it was based on the translation of Kāmil Yūsuf, and the standard Arabic of that translation was consistently spoken, I felt the characters very well -- Nora's whimsical

lightheartedness in Act One and Helmer's paternalistic, good-humoured authority. The formality of the language code was overruled by a softspoken, lively, and informal giving voice to the text. It remains to be seen, whether the new vernacular version will become attractive on the marked for new Egyptian stage productions of *Et Dukkehjem*.

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ⁱ Also transcribed Ṣannū‘, both arabised forms of Sanua, the Italian/Levantine family name.

ⁱⁱ What is considered the very first play composed in Arabic, *al-Bakhīl* ("the Miser") in 1847, by the Lebanese Mārūn al-Naqqāsh, is reportedly inspired by Molière's *L'avare*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Salama-Carr 2006, Bardenstein 2005, Badawi 1988.

^{iv} "[T]he audience in early twentieth-century Egypt would not have accepted a dead Hamlet after all the perils he experiences in the play. This would have been a stark breach of their social as well as aesthetic codes" (Hanna 2005, 188).

^v For his biography, see DeYoung 2010.

^{vi} Hakim's first play was *Ahl al-kahf* ("The people of the Cave") in standard Arabic, in 1933.

^{vii} Also Egyptian writer and playwright Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894-1973) struggled for years with the dilemma of variety choice and ended up by publishing some plays in both standard and vernacular version in one volume (Diem 1974, 116). Thus, the procedure followed by the new translation project from Norwegian, a kind of interlingual translation (see below), does have a precedent.

^{viii} Nu'mān 'Ashūr (1918-1987).

^{ix} Which I do not, however, claim to be exhaustive.

^x Possibly by Salāma Mūsā, but I am not able to retrieve this piece of information.

^{xi} <http://ency.kacemb.com>. He translated Chaucer's Canterbury tales, and also stories (*ḥikāyāt*) by H.C. Andersen (<https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/3394631>).

^{xii} Tareq Abbas: "Amīr al-'adab al-sha'bī" ("The prince of folk literature") <http://today.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=266802>.

Al-majalla al-jadīda "covered everything from politics to popular science, and [was] a vehicle for literary modernism" (Elshakry 2013, 252).

^{xiii} Theodore Jorgenson, born 1894 in Norway, died 1971. Migrated in 1911 to the U.S.A. Professor 1925-1966 of Norwegian at St. Olaf College, Minnesota. (<http://runeberg.org/authors/jorgethe.html>). In 1930, he

published *The cultural development of the Norwegian people. An outline*, from where Yūnus might have his description. His *Henrik Ibsen: A Study in Art and Personality* (1945) is a reference in Samir Sarhan's 1969 book.

^{xiv} *Hā'ulā'i 'allamūnī* ("These [men] have taught me").

^{xv} *lu'ba* "plaything, doll", in an Egyptian setting, is less formal than *dumya* ("doll"). The most common Egyptian Arabic word for 'doll', though, is *'arūsa*. Neither *lu'ba* nor *dumya* is listed in the comprehensive *Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* by Hinds and Badawi.

^{xvi} " *'an al-mu'allif*" <http://www.hindawi.org./books/72527397/> For a rich presentation of Mūsā's social and political ideas, see Elshakry 2013, 240-259.

^{xvii} Besides *Bayt al-dumya* ("A Doll's House", 1953), there was *al-'Ashbāḥ* ("Ghosts" 1956), *Hūdā Gāblir* (1961), *al-Baṭṭa al-barriyya* ("The Wild Duck", 1962?), *Hūrīyyat al-baḥr* ("The Lady from the Sea", 1963?).

^{xviii} Bahā Ṭāhir, outstanding novelist, and director of several of these radio productions, talked to me in 2014 about the enthusiasm and dedication of all involved in the productions, of which some are available on sound files. He did not, however, have access to any manuscripts prepared for the oral staging.

^{xix} A preliminary list prepared for the Center of Ibsen Studies, Oslo.

^{xx} Registered in Ibsen Senter list.

^{xxi} <http://www.moheet.com/2013/05/19/1770436/tarjama-jadida-li-bayt> [in Arabic letters], (downloaded 02.05.2016). Also the online version of the journal *Al-yawm al-sābi'* presented the news of the publication the same day. <http://www.youm7.com/story/0000/0/0/-/1072113> (downloaded 29.04.2016).

^{xxii} Nora was played by Amīna Nūr al-Dīn. (Ibsen Collected Works (in Arabic), vol 1(Cairo 2006), part 3, p.9.) Saad Ardash (1924-2008) played the part of Helmer. Nehad Selaiha: *al-Ahram weekly online* <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/902/cu4.htm>

^{xxiii} The version of *Vildanden* included in the 2006 reproductions (vol. 2) is translated by 'Abdallāh 'Abd al-Hāfīz, Kuwait 1986.

^{xxiv} In the 2006 reproduction, the play is strangely followed by a page presenting the translator as dr. Aḥmad al-Nādī.

Kamel Yousef's [sic] translation was also printed by Az-Zaman, Rabat in 2007, in cooperation with the Norwegian Embassy in Rabat. NOREXT post 1795290144. NOREXT post 1325518032 lists the date of Kamil Yusuf's translation published in Egypt by Maktabat al-funūn al-drāmiyya (above) as 1979.

The 2006 reprint series has a general introduction by Samir Sarhan (1941-2006) department of English, Cairo University, translated (in whole or in part) from his study in English on *Henrik Ibsen from Romanticism to Realism*, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo 1969.

^{xxv} As I have not had access to the original edition, I do not know how it was spelt there...

^{xxvi} Cf. the official Jordanian cultural website <http://culture.gov.jo/new>, searched 26.10.16

^{xxvii} With the knowledge that 50 øre = half a crown

^{xxviii} I.e., judging from various English-Arabic dictionaries.

^{xxix} Maybe connected to the Levantine translators DA and SIN being linguistically more conservative with regard to proper Standard Arabic than the Egyptian KY (cf. Introduction).