

# Social Imaginaries and a Culture of Circulation: *Sanna kvinnor* in Late Nineteenth-Century Nordic Theatre

BIRGITTA LINDH ESTELLE

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*Anne Charlotte Leffler's play Sanna kvinnor (True Women) (1883), together with other late nineteenth-century plays by women playwrights, is considered a significant historical event in Swedish theatre histories, regarded as a successful feminist intervention. This study examines the cultural-specific conditions and agendas that governed the interpretations of Sanna kvinnor at the theatres. Theoretically, it is based on the idea of plays as the initiators of circulation, which in turn is performative. The focus is on the social imaginaries that are reinstated by the stagings and their interpretations, and how these imaginaries reciprocally shape the interpretations of the play's central theme, protagonist and audience address. The article provides an overview of the various social imaginaries at play and identifies the cultural and social abstractions that form a specific culture of circulation. The encounters between the play and various Nordic theatre environments are examined by closely analyzing and contextualizing theatrical reviews.*

Anne Charlotte Leffler was considered a leading figure among Swedish modern-breakthrough writers and a successful playwright in Swedish theatres in the 1880s. Her breakthrough play *Sanna kvinnor* (True Women) (1883), is one of many plays by women playwrights that were popular in Nordic theatres but which these days linger in the shadows of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

These plays by women form a prominent historical event in Swedish theatre histories, regarded as early but short-lived successful feminist interventions in theatre. Margareta Wirmark has remarked on the pace at which *Sanna kvinnor* was distributed to theatres in Nordic capitals in the spring season of 1884. She regards its quick dissemination as evidence of significant impact, which she credits to Leffler's popularity and the newsworthiness of her play.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that the composition of the play, unusually open to various interpretations and uses in different Nordic theatrical environments, explains its popularity.

In *A Global Doll's House*, Holledge *et al.* interpret patterns from distant readings as indicative of underlying political, social, economic, aesthetic or technological forces related to circulation. They focus on the constraints imposed by these external forces in global transmission.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, I concentrate on the culturally specific conditions and agendas that regulate the interpretations and uses of the play *Sanna kvinnor*. By closely examining and contextualizing the stagings of *Sanna kvinnor* and interpretations in the press, this study aims to illuminate how performative

imaginaries in different Nordic cultural contexts are shaped by and simultaneously shape the interpretations of the play's central theme, protagonist and audience address. The idea is to give an overview of the different social imaginaries at work in order to draw conclusions about the constraints that shaped the Nordic culture of circulation initiated by the play *Sanna kvinnor*. I draw on ideas of cultural circulation as performative, as expressed by Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma in their seminal article 'Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity', in which they examine the performative constitution of capital, building on anthropological and cultural theory.<sup>3</sup>

After first giving an account of the theoretical framework and discussing the play and its implied audience, I will turn to the productions and their reception in the theatres of the Nordic capitals, first the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm in the autumn of 1883 and then during 1884–5 the New Theatre in Helsinki, the Christiania Theatre in Oslo and the New Theatre in Stockholm, the last three of which featured the Swedish star actor Emil Hillberg in the role of the play's antagonist. An account follows of the production of *Sanna kvinnor* by Albert Ranft's company which toured the western provinces of Sweden during 1884–6 and the reception of the staging in Sweden's second-biggest city, Gothenburg. I will then highlight theatrical events that open up particularly interesting interactions between *Sanna kvinnor* and the critics. First, the Finnish Theatre's staging in 1883 is considered, followed by the production of the play by an amateur group in Copenhagen, the Arbejdernes Fri Teater (the Workers' Liberal Theatre), in 1892. The article concludes by identifying and discussing the characteristics of the culture of circulation that emerge from and shape the interaction between the stagings of *Sanna kvinnor* and the critics in different Nordic theatrical environments.

### **Social imaginaries and the culture of circulation**

The dissemination of plays in the theatre is a theoretically complicated business due to the transformative power of adaptations that take place in translation and staging.<sup>4</sup> Holledge *et al.* give evidence that this awareness has shifted the focus from close readings of texts to close readings of performances in investigations of the global transmission of *A Doll's House*.<sup>5</sup> However, the transformative processes of translating and adapting a play raise questions about the nature of the circulated object. What is the effect of circulation on the play, and what is the role of the play in this circulation? Lee and LiPuma note that circulation is a cultural process created by the interaction between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them.<sup>6</sup> In line with their ideas and in accordance with the status of a play in the creative process leading to a staging, I see the play *Sanna kvinnor* as the initiator of a process of circulation rather than its circulating object.

The encounters between cultural forms and interpretive communities are both driven by and reinstate social imaginaries.<sup>7</sup> Critical aspects of the construction of such imaginaries are thus inscribed in social practices such as the staging of plays and their reception, and can be identified as a performative impact that informs the result of

these practices.<sup>8</sup> Lee and LiPuma cite the public sphere and the bourgeois state as examples of social imaginaries that are re-enacted through the actions of interpretative communities.<sup>9</sup> As the private sphere is inextricably linked to the public sphere and the national citizen state, it is also considered in my analysis. Furthermore, Lee and LiPuma argue that social imaginaries move in secular time and shape cultures of circulation that are characterized by certain forms of constraint, evaluation and abstraction.<sup>10</sup> The social imaginaries that emerge from and simultaneously shape the interactions between the play *Sanna kvinnor* and its stagings and the critics in different Nordic theatrical environments thus reveal constraints that shape circulation, while these constraints reciprocally are what circulates.

The body of my empirical sources, found in Nordic digital newspaper and periodical compilations, comprises a variety of traces.<sup>11</sup> These include brief, superficial articles advertising performances of *Sanna kvinnor* at the theatres and other news relating to the play, the theatrical events and the associated agents. Additionally, more detailed reviews and more elaborate articles are encompassed. According to a semiotic approach, the reviews signal something about what took place on the various stages, which is informed by the reviewers' prior understanding, namely their ideological positions, influenced by the theatre conventions and social norms of the time. In two cases, the production at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm and the productions featuring the actor Emil Hillberg, the accounts are based on several reviews by different reviewers that have been related to each other. Although the reviewers' evaluations may differ, taken together the observations reinforce the picture of the staging.

Theatre conventions and social norms are seen as codes for a sociocultural system that impregnate the pattern of meaning laid down in the documents in the historical moment they were produced.<sup>12</sup> My construction of social imaginaries is derived from these sociocultural codes activated by the staging of the play *Sanna kvinnor*.

### **The play and its implied interpretative community**

The plot of *Sanna kvinnor* revolves around Berta, who strives to protect her mother's heritage from her father's gambling addiction by convincing her mother to sign a deed of gift, granting Berta control over the money. Another plotline follows Berta's elder sister Lissi, who catches her husband, Wilhelm, engaging with a prostitute. The behaviour of these three women in these situations raises questions about how a true woman should act: actively interfere to do what is responsible and morally right or adjust to the will of the husband and father as the head of the family. At the end of the play Berta finds out that her mother has let her down by ripping the deed of gift apart under pressure of her husband's persuasive powers. Despite this treachery, she turns down a proposal of marriage, which would have saved her from her demanding situation as the true breadwinner of the family, to support her mother. In the final scene, Mr Bark proposes a toast for the true woman without anybody else joining in.<sup>13</sup>

Plays and theatre conventions presuppose the existence of interpretive communities with certain forms of interpretation and evaluation.<sup>14</sup> The composition of *Sanna kvinnor* suggests an audience aware of a Swedish law from 1874 which gave

a married woman the right to administer her earnings and private property.<sup>15</sup> This law is a crucial element of the plot. Furthermore, the themes of the play assume an audience that was familiar with the Nordic social debate of the 1880s regarding *sedlighet*, a concept similar to decency that referred to a broad range of bourgeois norms and values, including drinking and gambling habits. As the debate progressed, the term *sedlighet* came to be associated primarily with sexual morality.<sup>16</sup> Two contrasting views on marriage and sexual morality were opposed to each other. One side advocated pre-marital erotic indulgence for both women and men, while the other side advocated abstinence until marriage for both women and men.<sup>17</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the threat of immorality to the entire bourgeois society was still perceived as a significant concern.

As in several European countries, idealist aesthetics held a dominant position in respected Nordic theatres. Its values were closely linked to artistic norms and called for didactic, ennobling qualities, especially the defence of *sedlighet*. Two thematic elements were of particular significance in ensuring a positive moral tendency in the theatre: depictions of selfless love and of family happiness. In accordance with the Hegelian idealization of the patriarchal family as the ethical foundation of the nation state, theatre was expected to present transformations of problematic families into harmonious ones. This perspective on family and marriage, which was based on the idea of complementary gender roles, including the wife's obligation to support her husband morally, was at odds with emerging views on women's rights to individualism and self-realization that were being discussed in the social debate about decency.<sup>18</sup> However, the 1880s marked the beginning of a period of significant change for Nordic theatre. Several anti-idealistic expressions, such as sociocritical drama, competed with idealist artistic norms and conventions. They questioned the inherent view of art and morals, striving to undo the knot that tied those components closely together.<sup>19</sup> The use of playful irony in *Sanna kvinnor* challenged the prevailing idealistic theatre conventions, producing an ambivalent relationship between this aesthetic and the new sociocritical drama.<sup>20</sup> This composition thus suggests an awareness of a potential division in the reading and spectating community.

According to a basic dramaturgical analysis, Berta is clearly the protagonist of the play. She drives the plot forward by arranging the deed of gift, which is then countered by her father's retaliation. Berta appears most frequently in the text, and the exposition foregrounds the relationship between her and her mother. The interior plot revolves around Berta's need for proof of her mother's loyalty and sense of right.<sup>21</sup> As Berta, who is outspoken and actively interferes in the family's financial situation, does not represent the normalized prevailing femininity, she does not fit any of the stock roles for actresses in the nineteenth century.

Berta's mother, Julie Bark, though, fits the stock role of 'the noble mother' and thus offered material for actresses who had made a career performing the femininity of a woman of noble character, struck by grief or bad luck. Moreover, Berta never meets her antagonist Mr Bark eye to eye in the play; instead, their fight over the control of money takes place with Mrs Bark as the intermediary. These aspects of the composition add to the ambivalence between the play's social critique and conformity with idealistic

theatrical norms. Furthermore, Leffler's play prioritizes the psychological truths of its characters, based on an analysis of human nature, over plot.<sup>22</sup> This priority suggests an expectation that the interpreting community will understand and accept a representation that is closer to life than the average performance on Nordic stages in the 1880s.

### ***Sanna kvinnor* in a moral universe**

*Sanna kvinnor* premiered at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm in October 1883. The play provoked strong emotional responses among both reviewers and the audience.<sup>23</sup> The prompter's manuscript mentions Mr Fredrikson as the director of the play, likely referring to Gustaf Fredrikson, who managed the Royal Dramatic Theatre from 1879 to 1884.<sup>24</sup>

The reviews indicate a staging marked by melodramatic polarization and exaggeration.<sup>25</sup> The characterization of Mrs Bark as a victim is contrasted with the negative portrayal of male characters, who are depicted as bad and undutiful. The reviews foreground the female characters, particularly Helfrid Kinmansson's portrayal of Mrs Bark, and indicate a staging depicting two different types of femininity, one represented by Mrs Bark and her eldest daughter Lissi Bark, and the other by Berta. Berta's righteousness, moral strength and concern for her mother are emphasized. The characterization of Berta as a caring and responsible daughter thus seems to have been more prominent than the portrayal of a woman questioning gender norms. Additionally, the reviews suggest that the production was rather static and lecture-like, with a disconnect between the acting and the psychological depth of Leffler's characters.<sup>26</sup> This view implies the use of the toned-down variety of a French acting style favoured by Gustaf Fredriksson, in which line delivery takes precedence over acting. The lines were meant to be delivered with naturalness and simplicity.<sup>27</sup>

Defenders of idealistic aesthetics among critics dismiss the representation of the characters and of marriage as evil and untruthful. They struggle to identify a theme but see the purpose of both the play and the staging as discrediting men. Those who advocate sociocritical representations welcome *Sanna kvinnor* as a justified and audacious contribution to an important social question. They view it as a brave and honest depiction of the conditions of marriage. The reviewers discuss the critique of traditional subservient femininity and male injustice in the staging, using Mrs Bark's negative example. The lenient Mrs Bark is regarded as the protagonist, with Berta as her contrasting sidekick. Thereby Berta is seen as operative at the thematic level and not as a role driving the plot. The reviewers all emphasize the importance of morality, specifically righteousness and inner truth, in their analysis.<sup>28</sup>

The performative encounter between *Sanna kvinnor* and the reviewers raises moral concerns. For the defenders of aesthetic idealism, the concern relates to their ideas on what reality to stage in theatres. Their objection to the portrayal of men in *Sanna kvinnor* is based on the aesthetic ideal of representing individuals not as inherently bad, but as having the potential to improve themselves by adopting the 'right' values. However, the protest and difficulty of identifying a theme reveal a view of men as the natural dramaturgical centre and, on a social level, the unquestionable heads of families. These interpretations by

reviewers are influenced by and simultaneously reinforce a social imaginary echoing the Hegelian idealization of family as the ethical foundation of the nation state, which required that the boundaries between family affairs and public life were maintained.<sup>29</sup> The disclosure of the Bark family's personal matters jeopardized this idealization. Furthermore, the combination of aesthetics, ethics and Christianity in idealism should be understood within the framework of an optimistic utopian vision of human perfection built on the idea of one's own culture as superior to others owing to its further development of freedom, democracy and tolerance.<sup>30</sup> Idealized representations at the theatre contributed to maintaining this social imaginary. The staging of *Sanna kvinnor* fails to provide the audience with role models and to present the perfection of the national citizen state.

The interpretations by the reviewers who welcome the play may be based on idealistic aesthetics, despite their support for change. Lisbeth Stenberg highlights an ethical and emancipatory aesthetic grounded in idealism, which acknowledges social injustice. This aesthetic accepts sociocritical representations onstage if they provide a deterrent example that supports the development of the individual's character.<sup>31</sup> The highlighting of Mrs Bark as the protagonist and the problem understood as Mr Bark's irresponsible behaviour among this group of reviewers indicate such a view underpinning their acceptance of having the nasty interior of family life disclosed on the stage. So does their focus on righteousness and inner truth, which hints at a position taken in Christian ideas of the human being as imperfect but with the ability to improve.<sup>32</sup> The function of the arts, according to this group of reviewers, is to contribute to the development of individuals and society. Two of the critics attribute the responsibility of maintaining high moral standards to wives, while the other two emphasize the importance of individual conviction in promoting moral behaviour. One view aligns with the complementary view of the sexes and women's role as the moral protector of the family, in accordance with Hegelian beliefs. The other group assigns the responsibility for moral development to both spouses, thus restoring and being influenced by a social construct of a healthy nation state based on each person's moral accountability.

Ethical emancipatory aesthetics were the stance of the early Swedish women's movement in the debate on *sedlighet* in the early 1880s.<sup>33</sup> Its advocates maintained that sexuality should be kept within marriage for both men and women, combined with the idea that everyone must be responsible for their own inner moral compass. The ethical idealistic aesthetics asked for artistic and social reformation while the conservative variety strove to preserve both the aesthetic ideals and the power relationship within the family. The pervasiveness of the complementary view of the sexes and the debates on *sedlighet* in the early 1880s, in which representatives of the women's movement demanded the same self-discipline and high moral standard for men and women alike, may explain the subordinate position of Berta as an unmarried woman in the reviewers' interpretations.

### ***Sanna kvinnor* meets a star actor**

*Sanna kvinnor* premiered in Helsinki at the New Theatre in January 1884, followed by performances at the Christiania Theatre in Oslo in May of the same year. Matinee

performances were also held at the New Theatre in Stockholm in 1885. These productions shared the Swedish popular actor Emil Hillberg in the role of the father and husband, Mr Bark. Despite differences, such as those caused by the Norwegian translation used at the Christiania Theatre, the presentations of the stagings and their interpretations in newspapers from the three cities are quite similar. The reviews all pay great attention to Hillberg's portrayal of Mr Bark, with his acting dominating the stage and being seen by the critics as the focal point of the dramaturgical build-up in all three productions. Furthermore, the reviews of the three productions, across cultural and ideological lines, indicate that Emil Hillberg portrayed Mr Bark with realism, creating a truthful depiction of a live person and bringing out his psychology. Hillberg also added comic aspects to his portrait.<sup>34</sup>

Apart from Hillberg's portrayal of Mr Bark, the character of Berta receives the most attention. At the New Theatre in Stockholm, this emphasis could be attributed to the actress Anna Lisa Hwasser-Engelbrecht, who chose the role for her matinees. The reviewers note that the audience's response to her performance was highly appreciative, and that she exhibited 'simple, feminine dignity' in her interpretation of the role.<sup>35</sup> The Helsinki performances garnered significant interest and attention for the Swedish-Finnish actress Ida Reis. While one critic considers her experienced in roles like Berta, another finds the role incongruous with Reis's nature, resulting in a less distinct creation of Berta's independence.<sup>36</sup> Sophie Reimer's portrayal of Berta at the Christiania Theatre had a subdued quality, although reviewers' opinions differed. In one review of the play, pseudonymous I.H. notes that the role of Berta is portrayed in a gender-neutral manner, while an anonymous reviewer finds that the moderation of the role enhances the image without compromising the truth.<sup>37</sup> None of the reviewers identifies any moral flaws in Berta in any of the versions by Hwasser, Reis or Reimer, suggesting that all three actresses downplayed Berta's rebellious traits. However, despite having a more prominent position in the reviews of these productions, the role is only discussed thematically. It represents a better kind of femininity than Mrs Bark's and Lissi's lax versions, just as in the reviews of the production at the Royal Dramatic Theatre. The focus is still on the marriage between the immoral Mr Bark and his weak wife. Although Mr Bark's bad moral character is seen as the problem, a change in femininity is seen as the cure. In contrast to Ibsen, Leffler aimed to demonstrate that women were also responsible for turning marriage into a 'Doll's House', an anonymous critic states.<sup>38</sup>

Although the reviews revolve around the male star actor's skills in the antagonistic role, thus focusing on destructive masculinity, the reviewers' understanding of the stagings shape and are shaped by a similar imaginary as the one produced by the staging at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. It either maintains a complementary view of the sexes, including the idea of morally strong women restoring weak men, or places the moral responsibility on men and women alike. However, the focus on Pontus Bark's destructive masculinity as a problem and the suggestion of a changed femininity as the solution highlight the pervasiveness of marriage as the minimal cornerstone of society. The increased focus on Berta in the reviews of these stagings in comparison to those of the Royal Dramatic Theatre's



production underlines this pervasiveness as a reason for Berta not being perceived as the protagonist, given that she represents an unmarried woman. Moreover, critics, regardless of their cultural or ideological positions, believe that promoting high moral standards and good personal qualities is the key to improving relationships between spouses and creating a healthier society.

Compared to the staging at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, all reviewers acknowledge the existence of Mr Bark's real-life counterparts, although one defender of idealistic aesthetics also notes that the Barks' marriage is an exception to the rule. This position may of course be attributed to an acceptance of sociocritical representations in general. However, the focus on Hillberg's acting in the reviews suggests that it played a significant role in this acceptance. The reviewers' comments on the psychological truth of the role indicate that, in these stagings, Mr Bark was portrayed less as a melodramatic villain and is therefore not perceived as an attack on men. Furthermore, Hillberg's acting was more in line with the idealistic ideals of theatre to amuse and to be agreeable, as it included comic and entertaining aspects.

### ***Sanna kvinnor* in the hands of two modern theatre men**

In 1884–6, Albert Ranft's Theatre Company (formerly Lindberg's Company) toured several cities in the south-west provinces of Sweden with the play *Sanna kvinnor*. At the time, Albert Ranft was twenty-six years old and had recently become the manager of the company. Ranft has testified to the influence of his mentor, August Lindberg, who is considered to have contributed to the development of an acting style based on naturalistic doctrines in his famous groundbreaking staging of Ibsen's *Ghosts* in 1883. Ranft purchased exclusive rights from Leffler to perform *Sanna kvinnor* in the provinces, which he used to advertise the productions. In the playbills, he also presents himself as the director of the production and advises theatre-goers not to miss it if they want to stay up to date with the latest in theatre.<sup>39</sup> The analysis will concentrate on the reviews of the performances at Mindre Teatern (the 'minor theatre') in Gothenburg by the liberal Karl Warburg, who, like Ranft, embraced modern ideas on theatre.<sup>40</sup> Reviews from performances in other cities will inform the depiction of the staging.<sup>41</sup>

Reviews of the performances and playbills from various cities on the tour unanimously indicate that Ranft made the marriage of Mr and Mrs Bark the focus of the plot. In particular, the actress Elise Stier's portrayal of Mrs Bark's suffering, in line with the stock role of a 'mere noble', appears to have been a prominent feature of the production.

Furthermore, Ranft's directing appears to have focused on the integrated interaction between the actors. The actors are also praised for the psychological complexity and truth they bring to their roles. As in the production at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the role of Berta seems to have been contrasted with that of her amiable but weak mother, Julie. However, the reviews indicate that the actress Ellen Ädelstam portrayed her as a forceful and rebellious young woman in this production. The depiction of scenery and decorations, along with the intricate family relationships, suggests a prevailing mood of depression onstage, but with occasional glimpses of entertaining lightness. The combination of this description with the



psychological complexity of the roles signals a more dynamic production than at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm.<sup>42</sup>

In his review of the first performance in Gothenburg, Karl Warburg shows enthusiasm for Anne Charlotte Leffler and *Sanna kvinnor*. He refers to her as ‘our great authoress’ and states that *Sanna kvinnor* is the crown jewel among all of Edgren’s stage writings and Sweden’s best contribution to the modern school of Nordic drama.<sup>43</sup> He particularly praises the play’s truthfulness to life.<sup>44</sup> Warburg generally asked for theatrical productions that have merits that go beyond entertainment. He believed that theatre should be artistic and that audiences require aesthetic education to appreciate it.<sup>45</sup> *Sanna kvinnor* aligns with Warburg’s educational and enlightening mission.

According to Warburg, what Leffler is trying to show in her play is that women are not oppressed slaves who should blindly obey their husbands and accept maltreatment, and he supports this view. He finds the link between feminine goodness and submissive weakness broken by the dramatization of the mother and her two daughters, the mother being the ‘romantic Genoveva type’ that Leffler questions.<sup>46</sup> The negative example of Mrs Bark carries the message: women’s laxity makes men bad. From this position follows the logic that firmer wives would make husbands clean up their act. Warburg also finds Berta’s demand that ‘a woman should be a woman for herself’ and ‘a man a man for himself’ exaggerated.<sup>47</sup> Despite Warburg’s affirmation of Leffler’s protest against the subordination of women in marriage, his understanding essentially remains within the bounds of a complementary view of the sexes. Furthermore, he accepts Berta’s forceful femininity onstage but finds Berta manly and coarse. This suggests that, in his view, such a woman would in fact cross gender boundaries in a negative way. He calls for a firm, strong woman with a moral backbone, but he cannot accept Berta as a model of such qualities because she does not embody femininity in the right way. Warburg also praises the ensemble’s integrated acting and the actors’ truthful, psychologically complex portraits.<sup>48</sup>

The social imaginary re-created by *Sanna kvinnor* suggests a utopian community with refined cultural tastes that welcomes critical portrayals of contemporary society and representations of the factual nature of human beings and individuals acting outside the prevailing gender norms on the theatre stage. The protest against the treatment of women as slaves indicates liberal ideas based on democratic values and a reformist drive.

However, there are limits to the liberalism and a discrepancy between what is welcomed as artistic representation in the public sphere and what is tolerated in social reality. While women can be represented in art as acting solitary individuals and against the ideals of femininity, such a woman is not acceptable in reality. The complementary view of the sexes and the celebration of a woman’s moral firmness and caring responsibility still form the basis of Warburg’s social imaginary.

### ***Sanna kvinnor* in a nationalist setting**

Interestingly, the Finnish production of *Sanna kvinnor* (*Todelliset naiset*) took place before it was performed in the original language at the Swedish-speaking New

Theatre in Helsinki. After the premiere in Wiborg in November 1883, Suomalainen Teatteri (the Finnish Theatre) toured the Finnish provinces – a tour that went as far as St Petersburg – before the play was performed at the Arkadia Theatre in Helsinki.<sup>49</sup> The founding of the Finnish Theatre in 1872 was a strong part of the dynamics of the Fennomanian language-political power struggle in the pursuit and demonstration of institutional power.<sup>50</sup> In the 1880s, a new generation of Fennomans, dissatisfied with the dominant Fennomanian Christian conservative world view, advocated progress and liberal ideas. They introduced ideas of gender equality and religious freedom into national thinking.<sup>51</sup> The scholar of Nordic literature Valfrid Vasenius published two articles about *Sanna kvinnor*, one about the play and one about the Finnish Theatre's production of the play, in the Finnish-language periodical *Valvolja*, of which he was also one of the founders and editors. In his advocacy of Scandinavian cultural ties, scientific thought, and liberalism, he seems to have had a different view from the Fennomans, although it partly complies with the ideas that the young Fennomans wanted to introduce in the 1880s.<sup>52</sup> Still, Vasenius's celebration of Finnishness is central to his interpretation.<sup>53</sup>

The fact that *Sanna kvinnor* was staged in Helsinki in both a Finnish and a Swedish version at the same time allows Vasenius to develop ideas on nationalistic traits by comparing the two productions. In the Swedish-speaking New Theatre he saw a light, cool performance in which the actors held back their emotions, while in the Finnish Theatre he perceived a more passionate performance in which the actors created their roles with more force. He explains this difference by the fact that the Swedish actors are more familiar with the conditions described in the play, which enables them to portray the outward elegance typical of the Swedes. This elegance was particularly evident in Emil Hillberg's portrayal of Mr Bark and in the actress Otilia Littmarck's performance as Mrs Bark, who maintained her appearance despite the role's difficult situation. In the Finnish production, Benjamin Leino portrayed Mr Bark as an unfortunate ordinary man who loses track of the small amounts he has borrowed and suddenly realizes how much he is in debt. The actress Aurora Aspegren showed Mrs Bark's full suffering. These two roles were much sadder than in the Swedish version. Leino's and Aspegren's performances, in turn, allowed Kaarola Awelan to give Berta a different mood from the smiling Mrs Reis on the Swedish-speaking stage, who could not play the role with as much force. Awelan's Berta made the audience forget the actress; they saw a woman who defended the cause of women with boldness and audacity, which made the overall effect of the play deeper and more tragic than in the Swedish version.<sup>54</sup>

Vasenius finds these differences natural and links them to the national spirit of the different audiences. He claims that in the Swedish-speaking production, the elegance and preservation of appearances in the acting kept the audience's hearts cold, while the satirical parts of the play affected their minds. The Finnish-speaking production, in contrast, touched the hearts of the audience because the loss that threatened the Bark family was more evident in this adaptation. In Vasenius's comparison of the acting and the audience, sophistication and distance are associated with Swedishness, while emotionality and decency are associated with Finnishness. He also identifies the

capacity for democracy as a Finnish national trait, conceding that although there are Wilhelms and Mr Barks in Finland, unlike other nations what gives hope is the existence of a democratic spirit that does not tolerate the oppression of the sexes any more than it tolerates the oppression of any other class of people. He maintains that the affairs of women and those of a (united) nation are inseparable since they both pass through different stages of civilized society. In the third degree, the sober strength of the lower classes has flown into the higher states he predicts, and in the same way womanhood will eventually influence society, as the civilized nation and society need female virtues.<sup>55</sup> In Vasenius's teleological thinking, liberal ideas and notions of progress in line with European Enlightenment ideas are combined with notions of national identity which echo the romantic binary of the simple peasant as opposed to the cultivated urban bourgeoisie and aristocracy. In this nationalist setting, *Sanna kvinnor* is used to illuminate the superiority of Finnishness. The cause of women is equated with that of the common people and Berta is celebrated as a freedom fighter with the same democratic spirit as the Finnish people. The passion and emotion associated with Finnishness, together with the understanding of Mr Bark as an ordinary but unfortunate man, also make *Sanna kvinnor* a family tragedy. Furthermore, the nationalist imaginary shapes the interpretation of the audience address in the Finnish Theatre production as one of emotional honesty and passion.

The encounter between *Sanna kvinnor* and the Finnish nationalist framework represented by Vasenius's two articles produces a social imaginary in which Finnish identity is elevated and idealized through ideas of morality, emotional honesty and aptitude for democracy. The soul of Finnishness is shifted from the original Romantic setting of peasants in the countryside to working people and the poor and lowly in general.<sup>56</sup> The use of the two *Sanna kvinnor* productions as canvases onto which ideas of nationality are projected makes women and femininity share the beneficial qualities of the working people, which society needs. As a result, women's agency extends beyond the boundaries of the family.

### ***Sanna kvinnor* in social-movement circles**

On 10 February 1892, *Sanna kvinnor* was performed by the Arbejdernes Fri Theater (the Workers' Liberal Theatre), an amateur group consisting of members of a workers' association in the Amager district of Copenhagen.<sup>57</sup> The performance took place at a party organized by De Samlede Kvindeforeninger i København (the Gathered Women's Rights Organizations) in the workers' union hall. Tickets were sold by members of the women's rights organizations in their homes and at the workers' union's localities.<sup>58</sup> The performance was announced in the Danish dailies and reported in several Swedish newspapers. Before the production of *Sanna kvinnor*, the amateur group, which could be hired by societies for special occasions, had performed August Strindberg's *Fadren* (The Father) (1887). The empirical basis for the analysis of their production of *Sanna kvinnor* is given by articles and reviews in *Hvad vi vill*, the periodical of the Danish women's rights organizations, and a review from the daily paper *Kjøbenhavn*.

According to *Hvad vi vill*, the Workers' Liberal Theatre was founded by young workers who wanted to create an experimental theatre to perform new plays dealing with social issues. Several reasons are given. First, the activities would be an alternative to public theatres, which are highlighted as arenas for the social exhibition of bourgeois wealth. If a working-class man or woman could afford a ticket at all, he or she would certainly feel uncomfortable in the theatre, as he or she would not be able to afford fine clothing, the author of the article argues. Second, s/he has noticed a growing literary life among the workers.

Readings by actors, often held in the workers' society's own rooms in the district of Amager, drew full houses. However, the plays chosen by the actors are considered too light or old-fashioned. The author of the article refers to the social-democratic labour movement as the avant-garde of ideas, and thus wants modern literature that discusses social issues in the service of its Enlightenment project. The ideas of our modern authors, the reviewer argues, should be supported by the broad masses of the people.<sup>59</sup> In another article, the reviewer further emphasizes the educational context in which s/he includes *Sanna kvinnor* by exhorting readers to come to the party to support the laudable educational enterprise of the young workers to get involved in the play and to present it to the general public 'to the best of their ability'.<sup>60</sup>

*Sanna kvinnor* is described as a comedy, which suggests that Berta is not seen as the protagonist. The lesson it teaches, especially to women, is easy to understand, according to the reviewer. This lesson revolves around Lissi, Berta's elder sister, who discovers that her husband socializes with a prostitute. What young women primarily can learn from the play is 'by their love to raise the husband to a higher morality, while it is true that women's lives have throughout been carried by a purer will in sexual terms'.<sup>61</sup> The interpretation reflects the heightened focus on sexuality in the Scandinavian moral debate in the latter part of the 1880s. The lesson of the play is interpreted within the gender discourse highlighting moral equality by men attaining the level of the 'cultural woman' as poignantly expressed by the prominent Danish representative of the women's movement, Elisabeth Grundtvig, in this debate, hinting at women's 'higher nature' developed through keeping themselves sexually pure.<sup>62</sup> The interpretation still places moral responsibility on women, but by claiming that women are morally superior and therefore fit to take the lead, the power dynamic in marriage is levelled out. The author draws a parallel between Lissi's behaviour and her mother's indulgent and soft-hearted attitude towards her husband, and s/he testifies to the fact that 'cowed and frightened wives, who have sunk down to unwilling beings through the disempowerment of marriage', still can be found in real life, despite the progress of the women's cause.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, s/he approves of the truth of *Sanna kvinnor* but also expresses hope for the future, by highlighting the generational difference between Lissi and her mother, thus reinstating the utopian drive in the women's movement.

The belief in progress also affects the interpretation of Berta. She embodies 'the germ of all the new thoughts'.<sup>64</sup> Yet, in another article, Berta is perceived as a warning. She judges her weaker family members too hard, leading to misery for both her and those around her. Women like Berta are not happy. Her time has not yet

come, and she needs to find a husband with a kindred soul. A woman who values loyalty to herself and has a sense of responsibility as a member of society is a woman for the future.<sup>65</sup> The reviewer suggests that there are probably more women like Berta in 1892 than there were in 1883 when Leffler wrote the play. However, it may be necessary for all women to first become like Berta before they can voice their demands.<sup>66</sup> Considering that *Sanna kvinnor* was written only nine years earlier, the author strongly believes in the power and speed with which the utopia of the women's movement will be reached.

The reviewer in *Hvad vi vill* reminds readers not to evaluate amateur acting using the same standards as for professional acting. S/he offers advice to the amateur group, such as improving their memorization and toning down their performances.<sup>67</sup> The anonymous reviewer in *Kjøbenhavn* hints at his amusement at the unskilled actors onstage, stating that evaluating their acting is beyond his abilities. However, possibly mockingly, he finds the Workers' Liberal Theatre a unique institution simply because they are amateurs. As workers who earn their living through hard labour on a daily basis, their acting reflects the colours of life. This quality makes them representatives of the theatre of the future in the socialist state.<sup>68</sup> The discourse is structured by a progressive temporality, similar to his colleague in *Hvad vi vill*, who focuses on the thematic aspects of the staging.

The social imaginary shaping and being shaped by the encounter of *Sanna kvinnor* and this social-movement environment, as expressed in the reviews, is one on its way to a future goal. The way to this utopian society is paved by the young generation, especially those from working-class backgrounds who are influenced by new radical ideas to which the new modern breakthrough literature contributes. This view testifies to an educational discourse in line with liberal enlightenment ideas as the framework for the interpretations. The utopian vision produced by the encounter with *Sanna kvinnor* revolves around a moral marriage that can exist only when the ideals of both masculinity and femininity have been redefined. The text demonstrates a strong belief in the power of social movements to effect change and suggests that the desired utopian reality is within reach. The combination of the discourses of sexual purity, progression and education shapes Lissi as the protagonist while Berta becomes the paragon for the kind of woman she must turn into in the future, but for which society is not yet ready. In line with this interpretation, the theme is conceived of as the task for young women, due to their purer sexuality, to lead their husbands towards a moral sexuality; that is, keeping it within marriage. The address to the audience depends on the appreciation of the amateur actors' efforts to enter the play and of the nuances of working-class reality.

### **The performative culture of circulation**

The productions of *Sanna kvinnor* included in this study demonstrate differences in the understanding of the protagonist and of the dramaturgical centre. In the production at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm in 1883, the role of Mrs Bark was highlighted, while the productions at the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, the Christiania Theatre and the

New Theatre in Stockholm featured the role of Mr Bark. In the staging by Albert Ranft, both the actor and the actress performing the roles of Mr and Mrs Bark were focused on. Moreover, the productions showed differences in the performances of the role of Berta. How the audience was addressed through the acting also seems to have varied. In the Royal Dramatic Theatre production, the focus was on the delivery of lines. In contrast, the Hillberg stagings placed emphasis on the ability of a star actor to convey psychological truth in his role. Finally, in the Ranft production, the actors interacted with each other to a greater extent than in the other two stagings. However, these differences do not significantly affect the reviewers' interpretations of the central theme. Their understanding of it as an issue of morality linked to femininity is surprisingly similar, despite the different approaches to the protagonist and the acting in the productions. Similar social imaginaries produced in these theatrical environments seem to have had a significant influence on the interpretations of the productions, resulting in related understandings.

Nevertheless, there are also notable distinctions between the different environments. The most notable ones were observed in the interpretations of the Finnish Theatre's staging and the staging by the Workers' Liberal Theatre in Copenhagen. The Finnish reviewer considers the entire Bark family the protagonist, conceiving the play as a tragedy. However, the Danish representative of the women's movement regards Lissi, who is reunited with her husband in the end, as the protagonist and labels the play a comedy. Berta is never perceived as the protagonist in any of the interpretations. Instead, she is seen either as a representation of an undesirable femininity or as a paragon of firmness for a wife, depending on whether her loving and caring responsibility or her rebellious side was emphasized in the role.

The main constraint of the culture of circulation as expressed in the social imaginaries shaping and being shaped by *Sanna kvinnor* is the issue of morality. In the context of the mainstream prestigious theatres in the capital cities, the understanding of women as responsible for morally supporting their husbands crosses ideological lines, irrespective of what role was highlighted in the different stagings. Additionally, the issue of morality pertains to the representation of human beings onstage and is a prominent theme in the reception of the staging at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm in 1883. In the context of Finnish nationalism, morality operates through the merging of liberal ideas, notions of progress, and romantic ideals of the purity of the common people and women. This produces a perspective in which the emotional appeal to the audience and Berta's democratic spirit are seen as expressions of Finnish identity. The representative of the women's movement commenting on the staging by worker amateurs in Copenhagen focuses mainly on sexuality as a moral issue. Berta represents the cultured woman of the future with the necessary strength to guide men towards a purer sexuality.

The issue of morality is connected to gender and although the most heated reactions concern the representation of masculinity, as in the staging and reception at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, it is mainly femininity that contributes to shaping the culture of circulation. Most critics agree that femininity is the key to better men,

better marriages and, accordingly, a better society. Firmness and moral integrity must replace weakness and submissiveness as feminine ideals. Still, female strength should not turn into harshness and rebellion to avoid violating the boundaries of idealized femininity. The critic Karl Warburg's interpretation of Albert Ranft's staging shows a discrepancy between femininity in theatrical representation and femininity in life as he approves of bourgeois women transgressing the lines of traditional gender roles on the stage but is reluctant to accept such women in real life. Female forcefulness, as represented in Karola Awelan's performance of Berta, is wholeheartedly accepted by the critic of the Finnish Theatre's staging due to the interpretation shaped by the cause of Finnishness.

Another constraint on the culture of circulation, connected to that of morality, is the complementary view of the sexes, alternatively the idea of the ethical marriage. These ideas shape and are reinstated by the marriage between Mr and Mrs Bark and are connected to the theme of the submissive feminine ideal in need of change. In the reviews, the difference between these two attitudes is expressed in the reasons for women being morally supportive: for the sake of their husbands or for developing marriage into a union based on true emotional and intellectual understanding between the spouses. The prevalence of the complementary view of genders and the emphasis on ethical marriage in the Nordic cultural debate, along with the play's composition, partly explain why Berta, who through dramaturgical analysis of the play can be identified as the protagonist, is perceived as a supporting character to Mrs Bark and her sister Lissi, serving only a thematic purpose. The Finnish Theatre's nationalist environment is the only instance that does not discuss morality within the complementary view of the sexes or the ethical marriage as envisioned by the women's movement. Instead, it focuses on the tragedy of both Mr and Mrs Bark and links morality to Finnishness through Berta.

The concept of truth is fundamental to the culture of circulation. The distinction between defenders of conservative idealism and advocates of sociocritical realism is based on their attitudes toward the representation of marriage, family and human beings in general. However, the acceptance of the truth of *Sanna kvinnor* also depends on the actors' performances. Realistic and psychologically complex character portrayals make *Sanna kvinnor* more appealing to critics across ideological divides. Such acting complied with the idealists' desire for well-rounded characters that can be sympathized with or converted to the right moral track, as well as demands for truthful naturalistic depictions of human behaviour.

The acceptance of truth is linked to change and progress, whether in the form of an idealistic vision of an already existing human perfection or in that of the liberal Enlightenment vision that highlights education as the path to achieving a better society. Enlightenment, which is connected to democracy, underpins liberal Karl Warburg's review of Albert Ranft's staging and motivates his view that women must be liberated from their subservient position in marriage. The stagings of the Finnish Theatres and of the Workers' Liberal Theatre both reinstate democracy in relation to their respective political goals, expressed as optimistic utopian visions soon to be reached. This stance is evident in the character of Berta, who is interpreted as the



representative of the idealized human qualities of their utopias, including high moral integrity, bravery and a democratic spirit.

Finally, the culture of circulation shaped by the encounters between different Nordic theatre environments and *Sanna kvinnor* is based on a rather successful reception and circulation due to the play's usefulness in various interpretive communities. In response to established theatre-historical accounts of Swedish women's modern breakthrough plays as successful feminist interventions, this study suggests the need to differentiate between the reception and dissemination of plays at theatres, and potential feminist agendas in playtexts. In the reception and circulation instigated by *Sanna kvinnor*, various social imaginaries in which moral standards lead to a healthy society revolve around women. These imaginaries subordinate a change in the power balance between genders and feminine ideals to other primary concerns.

## NOTES

- 1 Margaret Wirmark, *Noras systrar: Nordisk dramatik och teater 1879–1899* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2000), pp. 272–3.
- 2 Julie Holledge, Jonathan Bollen, Frode Helland and Joan Tompkins, *A Global Doll's House: Ibsen and Distant Visions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 18–20.
- 3 Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, 'Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity', *Public Culture*, 14, 1 (2000), pp. 191–213.
- 4 See Sirkku Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000); Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaption* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Christina Marinetti, 'Theatre as a "Translation Zone": Multilingualism, Identity and the Performing Body in the Work of Teatro delle Albe', *The Translator*, 24, 2 (2018), pp. 128–46.
- 5 Holledge, *A Global Doll's House*, p. 12.
- 6 Lee and LiPuma, 'Cultures of Circulation', p. 192.
- 7 Lee and LiPuma here build on Benedict Anderson's conception of nation as an imagined community, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 2006; first published 1983).
- 8 Lee and LiPuma, 'Cultures of Circulation', use the phrase 'performative ideology', but as Anderson highlights the difference between an imagined community such as a nation and an ideology and treats the former as a phenomenon connecting 'to "kinship" or "religion" rather than with "liberalism" or "fascism"', I prefer the word 'impact'.
- 9 Lee and LiPuma, 'Cultures of Circulation', add the market to the public sphere and the citizen state as components of modern social imaginaries. I leave the market out as it is not relevant to my analysis.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 192–6.
- 11 The total number of sources used in the mapping of theatre events that include *Sanna kvinnor* in the Nordic countries amounts to a little more than 300 newspaper and periodical articles related to *Sanna kvinnor*, collected from Nordic newspaper databases in the 2017–23 period. The reception documents were initially generated through search terms comprising the play's title, its relevant translations and different variations of the playwright's name. In a second step, the names of the relevant reviewers and the different venues were used.
- 12 Lena Hammergren, *Dans och historiografiska reflektioner* (Stockholm: STUTS, 2009), pp. 67–8.
- 13 Anne Charlotte Leffler (Edgren), *Sanna kvinnor: Skådespel i tre akter* (Stockholm: Z. Hæggström förlagsexpedition, 1883). The play is available in English translation (*True Women*) in Katherine E. Kelly, ed., *Modern Drama by Women 1880s–1930s* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- 14 See Lee and LiPuma, 'Cultures of Circulation', p. 192.

- 15 Yvonne Leffler, 'Den sanna kvinnlighetens konsekvenser i Anne Charlotte Lefflers *Sanna kvinnor*', in Leffler, ed., *Det moderna genombrottets dramer: Fem analyser* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004), pp. 45–61, here p. 46.
- 16 See David Gedin, *Fältets herrar: Framväxten av en modern författarroll* (Eslöv: B. Östlings bokförlag Symposion, 2004), pp. 382, 387–91.
- 17 Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, *– bara ett öfverskott af lif –: En biografi om Frida Stéénhoff* (Stockholm: Atlantis (2010), p. 48.
- 18 Inger-Lise Hjort-Vetlesen, 'Modernitetens kvinnliga text: Det moderna genombrottet i Norden', in Elisabeth Möller Jensen, ed., *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria 2: Fadershuset* (Höganäs: Wiken, 1993), pp. 330–53, here p. 337.
- 19 István Molnár, '*Det gör godt att skåda*': *Bildning, moral och underhållning, dramatik och offentlig debatt under teatersäsongen 1868–69 i Stockholm* (Stockholm: Stift. För utgivning av teatervetenskapliga studier, 1991), pp. 145, 158; Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theatre, Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 67–8. In accordance with Moi's use of the notion, aesthetic idealism refers to a set of 'post-Kantian aesthetic principles that survived Romanticism as a literary and artistic movement', which in an impoverished moralizing and didactic form (compared to Romanticism proper) contributed to a more or less compulsory 'master discourse' about literature and art well into the twentieth century. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 20 See Birgitta Johansson Lindh, *Som en vildfågel i en bur: Identitet, kärlek, frihet och melodramatiska inslag i Alfild Agrells, Victoria Benedictssons och Anne Charlotte Lefflers 1880-talsdramatik* (Göteborg: Makadam, 2019), p. 20.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14.
- 22 Monica Lauritzen, *Karl Warburg: Den allvarsamme vägvisaren* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2018), p. 175; Mona Lagerström, *Dramatisk teknik och könsideologi: Anne Charlotte Lefflers tidiga kärleks- och äktenskapsdramatik* (Göteborg: Skrifter utgivna av Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Göteborgs universitet, nr 36, 1999), pp. 58–61.
- 23 Birgitta Johansson Lindh, 'Affective Economies in the Tug of War between Idealism and Anti-idealisms: Reviewers' Reactions to Anne Charlotte Leffler's *Sanna kvinnor* (True Women)', in Erik Mattson, ed., *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 29, 1 (2017), special issue, *Turning Points and Continuity: Reformulating Questions to the Archives*, pp. 25–43, here p. 26.
- 24 Birgitta Lindh Estelle, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Radical Utopias in Reviews: Stagings and Reception of Anne Charlotte Leffler's Play *Sanna kvinnor*', *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 34, 2 (2023), pp. 103–17, here p. 107.
- 25 The account builds on six reviews, five in daily papers published a day or two after the premiere on 15 October and one from a periodical published a month later.
- 26 Lindh Estelle, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Radical Utopias', pp. 107–10.
- 27 Stig Torsslow, *Dramatenaktörernas republik: Dramatiska teatern under associationstiden 1888–1907* (Stockholm: Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern, 1975), pp. 171, 173, 294.
- 28 Lindh Estelle, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Radical Utopias', p. 110.
- 29 Kari Melby, Anu Pylkkänen, Bente Rosenbeck and Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, *Inte ett ord om kärlek: Äktenskap och Politik i Norden ca 1850–1930* (Göteborg: Makadam, 2006), pp. 52–3.
- 30 See Molnár, '*Det gör godt att skåda*', p. 9.
- 31 Lisbeth Stenberg, *I kärlekens namn: Om människosyn, den nya kvinnan och framtidens samhälle i fem litteraturdebatter 1881–1909* (Stockholm: Normal, 2009), pp. 18, 54.
- 32 See *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 33 See *ibid.*, p. 13; and Melby *et al.*, *Inte ett ord om kärlek*, p. 53.
- 34 Birgitta Johansson Lindh, 'Sanna kvinnor, Emil Hillbergs Pontus Bark och recensenterna: Receptionen av Anne Charlotte Lefflers pjäs *Sanna kvinnor* i några nordiska uppsättningar via dagstidningarnas recensioner', in Rikard Hoogland, ed., *I avantgardets skugga. Brytpunkter och kontinuitet i svensk teater kring 1900* (Göteborg: LIR.skrifter, 2019), pp. 143–67, here pp. 151–61.

- 35 Anonymous, *Stockholms Dagblad*, 7 December 1885; V.S., *Dagens Nyheter*, 30 January 1885, National Library of Sweden, at <https://tidningar.kb.se>. The quotation in the Swedish original: 'enkel, qvinlig värdighet'. All translations of quotations in this article are mine.
- 36 Anonymous, *Nya Pressen*, 21 January 1884; Anonymous, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 16 January 1884, National Library of Finland, at <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/search?formats=NEWSPAPER>.
- 37 I.H., *Dagbladet*, 15 June 1884, National Library of Norway, at [www.nb.no/search?mediatype=aviser](http://www.nb.no/search?mediatype=aviser). The reviewer in *Morgenbladet* who is in favour of Sophie Reimer's creation is quoted by I.H. in this issue of *Dagbladet*.
- 38 Anonymous, *Nya Pressen*, 21 January 1884.
- 39 Lindh Estelle, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Radical Utopias', p. 110.
- 40 Warburg was the editor and theatre critic in the Gothenburg daily paper *Göteborgs Handels och Sjöfartstidning* and a historian of literature and art who achieved a leading position in Sweden.
- 41 For this purpose, two reviews by anonymous critics in *Borås Tidning* (8 November 1884) and *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (21 January 1886) are used.
- 42 Lindh Estelle, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Radical Utopias', p. 111.
- 43 Edgren was Anne Charlotte Leffler's surname when she was married to her first husband.
- 44 K.W-g., *Göteborgs Handels och Sjöfartstidning*, 30 April 1885, National Library of Sweden, at <https://tidningar.kb.se>.
- 45 Lauritzen, *Karl Warburg*, pp. 106–7.
- 46 K.W-g., *Göteborgs Handels och Sjöfartstidning*, 30 April 1885. Genoveva represented the woman who endures the most difficult distress but still is faithful to the man who has let her down and caused the pain. Genoveva femininity was idolized in all kinds of plays and performances at the time, among others in plays by Tieck and Hebbel.
- 47 K.W-g., *Göteborgs Handels och Sjöfartstidning*, 30 April 1885.
- 48 Lindh Estelle, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Radical Utopias', p. 111.
- 49 Anonymous, *Sanomia Turusta*, 6 December 1883, National Library of Finland, at <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/search?formats=NEWSPAPER>.
- 50 Laura Elina Aho, *Suomalainen teatteri ja kansallisuuden sukupuolittunut kuvasto. Suomalaisen teatterin ohjelmisto 1872-1882 ja näyttelijä Ida Ahlberg suomalaisuuden naishahmoisen henkilöitymän instrumentteina*, at <https://helda.helsinki.fi/items/a92b89ee-5ff2-464e-82a8-12b852b22f42> (accessed 30 September 2023), pp. 49–50.
- 51 Ibid., p. 52.
- 52 See *ibid.*, pp. 48–9.
- 53 Valfrid Vasenius's cultural–political stance has been described as avoiding linguistic and sociopolitical divisions by uniting the Finnish people. Yrjö Varpio, 'Valfrid Vasenius', *Biografiskt lexikon för Finland 2: Ryska tiden* (2009), at <https://blf.fi/artikel.php?id=2966> (accessed 15 October 2023).
- 54 Valfrid Vasenius, 'Suomalainen Teatteri', *Valvolja*, 1 (1 January 1884), pp. 53–6.
- 55 Valfrid Vasenius, 'Nouri routsi', *Valvolja*, 1 (1 January 1884), pp. 7–22, here pp. 21–2.
- 56 See Aho, *Suomalainen teatteri*, p. 52.
- 57 The word *fri* (liberal) may well hint at Antoine Antonin's avant-garde Théâtre libre in Paris.
- 58 Anonymous, *Socialdemokraten*, 2 October 1892, Royal Danish Library, at [www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis](http://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis).
- 59 Anonymous, 'Arbejdernes Fri Teater', *Hvad vi vill*, 5, 3 (17 January 1892), *Kvinno. Køn og Ligestilling*, at <https://kvinfo.dk>, p. 11.
- 60 Anonymous, 'Arbejdernes Fri Teater', *Hvad vi vill*, 5, 6 (7 February 1892), *Kvinno. Køn og Ligestilling*, at <https://kvinfo.dk>, p. 22: 'efter bedste Ævne'.
- 61 Anonymous, 'Sande Kvinder', *Hvad vi vill*, 5, 7 (14 February 1892), *Kvinno. Køn og Ligestilling*, <https://kvinfo.dk>, p. 25: 'ved deres Kærlighed at hæve Manden til en højere Moral, hvis det da ellers er sandt, at Kvindernes Liv gennemgaaende har været baaret af en renere Villie i sædelig Henseende'.

- 62 Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen, 'Modernity's Female Text', *History of Nordic Women's Literature*, 2011, at <https://nordicwomensliterature.net/2011/10/06/modernitys-female-text> (accessed 10 November 2023).
- 63 Anonymous, 'Sande kvinder', p. 25: 'de kuede og forskræmte Hustruer, der ved Umyndiggørelsen i Ægteskabet er sunkne ned til villieløse Væsener'.
- 64 Ibid.: 'Spiren til alle de ny Tanker i sig'.
- 65 Anonymous, 'Arbejdernes Fri Teater', *Hvad vi vill*, 5, 6, p. 22.
- 66 Anonymous, 'Sande Kvinder', p. 25.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Anonymous, *Kjøbenhavn*, 11 February 1892, Royal Danish Library, at [www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis](http://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis).

BIRGITTA LINDH ESTELLE ([birgitta.lindh@lir.gu.se](mailto:birgitta.lindh@lir.gu.se)), Associate Professor in Comparative Literature with a specialization in theatre, is Senior Lecturer at the University of Gothenburg. Her research is within the fields of Swedish theatre and drama, gender, historiography and transnational studies. She has published a monograph in Swedish on identity, love, liberation and the use of melodramatic elements in plays by three female playwrights in the 1880s (2019). She has also contributed to two collaborative research projects financed by the Swedish Research Council. In both projects Lindh Estelle studied the reception of women's playwriting. The results are published as a chapter in *Swedish Women's Writing on Export: Tracing the Transnational Reception in the Nineteenth Century* (2019), in *Nordic Theatre Studies*, and in the anthology *I avantgardets skugga. Brytpunkter och kontinuitet i svensk teater kring 1900* (*In the Shadow of the Avant-garde: Turning Points and Continuity in Swedish Theatre around 1900*). She is the editor-in-chief of *Women Writing Intimate Spaces: The Long Nineteenth Century at the Fringes of Europe* (2022).