

The Worker's Wife

by Minna Canth
translated by Minna Jeffery

For my grandmothers.

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Translator's Note

This work, translation, is *always* personal, and the blurring of writer and translator is inevitable. In the long course of producing this translation, I have created an imagined camaraderie with the playwright, Minna Canth. I do not necessarily hold imaginary conversations with her, but I do often find myself thinking ‘she would like this,’ or ‘she would not like this,’ hoping that my choices generally fall into the former category. I have even given her a nickname, Big Min, mostly used in my internal monologue but sometimes slipping out in conversation (which, yes, does make me Little Min). Perhaps our shared name played into this imagined kinship. My grandmother, Reetta Nieminen, wrote a biography of Minna Canth before I was born, so Big Min has always been a peripheral presence in my life, possibly preordaining my lifelong interests in theatre and social justice. I feel a closeness to Big Min, a sense of responsibility, of ambassadorship, which I think is common for translators. I have delved into her writings, attempting painstakingly to untangle meanings in such a way as to be able to render those meanings in another language. I have tried to guess at who she was in order to guess at what she meant when she wrote this or that. I hope I have come close.

Canth was lots of things. Over the years, her biographers have tried to pin her down, each offering a new, previously unseen version of Minna Canth. It is an impossible task, but I am grateful to those who have attempted it – particularly to Lucina Hagman (1911) for her

zeal, Greta von Frenckell-Thesleff (1944) for her thoroughness, my grandmother, Reetta Nieminen (1990) for her humour, and Minna Maijala (2014) for her precision and analysis. Their insights and research have provided invaluable clarity and provocation, and have helped me to build up the mental amalgam that constitutes Big Min. You will see references to their research and readings throughout my annotations on the text. Happily, there is also a significant amount of extant primary material on Canth – her letters (meticulously compiled and edited by Helle Kannila), journalistic writings, prose works, and, of course, her plays. I love her letters – rich in passion and personality, shifting tonally between anger, tenderness, self-deprecation, wit and more. I have included extracts from some of her letters, those relating to *The Worker's Wife*, in the appendices of this text. They give a sense of her character and politics, and provide helpful context about the writing of the play. They, perhaps more than anything else, have helped me to feel closer to Canth.

Minna Canth (1844 - 1897)

I am wary of reducing Canth to her biography. There is a common tendency to do so, at the expense of a dismissal or neglect of her artistic output, as is so often the case with women writers. Nonetheless, I will provide a brief biographical sketch here, to give you a sense of who we are dealing with. Ulrika Wilhelmina Johnson (Minna Canth) was born in Finland in 1844 to Ulrika and Gustaf Vilhelm Johnson.¹ At the time, Finland was an Autonomous Grand

¹ Biographical details predominantly gathered from Maijala (2014).

Duchy of Russia, Russia having ‘won’ Finland from Sweden in 1809. Canth’s father was a foreman at the Finlayson factory in Tampere. In 1853, when Canth was eight years old, the family moved to Kuopio, where her father had been appointed manager of the new Finlayson drapers’ shop. Industry was growing in Kuopio, increasing the possibility for social mobility, and Gustaf Vilhelm’s promotion from factory foreman to shop manager did indeed afford the family an upward shift in social status. Minna received an unusually good education even for a shopkeeper’s daughter, attending girls’ schools in Kuopio intended for the daughters of the bourgeoisie and the gentry. The teaching at these schools was in Swedish. As well as this the students were taught German, French and Russian. Knowledge of these languages meant that, as an adult, Canth was able to read all the most cutting-edge European writing, and even translated some of it into Finnish. Aged eighteen, Canth moved to Jyväskylä to attend the new teaching seminary there – the first institution in Finland to offer higher education to women and to teach in Finnish. However, she did not graduate, but left her studies two years later in order to marry one of her teachers, Johan Ferdinand Canth. In 1874, she began a career as a journalist, writing for the newly established *Keski-Suomi* Finnish-language newspaper. Her first work of fiction, a short story collection, was published in 1878 under the pseudonym ‘Wilja’. A year later, Canth’s husband died, leaving her a widow with seven children to care for. It was then that her writing career truly began, which she juggled alongside childcare, running the drapers’ shop she had inherited from her father, hosting a salon at her home, Kanttila, for artists and intellectuals, and participating actively in social and political debates through journalism and organising. She wrote her first play, *Murtovarkaus* [*The Burglary*], in 1879, and sent it to Kaarlo Bergbom – the founder and director of the Finnish Theatre in

Helsinki. The play premiered at the Finnish Theatre in 1882. Canth would go on to write ten plays, seven novellas, and numerous short stories, articles and speeches. *The Burglary* established Canth’s working relationship with Kaarlo Bergbom, which lasted throughout her life. You can see from her letters how dependent she was on the Bergboms, Kaarlo and his sister Emilie, for artistic guidance and support (Appendix Ei, ii, iii, iv, v). *The Burglary* was a light-hearted play in the folk drama tradition, as was the play that followed it, *Roinilan Talossa* [*The House of Roinila*], which was first performed in 1885.

Canth finished writing *The Worker’s Wife* in 1885, having worked on it for at least two years. The play marked a significant shift in her writing. Her first two plays had been very well received, and she was even awarded a prize by the Finnish Literary Association for the first, but Canth was dissatisfied with them. She wrote later that it was around this time that she read the writings of Hippolyte Taine, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Henry Thomas Buckle, and Georg Brandes. After reading these writers, she ‘finally felt freed from the preconceptions that had kept [her] soul in chains and burdened [her] consciousness with all sorts of confusion. And the desire for reform ignited in [her] once more’ (Canth cited in Ahola, 2019, pp.185-6). It was then that she began to write the damning, dramatic outcry against social and political injustice that would go on to become *The Worker’s Wife*.

The Worker's Wife (1885)

Although Canth was drawing on a wide range of intellectual and artistic influences and inspirations, *The Worker's Wife* offered something never seen before in the Finnish theatre. Lucina Hagman summarises:

‘We must naturally take as the root of Minna’s recognised independence the fact that she saw the contents of the world in her own light, let us say, the light of the feminine spirit... Great men, even those lauded as national heroes, had not seen the side of life that Minna’s eye saw. They had only seen the other side of life: only the male side and with a male eye.’ (Hagman, 1911, p.175)

Canth’s writing was overtly political and, specifically, feminist. Canth has been variously compared to Ibsen, and she was certainly greatly inspired by *A Doll's House*, but *The Worker's Wife* is a very different play. In his review of the original production of *The Worker's Wife*, critic O.E. Tudeer articulated one of the key differences between Ibsen and Canth’s approaches. Ibsen’s work, he writes, ‘suggests that individuals must begin the work of eradicating evil, the work for fulfilling the ideal, *internally*’; whilst Canth’s work ‘encourages us to begin by battling those dominant forces that sustain evil *externally*’ (Appendix D).² In other words, Canth’s work is geared towards societal reform, rather than individual introspection. Ibsen’s naturalistic style in *A Doll's House* seeks to replicate the world he perceived. Whilst Canth, too, sought to write

² Emphasis mine.

³ Päivi Lappalainen (2000) notes that there was only one other woman playwright writing in Finnish at that time – Theodolina Hahnsson, who had published three short plays in the 1870s. Lappalainen speculates that the loneliness of Canth’s position as a woman playwright was part of the reason why director Kaarlo

the world around her, it was explicitly with a view to inciting reform and revolution, and this was the result of her explicitly feminist mission. Canth’s particular, gendered position, the breadth of her reading and influences synthesised in her work, resulting in feminist dramatic voice that was unique within her context. There were very few other women writers of fiction in Finland at the time, especially women writing in Finnish rather than Swedish, and even fewer women playwrights.³ However, the late nineteenth century saw a wave of the first women journalists in Finland, of which Canth was one (she had written articles for years before she turned to playwrighting), alongside writers such as Anna Edenheim, Adelaïde Ehrnrooth and Alexandra Gripenberg – all of whom were heavily involved in Finland’s burgeoning women’s movement. The explicitly argumentative, sometimes rhetorical, tone of the play belies the influence of women’s rights journalistic writing.

Canth drew on her journalism when writing the play. Indeed, she published three articles (‘On the Woman Question’ parts one, two and three; Appendix A, B, C) in *Valvoja* magazine around the time that she wrote *The Worker's Wife*, which supplement the play. In the articles she points to the damage wrought on women by a society that sees things only from the male perspective. In *The Worker's Wife*, then, she puts this into action. *The Worker's Wife* is crafted to communicate political messages in a way that is fundamentally theatrical. *The Worker's Wife* is the culmination of Canth’s wide reading, her own artistic, and journalistic, voice, as well as her

Bergbom’s support and guidance was so important to Canth. Interestingly, Lappalainen also notes that while there was a dearth of women playwrights, women made significant contributions to Finnish theatre in the late-nineteenth century as translators. She names Elisabeth Stenius and Hilda Asp as examples, both of whom translated plays by Ibsen.

positionality as a woman and a feminist. The resulting play is *Canthian*, as opposed to being derivative of Ibsen or anyone else. It is a feminist social realist drama – a play that responds to contemporary women’s rights issues with the explicit intention of inciting change, and often subverts the expectations of realism in order to do so.

The play was first performed at the Finnish Theatre in 1885, directed by Kaarlo Bergbom. By all accounts it was a spectacular production by nineteenth-century standards: a large cast, including the most famous Finnish actress of the day, Ida Aalberg, and grand, realistic sets. A testament to Bergbom’s support of Canth’s work. However, there was one aspect on which he did not trust and support Canth, and that was with the ending she wrote for the play. Bergbom had expressed his doubts about the play’s ending in his correspondence with Canth, suggesting that it was too harsh, too damning. Canth, though, insisted on the necessity of her chosen ending, writing that ‘it felt impossible to present that sort of quiet, peaceful, patient philosophy, now when my heart is full of bitterness and revolution’ (Appendix Eii). Nonetheless, Bergbom did exercise directorial license when it came to the performance, and cut the final scene of the play. Indeed, it is clear that throughout the process, Bergbom – who was sceptical about Canth writing a realist play (despite himself having enthusiastically directed *A Doll’s House* for the Finnish Theatre in 1880. It was one thing to perform a realist play by a foreign man, and quite another to have a realist play by a Finnish woman) – had attempted to soften Canth’s writing. Early on in the process Canth wrote the following to a friend:

‘Writing [the play] is so infinitely fun. Whilst writing, I sometimes feel such great strength, bravery and freedom that it almost feels threatening. What a good war hero I would have

made if I had been a man and lived during a war time! “Take no prisoners” I think, every time I put some particularly sensational truth in Homsantuu’s mouth. The only thing is that [Bergbom] will weed them all out.’ (Canth cited in Majjala, p.160).

Had Canth written the above after the premiere of *The Worker’s Wife*, she could just as well have referenced Bergbom weeding out the sensational truths she put in the final speech of the play, which is what he did by fully omitting the final scene. When Canth was writing her second play, *The House of Roinila*, she had written to Bergbom for advice. In his reply, he had said: ‘If you trust my advice, write folk plays, write pictures of real life and in particular of women’s life’ (Bergbom cited in Aspelin-Haapkylä, 1909, p.112). The biting social critique that Canth produced in portraying real women’s lives in *The Worker’s Wife* was clearly not the sort of ‘real life’ that Bergbom had meant by this. The hegemonic, patriotic realism, encouraged by Bergbom was not adequate for Canth’s mission, which was to incite change and reform.

The reception of *The Worker’s Wife* proved both Bergbom and Canth right. Hagman (1911), who attended the premiere, wrote that the play divided audience members into two camps, and that ‘everybody felt that a meteor had fallen to the ground, so fierce was the explosion’ (p.214). Similarly, Nieminen (1990) summarises responses to the performance: ‘*The Worker’s Wife* delighted the youth and enlightened adults and angered conservatives’ (p.106). The play received a great deal of press attention in the aftermath of the first performance. Among the harshest and most vocal critics of the play was Agathon Meurman, journalist, important Fennoman

politician, and member of the board of the Finnish Theatre.⁴ Meurman wrote no less than three articles in the *Finland* newspaper, railing against Canth and *The Worker's Wife*. In his articles, Meurman condemned the protagonists, Johanna and Kerttu, as being untruthful characters, constructed by the women's rights agenda, and doubted the artistic merit of the piece and its durability as a work of art. Crucially, as Meurman himself acknowledged in the articles, he had not actually seen or read the play, so any opinion on the play as a work of art is entirely uninformed. No matter – as Nieminen (1990) quips, 'like a true politician, he knew what was good literature and what wasn't' (p.106). Several of the responses to the play centre around the question of whether or not it was 'truthful', or realistic. Lucina Hagman (1911) recalls overhearing a member of parliament remarking as he left the theatre, that it would have been a 'good piece, if it hadn't been so truthful' (pp.215-6). Päivi Lappalainen (2000) observes that 'the conservative circles' responses to Canth's work point to how realism – and in this instance the question of what realism is – connects to efforts to stabilise and justify the prevailing order' (p.69.). Meurman's principal concern was that the play dared to call into question the laws and justice system of the land ('Such is the latest accomplishment offered to us by the women's movement,' read the sarcastic conclusion of Meurman's review, cited in Maijala, 2014, p.170), but this exactly what Canth sought to do. Hagman describes what the play achieved:

The Worker's Wife was something completely new. It depicted old things, very old, very everyday things, insignificant things, in many peoples' opinion. But it depicted them with a new spirit,

shone new light on them, new colours.' (Hagman, 1911, pp.208-9).

Canth's political influence has been undeniable. The misogynistic property law that the play argues against was amended a few years after the play's premiere. It is reasonable to suggest that the furore the play provoked directly contributed to this amendment. There is now a need for a greater appreciation of her pioneering artistry, too, and an understanding of how her politics and artistic craft were inextricably linked. Her influence as a political, feminist artist, not just as a political voice, can be seen in the rich lineage of political women playwrights in Finland that followed her. Canth was the first woman playwright writing political plays in Finnish, but she was succeeded by writers such as Elvira Willman, Maria Jotuni, and Hella Wuolijoki. In 1918, Willman dedicated her novella *Vallankumouksen vyöryssä* [*In the Throes of Revolution*] to Minna Canth. The dedication summarises Canth's powerful impact on women's writing and politics in Finland:

'From you, Minna Canth, I received the first awakening of my life. Your genius encouraged me to work in service of what is right and beautiful. You are the guide of the youth, you, who already at the dawn of our civilisation dared to write:

"Your laws and justice – that's what I meant to shoot!"

(Willman, 1918, p.2)

⁴ The Fennoman movement was a nineteenth-century nationalist, conservative movement, devoted to promoting Finnish language and culture.

A Note About the Portrayal of Roma People in *The Worker's Wife*

Over one hundred years of change (not necessarily straightforward progress, but change, certainly) sit between Minna Canth and myself. Our feminisms, inevitably, are not the same. Indeed, even if we had been born in the same time period, there is nothing to say that we would agree on everything. Canth had a powerful voice and contributed to a lot of vital change for the better in nineteenth-century Finland, but there are elements of her politics that do not align with my own beliefs. Her articles 'On the Woman Question' (Appendix A, B, C) belie a somewhat puritanical valorisation of the moral value of labour, and similarly puritanical views about sex and, especially, sex work. The latter attitude creeps briefly into *The Worker's Wife*, too. Canth also explicitly states in one of the articles that women who do not desire and strive for liberty do not deserve it. Hmm. *The Worker's Wife* is a remarkably prescient play that makes a materialist feminist critique of how the legal and justice systems fail to protect the most vulnerable members of society, and how they in fact uphold prejudice and oppression. However, there are elements of the text – one key element in particular – that must be subject to criticism.

The central trio of *The Worker's Wife* is made up of Johanna, a young working-class Finnish woman; her husband Risto, a young working-class Finnish man; and Kerttu, a young Finnish-Roma woman. In the play, it is explained that Kerttu, mockingly nicknamed Homsantuu by the other townsfolk, was born of a Finnish-Roma mother and a Finnish father. Kerttu was taken away from her mother as a baby by her father's family. Her mother died soon after, and Kerttu was raised by her father, never knowing the

Roma side of her family. Nevertheless, throughout the play Kerttu is subordinated and rejected by the other characters on the basis of her heritage (i.e. for being a 'gypsy', a term used derogatorily throughout). Kerttu's character exposes the tremendous prejudice faced by the Roma community in nineteenth-century Finland.

The Finnish-Roma community (sometimes identified as Finnish Kale) have their own language and traditions, related to but distinct from other European Roma communities. There has been a Roma community in Finland for over 500 years, and there are currently approximately 10,000 Finnish Roma in Finland (Granqvist, 2020). The first Roma people came to Finland through Sweden in the late sixteenth century, during which time Finland was under Swedish rule. In 1637, a decree was passed in Sweden which stated that Roma people had to leave Sweden within the year. After that, any Roma men could be hanged without trial, and women and children deported. Although it is evident that this law was exceptionally rarely enforced, it gives an indication of the cruel prejudice the community have faced since their earliest arrival. The following centuries saw several state attempts to deport Roma people, and laws barring them from churches and from access to medical care. In the the nineteenth century, there was a shift towards attempting to supposedly integrate and assimilate Roma people into the wider population. However, this manifested as, for example, criminalising 'homelessness' (or a lack of fixed abode), and a drive to convert Roma people to Christianity, to 'save' them from paganism. Roma people were frequently sent to workhouses and forced labour and given harsher punishments for crimes than members of the wider population. Policies attempting to assimilate Finnish Roma people were not removed until the 1960s, and the first anti-discrimination law was not enacted until 1986.

Despite this law, discrimination against Roma people in Finland is still prevalent. For example, there are disproportionately high levels of unemployment and poor housing conditions within the community (Minority Rights). Although there have been several campaigns over the years seeking to challenge negative stereotypes about Roma people, the community still suffer a high number of hate crimes (Minority Rights). Indeed, Europe-wide Roma people face continual prejudice, including in Britain, where the 2022 Police Act legislated against roadside encampment, passing laws against those who live nomadically, which disproportionately affects members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (Monbiot, 2022).

Kerttu's inclusion in the play is complicated. It has been speculated that the decision to make Kerttu Roma (or, as she is called throughout the play, a 'gypsy') was a result of Bergbom's influence (Koski, 1998). Bergbom was hesitant about Canth's shift towards realism, and having a slightly 'exotic', melodramatic 'gypsy' character in the play tied it to the less controversial, safer, popular folk dramas of the time. Accordingly, Kerttu does indeed bear resemblance to these characters, and to the various stereotypical fiery, exoticized gypsy women (Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, to name but one) nineteenth-century European literature is replete with. She embodies many clichés surrounding Roma people in literature – she is temperamental, a disruptive force, and her impulsive and violent behaviour is explained as being inevitable due to her 'gypsy blood' (Canth, 1920, p.282). She shouts, physically attacks, and even wields a gun in the final scene. The very language she uses differentiates her from the rest of the characters – more heightened, almost poetic, and often violent. Kerttu's mother is similarly

described as dramatic and temperamental, and Kerttu's grandmother, who appears in act three, is quick to anger and threaten violence.

However, Kerttu is clearly not simply a character thrown in by Canth to give the play a bit of romantic flair. She is one of the play's protagonists – indeed, she is arguably the most compelling and complex character in the whole play – and is portrayed sympathetically. If Kerttu and her grandmother are angry, it is because they have reason to be so, and the play reveals that. Kerttu is continually rejected and treated with contempt and hostility by the other characters in the play, without provocation. The other townsfolk are shown to be bigoted and prejudiced in their treatment of her. Her grandmother makes a speech in act three about the hypocrisy of Christian people who preach one thing from the pulpit and then act a completely different way. This speech mirrors Canth's own mistrust of the church as an institution. In the final act, Canth gives Kerttu the most famous line of the play, which gives voice to Canth's main message: 'Your laws and justice, that's what I meant to shoot.' Canth clearly understands these characters to be oppressed, and sympathises with their plight, thus going against the dominant xenophobic beliefs of her time.

There are a couple of key moments in the play that are particularly complicated in their simultaneous espousal and problematisation of harmful stereotypes about Roma people: the curse in act one, and the dance at the end of act two. I have addressed both in the annotations on the text, but want to particularly mention the dance here. At the end of act two, Kerttu is desperately trying to raise money to pay for medicine to heal Risto's eyes, after she has thrown sand in them to make him leave her alone. She rushes over to a group of wealthy

gentlemen in the marketplace and begs them to give her money in exchange for her dancing ‘such a wonderfully beautiful gypsy dance’ for them. It is a horrible moment, where Kerttu is forced to exploit the gentlemen’s misogynistic, exoticizing views about her. I would task a director with particular caution with the staging of this dance. It must be subversive, rather than straightforwardly conforming to any pre-conceived stereotypes about ‘gypsy dances’. By not taking care here, a director risks perpetuating harmful, exoticizing stereotypes about Roma people, and also not accurately representing the truth of the play. In the very first performance of *The Worker’s Wife* at the Finnish Theatre in 1885, Kerttu was played by the most famous Finnish actress of the day – Ida Aalberg. Aalberg was drawn to the part specifically because of the dance. She had recently learned to dance the tarantella when playing Nora in *A Doll’s House*, and had subsequently taken dance lessons abroad. Accounts of the performance suggest that Aalberg’s dance in act two was really an accomplished, provocative tarantella. Critic Hjalmar Neiglick (cited in Nieminen, 1990, p.109) reviewed the performance and noted the improbability of Aalberg’s portrayal. From her ‘picturesque’ outfit, to this exotic dance, Aalberg’s Kerttu had little to do with real Finnish Roma people, and was based entirely on a fantastical, exoticized stereotype.

This example demonstrates how what Canth has written - which is, I believe, a truthful exploration of the prejudice faced by Finnish Roma people - can be misrepresented and turned into an exoticizing display, perpetuating harmful stereotypes. It is a text to be treated with great care. As I have outlined, as well-intentioned as the play is, Canth’s portrayal of Roma people is not without fault. Kerttu’s character does still in some ways conform to stereotypes about Roma people, in a way that Canth does not problematise.

Nonetheless, it is a radical text for a time at which Roma people were openly discriminated against unquestioningly by Finnish people, and Finnish law itself. Canth’s writing consciously exposes the tremendous discrimination faced by Finnish Roma people in the nineteenth century. Kerttu is portrayed sympathetically; her rejectors, and indeed the Finnish legal system, are exposed as cruel and bigoted.

How to read this text

The feminist translator, affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. Womanhandling the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator. Taking her place would be an active participant in the creation of meaning who advances a conditional analysis. (Barbara Godard, 1989, p.50)

What follows is in fact two translations, both produced by me, of *The Worker’s Wife*. The two versions have been guided by separate aims, and different readers will be drawn to each (although some will be interested in both and will, I hope, find having the two side-by-side illuminating). The text on the left is what could be called a ‘literal’ translation. The term ‘literal’ is flawed, but most succinctly encapsulates what I have sought to achieve in that translation. It has been subject to my interpretative transformation, I have made numerous choices in translating it, but I have attempted to actively intervene as little as possible. It is a version where I have endeavoured to stick as closely as possible to the text as Canth wrote it, and to how the play would have been presented to audiences in

nineteenth-century Finland. I have made no explicit interventions, and very few omissions. This text is heavily annotated with footnotes, which serve two main purposes: firstly, they offer a commentary on the play, pointing out context, and my own and other scholars' analyses of it. Secondly, they are there to explain and contextualise some of my translation decisions, those moments where I *have* made a more explicit choice.

The text on the right-hand side is my feminist, unashamedly 'womanhandled' translation of *The Worker's Wife*. This text is intended for performance in a contemporary anglophone context. You will see that it is replete with interventions, omissions and additions. These interventions have always been guided by my reading of the play, by my own feminist politics, and by my tastes and aims as a theatre-maker. The choices I have made in the text on the right-hand side will, I hope, be explained and justified by the reading of the play put forth in this introduction and in my commentary on the left-hand text. There is very little additional commentary on the right-hand text, because my commentary is written into the text itself, it is theatricalised.

Placing the two versions side-by-side highlights where I have made interventions, but you do not need to read the two together (which makes for a somewhat disorienting reading experience). You can choose which text to read, depending on the purpose of your reading. The left-hand text is most helpful for scholars wanting to read *The Worker's Wife* and to gain an insight into the play, its context, and Minna Canth. The text on the right is for theatre-makers

wanting to stage the play. It is ready to be picked up, read, and performed. That being said, the footnotes on the left-hand text may still be helpful to any theatre-makers seeking to contextualise their understanding of the play, to assist their practice. Furthermore, the left-hand text could also offer a starting point for those who wish to produce their own 'version' of the play, enabling them to make their own, contextualised interventions, drawing on the information in my footnotes and the uncut text.

In 1889, poet Arvi Jännes wrote a poem dedicated to Canth called "Inhuuden ihantelijalle" ["To the idealist of abomination"]. In the poem, he concedes that Canth was born with great gifts, but that she has squandered these by using them for evil ends. He accuses her of 'trampling on the laws of beauty' and drawing out nothing but ugliness by depicting the ills of society. He exhorts her to 'Cease your singing now, be quiet!' *The Worker's Wife* is an angry play, its anger bursting out of Kerttu in the very first act, bubbling all the way through and bursting out again in Vappu's final, damning speech. Jännes is right, there is an ugliness to the play, but that ugliness is crucial to its politics.

My two translations of the play are meant to act as a provocation, or an invitation. They are not fixed. They are waiting for someone to pick them up and engage with them, someone to pick apart my meanings and infuse their own. Do what you want with them, and make your own interventions! But do so with political purpose. The only other thing that I ask is that you keep it ugly. Do not attempt to smooth out this play. Keep it messy, keep it ugly.

The Worker's Wife ¹

by Minna Canth

translated by Minna Jeffery

Characters:²

Risto, a worker.

Johanna, his wife.

Helka, an old Finnish-Roma woman.

Kerttu, her granddaughter.³

Hagert, her son.

Iiona, Hagert's wife.

Herman Gabriel and Iiona, their children.

Leena Kaisa.

Characters:

Kerttu, a young Finnish-Roma woman. Often called *Homsantuu* (a derogatory nickname) by the other characters.

Johanna, the worker's wife.

Risto, her husband, the worker.

Vappu, a market seller.

Katri, Laura, Liisa, domestic workers.

Toppo and Kustaa, workers.

Yrjö, a blacksmith.

¹ Canth considered several different titles for the play whilst writing it. At different times she considered *Homsantuu*, *Johanna and Homsantuu*, and *Hapanrokkaa* [*Bitter Soup*]. It is worth noting the prevalence given to *Homsantuu* (Kerttu) in the first two options, marking Kerttu out as a character of at least equal significance to Johanna. Indeed, even after settling on the eventual title, Canth continued to use *Homsantuu* as a shorthand to refer to the play in her correspondence. Although her eventual title, *Työmiehen vaimo* [*The Worker's Wife*], seems to refer specifically to Johanna, it may well be meant to imply both women. *Hapanrokkaa* translates to 'Bitter Soup' (which was a specific soup made out of potato and rye dough), because the play 'ought to be bitterness for men and soup for women' (Appendix Eiii). I considered reverting back to *Homsantuu and Johanna* as the title for my translation, to highlight the juxtaposition of the two characters. However, I eventually concluded that *The Worker's Wife* is important in making explicit the women's position in relation to the worker (Risto), and also their functionality as characters.

² In my feminist translation, I have altered the order of the character list in order to make immediately clear who the central trio of the play are. After that characters are listed in order of appearance. I also added in a few more explanatory details about characters where I felt it pertinent to do so – specifically clarifying the Vörskys' and Mrs Hanhinen's roles. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that in the source text, Kerttu is listed as 'Homsantuu' (her derogatory nickname) in the character list and in the stage-directions throughout. Her descriptor in the character list, and that of her family, is 'gypsy'. In my translation, I have amended her name to Kerttu, and have changed the character description to the term 'Finnish-Roma'.

³ There has been speculation about what the inspiration was behind Kerttu as a character. A fairly dominant argument (Maijala, 2008, p.88; von Frenckell-Thesleff, 1994, p.123) is that Canth was inspired by the titular character of George Sand's *La Petite Fadette* (1849). Canth had seen, and been greatly struck by, the stage adaptation of the novel by Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer when the Finnish Theatre performed it in Jyväskylä in 1879. Five years later, in 1884, Canth was involved in a performance of the play, put on as a fundraiser for the Kuopio girls' secondary school. Her dear friend Hilda Asp played the lead role, and Canth later wrote to Asp crediting this performance as having inspired Kerttu's character (von Frenckell-Thesleff, 1994, p.124). *Fadette* is described as dark in appearance, as a free-spirited 'child of nature' and is presented as an outsider. Von Frenckell-Thesleff (1994, p.122) speculates that Kerttu being Roma might have been Bergbom's influence, given his taste for Hungarian folk dramas, many of which featured romantic depictions of 'gypsies'. Interestingly, von Frenckell-Thesleff (1994, p.123) also references speculations that Canth had based Kerttu on an actual Roma woman known to have been living in Kuopio, but she reasonably dismisses this, saying it is impossible to know whether or not Canth ever encountered this woman.

Anna Maija.

Vappu, *a market seller.*

Katri, Laura, Lotta, Liisa, *domestic workers.*

Yrjö, *a blacksmith.*

Toppo, Kustaa, Heikki, Janne, *workers.*

Mrs Vörsky.⁴

Mr Vörsky.

Mrs Hanhinen.

First Policeman.

Second Policeman.

Song-Seller.

Gentlemen.

Boys.

Wedding guests.

Market shoppers and sellers.

The incident takes place in the town of Kuopio, 1885.⁵

Leena Kaisa.

Helka, *an old Finnish-Roma woman, Kerttu's grandmother.*

Hagert, *her son, Kerttu's uncle.*

Ilona, *Hagert's wife.*

Mrs Vörsky, *an upper-class woman.*

Mr Vörsky, *her husband.*

Mrs Hanhinen, *an upper-class woman, head of the Women's Association.*

Policeman 1

Policeman 2

Song-Seller.

Gentlemen.

Boys.

Wedding Guests.

Market sellers and shoppers.

On-lookers .

Minna .

A note on casting: parts can be multi-roled as needed, with the exception of Kerttu, Johanna and Risto, who should only play their respective characters. A couple of characters could also be omitted if necessary (I have already cut a few who only had passing lines in the original text).

⁴ In *A History of Finland's Literature*, Kai Laitinen (1998, p.88) suggests that 'Vörsky' and 'Hanhinen' 'may very well be comic names: "Vörsky" suggests the Russian *vor*, thief, robber, and "Hanhinen" the Finnish *hanhi*, goose.' It is a reasonably compelling argument, but I have opted not to anglicise the names as a result of wanting the play to feel tied to its nineteenth-century Finnish context, and so have let this enjoyable word play slide. It is nonetheless worth noting the implications of these denominations, as they certainly give a hint as to Canth's feelings about these two characters. In a letter to Kaarlo Bergbom, defending her cutting portrayal of the two upper-class women, Canth mentions in passing that she has to call the character Mrs Vörsky, because 'there is a certain Mrs Mörsky here, so I cannot use that name' (Appendix Eiv).

⁵ Kuopio is the Finnish town in which Canth herself lived throughout her adulthood. I have added '1885' here, the year that Canth finished writing the play and that it was first performed, in order to explicitly root my translation in its original nineteenth-century context. I have chosen to translate the Finnish word 'tapaus', which could be translated as story, episode, event, occurrence, as 'incident', because of the sense of foreboding it carries, and the suggestion that something is about to be investigated and analysed, rather than simply related.

Care must be taken with the character of Kerttu, and also her family. This play and any production thereof should resist perpetuating harm towards the historically oppressed Roma community.

The character of Minna may be performed by an actor, or simply appear as a projection or surtitles, or be read as a voiceover. If performed by an actor, it would work well have her and Vappu played by the same performer, although a distinction between the two characters should be made. Or I could come and perform it for you, if you like.

Any text written in this font is an addition by me, the translator.

PROLOGUE

Two women.

The first woman, Kerttu, is harvesting potatoes. The work is hard, but Kerttu is tireless. She gets paid in potatoes rather than cash, so she needs to harvest enough to have plenty to sell at the market later. The second woman, Johanna, knits socks. The lighting is poor and the work is fiddly, but Johanna works quickly and precisely. She needs to knit two pairs to get enough to pay for bread. Meanwhile...

Minna. The incident takes place in a town called Kuopio, Finland, 1885.

In 1885, the point in history we are dealing with here and now, the area of land we now call Finland is in fact the Autonomous Grand-Duchy of Finland - part of Russia. Russia, in turn, had won the land from Sweden in 1809.

Pay attention to this, because it is important.

This area of land had been part of Sweden for a long time before that, and was governed according to the laws laid out in the Swedish Civil Code. Those laws, written down by wise men in 1734, changed very little over the next 150 years.

Now, the 1734 Civil Code has nine main sections:

The Book of Parents

The Book of Inheritance

The Book of Land

The Book of Building

The Book of Commerce

The Book of Crime

The Book of Judicial procedure

The Book of Execution of judgements

And, finally, of course,

The Book of Marriage.

It is here that we find what we are looking for; the law to which the watcher, reader, listener of this play must pay particular attention. Listen carefully.

Law number one, section nine, Book of Marriage. In old Finnish, it goes like this:
'Sitten cuin mies ja waimo yhteen wihityt
owat, nijn on mies waimons oikia edeswastaja,

ja mahta etziä hänen puolestans. Waimo seura myös miehens säätyä ja tilaa.'

In English, that is something along the lines of:

'When husband and wife are married, then the husband is responsible for his wife, and must answer for her. The wife must also follow the husband's order and rank.'

Beat.

Hmm.

In practice, the husband being his wife's 'edeswastaja', being 'responsible' for her, being legally head of the household, is legally responsible for their property. Her property. Should she be a working women, her earnings.

There had been some talk about amending that law. A whisper here and there that maybe, just maybe, the law could do with an update. Someone even got as far as raising the matter at the big parliamentary meeting of 1882.

But marriages in Finland were, of course, happy, so why mess about with things?

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Right?

Beat.

Kuopio, Finland. 1885. A young woman gets married.

For a moment, Johanna and Kerttu are completely still, bathed in moonlight. Then, the other women enter. Johanna puts down her knitting as they help her put on her wedding outfit: a black jacket and skirt, a small silver crown and a white veil.⁶

Whilst they dress Johanna, the women sing an old song, a lament, about a woman going away to get married. In the song, they say that she should cry now, or else she'll cry all through her marriage. Johanna does not cry. Throughout, songs should be performed in Finnish, and a written translation provided.

⁶ I have chosen to specify her outfit based on research into what brides, particularly those from working-class backgrounds, typically wore in late-nineteenth-century Finland. The majority of the sources I came across made it clear that wearing white for weddings did not come into fashion properly until the twentieth-century. Generally, women would have worn a smart, black suit, which they could then continue to use as general formal wear after their wedding. As soon as I discovered this, the image of Johana dressed in white became jarring to me every time I imagined it. I am wary that my attraction to stipulating that Johanna be dressed in black is very much the product of my twenty-first century mind liking the idea of her dressed in sombre, funereal black rather than the white we now expect for a bride. Am I deliberately creating an arguably false image here? Is having Johanna dressed in now more neutral wedding white a better 'translation' of her outfit?

Women. *(singing)*⁷
*'Kuule neito, kun mie laulan,
jo on ottajat ovilla,
veräjillä viejät miehet.*

*Niinkö luulet, neito rukka,
luulet kuuksi vietäväsi
ja päiväksi otettavasi?*

*Niinkö luulet, neito rukka,
työt loppui, huoli väheni?
Vasta huolta valitahan,
ja ajatusta annetahan.*

*Kyllä huntu huolta tuopi,
liinat liikoja sanoja,
palttina pahoja mieltä.*

*Itke, neito, naitaessa,
vierittele vietäessä.
Ku et itke naitaessa,
itket ikäsi kaiken.'*

['Listen maiden, as I sing,

⁷ Canth includes several folk songs in the play, and so I thought it would not be inconsistent for me to also include one in the prologue. I have chosen a folk song performed and recorded by Finnish folk ensemble Me Naiset as 'Morsiamen Itketys' [The Bride's Lament]. The song relates to the Eastern Finnish (Karelian) tradition of wedding songs and wedding laments, whereby the bride's family would sing songs to make her cry before going to the groom's home. The idea was that crying would offer some sort of spiritual protection, or that it would prevent her from crying all through her marriage. As with the black wedding outfit, I am aware that the image of a weeping bride carries different resonances for a twenty-first century anglophone audience than it might for a nineteenth-century, or perhaps even twenty-first century, Finnish audience. On the other hand, the albeit arguably 'false' image does establish a tone consistent with the action and aesthetics of the play. The image of a bride dressed in black, surrounded by weeping women, is an ominous one for us, where it would have been a typical scene at the time. Nonetheless, I wanted to include it because I do want the play to be rooted in this particular time and place, and maybe there is an interesting tension in the somehow false image it presents to our twenty-first century eyes.

*The takers now are at the door,
The men already at the gate.*

*Did you think, poor maid,
You'd be gone for a month,
Taken only for a day?*

*Did you think, poor maid,
your work and woes were over?
Only now do your woes begin,
And only now you realise.*

*Yes, the veil will bring you sorrow,
the wedding clothes too many words,
and with the linen will come sadness.*

*Weep, maiden, as you wed,
cry as they take you away.
If you do not weep when you are wed,
you will weep for the rest of your days.']*

*Darkness. From outside, we hear cries of 'Come
out bride!*

ACT I

Risto and Johanna's wedding celebration.⁸ On the right there is a door to a side room, on the left a window. At the back, the door to the porch. There are cries of: 'Come out, bride!'

The curtain rises.

Johanna is standing in front of the window in her wedding outfit; Katri and Laura stand either side of her, holding lanterns.⁹ Vappu stands downstage right. Towards the back stand Risto, Yrjö, Toppo, Kustaa, Heikki, Janne, Lotta, Liisa, Leena-Kaisa, Anna-Maija and other wedding guests. Shouts of 'To the bride!' echo through the window.

ACT I: The Wedding Party

Softly, the sound of a cotton mill. This sound continues throughout the play, varying in intensity – sometimes it is barely audible, and at other times it is deafening.

An evening in early autumn. Risto and Johanna's wedding celebration. The religious ceremony has taken place. They are married, and it is time to party. Everyone is drinking tea and having a nice time, but you can tell that they are waiting for things to really kick off.

On the right there is a door to a side room, and on the left there is a window. At the back, the door to the porch.

A tableau: Johanna is stood in front of the window in her wedding outfit. Katri and Laura stand either side of her, holding lanterns. Vappu stands downstage right, alone. Towards the

⁸ In Finnish this is more literally 'Risto and Johanna's wedding room.' My research about nineteenth-century wedding customs suggested that wedding celebrations typically took place at the groom's home, decorated for the occasion. The architecture described in this act matches that of Johanna and Risto's home in acts four and five, so it seems fair to assume that this is indeed Risto's home. I thought 'wedding room' was slightly confusing as, to me, it implied that this space is where the actual wedding ceremony has taken place, which is not the case. This act takes place *after* the actual ceremony, during the drinking and dancing and celebrating part of the occasion. I have made this more explicitly clear in my feminist translation, and have also included a couple of contextual details (the time of year and the time of day), which I believe would have been self-evident to Minna Canth and her original audience, but not to a contemporary reader, and which I think are important to the setting of the scene. Weddings typically took place in the early autumn (Liisa mentions later that Kerttu has 'worked like a horse all summer,' so an early autumn setting makes sense), and the party would take place in the evening (Katri mentions that Kerttu is standing 'in the moonlight').

⁹ The question of what exactly Katri and Laura are doing here required investigation. The line in Finnish is: '*Katri ja Laura näyttävät valkeata molemmin puolin.*' My initial translation of this line came out as 'Katri and Laura show white on either side,' which does not make a great deal of sense. It was only after researching and crowdsourcing information that I discovered that 'valkea' is an old word for 'light' or 'fire'. This, along with the knowledge that this act takes place after nightfall, led me to conclude that Katri and Laura must be stood either side of Johanna holding lanterns of some kind.

back stand Risto, Yrjö, Toppo, Kustaa, Liisa, Leena-Kaisa, and other wedding guests. A moment of stillness, then: shouts of 'To the bride!' echo in through the window.

Risto. What are you thinking, Vappu? Wouldn't it be fun to be in her place?

Vappu. What, a bride?

Risto. Exactly. When this is how much respect you get.¹⁰ You follow Johanna's example and get a man for yourself, too.

Vappu. I wouldn't be her for anything.¹¹

Risto. Why on earth not? When you've got men to choose from like tens of tortoiseshell tomcats.¹² What's holding you back?

Vappu. Many are the twists and turns a journey takes, many are the 'Mattis' you meet along the way.¹³

Risto. What d'you reckon, Vappu? Fancy yourself in her shoes?

Vappu. What, a bride?

Risto. Exactly. When this is how much respect you'd get. You follow Johanna's example and get yourself a man, too.

Vappu. No thanks.

Risto. Why not? When you've got men to choose from like tortoiseshell tomcats. What's stopping you?

Vappu. Many are the twists and turns a journey takes, many the men you meet along the way.

¹⁰ I have chosen the word 'respect' for the Finnish word 'kunnioittaa'. The Finnish line translates word by word as 'when really like that you get respected/honoured/esteemed/revered.' I opted for 'respect', because the notion of respect and respectability is one of particular importance in this play, as it is partly on the grounds of respectability that the other townsfolk convince Johanna to make the fateful decision of staying with Risto at the end of this act.

¹¹ This line in the Finnish is grammatically tricky to translate. Word by word it comes out roughly as 'not of her am I at all.' The sense in the line is that Vappu is not interested in being like Johanna (i.e. a bride). In my feminist translation, I wanted to emphasise how resistant Vappu is as a character, and so I made the line slightly blunter.

¹² I was not previously familiar with this idiom, and could not find a record of it anywhere. The line in Finnish is 'kuin kirjavä kissoja'. Word by word, this would be: 'like multi-coloured cats'. The implied meaning is that men are abundant, as there are generally more multi-coloured than mono-coloured cats about. Cats appear in quite a few Finnish expressions, and they are often invoked slightly disparagingly because cats were held to be less useful pets than dogs were. I shifted the meaning very slightly in my translation, as I wanted to preserve the alliteration, which is a typical feature of Finnish sayings.

¹³ This line is a Finnish saying that appears in Elias Lönnrot's (1842) *Suomen Kansan Sanalaskuja [Proverbs of the Finnish People]*. Alliterative proverbs such as this are typical of Canth (see Risto's 'tens of tortoiseshell tomcats' above), and alliteration is also a common feature of Finnish language folk poetry. 'Mattis' refers to men called Matti – a typical Finnish male name. In my feminist translation, I have chosen to translate it as 'men', rather than 'Mattis', as I did not want to meaning of the saying to be obscured. Vappu is a key character, speaking some of the most resistant lines in the play. This opening dialogue establishes both her position as counter-hegemonic (in her indifference, even opposition, towards marriage), but also the entire play's radical dramaturgical centring of resistant women's voices.

Risto. You're too cautious.

Vappu. Better to be watchful than regretful.

Shouts of 'To the bride!' echo through the window again. Johanna nods happily.

Johanna. Can you see that girl over there? Who's climbed onto the wall across the street?

Katri. That one standing in the moonlight, thrashing her arms about like mad? It's a wonder she doesn't fall down head over heel.¹⁴

Risto. You're too fussy.

Vappu. Better to be careful than regretful.

Shouts of 'To the bride!' echo through the window again.

The stage is divided in two, with the men on one side and the women on the other. The asterisks denote where focus shifts from one side to the other. Vappu stands on the women's side, but is somewhat removed from them, almost as if she is more part of the audience than the action.

Johanna. Can you see that girl over there? Up on the wall across the street?

Katri. Standing in the moonlight, waving her arms like mad? It's a wonder she doesn't fall.

¹⁴ The first image we get of Kerttu is very striking. It is notable that the first introduction to the character is through the disparaging gossip of the townsfolk, rather than it being on Kerttu's own terms. The image of her standing in the moonlight, waving her arms, physically outside of the building that all the other characters are in, is one that plays into an othering idea of a romanticised, exoticised, 'wild' gypsy woman. In my feminist translation, I have included having Kerttu on stage, working, in the opening image of the prologue, in an attempt to introduce the character in a less immediately othering context.

Johanna. Isn't that Homsantuu?

Katri. True. That's her alright.

Laura. Clear as day. I recognise her now, too.

Lotta. That woman, Homsantuu? Never. Homsantuu's not been seen in town for half a year. Where would she have sprung from all of a sudden?

Johanna. I don't know, but it's her alright. Katri dear, send someone to invite her in.

Katri. Come on now. Invite Homsantuu in here? In the sorts of rags she's probably wearing?¹⁵

Johanna. Yes, what of it? Clothes don't make a person any worse, do they?

Katri. Well, maybe not...¹⁶

Katri goes to the doorway and speaks quietly to Heikki, who then goes outside. Tea is served.

Johanna. Isn't that Homsantuu?

Katri. That's her alright.

Laura. Clear as day. I recognise her now, too.

Liisa. Homsantuu? No way. No one's seen Homsantuu in town for half a year. Where'd she have come from all of a sudden?

Johanna. Search me, but it's definitely her. Katri love, send someone out to invite her inside.

Katri. You serious? Homsantuu? In here? In the rags she's probably wearing?

Johanna. So what? Clothes don't make a person any worse, do they?

Katri. If you say so...

Katri goes to speak to Kustaa. She has to hover at the edge of the conversation for a while before she can get to him.

¹⁵ However, although the first image of Kerttu is problematic in how it plays into the trope of the 'wild gypsy woman', this opening dialogue does serve to immediately expose the townswomen's prejudiced attitudes towards her. Their nasty, gossiping tone marks Kerttu out as a sympathetic character.

¹⁶ The exact meaning and implication of this line gave me pause. The Finnish, 'No, eipä siltä', is roughly 'well, not nonetheless,' but obviously that does not communicate much in English, and I had to think about the implication. Does Katri mean: 'perhaps clothes don't make a person worse,' or 'perhaps it would still be better not to invite her in,' or even something like 'well, alright then'? Whatever Canth meant the line to imply, there is clear a sense of resignation, as Katri does then go and ask someone to fetch Kerttu. I added the ellipsis to leave space for something unsaid, and tried to preserve some sort of ominous edge, the possible implication of 'on your head be it...'

Laura. You'll regret inviting Homsantuu. You'll see. She'll act up, like she always does.

Johanna. Rubbish. Homsantuu's not so bad, if you just treat her nicely.

Risto. I'd like to hear what those gate-crashers out there are saying about my bride.¹⁷

Yrjö. Even without hearing, you know they're out there singing Johanna's praises.

Risto. And being jealous of me. Yes, yes, Yrjö, just like you are too, I shouldn't wonder. They say you had your eye on Johanna for years, 'til I came along and – one, two! - snatched the girl away from you.

Yrjö. Why speak about that? She picked the one she wanted. But I'll tell you this truly, Risto: you've got yourself the finest golden treasure in Johanna.

Laura. You'll regret inviting Homsantuu. You'll see. She'll act up, like she always does.

Johanna. Nonsense. Homsantuu's not so bad, as long as you're nice to her.

The men are smoking pipes.

Risto. I'd like to hear what that lot out there are saying about my bride.

Yrjö. You know they're singing Johanna's praises.

Risto. And they're jealous of me. Yes, just like you are too, Yrjö, no doubt. People say you had your eye on Johanna for years before I came along and snatched her up.

Yrjö. That's enough about that. She picked the one she wanted. But I'll say this, Risto: you've got yourself the finest treasure there is in Johanna.

¹⁷ The opening dialogue between the men immediately reveals the misogynistic attitudes they have towards women. In the alternating conversations between the men and the women, Canth juxtaposes the misogyny of the men, who here talk disparagingly about Johanna and women more generally, but also the xenophobic misogyny of the women, who gossip cruelly about Kerttu. This line is also important in reminding us of the unseen crowd just outside the playing space. We are vaguely aware of them from their shouts of 'To the bride!' in the play's opening moments, but Risto invokes them again here. The idea of all the action taking place under the watchful eye of society, and indeed of everything being commented on, is an important thread in the play. There is also scope to argue that the 'gate-crashers out there,' the crowd, could even be us, the audience, an allusion to our involvement and complicity in the action. Occasionally throughout the feminist translation, as per the key, I have put parts of lines in square brackets, where the line should be implied but not spoken. There is no getting around the fact that Canth's play does contain a lot of exposition and arguable over-explanation. Given the nineteenth-century theatrical context within which she was working, this is unsurprising. By modern conventions, however, it can make the dialogue seem somewhat stilted. There are some lines, words, phrases that I have cut altogether, and then moments such as this where I wanted to keep the line on the page for clarity, but did not think it would need to be said aloud in performance.

Risto. You're not exaggerating either. You know what? Six hundred marks she has in the bank, no lie, and interest on top of that too.¹⁸ Ah, but I can show you. I've already got the savings book off Johanna, for me to look after. Just you look at this.

Kustaa. Six hundred marks, it's true. Well, lad.¹⁹ That'll do to live on. If only I could be so lucky. Did you hear that, Toppo? A six-hundred-mark dowry that golden boy's got himself. Shall we go and get married too?

Toppo. Sod that. There aren't enough rich girls to go round anyway. Others must content themselves with poor girls or go without. And for my part, I'd rather go without and live how I like.

Kustaa. Don't say that. Even if you take a poor one, you'll get someone to mend your trousers, stop your knees poking out.²⁰

Risto. And who says a man can't live however he likes, even if he does take a woman?²¹ Rubbish. Tobacco in your pipes, men.

Kustaa. But still, I'd rather a rich one too. Only trouble is, those ones aren't waiting around to be plucked off the shelf. There are normally plenty of takers. So how did you get that Johanna to give in, Risto? Be good to know.

Risto. You're not wrong! Listen to this: six hundred marks she's got in the bank – no lie – plus interest. I can show you. I've already taken her savings book off her, for 'safe-keeping'. Just you look at this.

Kustaa. Six hundred marks, it's true! Well, my lad. That'll do to live on. If only I could be so lucky. You hear that, Toppo? That golden boy's gone and got himself a six-hundred-mark dowry. Shall we go and get married too?

Toppo. Sod that. There aren't enough rich girls to go round. The rest of us must content ourselves with poor girls or go without. And for my part, I'd rather go without and live how I like.

Kustaa. Nah, even a poor one'll mend your trousers, stop your knees poking out.

Risto. And who says a man can't live how he wants, even if he does take a wife?

Kustaa. Still, I'd rather a rich one. Trouble is, they're not exactly sitting around waiting to be plucked off the shelf. There are normally plenty of takers. So how d'you get that Johanna to give in, then, Risto?

¹⁸ Six hundred marks would have equated to approximately 3000 euros in modern currency. Clearly, as Risto boasts, it is a fairly substantial dowry for a working-class woman, and Johanna has evidently had to work hard to save this amount. In the feminist translation, I have added quotation marks around 'safe-keeping', because the line in Finnish ('omaan huostaani') implies that he has taken the book into his own possession. Adding quotation marks around 'safe-keeping' gives it a sarcastic implication, fitting the generally slightly jokey tone of Risto's dialogue throughout.

¹⁹ The Finnish word here is 'miekkonen', which is a slightly pejorative, playful name for a man.

²⁰ This is the first allusion to women's domestic labour in the play, and it is mentioned here dismissively, as a joke.

²¹ I have translated the word 'akka' as 'woman' rather than 'wife', because 'akka' has a very slightly derogatory tone, and 'woman' has a blunter edge in English than 'wife' does.

Risto. How much'll you pay me to tell you?

Toppo. Don't bother promising him anything, Kustaa. I'll tell you the trick for free.

Risto. You? Go on then, let's hear it.

Toppo. Nothing to it. You just pull her leg a bit. And that's easy enough – poor things don't know much about the way of the world, not much at all.

Johanna. But mark my words - in time, Homsantuu will learn to behave herself.

Laura. That wild thing? Never. The sort of creature she is. That sort won't take to work, no matter what.²² One time, she was helping me wash clothes at the ice hole - and she just started dancing, for no reason! I don't know what sort of gypsy dance she was doing, but no

Risto. How much'll you pay me to tell you?

Toppo. Don't promise him anything, Kustaa. I'll tell you for free.

Risto. You? Go on then, let's hear it.

Toppo. Nothing to it. Just pull her leg a bit. And that's easy enough – poor things don't exactly know much about the way of the world.

Katri finally manages to speak to Kustaa, who then exits to fetch Kerttu. Katri goes back over to the women.

Johanna. Look, I'm telling you – Homsantuu will calm down eventually.

Laura. That wild thing? Never. The sort of creature she is. That sort don't take to work, no matter what. This one time, she's helping me wash clothes at the ice hole, and she just starts dancing, out of nowhere! I don't know what sort of gypsy dance she was doing,

²² Laura uses the words 'kapine', which I have translated as 'creature', and 'talttumaan,' which I have translated as 'take to.' The way Laura talks about Kerttu here is the way one might talk about a difficult horse. It is dehumanising, reflecting Laura's bigoted attitude towards Kerttu, and also establishes connection between Kerttu and the natural world, which is a significant trope throughout the play. The idea of Kerttu as something 'wild' (the word used in Finnish is 'hurja', which could be translated, for example, as fierce, frantic, fantastic, but I have chosen 'wild' in order tie in with the idea of Kerttu as wild creature implied in the rest of Laura's speech), and natural plays into stereotypes about Roma people.

one could help laughing at the poor freak.²³ Imagine, her skirt so frozen that it stood stiff around her and the girl just flies and spins along the ground like a whirlwind. A creature like that learn to behave? Yes, I'm sure!²⁴

Liisa. You never know. Just the other day, Mrs Soininen from Riistavesi was here singing Homsantuu's praises to the heavens.²⁵ Apparently, she's worked like a horse for them all summer –²⁶

Johanna. There you go.

Liisa. – but everyone still made fun of the poor girl, especially those lads on the farm. You know what they're like – as if they could resist a bit of teasing.

Katri. She was probably asking for it.²⁷

Liisa. Oh, come on. All she did was work so hard she couldn't even eat – because, see, she's getting married this autumn. Said she had a sweetheart here in town.

Katri. Probably just someone playing a trick on her.

but you couldn't help laughing at the poor freak. Imagine, her skirt so frozen it's standing stiff around her, and her just flying and spinning along like a whirlwind. A creature like that calm down? Yeah right!

Liisa. You never know. Just the other day, that Mrs Soininen from out of town was here singing her praises to the heavens. Apparently, she's worked like a horse for them all summer –

Johanna. There you go.

Liisa. – but everyone still took the piss out of her. Especially those boys on the farm. Well, you know what they're like –

Katri. She was probably asking for it.

Beat.

Liisa. Give over. All she did was work so hard she couldn't even eat, because, see, she's getting married this autumn. Said she had a sweetheart here in town.

Katri. Probably just someone playing a trick on her.

²³ I have translated descriptor 'ruoja' as 'freak', rather than 'wretch' which the original word is slightly closer to. Wretch and wretched are translations for a lot of the descriptors and adjectives in the play, but often archaicise the language to an extent that I think it sometimes softens the meanings. Here, I wanted to emphasise Laura's gossipy, condescending contempt, and so opted for 'freak' instead of wretch.

²⁴ This is the first introduction of a motif throughout the play of dance as a subversive act.

²⁵ I have cut place names such as Riistavesi here and Tuusniemi a few lines later. Although I like the specificity, I felt that these very localised place names would most likely mean very little to most anglophone audiences and readers, and ultimately were not particularly important the meaning of the lines.

²⁶ Again, Kerttu as creature. This dialogue also establishes Kerttu's position as a worker, a labourer.

²⁷ The line in Finnish ('Jospa hän antoi heille syytä') is closer, word by word, to 'perhaps she gave them cause.' I have chosen to translate the line as 'she was probably asking for it' in order to heighten the resonance with the oft repeated misogynistic line given in response to women's harassment.

Johanna. You never know.

Katri. It is what it is. Who'd have a girl like that?

Laura. Her a gypsy, on top of everything else.²⁸

Liisa. No she's not, her dad was one of the Väänänens from Tuusniemi.

Laura. But her mother was a gypsy, and they say she was a real piece of work too. Couldn't even settle down with her husband, but ran off, and she'd have taken Homsantuu with her, but Väänänen's family chased after her and got the child back. And then those good-for-nothing gypsies went and did magic to turn Väänänen so heavily to drink that in a few years he'd lost his house and everything he had. He eventually died of drink, too.²⁹

Johanna. And left his child to weather this wide world alone? Poor Homsantuu. Perhaps she'd have been better off with her mother.

Risto. Now, don't exaggerate, Toppo. I won't be scared of my old woman if I want to drink, not in a moon and a day.³⁰ Hah! Whatever next.

Johanna. You never know.

Katri. It is what it is. Who'd have a girl like that?

Laura. Her a gypsy, on top of everything.

Liisa. No she's not, her dad was one of the Väänänens from the next town over.

Laura. Yes but her mother was a gypsy, and a real piece of work too, apparently. Couldn't even settle down with a husband, but goes running off – and she'd have taken Homsantuu with her, but Väänänen's family chase after her and get the kid back. And then those bloody gypsies go and put a curse on Väänänen, which makes him such a drunk that in a few years he's lost his house and everything he had. Even died of drink, eventually.

Johanna. And left his child all alone? Poor Homsantuu. She might have been better off with her mother, after all.

Risto. Now, don't joke, Toppo. I won't be scared of my old woman if I want a drink. For fuck's sake!

²⁸ This is the first explicit mention of Kerttu's Roma heritage (other than Laura describing her dance as a 'gypsy dance' a few lines earlier), and it is immediately contradicted, calling into question Kerttu's positionality. The following expository dialogue about Kerttu's history establishes her as occupying an interesting hybrid position – half Finnish and half Roma.

²⁹ This is a foreshadowing mention of alcoholism, which emerges as a theme in the play. Alcoholism was a problem in nineteenth-century Finland, in part exacerbated by industrialisation and the move towards cities, where drinking was an issue among labourers in particular.

³⁰ 'Not in a moon and a day' is a literal translation of the Finnish idiom 'ei kuuna päivänä.' Although my translation is not an English idiom, I decided to keep it like this rather than replacing it with an equivalent English idiom, because in this instance I don't think that meaning is impeded.

Toppo. Well, well, we shall see. What will you do when your old woman turns round and says ‘that’s *my* money, you can’t spend it however you like’?

Risto. What will I do? Hah, what a question. Who’s in charge of the funds – husband or wife? You must know Finnish law well enough to know that, my lad.³¹

Toppo. ‘Course I know the law puts men in charge, but seems to me these wives manage to stick up for themselves pretty well.

Risto. The tricky ones probably have their means and schemes, but my Johanna isn’t like that.³²

Toppo coos at him mockingly and puts some tobacco in his pipe.

Risto. Yes, yes, you just laugh. As if I didn’t know Johanna. You’ll see soon enough – am I a man or do I carry this between my legs for nothing? (*To Johanna.*) Where have those drinks got to?

Toppo. Well, well, we shall see.

The following dialogue between Toppo and Risto is spoken as direct address to the audience. They speak in a rehearsed, scripted manner, as if by rote.

What’ll you do, when your old woman turns round and says, ‘that’s my money, you can’t spend it however you like’?

Risto. What’ll I do? What a question! Who’s in charge of the funds – husband or wife? You must know Finnish law well enough to know that, my lad.

Toppo. ‘Course I know the law puts men in charge, but it seems to me these wives manage to stick up for themselves pretty well.

Risto. The tricky ones probably have their means and schemes, but my Johanna isn’t like that.

Dialogue goes back to normal.

Toppo coos at him mockingly.

Risto. Yeah, yeah, you just laugh. As if I didn’t know my Johanna. I’ll show you – am I a man or do I have this between my legs for nothing?

³¹ Here, Canth explicitly invokes the law on which the action of this play hinges. In my feminist translation, I have played into how this might seem somewhat jarringly expositional. This explicit invocation of the law *is* jarring, but it serves the purpose of taking the audience out of the action for a moment to remind of the real context in which this play is taking place.

³² The Finnish for ‘means and schemes’ is alliterative – ‘konstia ja koukkuja,’ so I have sought to reflect this by making my translation assonant, if not alliterative, rather than going for the slightly more idiomatic ‘ways and means.’

The divide between the two halves of the stage dissolves.

(To Johanna.) Hey, where have those drinks got to?

Johanna. Katri love, would you go and fetch them?

Risto. And get a move on now! What the hell are you playing at, hanging about so long? The men should have had something stronger ages ago.

Katri exits right.

Johanna. What do you think, Risto? Hasn't all this been like the sunrise on a spring morning?

Risto. Is that how it feels to you? Christ, how beautiful you are this evening. Honestly, it's a joy to look at you. And your outfit is just as fine as any rich bride's. You'll do to show off as my own, I'll say that.

Johanna. As long as you're happy, I don't care about anything else. And you are, aren't you, Risto?

Risto. Do you even have to ask? I'm like a three-mark horse. Guess how many here wish they could swap places with me? All the boys' hearts are breaking, I'm telling you. Every last one of them is

Johanna. Katri dear, go and hurry them.

Risto. And get a move on now. What on earth are they doing, hanging about so long? We should have served the men something stronger ages ago.

Katri exits right.

Johanna. What do you think, Risto? Hasn't the beginning of our lives together been just like the sunrise on a spring morning?

Risto. Is that how it feels to you? Christ, how beautiful you are this evening. Truly, it's a joy to look at you. And your outfit is at least as handsome as a rich bride's. You'll do to show off as my own, I'll say that.

Johanna. As long as you're happy, I don't care about anything else. And you are, aren't you, Risto?

Risto: Well, that's certain. Do you even have to ask? I'm like a three-mark horse.³³ Have a guess how many here this evening wish they could swap places with me? You can be sure that the boys' hearts are

³³ Three mark horse' comes from a Finnish expression: 'iloinen, kuin kolmen markan hevonen' ('As happy as a three mark horse.') I have chosen to translate the saying literally, rather than replacing it with an equivalent English expression, because I think the meaning is implied clearly enough, and the fact that the saying mentions both money and horses is thematically resonant.

pinning away. ‘God, if only I could get such a rich and beautiful girl,’ every last one of them is thinking to himself.

Johanna. Not many of them.

Risto. What about the blacksmith, then? Believe me, he’s ready to break for pity, though he’s trying to hide it. Ah, the drinks – finally!

Katri sets the tray down on the table. Risto pours out drinks.

Katri. What’s the matter with these girls now?³⁴ Everyone must be happy this evening. It’s not every day we get a party like this.

Liisa. There will be some dancing tonight won’t there, Johanna?

Johanna. You can dance as much as you like. Risto asked the Hakalas’ Janne to bring his fiddle.

Liisa. How fun! My feet are itching to dance. Shall I show you how to dance the Old Maid? Give me some space. (*Sings softly and dances.*)

*’Raatikoon, raatikoon,
Vanhat piiat pannaan.*

thinking: ‘God, if only I could get such a rich and beautiful bride.’

Johanna. I doubt it.

Risto. What about the blacksmith, then? Trust me, he’s ready to break in two, though he’s trying to hide it. Ah – finally!

Katri sets the tray down on the table. Risto pours out drinks.

Katri. What’s the matter with you girls? Everyone should be happy this evening. We don’t get a party like this every day.

Liisa. There will be dancing tonight won’t there, Johanna?

Johanna. You can dance as much as you like.

Liisa. Thank god! My feet are itching to dance. Hey, shall I show you how to dance the Old Maid? Give me some space.

She sings and dances, accompanied by the musician, and everyone turns to watch her uncomfortably. Only Johanna smiles at her. As previously, the song should be performed in Finnish, with an English translation provided.

*(Singing.)
’Raatikoon, raatikoon,
Vanhat piiat pannaan*

³⁴ It is not entirely clear who Katri means by ‘these girls’, but context implies that it must be the other women, who are perhaps getting a little bored, or possibly worried about the men drinking.

*Raatikkoon, raatikkoon,
Vanhat piiat pannaan.
Tuon, tuon Kyöpeli vuoren taa,
Ett'ei noita, ett'ei noita
Pojat naida saa.*³⁵

[*'Tossed away, tossed away,
All the old maids will be.
Tossed away, tossed away,
All the old maids will be.*

*Far, far, behind the witches' mountain,
So that they can't, so that they can't
Marry all the boys.']*

Laura. Stop messing around. Everyone's looking at us.³⁶

Liisa. (*Stops dancing.*) Let them look. I don't care!

Johanna. Go on, Liisa – if you can't dance at a wedding, when can you?

Liisa. See, Janne's already taking out his violin. Soon the fun will start. And the bride will be the first to the floor. You must be very happy this evening, Johanna.

*Raatikkoon, raatikkoon,
Vanhat piiat pannaan.
Tuon, tuon Kyöpeli vuoren taa,
Ett'ei noita, ett'ei noita
Pojat naida saa.'*

[*'Tossed away, tossed away,
All the old maids will be.
Tossed away, tossed away,
All the old maids will be.*

*Far, far, beyond the witches' mountain,
So that they can't, so that they can't
Marry all the boys.']*

Laura. Stop messing about. Everyone's looking at us.

Liisa. (*Stops dancing.*) Let them look. I don't care!

Johanna. Go on, Liisa – if you can't dance at a wedding, when can you?

Liisa. Now the party can really start. And the bride will be the first to the floor. You must be so happy, Johanna.

³⁵ This song references two fictional places associated with 'old maids' (unmarried women over the age of around 25): 'Raattikko' and 'Kyöpeli mountain'. The former, 'Raattikko', refers to a place where unwanted things are thrown away (a scrap heap, or landfill, say). The latter, 'Kyöpeli mountain', is the fictional mountain where witches, along with any manner of devils, ghosts and so on, lived. The song is a reminder of the societal disgust and derision towards unmarried women. Of the songs that I have kept in the play, I have chosen to keep them in Finnish, as the inclusion of Finnish language reminds the reader/audience of the location. However I have also included a translation of the lyrics, and specified that this translation be made visible to the audience. In my feminist translation, only the women characters sing, and the lyrics of the songs always illuminate meaning in the play in some way. In this instance, they act as a contextually relevant reminder of the pressure placed on women to marry and the misogynistic figuring of unmarried women as undesirable witches.

³⁶ Laura's uncomfortable reaction marks Liisa's solo-dance as another moment of dance as being subversive in the play.

Johanna. My happiness knows no weight or measure. Never in my life have I lived a day like this.

Liisa. Lucky girl. When will it be my turn?

Johanna. When the right one comes along, Liisa dear, the one God has made for you.³⁷

Liisa. Yes, and who knows when that will be. Perhaps he hasn't made one for me.

Johanna. Of course he has. For you, like everyone else.

Risto. To your health, ladies and gentlemen! Come and have a taste. This evening, men, you can drink as much as you want. I'll make sure the supplies don't run dry. There. Drink up, down in one. That's it. We'll pour another round soon. No one can say the wait between drinks was too long at *my* wedding.

Katri. Just as long as they don't get drunk this evening.³⁸

Johanna. They won't. Risto will make sure.

Katri. If he remembers to.

Johanna. Of course he will. Don't you worry about that.

Johanna. I'm happier than I can say. Never in my life have I lived a day like this.

Liisa. Lucky girl. When will it be my turn?

Johanna. When the right one comes along, Liisa love.

Liisa. Who knows when that'll be.

Johanna. It'll happen, like it does for everyone else.

Risto. To your health, ladies and gentlemen! Come and have a drink. This evening, men, you can drink as much as you want. We'll pour another round soon. No one can say the wait between drinks was too long at *my* wedding.

Katri. I just hope they don't take it too far.

Johanna. They won't. Risto will make sure.

Katri. If he's in a fit state to.

Johanna. Of course he will be. Don't you worry about that.

³⁷ I made the decision to cut 'the one god has made for you' from my feminist translation. Whilst I don't think the mention of god here would have stuck out to a nineteenth-century audience, it was jarring to my twenty-first century ears. Johanna as 'godly', or pious, was not something I wanted to emphasise in my translation of the play.

³⁸ Canth was an advocate of the temperance movement (abstinence from alcohol), writing several articles on the subject. The sensitivity around drinking, especially at a wedding, is perhaps somewhat alienating for a twenty-first century audience. I have added the qualifier 'too' in the feminist translation, with the aim of making the line a little less alienating.

Liisa. And anyway, so what if they drink a bit now? Men are always the most fun when they're a bit drunk.

Vappu. Think a little, Liisa. Just you get yourself a drunk for a husband, you'll soon tire of 'fun'.

Laura. But it's true, men these days aren't really at their best unless they have a bottle in hand.

Johanna. You can't say that about everyone.³⁹ There are still some decent men about. Aren't there, Vappu?

Risto. Now they are full once more. Take them, boys. Drink, and drink hard, drink until the world is spinning before your eyes, and the ringing and banging in your ears is louder than a Tampere cotton mill.⁴⁰ That's when you'll know you've drunk at Risto's wedding!

Toppo. Well said! You know the party's bad when the men come home sober.

Risto. And now it's time to dance the polska. Isn't that fiddle of yours tuned already, Janne? Let's have a proper dancing tune. There

Liisa. Anyway, who cares if they drink a bit now? Men are always more fun when they're drunk.

Vappu. Be careful what you wish for, Liisa.

Laura. It's true, though – men these days always need a bottle in hand.

Johanna. Not all men. There are still some decent ones around. Aren't there, Vappu?

Beat.

Risto. (*Re-fills the glasses.*) Here you go, boys. Drink, drink until the world is spinning before your eyes, and the ringing and banging in your ears is louder than a cotton mill. That's when you'll know you've drunk at Risto's wedding!

Toppo. Good man! You know the party's bad when the men come home sober.

Risto. And now let's have a dance. Isn't that fiddle tuned already? Let's have a proper tune.

³⁹ In my feminist translation, I have taken a slight liberty with the syntax of the source text to make this line echo a line ('not all men') often levelled as a rejoinder to feminist critique. The meaning is the same, but this phrasing will likely have a clear resonance for contemporary audiences.

⁴⁰ Minna Canth was born in Tampere, and her father had been a foreman at the Finlayson textile factory there. In the late nineteenth century, Finland was still fairly newly industrialised. This was the first Finnish play to portray urban workers, rather than having a rural setting, and this reference to a cotton mill roots it in that setting. It is a striking simile, which emphasises the idea that the characters in the play are as though in a factory, where they act according to pre-ordained expectations and norms. This line was the inspiration for my use of the aural device of the continual sound of the cotton-mill in my feminist translation.

we go! That Janne sure can play. Hurry up, men. Take a girl, all of you, and I will take my little chicken. (*Crooning at Johanna*)

'Kitkat, katkat, pitkät matkat.

Sinä ja minä ja Sirkka Liisa,

Puntun Paavo ja Juortanen Jussi,

*Kapakka Lassi ja Myllärin Matti –'*⁴¹

[*Kitkat, katkat, long are the journeys.*

You and me and Sirkka's Liisa,

Puntu's Paavo and Jourtanen's Jussi,

Barkeep' Lassi and miller Matti –]

Johanna. Listen, Risto. A few words first.

Risto. You can have three. Oh, I see! We're going right out of the way, so the others won't hear.⁴² Well, what on earth's the matter now?

The musician begins to play.

There we go! Hurry up, men. Take a girl, all of you, and I'll take my little chicken.

Risto moves to try and grab Johanna to dance with him, but she gently moves him away.

Johanna. Risto, can I have a word first?

Risto. Alright, you can have three.

Johanna tries to lead him aside to speak privately. It is not a very successful attempt; everyone is clearly listening in.

What on earth's the matter now?

⁴¹ This is a sort of folk, or nursery, rhyme. It appears in *Kanteletar* (Book 1, Song 221 'Piilehtiä ['The hider']) - a collection of Finnish folk songs and verses collected by Elias Lönnrot in 1840. I have cut it from my feminist translation because I decided to only give women characters in the play the ability to sing. Furthermore, unlike some of the other songs included throughout the play, this one does not really add anything besides showing Risto's playful nature. The only other resonance the song might carry comes from it being about a game of hide and seek. The singer concludes with the lines, which Risto does not sing here, 'Ei minua löytykänä - / Mie vaan pankolla makasin.' ['I was never found - / I just laid above the stove.'] - a possible foreshadowing of Risto's secret past hiding in plain sight. The song is also from the 'Children's Songs' section of the collection, again perhaps highlighting his childishness.

⁴² There are several instances such as this where it is unclear whether or not a conversation is being had privately or publicly. In the first two acts, the stage is constantly populated by a large group of people, implying that actually none of these conversations can be particularly private, and that the characters in the play are under constant societal scrutiny. In my feminist translation, I have made this sentence implied rather than spoken, as again it is a slightly overly expositional line which can be conveyed through stage directions rather than speech.

Johanna. People won't start behaving badly this evening, will they?⁴³ I'm already starting to get worried.

Risto. Behaving badly? Come on now.⁴⁴ Is that why you've got so serious? Don't you worry. What sort of bad behaviour would we have here?

Johanna. If the men drink too much and get drunk.

Risto. What then? It wouldn't be the first time. It's expected at a party like this. It wouldn't be so strange, would it?

Johanna. It would ruin our wedding. Risto dear, *you'll* be careful at least, won't you?

Risto. *Me?* (*Cooing*) Can't I be a little tipsy at my own wedding? – The man who dares to drink no spirits is no man at all, you know!

Johanna. Quiet, quiet, don't speak so loudly. You're joking, Risto, you don't mean that. If you got drunk, I'd be so ashamed I couldn't hold my head up.

Risto. Oh really!⁴⁵ It sounds like, like – Listen Johanna, don't you forget what the vicar said to us just now.

Johanna. Things won't get out of hand this evening, will they?

Risto. Out of hand? For goodness' sake. Is that why you've got so serious? Don't you worry. What do you mean out of hand?

Johanna. If the men drink too much and...

Risto. So what? It wouldn't be the first time. People expect it at a party like this. It wouldn't be so strange, would it?

Johanna. But you'll be careful, won't you, Risto, my love?

Risto. *Me?* Can't I be a bit pissed at my own wedding?

Johanna. Shh, don't shout. You're joking, Risto, you don't mean that. If you got completely drunk, I'd be so ashamed, I –

Risto. For fuck's sake! It's starting to sound like –

⁴³'Behaving badly' is my translation of the Finnish phrase 'pahaa elämää,' which word by word is 'bad life', but has connotations of sinfulness or immorality, rakish behaviour (i.e. drinking and misbehaving).

⁴⁴ The actual phrase in the source text here ('kissa viekөөn') translates literally as 'may the cat take you.' Its meaning, however, is just as a slightly dismissive filler expression. In this instance I have opted not to translate the phrase literally, because I felt it would hinder meaning, instead replacing it with an equivalent dismissive phrase.

⁴⁵ In my feminist translation, I have added in a couple more expletives in Risto's speech than there are in the source text. Risto does come across as crude in the source text, but that crudeness does not really come across as strongly in translation and in a more contemporary context, so I have pushed the language a little further in places to reflect that.

As previously, Risto shifts to direct address, speaking in the same slightly rehearsed, false tone of voice. Johanna continues as normal.

Listen, Johanna, don't you forget what the vicar said to us just now.

Johanna. What do you mean?

Risto. 'The head of the woman is the man.'

Risto goes back to normal.

Toppo. 'The head of the woman is the man,' just like the head of the mouse is the cat. And it's a bit late for the mouse to start crying when it's halfway in the cat's jaws.

Risto. (*Laughing.*) Quite right, Toppo, quite right! It's a bit late for the mouse to start crying, when it's halfway in the cat's jaws. Come on, Johanna, shall we get started?

Johanna. (*Puts both her hands in Risto's.*) Go on then.

Johanna. What do you mean?

Risto. 'The head of the woman is the man.'⁴⁶

Toppo. 'The head of the woman is the man,' just like the head of the mouse is the cat.

Kustaa. And it's a bit late for the mouse to start crying when it's halfway in the cat's mouth.⁴⁷

Risto. Quite right, Kustaa, quite right, ha ha ha!⁴⁸ It's a bit late for the mouse to start crying, when it's halfway in the cat's mouth. Well, Johanna, shall we get started now?

Johanna. (*Puts both her hands in Risto's.*)⁴⁹ Let's!

⁴⁶ This is a citation from 1 Corinthians 11:3 in the Bible. I have used the King James Bible for the English translations. In her article 'Naiskysmyksestä' [On the Woman Question], Canth writes about that 'heresy, which dares to use the Holy Bible as its weapon in the defence of oppression.' (Appendix A).

⁴⁷ In an article for *Finland* magazine after the play's premiere, Canth's friend Elisabeth Stenius described how Canth had told her about a working-class woman who had visited her and told her about how her husband had spent all her money (as was his legal right). One night, having spent all her money, he had demanded the woman's earrings. When she refused, he pulled them out of her ears. The woman had asked Canth: 'Is it right that the head of woman is man, in the same way that the head of the rat is the cat?' (cited in von Frenckell-Thesleff, 1994, p.124).

⁴⁸ Where Canth has written out 'ha ha ha', I have tended to replace it with a stage direction in my feminist translation, in line with more modern play text convention.

⁴⁹ In their translations of this passage, both Eric Schaad (2006, p.103) and Hanhilahti and Taanila Lehtinen (1981, p.17) emphasise Johanna placing both her hands in Risto's, in what Schaad (2006, p.95) calls a 'posture of capitulation.' Both have made significant cuts to stage directions elsewhere, but opt to keep this one in, highlighting the gestural significance of the action. This movement almost seems to seal Johanna's fate as, despite her concerns, she gives herself up to Risto wholeheartedly.

Everyone moves into position and they dance the polska. The dance gets quicker and quicker, joy rises to a peak. Then the door opens and Heikki pulls Kerttu inside, who is pulling back with all her strength. The dancing stops and everyone stands still.

Kerttu. I don't want to come in, do you hear me? I don't want to! Let go of me you pudding-faced pagan, or I'll bite your fingers off!⁵⁰

Risto. Kerttu! *(Draws into the shadows.)* What on earth will come of this?

Heikki. Calm down, calm down! Christ alive, she rages like a penitent in a priest's well.⁵¹ My, my, how sharp its nails are. Pest!

Everyone gets into position and they dance the polska. The dance gets quicker and quicker, joy rises to a peak.

Then the door opens and Kustaa pulls Kerttu inside, who resists with all her strength. The dancing breaks up and everyone stands still.

The mood shifts dramatically. From here until she exits, the scene should be led by Kerttu, as if we are seeing events from her perspective, through her eyes. Kerttu's situation is bewildering, and the way that the other characters respond to events is grotesque and jarring.

Kerttu. I don't want to come in! Let go of me you bastard, or I'll bite your fingers off!

Risto. *(Draws into the shadows.)* Shit!

Kustaa. Calm down, calm down! Christ alive, she's wriggling like a whore in church. Jesus, how sharp its nails are. Witch!

⁵⁰ Already in her first line, Kerttu deploys the colourful alliterative language characteristic of her: 'pakanan pallinaama,' which I have translated as 'pudding-faced pagan'. In fact, the rest of the phrase in Finnish has further alliterative plosives with 'puren sormesi poikki' ('I'll bite your fingers off'), which I was unable to mirror in translation whilst still preserving meaning. I have decided not to keep 'pudding-faced pagan' in my feminist translation, because as enjoyable as it is, I think it would give Kerttu's entrance a misleadingly comic tone.

⁵¹ The literal Finnish line here is 'Like Penttinen (a Finnish surname) in a priest's well.' The name Penttinen is not referencing any specific person, but it is a typical old-fashioned Finnish idiomatic construction. In my translation, I switched Penttinen to penitent, which handily made sense and closely mirrored 'Penttinen', whilst being less confusing. I have upped the nastiness of the line in my feminist translation, because I wanted to emphasise the townsfolks' view of Kerttu immediately from her first entrance, and to introduce the element of them sexualising her.

Kerttu. Will you let me be?

Heikki. Stop fussing, you'll have to come along in any case. Your young men aren't here to help you now. Kustaa, grab her other hand.

Johanna. No, no don't force her.

Kustaa. That'll be a funny thing, if two grown men can't manage a little girlie like that.⁵²

With one shove, they throw her down onto the middle of the floor.

There now! That's the sort of blows I give, said the man as he thwacked his head on the plank.⁵³

Toppo. What the devil sort of Mad Mary is that?⁵⁴

Everyone laughs and whispers; the girls draw away to the left, whispering. Kerttu stands rigid, her hands clenched in fists, and looks around fiercely.

Johanna. Welcome, Kerttu!⁵⁵

Kerttu. Will you leave me alone?

Kustaa. Stop making a fuss, you'll have to come in either way. Your young men aren't here to help you now. Someone grab her other hand.

Johanna. No, no don't force her.

Kustaa. That'll be a funny thing, if a grown man can't manage a little girl like that.

With one shove, he pushes her to the middle of the floor.

There! Think you can get the better of me, do you?

Toppo. Devil d'you call this, then?

Everyone laughs and whispers. Kerttu stands rigid.

Johanna. Welcome!

⁵² The word here is 'typykkä', which means 'little girl' or 'slip of a girl.'

⁵³ As with 'Penttinen in the priest's well' a few lines earlier, the original line here is 'That's the sort of blows I give, said Vallas, when he whacked his head on the plank.' Again, Vallas is Finnish name, and the expression does not carry any wider connotation or context, but is simply an old-fashioned construction used in Finnish for effect.

⁵⁴ Toppo calls Kerttu a 'poropirkko.' This nickname breaks down into 'poro' (reindeer) and 'Pirkko' (the Finnish version of the name Bridget). The only other use of the word I can find is in the 1899 play *Tukkijoella* [On the Log River] by Teuvo Pakkala, which has a character called Poro-Pirkko. Poro-Pirkko's descriptor in the character list is 'juoruakka' – a derogatory nickname for a woman who gossips a lot. It is not entirely clear why Toppo would call Kerttu that in this context, but clearly whatever the exact connotation of this name is, the context and the laughter of the wedding guests afterwards makes it clear that it is something derogatory. I have translated it as 'Mad Mary' to keep it alliterative. I did not keep it in the adaptation, however, as I worried that it implied a non-existent connotation and might be confusing.

⁵⁵ It is surprising that Johanna calls her Kerttu here, having called her Homsantuu up to now. I have removed it in my feminist translation, in order to give emphasis to Kerttu's assertion of her name a few lines later.

Kerttu. That's set off the mutterings in the corners, the whisperings in the eaves.⁵⁶

Kustaa. Can't you hear, Homsantuu? The bride's talking to you.

Kerttu. My name is Kerttu.

Johanna. Welcome to our wedding, Kerttu!

Kerttu. Did you bring me here for a laugh?⁵⁷ (*Puts her hands on her hips.*) Good! Here I am. Do your best. See if you can get any more from me than an axe from a stone.⁵⁸

Toppo. Whose is that raggedy little thing, with its bared gums and gleaming eyes?⁵⁹

Kustaa. Haven't you seen Homsantuu before? Everyone else in the whole world knows her.

Kerttu. That's set off the mutterings in the corners, the whisperings in the eaves.

Kustaa. Can't you hear, Homsantuu? The bride's talking to you.

Kerttu. My name is Kerttu.

Beat.

Johanna. Welcome to our wedding, Kerttu!

Kerttu. Did you bring me here for a laugh? Fine! Here I am. Do your worst.

Toppo. Who does that raggedy little thing belong to?

Kustaa. Haven't you seen Homsantuu before? Everyone else in the whole world knows her.

⁵⁶ The Finnish line here ('Tuli nyt nurkkihin nuhina, sekä soppihin sohina') is a citation from Elias Lönnrot's *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 8 'Hyvä sanoma emolle' ['A good message for a mother']). A lot of Kerttu's language is alliterative and generally poetic, in the style of Finnish folk poetry. On the one hand, this distances her from the other characters in the play, who for the most part do not use this sort of language. On the other hand, however, it aligns her more closely with 'Finnishness'.

⁵⁷ Kerttu asks 'did you bring me here to be a 'pilkkapuikko'? 'Pilkkapuikko' (an object of mockery) is a nickname that appears in *Kanteletar* (Book 1, Song 128 'Katso Neitoasi!' ['Look at your maiden!']), in the section containing songs for wedding guests. In the first verse of the song, the groomsmen insult the bride and bridesmaids. The bridesmaids then respond saying that they have never been mocked like that.

⁵⁸ From *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 93 'Sepä vasta sen pahempi' ['That would be still worse']): 'Senpä te minusta saatta, / Min kirves kivistä saapi' ['That will you get from me, / That an axe gets from a stone.']. The same song is referenced a few lines later with 'all you got are hearts full of sin' ('Syntiä syämen täyen'). It is a bitter song about how it is worse for the 'worst' of the town to mock and gossip, than for the 'better' members of the town, and how the singer won't be hurt by their mockery.

⁵⁹ I have translated 'satapaikkanen tyttöhuitukka' as 'raggedy little thing.' 'Satapaikkanen' suggests something with hundreds of patches or repairs (i.e. a ragged piece of clothing), 'tyttö' is girl, and 'huitukka' is a diminutive, potentially derogatory name for a woman, meaning someone frivolous or physically small.

Kerttu. The very same who for sport you've boiled on your tongue-cauldrons and bubbled between your teeth.⁶⁰ And much good it's done you. Let's face it – all you got are hearts full of sin, but those you surely had to begin with.

Toppo. My god, what bile! Do I dare get any closer, or will fire shoot from its mouth, and sparks fly from its tongue?

Johanna. Away, Toppo! No one is allowed to make fun of Kerttu. She's an invited guest, just like everyone else. Would you like to come over here with the other girls, Kerttu?

Kerttu. No.

Johanna. I promise they'll treat you nicely, if you're friendly to them.⁶¹

Kerttu. I'll bow to birch trees before I bow to the unworthy; I'll pander to pines, before I pander to devils.⁶²

Laura. Shameless!

Katri. How dare she!

Kustaa. Shall we grab the girl by the arms and throw her straight back out again?

Kerttu. That's me – the one you've boiled on your tongues and ground between your teeth for fun. And much good it's done you. All it did was fill your hearts with sin – but let's face it, they were probably like that to begin with.

Toppo. Christ, what a load of bile! Do I dare get any closer, or will fire shoot from its mouth?

Johanna. Shut up, Toppo! No one's allowed to make fun of Kerttu. She's an invited guest, just like the rest of you. Would you like to come over here with the other girls, Kerttu?

Kerttu. No.

Johanna. I promise they'll be nice, as long as you're friendly.

Kerttu. I'll bow to birch trees before I bow to worthless bitches. – I'll pander to pine trees, before I pander to devils.

Laura. Shameless!

Katri. How dare she!

Kustaa. Shall I grab her and chuck her straight back out?

⁶⁰ Another citation from *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 228 'Kului kultainen ikäni' ['My golden age passed']): 'Hautui hammasten välissä, / kiehui kielikattilassa.' It is a melancholy song from the 'Songs for Women' section, where the singer laments how their years have passed and their strength and honour has been worn down by people gossiping about them.

⁶¹ I cannot know whether it is something Canth intended, but reading the way Johanna speaks to Kerttu feels jarringly patronising.

⁶² From *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 101 'Monta muoriteltavata' ['Many to call mother']). The line comes from a song in the 'In Bondage' sub-section of the 'Songs for Girls' section. The singer sings about having many people to call mother, but not knowing who to bow to, vowing only never to bow to evil. It is possible that my use of 'bitches' here in the feminist translation is perhaps too strong. It was just too tempting not to pair it with 'birches'! The relationships between the women in this play are enjoyably, and realistically, biting.

Heikki. With the same force we brought her in with!

Johanna. Quiet! Don't sour her mind like that. Can't you hear? She's bitter enough as it is. Kerttu, can I offer you a glass of wine?

Kerttu. I don't want one.

Toppo. Bloody hell! She's not ugly, now that I look at her. A neck like a stem of heather, lips like a honey forest and cheeks like lingonberries. I'll be in love with her before long!⁶³

Kerttu. Come near me, and I'll claw your eyes out of your head.

Toppo. Now, now, no need for that. Even a cat can look at a king from on top of the stove, if nowhere else.

Kerttu. Get away, dog!

Toppo. (*Jumps backwards.*) Don't, god's creature.

Kerttu. (*Cold and calm once more.*) Did god create me, or was I born of sin?⁶⁴

Johanna. Don't mind them, Kerttu. They can't do anything to you while you're under my protection.

Johanna. Quiet! Don't sour her mind like that. Can't you hear? She's bitter enough as it is. Kerttu, can I offer you a glass of wine?

Kerttu. No.

Toppo. Bloody hell! She's not ugly, now that I look at her. A neck like a stem of heather, lips like honey and cheeks like lingonberries. I'll be in love with her before long!

Kerttu. Come near me, and I'll claw your eyes out of your head.

Toppo. Alright, alright, no need for that.

Kerttu. Get away, dog!

Toppo. (*Jumps backwards.*) Don't, for god's sake.

Johanna. Don't mind them, Kerttu. They can't do anything to you while you're under my protection.

⁶³ Again, Kerttu is figured using nature-related similes.

⁶⁴ In Canth's text, Kerttu has occasional moments of self-loathing. I have decided to remove most of these from my translation, because I don't think it is politically helpful for Kerttu to look down on herself. The line is another *Kanteletar* citation (Book 1, Song 49 'Onnettomasti syntnyt' ['Born unlucky']), where the singer laments having been born. I chose to cut this line from my feminist translation. Although I like that it is another example of Kerttu citing the *Kanteletar*, I wanted to remove any hint that her image of herself is at in line with the image the townsfolk have of her, in order to emphasise the bigotry of their attitude and distance it from reality.

Kerttu. Your protection? Am I some pitiful creature who needs protecting? Get away from me. I hate you more than the rest of them.

Johanna. Poor girl! Why is your young heart so hard?

Kerttu. Ask those village gossips. And above all ask your own miserable groom, who's hiding there behind the others, and doesn't even dare to come out where I can see him.

Johanna. You can't blame Risto. He hasn't done anything to you.

Kerttu. I should know.

Johanna. Come out, Risto. Don't let her insult your honour with her vicious accusations.

Risto slowly steps forward.

See, Homsantuu, of course he dares.⁶⁵

Kerttu. (*Watches Risto silently for a moment, but then bursts into speech in a voice choked with rage.*) Miserable man, you betrayed your promises, ate your honour like a dog.

Risto. She's lying – ha, ha, ha. Oh, god, how she lies.

Johanna. And all you can do is laugh, Risto?

Kerttu. (*Takes a step closer towards Risto, her arm extended.*) Am I lying? Look me straight in the eye and say those words once more, if you can.

Kerttu. Your protection? Am I some pitiful creature who needs protecting? Get away from me. I hate you more than the rest of them.

Johanna. Poor girl! Why is your heart so hard?

Kerttu. Ask that lot. And above all ask your own miserable groom, who's hiding there behind the others, and doesn't even have the nerve to come out where I can see him.

Johanna. You can't blame Risto. He hasn't done anything to you.

Kerttu. I should know.

Johanna. Come out, Risto. Don't let her insult you with her nasty accusations.

Risto steps forward reluctantly.

See, *Homsantuu*, of course he has the nerve.

Kerttu. (*Watches Risto silently for a moment.*) Pathetic man! You broke your promises, you ate your honour like a dog.

Risto. (*Laughs nervously.*) She's lying, god, what a load of lies.

Johanna. And all you can do is laugh, Risto?

Kerttu. (*Takes a step closer towards Risto.*) Am I lying? Look me straight in the eye and say that again.

⁶⁵ It is notable that having called her Kerttu from her arrival at the wedding up to now, Johanna reverts to calling her 'Homsantuu' here.

Johanna. You can, Risto!

Risto. (*Laughs, a little embarrassed, turns away and whispers to the men.*) There are times in life where you end up trapped like an insect on a pin.⁶⁶

Johanna. (*Stifling her dawning distress.*) Do what she says, Risto. I know you can.

A moment of silence.

Look her in the eye, Risto. You're innocent, after all.

Kerttu. Face me, if you dare, miserable.

Johanna. You're going to let yourself be slandered like that, in front of everyone? If I were a man, I'd shut her mouth. I wouldn't pity the damned girl one bit.

Kerttu: So your claws are out at last, good Samaritan? Excellent! That's exactly what I wanted. Come at me now, all of you, I'm not scared of you. I'll shout so it rings in your ears: Risto is an eater-of-words, a breaker-of-oaths, a twisted toad, the most treacherous traitor under the sun.

Johanna. Good god, won't you defend yourself, Risto? Deny her once and for all; crush that snake who spits her venom at us.

Johanna. Go on, Risto!

Risto. (*Laughs, a little embarrassed, turns away and whispers to the men.*) Listen, men – there are times in life where you end up trapped like an insect on a pin.

Johanna. Do what she says, Risto. I know you can.

A moment of silence.

Look her in the eye, Risto. You're innocent, aren't you?

Kerttu. Face me, if you dare, you miserable pig.

Johanna. You're going to let her slander you like that, in front of everyone? If I were a man, I'd shut her mouth. I wouldn't pity the bitch one bit.

Kerttu. So your claws are out at last, are they, good Samaritan? Excellent! Come at me now, all of you, I'm not scared of you. I'll shout so it rings in your ears: Risto is an eater-of-words, a breaker-of-oaths, a twisted toad, the most treacherous traitor under the sun.

Johanna. Good god, won't you defend yourself, Risto? Deny her once and for all; crush that snake who spits her venom at us.

⁶⁶ The Finnish expression Risto uses here ('Joutuu sitä johonkin tässä maailmassa, minkä sittapörrö seipäaseen') was somewhat difficult to decipher. 'Sittapörrö' seems to be an old-fashioned word for some sort of insect. 'Seipäaseen' could be a form of 'seipi', which is a sort of freshwater fish. I decided to slightly alter the phrase to 'like an insect on a pin', because I felt this conveyed the meaning more succinctly and obviously.

Kerttu. Deny? Crush? Me, you mean? Hah! My denier lies beneath a stone, my oppressor far beneath the earth.⁶⁷

Risto. What rubbish are you ranting about now, Kerttu? Let's agree to put all that old anger behind us, let's swallow our bitter pills. Then we'll dance the polska! That's better than arguing over nothing. And I'll pour you some wine too. Kerttu, come and have drink.

Kerttu. Worthless! You want to wash away your sins with wine?

Risto. Oh, well some great sin, I'm sure. No doubt, no doubt.⁶⁸ How many times has a young man flirted a little with a beautiful girl, in particular a cheap sort of woman, as you are, poor Kerttu dear, without any more serious intentions?⁶⁹ Shall we drink to that, men?

Kerttu. (*Almost out of her mind.*) Stop! (*In a choked voice*) I have one more thing to say, then you can have your drink. You feigned love when your mind was on betrayal. Your actions destroyed me. So you, too, must receive your just reward.⁷⁰

Kerttu takes out a ring tucked into the front of her shirt, and throws it at Risto.

Kerttu. Deny? Crush? Me, you mean? Hah! (*Derisively*) My denier lies beneath a stone, my oppressor far beneath the earth.

Risto. What rubbish are you ranting about now, Kerttu? Let's agree to put all that old anger behind us. Then we can have a dance! That's better than arguing over nothing. And I'll pour you some wine, too. Kerttu, come and have drink.

Kerttu. Bastard! You think you can wash away your sins with wine?

Risto. Oh, well some great sins, I'm sure. Sins, my arse. How many times has a young man had a little flirt with a beautiful girl, in particular a cheap sort of woman, as you are, poor Kerttu dear, without any serious intentions? Shall we drink to that, men?

The men cheer.

Kerttu. Stop! I have one more thing to say, then you can have your drink. You feigned love when your mind was on betrayal. Your actions destroyed me. So you, too, must receive your just reward.

Kerttu takes out a ring tucked into the front of her shirt, and throws it at Risto.

⁶⁷ From *Kanteletar* (Book 1, Song 3 'Kiven alla kieltäjäni' ['Beneath a rock is my denier']). Here, the singer is a child who is too shy to sing because the village will laugh at them, but then they reflect that their actual 'denier' and 'oppressor' are long dead. Kerttu is presumably alluding to her parents here.

⁶⁸ In the source text the line here is 'kantänka, said the Swede.' 'Kantänka' is a Swedish word meaning no doubt. I decided not to keep it in Swedish because it would impede meaning here. There are a small handful of moments where characters use Swedish, and at one point Russian.

⁶⁹ In her article 'On the Woman Question', Canth writes about the need to condemn the 'immoral' men with whom 'fallen women' sin (Appendix A). Risto perfectly embodies and acknowledges the hypocritical lack of condemnation of such men here.

⁷⁰ This is the first introduction of the concept of justice and punishment, which are important themes running through the play.

With your engagement ring I cast the last tender feeling from my heart. From this moment on, only fires of hatred and revenge will blaze there. My curse will follow you until death, even beyond the grave. It will weigh on your shoulders like a mountain, it will gnaw at your breast like a worm, night and day it will remind you whose joy and whose life you have destroyed.⁷¹

Johanna. Help – I’m going to faint.

Yrjö. (*Helps her to a chair.*) Water, bring water.

Vappu brings Johanna water and rubs her temples.

With this engagement ring I cast the last tender feeling from my heart. From this moment on, only fires of hatred and revenge will blaze there.

Kerttu gathers herself, and then starts speaking again with renewed force. It is dark, other than the glow of moonlight through the windows. Everyone is genuinely afraid.

My curse will follow you until death, even beyond the grave. It will weigh on your shoulders like a mountain, it will gnaw at your breast like a worm, night and day it will remind you whose joy and whose life you have destroyed.

Johanna. Help – I’m going to faint.

Yrjö. Water, bring water.

Vappu brings Johanna water.

For a moment, Kerttu looks very lost and very alone. She gathers herself again.

⁷¹ There is a harmful stereotype of ‘gypsy curses’ and ‘gypsy magic’ which this speech has the potential to play into – Kerttu as violent, temperamental ‘gypsy woman,’ casting spells. Indeed, when telling the story of Kerttu’s childhood, Laura suggested that Kerttu’s mother had cast a curse on Kerttu’s Finnish father which had led him to drink and, eventually, death. However, we know that Kerttu was not raised by her Roma family, and so even if there were such a thing as a Roma curse, where would she have learned how to do it? I suggest that here, Kerttu is exploiting the wedding guests’ bigoted views about her in order to deliberately frighten them. Her anger is completely justified by the context of the scene, and so she is trying to assert power in a scene where she has otherwise been completely powerless. In my stage directions, I have added a fleeting moment where Kerttu’s vulnerability is emphasised, and have attempted to highlight the consciously constructed nature of this moment, so that the curse does not pass by without remark, unquestioningly perpetuating stereotypes about Roma women.

Kerttu. Has that forget-me-not wilted now? Has the brightest in the parish, the fairest in the nation withered already? It is not yet time for that. Savour first that joy you've founded on another's loss. Savour happiness and love's sweetness for as long as you can. And I, all the while, will circle your happy home like an eagle owl, and shout: vengeance, vengeance, vengeance! (*Runs out.*)

Silence and confusion.

Vappu. How are you feeling, Johanna?

Yrjö. Very bad, I fear.

Johanna. Maybe it'll pass. – Stay with me, both of you.

Toppo: But my, what pepper that girl had in her! Real fiery, hot pepper. What a terrible day! With Risto standing in front of her like a miserable sinner, and not able to get a single word out of his mouth.

Kustaa. And what about the rest of us? Damn it, I've hardly ever been as embarrassed as I was just now.⁷²

Laura. There you go. Didn't it go exactly like I said it would?

Katri. Johanna just *had* to invite her. We all know perfectly well that Homsantuu doesn't know how to behave.⁷³

Kerttu. Has that little flower wilted now? Has she withered away already, that brightest in the parish, fairest in the nation? Not yet, sweetheart. First savour that joy you've founded on another's loss. Savour happiness and love's sweetness for as long as you can. And I, all the while, will circle your happy home like an eagle owl, and shout: vengeance, vengeance, vengeance! (*Runs out.*)

Silence and confusion.

Vappu. How do you feel, Johanna?

Yrjö. Not good, it looks like.

Johanna. Perhaps it'll pass. – Stay with me, both of you.

Toppo. Christ, that girl was full of fire! Real fire. What a day! And Risto stood in front of her like a miserable sinner, not able to get a single word out of his mouth.

Kustaa. And what about the rest of us? Damn it, I don't think I've ever been as embarrassed as I was just now.

Laura. There you go. Didn't it go exactly like I said it would?

Katri. Johanna just had to invite her. We all know perfectly well that Homsantuu doesn't know how to behave.

Beat.

⁷² The question of public respectability is emphasised in this line. The point isn't how Kerttu, or indeed Johanna, have been treated, but rather about the public forum in which these grievances have been aired, and the embarrassment that has caused the spectators.

⁷³ Not one single voice is raised in defence of Kerttu; it is Kerttu's behaviour that is questioned by the townsfolk, rather than Risto's.

Risto. (*Sighs.*) You can say that again. Only a drink can shake this shock from my body. (*Fills the glasses.*) What are you doing over there, Toppo?

Toppo. I'm looking for the ring that mad girl threw on the floor.

Risto. Let it be, lad, it's not worth it. It was just a sort of brass thing; worthless rubbish, even though that silly girl carried it at her breast.⁷⁴ Come and have a drink first. A toast, men!

*The sound of three loud bangs on the wall. Everyone jumps, especially the women.*⁷⁵

Women. Good god, what was that?

Leena-Kaisa. A death knell.

Anna-Maija. Or perhaps that end of the world is at hand.

Toppo. (*Looks out of the window.*) Well for god's sake! It was just Homsantuu banging on the wall. She's out there now, throwing punches and jumping about like a wild creature.

Risto. Out, men! Grab hold of that possessed woman and take her to the police station.

Risto. You can say that again. I need a drink to calm myself down. (*Filling the glasses.*) What are you doing over there, Toppo?

Toppo. I'm looking for the ring that mad woman threw on the floor.

Risto. Leave it, lad, it's not worth it. It was just a sort of brass thing; worthless rubbish. Come and have a drink first. A toast, men!

The sound of three loud bangs on the wall. Everyone jumps.

Laura. Oh my god, what was that?

Leena-Kaisa. A death knell.

Liisa. Maybe it's the end of the world!

Toppo. (*Looks out of the window.*) Well for god's sake! It was just that Homsantuu banging on the wall. She's out there now.

Risto. Out, men! Grab hold of that devil and drag her to the police station.

⁷⁴ 'Hupakko,' which I have translated as 'silly girl' is a derogatory name for a silly, potentially slightly promiscuous woman.

Minna Maijala (2008) has commented on the fact of the ring being made of brass, reading it as an allusion to 1 Corinthians 13, a passage read as part of the wedding ceremony: 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' Maijala (2008, p.85) writes, 'Risto has given Homsantuu, also metaphorically, but a brass ring, an empty, loveless promise. To him, the engagement has been but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, mere speech, which has not bound him.'

⁷⁵ It is funny that Canth marks the women out as more easily frightened here. She hasn't quite moved on from a view of women as being more sensitive than men. Needless to say, it is a superfluous distinction and I removed it in my feminist translation.

Johanna. No, leave her in peace.

Risto. Whatever next. Take the girl straight to jail, and quickly.

Toppo. Too late! She's running away, you won't catch her now. She's flown so far you can't see anything but a skirt waving in the wind.

Risto. Let her go then. But, my god, she'll pay if she ever sets foot on my land again.

Liisa. A real villain. Ruining all our fun. We'll see if things get any better now.

Laura. I doubt it, when the bride looks as miserable as that.

Lotta. What a wedding. Well and truly. It was worth buying a flower to pin on my dress for this.

Katri. And I had to find cover, or the mistress wouldn't have let me come.⁷⁶

Vappu. Are you starting to feel a little better, Johanna?

Yrjö. Perhaps you'd like some more water?

Johanna. I don't need anything. If I just had the strength to get away from here.

Johanna. No, leave her in peace.

Risto. Are you joking? Take the girl straight to jail, and quickly.

Toppo. Too late! She's running away, you won't catch her now. Nothing but a skirt waving in the wind.

Risto. Let her go then. But, Jesus, she'll pay if she ever sets foot on my land again.

Liisa. A real witch. Ruining all our fun. We'll see if things pick up after this.

Laura. I doubt it, when the bride looks as miserable as that.

Liisa. What a wedding. Honestly. Was it worth spending money on a flower to pin on my dress for this?

Katri. And I had to find cover, or the mistress wouldn't have let me come.

Vappu. Are you feeling any better, Johanna?

Yrjö. Perhaps you'd like some more water?

Johanna. I don't need anything. If I just had enough strength to get out of here.

⁷⁶ This and the previous line draw attention to the women's material reality as working-class women.

Risto. Johanna seems to have had a real fright. Don't you worry yourself about any of it. It's not worth getting upset about. Do you hear? No, but look, she's so childish. Now she's crying about it.

Vappu. Is it any wonder? All of you, think if it were you. It wouldn't be very fun to hear that sort of thing about your groom, on your wedding night of all nights.

Risto. What sort of thing?

Vappu. Deception.

Risto. Deception! The things I have to hear. Deception, eh? How funny you are. So it's 'deception' to tease a girl a bit? That sort of thing always happens.⁷⁷

Toppo. Women were made for men to fool about with. They're probably not good for much else, anyway.

Risto. Exactly. And what harm is there in a young man flirting with beautiful girl? He can't marry all of them, come on now.

Vappu. But you were engaged to that girl, that's what I understood. So why on earth did you leave her like that?

Risto. Why on earth, why on earth! What a question. Because I got a better one, obviously. Johanna is in a whole other league to Kerttu, who, poor girl, doesn't even have a proper skirt, let alone money in

Risto. Johanna seems to have had a real fright. Don't you worry yourself about any of it. It's not worth getting upset about. Do you hear? No, but look, what a child. Crying about it!

Vappu. Is it any wonder? All of you, think if it were you. That's not exactly the sort of thing you want to find out about your groom, on your wedding night of all nights.

Risto. What sort of thing?

Vappu. Betrayal.

Risto. Betrayal! The things I have to hear. Betrayal, eh? Very funny. So it's 'cheating' for a man to tease a girl a bit? It'd hardly be the first time.

Toppo. Women were made for men to fool about with. They're hardly good for much else, anyway.

Risto. Exactly. And what harm is there in a young man flirting a little with a beautiful girl? He can't marry all of them, come on now.

Beat.

Vappu. But you were engaged to that girl – that's what I understood. So why on earth did you drop her like that?

Risto. Why on earth, why on earth! What a question. Because I got a better one, obviously. Johanna is in a whole other league to Kerttu, who, poor girl, doesn't even have a proper skirt, let alone money in

⁷⁷ Risto, who is completely unsanctioned for his actions, is unable to conceive of how he has erred.

the bank like this one has. Of course I took you, Johanna – surely you can't hate me for that – or what? Ha, ha, ha.

Johanna. (*Rises.*) I have to get out of here. – Out, no matter what. Girls, help me get these decorations off.

Risto. Now what? Where are you going? In the middle of everything. Tell me, good woman.

Johanna. I don't know, as long as I get out of here. I'm sure things will become clear then. At the very least I'm certain that the two of us don't belong together.

Risto. Lord come down and crush us all, has she lost her mind?

Katri. What are you thinking, Johanna? You'll make yourself a laughingstock.⁷⁸

Laura. Only just come from the altar and now she wants to leave her husband. I've never heard such a thing.

Lotta. And for a stupid reason, too. Just because of some mad hussy. Yes, quite; no one exactly thinks of Homsantuu as sane.

Johanna. How tightly did you put these pins in? I can't get them out at all.

the bank like this one has. Of course I took you, Johanna – surely you can't hate me for that – or what? (*Laughs.*)

Johanna. I have to get out of here. – Out, no matter what. (*Attempting to pull off the veil and crown.*) Girls, help me get these off.

Risto. Now what? Where are you going? In the middle of everything. Tell me, good woman.

Johanna. I don't know, as long as I get out of here. I'm sure things will become clearer then. At the very least I'm certain the two of us don't belong together.

Risto. God help us, has she lost her mind?

Katri. What are you thinking, Johanna? You'll make yourself a laughingstock.

Laura. Only just come from the altar and now she wants to leave her husband. I've never heard such a thing.

Liisa. And for a stupid reason, too. Just because of some madwoman. Homsantuu's not exactly sane, is she?

Johanna. How tightly did you put these pins in? I can't get them out.

⁷⁸ Emphasis, again, is on public respectability and reputation.

*Johanna pulls the crown and veil off her head. Leena-Kaisa and Anna-Maija come forward and set themselves at either side of Johanna.*⁷⁹

Leena-Kaisa. Here you see how the devil can possess a person, just as soon as he gets them in his trap.

Johanna. The devil? Possess me?

Risto. She's right. The devil's taken hold of you, that's all it is. Course that's all it is.

Vappu. Whatever it is, I'd do exactly the same if I were Johanna.

Laura. Another one! He's taken hold of that funny one too.

Katri. Never mind Vappu. She's not like other people. She always thinks differently about everything.⁸⁰

Leena-Kaisa. Vappu's a child of the world.⁸¹ Don't listen to her.

Vappu. But think a little, good people. How could anyone live with a man you can't trust? Downright impossible. I'd sooner live down a well.

Johanna. That's how it is. Rather down a well or with pigs. Don't stop me, let me go.

Johanna pulls the crown and veil off her head. Leena-Kaisa and Vappu come forward and set themselves at either side of Johanna.

Leena-Kaisa. Now you see how the devil can possess a person, as soon as he gets them in his trap.

Johanna. The devil? Possess me?

Risto. She's right. The devil's got hold of you, that's what it is. Course that's what it is.

Vappu. Whatever it is, I'd do exactly the same if I were Johanna.

Laura. Another one! He's got hold of her too.

Katri. Ignore Vappu. She's not like other people. She always thinks differently about everything.

Leena-Kaisa. Vappu's a child of the world. Don't listen to her.

Vappu. But think for a second. How could anyone live with a man you can't trust? It's impossible. I'd sooner live down a well.

Johanna. That's it. Down a well or with pigs. Don't stop me, let me go.

⁷⁹ This tableau mirrors the opening tableau, where Johanna is stood in her wedding outfit with Katri and Laura either side of her. In my feminist translation, I have put Vappu at Johanna's other side instead of Anna-Maija, with her and Leena-Kaisa representing the two possible paths that Johanna could take (rebellion and conformity).

⁸⁰ These lines confirm Vappu's resitancy as a character, her position outside of the rest of the society.

⁸¹ Leena-Kaisa is possibly alluding to the 'children of the world,' in 16 Luke 8, who are focussed on life, rather than the godly 'children of light', who set their sights on eternal life.

Anna-Maija. Unhappy woman, is this how quickly you've forgotten your sacred wedding vows?

Johanna. My wedding vows? (*Bows her head.*)

Leena-Kaisa. Is this how you submit yourself to your husband? Is this how you honour you husband and your lord?⁸²

Anna-Maija. Were we not all here to witness just now as you were given to Risto, to be bound to him forever?

Leena-Kaisa. And to always behave in such a way as to be good enough for your husband?

Risto. 'To be good enough for your husband.' That's what the vicar said.

Anna-Maija. Immediately at the first hurdle you are now nonetheless ready to give up the one for whom you were created –

Leena-Kaisa. Unhappy woman, is this how quickly you've forgotten your sacred wedding vows?

Johanna. My wedding vows?

As Risto did earlier, Leena-Kaisa addresses the audience. She speaks as a zealous preacher to their congregation. Risto speaks like this, too, when quoting.

Leena-Kaisa. Is this how you submit yourself to your husband? Is this how you honour you husband and your lord?

Beat.

Were we not all here to witness just now as you were given to Risto, to be bound to him forever? And to always behave in such a way as to be good enough for your husband?

Risto. 'To be good enough for your husband.' That's what the vicar said.

Leena-Kaisa. Immediately at the first hurdle you are ready to give up the one for whom you were created –

⁸² The line is paraphrased from 5 Ephesians 22, so I mirrored the language used in the King James Bible. In 'On the Woman Question' (Appendix A), published the year before the first performance of *The Worker's Wife*, Canth writes about, 'that Phariseean heresy which dares to use the Holy Bible as its weapon in the defence of oppression and despotism.' She notes that Paul's words, in particular, 'are brought out time and again, particularly when it is a question of married women's rights.' Throughout this dialogue, Leena-Kaisa and Anna-Maija cite Paul's letters to the Ephesians and the Corinthians, in order to convince Johanna to stay with Risto.

Risto. – ‘for the woman was created for the man, not the man for the woman.’⁸³ The vicar read *that* from the prayerbook, too.

Anna-Maija. – You are ready to give up the one for whom you were created, in order to follow the temptations of the devil, and the desires of your own worldly mind? Oh, the height of the precipice on which you stand, poor woman.

Johanna. You might be right. I didn’t think about that. Good god, What do I do now?⁸⁴

Leena-Kaisa. Pray for your husband’s forgiveness and ask him to suffer your weakness, remembering that he has been equipped with a stronger nature and greater wisdom than you have.

Risto. Yes, yes – I’ll remember that, too. And that ‘I must do my best to govern my wife.’ We said all that in the wedding vows. And I won’t get angry about silly things, but will be willing to forgive Johanna.

Laura. Do you hear how good-natured he is? Not a bad word about all of this.

Katri. Not many men would have done the same in Risto’s position. Johanna should thank her luck.

Vappu. Leave now, Johanna. You can stay at mine to begin with.

Risto. – ‘for woman was for man created, not man for woman.’ The vicar read that from the prayerbook, too.

Leena-Kaisa. – You are ready to give up the one for whom you were created, in order to follow the temptations of the devil, and the desires of your own worldly mind? Oh, the height of the precipice on which you stand, poor woman.

Johanna. You might be right. I didn’t think about that. Good god, what do I do now?

Leena-Kaisa. Pray for your husband’s forgiveness and ask him to suffer your weakness, remembering that he has been equipped with a stronger nature and greater wisdom than you have.

Risto. Yes, yes – I’ll remember that, too. And that ‘I must do my best to govern my wife.’ We said all that in the wedding vows. And I won’t get angry about silly things, but will be willing to forgive Johanna.

Dialogue continues as usual.

Laura. Do you hear how good-natured he is? Not a bad word about all of this.

Katri. Not many men would do the same in Risto’s position. Johanna should thank her luck.

Vappu. Leave now, Johanna. You can stay at mine to begin with.

⁸³ Citation from 1 Corinthians 11.

⁸⁴ Johanna understands the impossibility and vulnerability of her position; leaving Risto would cast her out of society.

Johanna. I can't leave my husband. It would be a great sin, wouldn't it?

Vappu. What? A sin? To correct a mistake you realise you've made? I can't listen to this.

Johanna. You're forgetting that the vicar has bound us together.

Vappu. And so what? What does that have to do with this?

Laura. Lord protect us, what sort of heathen is she?

From outside come shouts of 'Come out, bride!'⁸⁵

Katri. There now! The bride is wanted outside, and her outfit's all a mess.

Lotta. Sit here, Johanna, and we'll have it all in order in moment.

Katri. How they shout. Just wait a blessed moment and be quiet. You'll see us soon. Well, perhaps that will do. As long as it's there or thereabouts. Let's go.

They go over to the window. Shouts of 'To the bride!' echo. Risto drinks and serves the men a drink.

Vappu. Is that how they cheered the sacrificial lambs in the days of the Old Testament, as they led them to the slaughter? What do you reckon, Leena-Kaisa?

Johanna. I can't leave my husband. It would be a great sin, wouldn't it?

Vappu. A sin? To correct a mistake? I can't listen to this.

Johanna. You're forgetting that the vicar bound us together.

Vappu. So what? What does that have to do with this?

Laura. God help us, what sort of heathen is she?

From outside come shouts of 'Come out, bride!'

Katri. Listen! The bride is wanted outside, and her outfit's all a mess.

Liisa. Sit here, Johanna, and we'll have it sorted in a sec.

Katri. All that shouting! Wait a bloody minute and be quiet. You'll see us in a second. Well, perhaps that will do. As long as it's there or thereabouts. Let's go.

They go over to the window. Shouts of 'To the bride!' echo from outside. Risto drinks and serves the men another round.

Vappu. Is that how they cheered the sacrificial lambs as they were led to the slaughter in the days of the Old Testament? What do you reckon, Leena-Kaisa?

⁸⁵ This reminder of the unseen crowd outside the house emphasises the scrutiny under which Johanna is forced to act, and the societal pressure on her to be a bride, or wife.

Leena-Kaisa. I'm sure don't know. But what do you mean?

Vappu. Just asking, no reason.

Leena-Kaisa. It seems you're trying to be witty. That's a very unsuitable thing for a wedding guest to say.

Vappu. And with that, I'll be leaving. – Goodbye, Johanna!

Johanna. Already? Stay a moment longer, Vappu!

Vappu. No, thank you very much. I've had my fill of wedding joy for today. Goodbye everyone. (*Leaves.*)

Risto. Wasn't she in a damned hurry? 'Had my fill of wedding joy!' We're only just getting started. Give us the polska again, Janne, and we can dance.

Katri. That's just the word. Dance we must, so the bride can get some colour in her cheeks. Do you see how pale she is?

Johanna. Leave the dancing for this evening, it won't do any more.

Risto. Why not? Now is exactly the right time, now the glasses have been drained a little. Toppo, you take Johanna, I'll dance with that happy Liisa. (*Croons*) 'A graceful girl and a handsome boy, sweetly steps the girl, and boldly the boy.'⁸⁶ - Isn't that right, Liisa?

Toppo. (*Bowing to Johanna.*) May I?

Leena-Kaisa. I'm sure I don't know. What do you mean?

Vappu. Just asking, no reason.

Leena-Kaisa. It seems you're trying to be witty. That's a very unsuitable thing for a wedding guest to say.

Vappu. And with that, I'll be leaving. – Goodbye, Johanna!

Johanna. Already? Stay a bit longer, Vappu!

Vappu. No, thank you very much. I've had enough wedding joy for today. Goodbye everyone. (*Exits.*)

Risto. Wasn't she in a bloody hurry? 'Had enough wedding joy!' We're only just getting started. Let's have some music, and we can dance.

Katri. Dancing – yes! We have to dance, so the bride can get some colour in her cheeks. Do you see how pale she is?

Johanna. Leave the dancing for this evening.

Risto. Why? Now is exactly the right time, now that the glasses have been emptied a little. Toppo, you take Johanna, I'll dance with the lovely Liisa.

Toppo. (*Bowing to Johanna.*) May I?

⁸⁶ The song lyric is from *Kanteletar* (Book 1, Song 116 'Voisi nuo pariksi panna' ['Those two would make a pair']). As with Risto's brief song earlier, I decided to cut this from the feminist translation.

Johanna. I'd rather sit here and watch.

Risto. Oh, now what?

Johanna. I can't, Risto. I'm so tired and feel like I have a fever. I'll probably fall over if I try and dance.⁸⁷

Risto. Rubbish. Come and join the group. Of course you have to dance!

Toppo. Come, Johanna! Leave your cares to the fir-trees and your sorrows to the willows, and come and kick your legs with us.⁸⁸

Risto. Come along, come along, Johanna. There we go. And the rest of you, too. Don't hang about like that, or we'll never get started.

*Janne starts to play. They all take their places.*⁸⁹

Anna-Maija. Thank goodness we got Johanna back to her senses.

Leena-Kaisa. Thank god that all ended well. I was afraid of what would come of this.

The polska begins. Curtain down.

Johanna. I'd rather sit here and watch.

Risto. Now what?

Johanna. I can't, Risto. I'm so tired and I feel like I have a fever. I'll probably fall over if I try and dance.

Risto. Rubbish. Come and join in. Of course you have to dance!

Toppo. Come, Johanna! Leave your cares to the trees and your sorrows to the winds, and come and have a hop about with us.

Risto. Come on, come on, Johanna. There we go. And the rest of you, too. Stop hanging about, or we'll never get started.

They all take their places.

Leena-Kaisa. Thank god that all ended well and we got Johanna back to her senses. I was afraid of what would come of this.

The women sing. The polska begins.

⁸⁷ This allusion to Johanna's physical health foreshadows the toll that her circumstances will take on her.

⁸⁸ In Finnish, Toppo's 'leave your cares to the fir-trees and your sorrows to the willows' is: 'Anna huolia honkasien, surra suuren suopetäjän.' The line is an allusion to Rune XXII of the *Kalevala*: 'Ei ollut huolta ollenkana, / ajatusta aioinkana: / annoit huolla honkasien, / ajatella aiaksien, / surra suolla suopetäjän, / kangaskoivun kankahalla.' In W.F. Kirby's (1907) translation: 'Never yet wast thou in trouble, / Never hadst thou cause to worry, / To the fir-trees tossed thou trouble, / Worry to the stumps abandoned, / Care to pine-trees in the marshlands, / And upon the heaths the birch-trees.' Kirby gives Rune XXII the title 'The Tormenting of the Bride'. The bride in question is the daughter of Louhi, the witch of the north, who has just been wed to Ilmarinen, one of the heroes of the *Kalevala*. In these lines, the wedding guests are reminding the bride of the happy life she is leaving behind her, and the bride weeps.

⁸⁹ Johanna tacitly submits to joining in the dance. Elsewhere in the play, dancing alone and uninvited is presented as a subversive act and is frowned upon. Here, it marks Johanna's helplessness to resist societal pressure, as she wordlessly, against her will, joins in the dance at her ill-fated wedding.

Women. (*Singing.*)

*'Hae pois vaan sormukses,
ja kiitoksia vaan sulle.
Kun sun rakas ystäväs
on vihollinen mulle.*

*Marmorikivestä laattia
ja peililasista ovi.
Eikä se vanhan kullan sormus
sormeheni sovi.*

*Hae pois vaan sormukses,
se on ruvennut ruostumahan
kun mun nuori sydämeni
Alkaa muihin suostumahan.'*¹⁰³

*['Just take away your ring,
and only thanks to you.
Because your beloved friend
is an enemy to me.*

*A floor of marble
and a door of mirror-glass.
And that old sweetheart's ring
will never fit my finger.*

*Just take away your ring,
it has begun to rust
as my young heart
begins to accept others.']*

*A sense of foreboding. The mill sounds grow
louder.*

ACT II

The marketplace.

At the back of the stage on the left are a few stalls and tables selling all sorts of things. Sellers and shoppers. To the right, some boys are throwing a ball around, with their schoolbags under their arms. At the back, the Song-Seller sings and sells song pamphlets to those standing around, including Liisa. Katri and Laura are buying cabbages on the left. Vappu is the seller at the stall nearest the front on the left.⁹⁰

Song Seller. *(Singing.)*⁹¹

*Istuen ihanassa,
Raikkaassa lehdossa
Nyt Akseli ja Hilda
Hänen morsiamensa,
Kauniina kesäyönä
He rakkaudestaan
Puhuivat muistutellen
Muinaista onneaan.*

*Ja ikävä ja hauska
Se yö oli Hildalle,
Hän armastansa lempi*

ACT II: The Marketplace

A few stalls and tables selling all sorts of things. Sellers and shoppers mill about. Some boys are throwing a ball around, with their schoolbags under their arms. The Song-Seller sings and sells song pamphlets to those standing around, including Liisa. Katri and Laura are buying cabbages. Vappu sells bread at the stall nearest the front.

Song Seller. *(Singing.)*

*'Istuen ihanassa,
Raikkaassa lehdossa
Nyt Akseli ja Hilda
Hänen morsiamensa,
Kauniina kesäyönä
He rakkaudestaan
Puhuivat muistutellen
Muinaista onneaan.*

*Ja ikävä ja hauska
Se yö oli Hildalle,
Hän armastansa lempi*

⁹⁰ *The Worker's Wife* was the first Finnish play to portray the urban, rather than rural, working-class, and the bustling marketplace setting of the second act made a striking impression on the first audiences of the play. In his review of the play, O.E. Tudeer wrote that 'the depiction of market life...was comparable to what can be seen on the Meiningen stage,' famous for its detailed, realistic crowd scenes (Appendix D). After travelling to Helsinki to see the play, Canth also commented on how 'the market scene was wonderfully arranged.' (Appendix E vii)

⁹¹ A Song-Seller, 'viisunkauppias' in Finnish, was a travelling musician who went round marketplaces singing and selling pamphlets containing the lyrics of popular folk songs and ballads. The song he sings here, 'Akseli and Hilda', was a very popular in the late nineteenth century. The melancholy tone of the song gives a good indication of the direction that things have taken after the wedding. Having the song at the beginning of this act also establishes the marketplace as a performance space.

*Ja nojas rinnalle,
Hän suruissansa lauloi
Ja huolin huokaili:
Hyvästi, kauniit lehdot,
Hyvästi, armaani!*

*[Sitting in a bright,
and lovely glade,
Akseli and Hilda
His fair bride
One beautiful summer's night
Spoke of their love
Remembering
Their ancient joy.*

*How sad and how happy
That night was for Hilda,
She embraced her beloved
And leant on his breast,
She sang her sorrow
And sighed her cares:
Farewell, beautiful glade,
Farewell, my beloved.]*

*Johanna enters from the right. She stops, hesitating. She looks in turn
at the money in her hand and at the sellers.*

*Ja nojas rinnalle,
Hän suruissansa lauloi
Ja huolin huokaili:
Hyvästi, kauniit lehdot,
Hyvästi, armaani!'*

*['Sitting in a bright,
and lovely glade,
Akseli and Hilda
His fair bride
One beautiful summer's night
Spoke of their love
Remembering
Their ancient joy.*

*How sad and how happy
That night was for Hilda,
She embraced her beloved
And leant on his breast,
She sang her sorrow
And sighed her cares:
Farewell, beautiful glade,
Farewell, my beloved. ']*

*Johanna enters from the right. She stops, hesitating. She looks in turn
at the money in her hand and at the sellers.*

*Everything is still. She addresses the
audience.*

Johanna. (*Aside*) One single mark! Not a penny more. And no idea when I'll get another. (*Looks silently at the money for a moment.*) What shall I do with this? Buy milk for the child, or bread for all of us?⁹²

Katri and Laura come towards her. Liisa sees them and rushes over with a song pamphlet in her hand and a basket on her arm.

Katri. So that Johanna's still alive, is she? Hello, hello! It's been a long time since I last saw you.

Laura. You've changed terribly. And only a year since we celebrated your wedding. I wouldn't even recognise you anymore.

Johanna. I was ill in bed for a long time, and then my little boy's been poorly. Your face does get paler when you spend all your nights sitting up by the cradle.

Liisa. Oh, so you have a son already? I didn't even know. Well I never. And how old is he? Three months, you say? And who does he look like? Like his mother or his father? I'll come and see him one of these days. So you have a son!

Johanna. He's so delicate and poorly, little thing. Perhaps the Lord will soon carry him away.

Johanna. One single mark! Not a penny more. And who knows when I'll get another. (*Looks at the money for a moment, in silence.*) What shall I do with this? Buy milk for the child, or bread for all of us?

Beat.

Katri and Laura come towards her. Liisa sees them and rushes over with a song pamphlet in her hand and a basket on her arm.

Katri. So that Johanna's still alive, is she? Hello, hello! It's been a long time since I last saw you.

Laura. You've changed. And only a year since your wedding. I wouldn't even recognise you anymore.

Johanna. I was ill in bed for a long time, and my little boy's been poorly. Your face does get paler when you spend all your nights by the cradle.

Liisa. Oh, so you have a son already? I didn't know. Well I never. And how old is he? Three months? And who does he look like? Like his mother or his father? I'll come and see him one of these days. So you have a son!

Johanna. He's so delicate, poor little thing. Perhaps god will soon carry him away.

⁹² The act opens with this striking direct address from Johanna. The act is set in the marketplace, a space predominantly populated by women, who were responsible for buying food either for their own families, or on behalf of their employers. The audience are immediately confronted with Johanna's financial precarity, and watch the following act through the lens of this knowledge.

Katri. There's no magic to it. Sickly children often grow up to be perfectly healthy, if you just look after them. When our Iigori was little, he was so thin and sickly you wouldn't have thought anything would come of him. But listen, as soon as the mistress started feeding the boy eggs and chopped beef, he started growing and putting on weight before your very eyes. You should see how strong and healthy he is now. His cheeks are so plump and rosy, it's a joy to look at them.

Laura. Well, we bathed our Eveliina in malt. Put a whole gallon of malt in the tub every time.⁹³ Why don't you try that, Johanna?

Johanna. (*Smiling*) Eggs, meat, malt! I can tell you work for finer folk. People like me can't afford to buy all that.

Laura. Well, for goodness sake! Two young, healthy people and only one child. Surely you can pay for anything at all. And a few grains of malt hardly cost the world. But you're just so tight, Johanna, that's what it is.

Liisa. And didn't you have your own money in the bank? Use that to buy them.

Katri. Yes, exactly. The woman has her own money in the bank, so she doesn't even need to beg her husband for every last penny, and still she dares to blame her lack of funds. Who'd have believed you'd get so tight?

Liisa. What's the matter, Johanna? Are you ill?

⁹³ Malt was sometimes used as a remedy for skin conditions.

Katri. There's no magic to it. Sickly children often grow up perfectly healthy, if you just look after them. When our Iigori was little, he was so skinny and sickly you wouldn't have thought anything would come of him. But listen, as soon as the mistress started feeding the boy eggs and chopped beef, he started growing and putting on weight before your very eyes. You should see how strong and healthy he is now. His cheeks are so plump and rosy, it's a joy to look at them.

Laura. We bathed our Eveliina in malt. Put a whole gallon of malt in the tub every time. Why don't you try that, Johanna?

Johanna. Eggs, meat, malt! I can tell you work for finer folk. People like me can't afford all that.

Laura. Well, for goodness' sake! Two healthy young people and only one child. Surely you can afford anything at all. And a few grains of malt hardly cost the world. But you're tight, Johanna, that's what it is.

Liisa. And didn't you have your own money saved up? Use that to buy them.

Katri. Yes, exactly. The woman has her own money in the bank, so she doesn't even need to beg her husband for every last penny, and still she dares to blame her lack of funds. Who'd have believed you'd get so mean?

Beat.

Liisa. What's the matter, Johanna? Are you ill?

Johanna. No – I’m not ill. Just now and then I get such sharp pains in my chest.

Katri. Ay, ay. You look terrible. Can you manage to walk, or shall I come and help you? You won’t fall, will you?

Johanna. No, let me be. It’ll pass. Goodbye for now, girls. Goodbye, Liisa! And come and see my son some time, if you want to.

Liisa. Goodbye, goodbye. I’ll come. Listen, Johanna, I just want to ask: how do you feel now, living in your husband’s home? Isn’t it a little bit fun, at least?

Johanna. Don’t ask about everything. You’ll no doubt find out for yourself in time, poor child. *(Goes a little to the left. Stops. Aside.)* My own money in the bank! My own money? Yes, ten years I worked in service to save that.⁹⁴ But, god, was it really my own after all? *(Goes over to Vappu.)*

Katri. *(Watching Johanna leave).* What’s the matter with that wife?⁹⁵ Something’s not right with her, mark my words.

Johanna. No – I’m not ill. Just now and then I get such sharp pains in my chest.

Katri. You look terrible. Can you walk, or shall I come and help you? You won’t fall, will you?

Johanna. No, let me be. It’ll pass. Goodbye for now, girls. Goodbye, Liisa! And come and see my son some time, if you want to.

Liisa. Bye-bye. I’ll come. Listen, Johanna, I just want to ask: how does it feel now, living in your husband’s home? It must be a bit fun, at least?

Beat.

Johanna. Don’t ask about everything. No doubt you’ll find out for yourself in time. *(Goes a little to the left. Stops.)*

Again, everything goes still and she addresses the audience.

My own money in the bank! My own money? Yes, ten years I worked to save that. But was it really my own after all?

The stillness breaks. Johanna goes over to Vappu.

Katri. What’s the matter with her? Something’s not right, mark my words.

⁹⁴ In act one, when the men were talking about Johanna’s dowry, the money was presented as a given, as if it had just materialised out of nowhere. Here, however, Canth reminds the audience that actually this was money that she had worked hard over several years to earn, and that she has now essentially forfeited all rights to.

⁹⁵ Johanna is defined by her social function – as a wife.

Laura. Who knows with her. I've not been able to stand the woman after she behaved so stupidly at her wedding.⁹⁶ Are you going to keep hanging around here? I, for one, have to go.

Katri. Me too. No good dilly-dallying on someone else's time.⁹⁷

Liisa. (*Looking in her basket.*) Oh, damn! I haven't even got everything I need yet. The mistress'll be livid by the time I get back.⁹⁸

Liisa goes to the back to do her shopping, Laura and Katri go to the right.

Vappu. Johanna dear, as I said, it's not worth selling bread by the pound for under twelve pence nowadays, when flour's so expensive. But if you buy the whole twenty-pound round, you can get it a bit cheaper.⁹⁹

*Risto and Toppo appear at the back.*¹⁰⁰

Laura. Who knows with her. I've not been able to stand the woman since she behaved so stupidly at her wedding. Are you going to keep hanging around here? I, for one, have to go.

Katri. Me too. No good dilly-dallying on someone else's time.

Liisa. (*Looks in her basket.*) Oh, shit! I haven't even got everything I need yet. The mistress'll be livid by the time I get back.

Liisa goes to the back to do her shopping, Laura and Katri go to the right.

Vappu. Johanna love, as I said, it's not worth selling bread by the pound for under twelve pence nowadays, when flour's so expensive. But if you buy the whole twenty-pound round, you can get it a bit cheaper.

Risto and Toppo enter from the left. The song-seller is singing, and Toppo and Risto are messing around dancing. The other shoppers stop to watch them.

⁹⁶ A reminder that even though Johanna did eventually conform to societal expectations by staying with Risto, the mere fact of her having wavered at the wedding party has made her an outsider.

⁹⁷ The idiom that Katri uses in Finnish is: 'Ei ole hyvä vitkastella, kun on toisen leivässä' ('it's no good delaying when you're on another's bread'). 'Bread' is a euphemism for wages, or livelihood. 'Bread' has the same meaning in the Finnish idiom 'pysyä leivässä' ('to stay in bread') – i.e., to earn enough to get by.

⁹⁸ In the Finnish, Liisa uses an idiom specific to Eastern-Finland (where the play is set): 'Mahtaa rouvalla taas olla tortut lämpiminä, kun kotia pääsen.' Literally, 'the mistress is likely to have got the cakes warmed by the time I get home.' 'Tortut,' cakes, are a euphemism for a scolding. Unfortunately, I could not find a way to translate these idioms in a way that mentioned bread and cakes respectively that would still have made sense to an anglophone audience. They are enjoyably apt idioms for this marketplace scene.

⁹⁹ In this act, Canth is precise about the domestic details of the cost of things and the realities of poverty. Johanna cannot afford to buy bread, let alone meat, eggs and malt for her child.

¹⁰⁰ The presence of the song-seller at the beginning of the act establishes the marketplace as a performative space. As in the first act, the constant presence of public, societal scrutiny is emphasised in this act, where nothing that takes place goes unnoticed. Throughout the play, Risto, who is ultimately a rather one-dimensional character, is effectively performing the role of the ideological oppressive husband, and I want to emphasise this performativity in my feminist translation, by turning his entrance here into a small performance.

Song-Seller. (*Singing.*)

*`Luullahan jotta on lysti olla
kun minä laulan.*

*Laulullani minä pienet surut
sydämeni pohjaan painan.*

*Laulullani minä pienet surut
sydämeni pohjaan painan.*

*Enkä minä sillä laulele,
jotta mulla on heliä ääni.
Laulelenhan sillä vaan,
kun oon näin yksinäni.
Laulelenhan sillä vaan,
kun oon näin yksinäni.'*¹¹⁵

*['You think that I'm enjoying life,
just because I sing.
With my song, my small sorrows
are pushed to the bottom of my heart.
With my song, my small sorrows
are pushed to the bottom of my heart.*

*And I do not sing because I have
a melodious voice.
I sing simply because
I am so alone.
I sing simply because
I am so alone.']*

Johanna. I can't. I don't have more than a mark this time, and I have to buy a bit of milk for the baby, too.

Vappu. Here's your husband; perhaps you can get some more from him.

Johanna flinches, hides her hand under her apron and dodges back a little, into the shadows.

Risto. So, what shall we do now, Toppo? This early morning calls for a drink, but there's no money. (*Pulls his pocket inside out.*) Not a penny. One pocket's empty, the other's got nothing in it. Tell me, lad, what shall we do?

Toppo. See your wife over there?

Risto. Johanna? Is she here? Well, hell, the woman's hardly likely to come to the market emptyhanded.

Toppo. (*Croons*) 'Heijuu, ajunttanpoo, Nostakaa ylös, laskekaa jo!'¹⁰¹ So the wife has money, and the husband doesn't. Do you remember what I said to you at your wedding? 'That's my money, you can't spend it however you like.' Didn't that come true?

Risto. No it did not, get that straight. 'That's my money' eh? Oho, I'm sure! Don't believe that pigs can fly, my man.¹⁰² Johanna always manages to get some penny or other for herself, but that belongs to me too – so say the law and commandments.¹⁰³

Johanna. I can't. I've only got one mark this time, and I have to buy a bit of milk for the baby, too.

Vappu. There's your husband; perhaps you can get some more from him?

Johanna flinches, hides her hand under her apron and dodges back a little, into the shadows.

Risto. So, what shall we do now, Toppo? This early morning calls for a drink, but we've got no money. (*Pulls his pocket inside out.*) Not a penny. One pocket's empty, the other's got nothing in it. Tell me, lad, what shall we do?

Toppo. That your wife over there?

Risto. Johanna? Is she here? Well, hell, the woman's hardly likely to come to the market emptyhanded.

Toppo. Aha! So the wife has money, and the husband doesn't. Do you remember what I said to you at your wedding? 'That's my money, you can't spend it however you like.' Didn't that come true?

Risto. No it did not, get that straight. 'That's my money' eh? I'm sure! Don't believe that pigs can fly, my man. Johanna always manages to get some penny or other for herself, but that belongs to me too –

¹⁰¹ Translation: 'Hey, hey, pile driver go, lift it up and lower it now.' This is a line from an old workers' song, sung by workers to keep pace while they worked the piledriver. Operating a piledriver is the sort of construction work Toppo and Risto are likely to have done. Although, of course, in this play they are clearly not very inclined to work.

¹⁰² The Finnish idiom is 'don't believe that the cat will fly' – another expression involving cats! I substituted cats with pigs to make it more idiomatic in English.

¹⁰³ Canth constantly reminds the audience very explicitly of how everything that Risto does is sanctioned by the law.

He turns out to the audience and uses the same rehearsed tone of voice as in the previous act.

– so say the laws and commandments.

Toppo. Your old woman doesn't disagree?

Risto. Disagree with the laws and rights of our land? Huh! Not likely. 'Live by the laws of the land, or leave,' as they say.

Back to normal.

You see how scared of me she is? Hiding and sneaking away like a thief. Proof she has money. Be patient, Toppo, we'll get our drink soon. (*Rushes over to Johanna.*)

Toppo. He might actually manage it. I wouldn't want to be in the wife's shoes –

Johanna and Risto face each other. The crowd gathers, as if around a boxing ring. It is unclear who they are rooting for.

Risto. Johanna, wait, don't go. Listen, do you have any money?

Johanna. Why?

Risto. I need some. Give it here and don't make excuses, I can see from your eyes you have some.

Toppo. But your old woman, doesn't she disagree?

Risto. Disagree with the laws and rights of our land? No-ho! Not likely. 'Live by the laws of the land, or leave.' You see how scared of me she is? Hiding and sneaking away like a thief. Proof she has money. Be patient, Toppo, we'll get our drink soon. (*Rushes over to Johanna.*)

Toppo. He might actually manage it. I wouldn't want to be in the wife's shoes –

Risto. Johanna, wait, don't go. Listen, do you have any money?

Johanna. Why?

Risto. I'd have needed some. Give it here and don't make excuses, I can see from your eyes that you have some.

Johanna. I have one single mark, that I earned from knitting two pairs of socks. I can't give it to you, Risto. It has to be used for food, the child is at home crying with hunger.

Risto. Are you going to start arguing again, even though you know it won't help anything? Just give me the money nicely now, and you'll get away with less bother. You'll always find enough to feed the child.

Johanna. It took me three days to knit those socks.¹⁰⁴ The child will have died of hunger before I earn another mark. And I can't work anymore unless I have some bread. I haven't eaten anything other than saltwater and potatoes for several days now. And with the child sucking at my empty breast, is it any wonder I have no strength? I can barely even stay upright.

Risto. Still complaining! Isn't it your own fault? You should have gone and borrowed from the blacksmith, like I told you to a hundred times. He wouldn't say no to anything for you.

Johanna. There's no way I can start getting into debt, when I know I can never repay it. I'd rather try and get the money another way, or manage without.

Risto. Do what you want, but blame yourself as well if you don't have enough. And now pull your coins out already. Toppo's over there laughing at me having to spend so long begging you.¹⁰⁵

Johanna. I have one single mark, which I earned from knitting two pairs of socks. I can't give it to you, Risto. It has to be used for food, the baby is at home crying with hunger.

Risto. Are you going to start arguing again, even though you know it won't help anything? Just give me the money nicely now, and you'll get away with less bother. You'll always find enough to feed the child.

Johanna. It took me three days to knit those socks. The child will have died of hunger before I earn another mark. And I can't work anymore unless I have some bread. I haven't eaten anything other than saltwater and potatoes for days now. And with the child sucking at my empty breast, is it any wonder I have no strength? I can barely even stay upright.

Risto. Still complaining! Isn't it your own fault? You should have gone and borrowed from the blacksmith, like I told you to a hundred times. He wouldn't say no to anything for you.

Johanna. There's no way I can start getting into debt, when I know I can never repay it. I'd rather try and get the money another way, or manage without.

Risto. Do what you want, but blame yourself too if you don't have enough. And now get your coins out already. Toppo's over there laughing at me having to spend so long begging you.

¹⁰⁴ Again, Canth is very precise here about what work Johanna does and what she earns for it. In her 1884 article 'On the Woman Question II', Canth addresses the limited range of work available to women, writing about how poorly paid women are because they are only permitted to do handiwork (Appendix B).

¹⁰⁵ Another reminder of the scrutiny under which all the action takes place and that Risto is attuned to it too, and feels some sort of societal pressure to be seen as 'manly'.

Johanna. I won't give you my only money, no matter what. How do you even have the nerve to ask that? Isn't it enough, that you've drunk away and wasted all my savings? Must you rob me of my small earnings too, penny by penny? You don't have a conscience, not even a bit of one. Is that how it is nowadays? That a man doesn't care to go to work at all, but just drinks and messes about day after day, until he loses everything his wife has saved? Just think for a moment, what will become of us? When we're as good as on the street already, and only a year passed since we got married. We'll end up beggars at this rate, there's nothing else for it.¹⁰⁶

Risto. Would you stop shouting? Whatever next. Ranting away in the middle of the market like a madwoman. Have you no shame? People are looking at you funny.

Johanna. (*Crying*) What can I do, when I've ended up in such a desperate situation? I don't care about myself, but the poor baby is suffering and starving.

Risto. Yes, you go on, keep crying and whining. Over something as pathetic as one mark. You'd think your life was at stake.

Johanna. Over one mark! So is this the first time you've forced a hard earned penny from me? Not to mention what I'd managed to save before marrying you.

Johanna. I won't give you my only money, no matter what. How do you even have the nerve to ask? Isn't it enough that you've drunk away and wasted all my savings? Must you rob me of the little I earn too, penny by penny? You don't have a conscience, not even a bit of one. Is that how it is nowadays? That a man doesn't care to go to work at all, but just drinks and messes about day after day, until he loses everything his wife has saved? Just think for a second, what will become of us? When we're as good as on the street already, and only a year passed since we got married. We'll end up beggars at this rate, there's nothing else for it.

Risto. Would you stop shouting? For Christ's sake. Ranting away in the middle of the market like a madwoman. Have you no shame? People are looking at you funny.

Johanna. (*Starting to cry*) What else can I do, when I've ended up in such a desperate situation? I don't care about myself, but the poor baby is suffering and starving.

Risto. Yes, you go on, keep crying and carrying on. Over something as pathetic as one mark. You'd think your life was at stake.

Beat.

Johanna. Over one mark! So is this the first time you've forced a hard-earned penny from me? Not to mention what I'd managed to save before marrying you.

¹⁰⁶ This powerful speech demonstrates that Johanna is clearly not unquestioningly blind to her circumstances. She recognises the extreme vulnerability and oppressiveness of her situation, but is powerless to do anything about it. Indeed, as Risto reminds her, the law is behind him, so she really is materially, legally powerless to defy him, as well as having to contend with the societal pressure to comply.

Risto. Oh, are you going to start bragging about your dowry again? A measly sum like six hundred marks? Many a wife has brought thousands and tens of thousands to her husband and not gone on about it the way you do. You're a real piece of work, you really are.¹⁰⁷

Johanna. This is the first time I've brought it up and let it be the last. I don't know how it slipped out of my mouth. When your mind is bitter, you say things you don't mean to.

Risto. Well, never mind; but hand the money over nicely, or I'll ask that policeman over there to come and help me.¹⁰⁸ Can we get the woman to obey, or not? Well, how will it be? Shall I shout now? Hey, po—

Johanna. No, don't, here you go. You should take my life while you're at it, then I could get away from this misery.

Risto. 'This misery?' What's the matter with you? At least go home to snivel, so you don't end up the laughingstock of the whole town. (*Goes to Toppo.*)

Toppo. Well, did you get the money?

Risto. Oh, are you going to start bragging about your dowry again? A measly sum like six hundred marks? Many a woman has brought thousands and tens of thousands to her husband and not gone on about it the way you do. You're a real piece of work, you really are.

Johanna. This is the first time I've brought it up and let it be the last. I don't know how it slipped out of my mouth. When you're upset, you say things you don't mean to.

Risto. Well, never mind; but hand the money over nicely, or I'll ask that policeman over there to come and help me. Can we get the woman to obey, or not? Well, how will it be? Shall I shout now? Hey, po—

Johanna. No, don't, here you go. You should take my life while you're at it, then I could get away from this misery.

Risto. 'This misery?' What's the matter with you? At least go home to snivel, so you don't end up the laughingstock of the whole town. (*Goes to Toppo.*)

The altercation ends. Everyone goes back to what they were doing before. Johanna stands still for a while before going over to Vappu.

Toppo. Well, did you get the money?

¹⁰⁷ Risto calls Johanna a 'kapine' (which I have translated as 'real piece of work'), which is the same word that Laura uses about Kerttu in act one (translated there as 'creature').

¹⁰⁸ This alerts us to the presence of law enforcement at the marketplace, adding yet another element of legal and societal scrutiny foregrounding the action.

Risto. Nothing to it. See that?

Toppo. Hey, enough for a bottle. Now we'll manage.

Risto. But the old woman does annoy me. Making such a fuss you wouldn't believe.

Toppo. I guessed as much. But 'be a man, bear all'. The hymnbook says that a man must suffer his wife's weaknesses, doesn't it? They, y'see, are the delicate beings of this world.

Risto. Shall we go to the pub then, or what?¹⁰⁹

Toppo. Absolutely. We shall go there and live like lords, just for the day. (*Lays his arm on Risto's shoulders; sings*)

*'Ei saa moittia juomari-poikaa,
Juomari-poikaa,
Juomari-poikaa,
Mies se on paikallansa.
Ja mies se on paikallansa...'*¹¹⁰

[*You can't scold a drinking boy,
A drinking boy,
A drinking boy,
For a man he is, in his place.
And a man he is, in his place...*]

(*Exit right.*)

Risto. Nothing to it. See that?

Toppo. Hey, enough for a bottle!

Risto. But the woman does wind me up. Making such a fuss you wouldn't believe.

Toppo. I guessed as much. But 'be a man, bear all'. The prayerbook says that a man must suffer his wife's weaknesses, doesn't it? Delicate creatures that they are.

Risto. Shall we go to the pub then, or what?

Toppo. Absolutely. We shall go there and live like lords, just for the day. (*He lays his hands on Risto's shoulders. Whistles a tune.*)

They dance off, exiting left.

¹⁰⁹ I debated whether or not to translate the word 'anniskelu' as pub or not. Pubs do have quite a strong, specific British resonance which is not really equivalent to drinking places elsewhere, including Finland. However, ultimately, the connotations of 'pub' (a place where ordinary working-class people can gather and drink) made it feel like the most appropriate choice of word.

¹¹⁰ This is an old Finnish folksong. Toppo and Risto exit with a song, as if to round off their performance.

Vappu. Where did you get to, Johanna? Come over here and buy your bread.

Johanna. Another time, Vappu dear. I can't now.

Vappu. Why not? Is it the price?

Johanna. No, it's not the price, I just have to leave my shopping this time.

Vappu. Come over here anyway, I have something else to talk to you about. Listen, wouldn't you like some weaving work? The Vörsky's mistress asked me to find some reliable person or other with a talent for that sort of work. I thought of you – I don't know anyone else whose honesty I could so guarantee.

Johanna. Oh, I'd so gladly take weaving work if I could get it. It would be a real help to me at such a difficult time. You always earn more weaving cloth than you do with other handiwork. How soon would she like it woven?

Vappu. Go and find out. Say that I sent you. But one more thing – if you like, you can have some bread from me now. I know you well enough. You'll pay me back when you can.

Johanna. A thousand thanks! Now that I have work, I might even be able to pay it back soon.

Vappu. Come over here and buy your bread, Johanna.

Johanna. Another time, Vappu. I can't now.

Vappu. Why not? Is it the price?

Johanna. No, it's not the price, I just have to leave my shopping this time.

Beat.

Vappu watches Johanna for a while.

Vappu. Come over here anyway, I have something else to talk to you about. Listen, wouldn't you like some weaving work? That Mrs Vörsky asked me to find some reliable person or other with a talent for that sort of work. I thought of you – I don't know anyone else whose honesty I could so guarantee.

Johanna. Oh, I'd gladly take weaving work if I could get it. It would be a real help to me now. You always earn more weaving cloth than you do with other work. How quickly does she need it done?

Vappu. Go and find out. Say that I sent you. But one more thing – if you like, you can have some bread from me now. I know you well enough. You'll pay me back when you can.

Johanna. Thank you a thousand times! Now that I have work, I might even be able to pay it back soon.

Vappu. There now, here's half a round of bread. Let me put it in this cloth.

Johanna. God reward your kindness towards me, Vappu. I don't know how to thank you enough for everything. (*Ties her bundle, bids Vappu goodbye and exits left.*)¹¹¹

*Kerttu comes running from the right, shoving a one-wheeled cart full of potatoes. The boys who had been playing in the street chase after her.*¹¹²

Boys. Homsantuu, gypsy girl! Homsantuu! Whose potatoes have you been stealing?

Kerttu. (*Shoos the boys away from her.*) Would you calm down? Go away, devils.

Policeman. Where did you grow those?¹¹³

Kerttu. Nowhere. I got every one of them as pay for digging them. But what's it to you?

Vappu. There now, here's half a round. Let me put it in this cloth.

Johanna. God reward your kindness towards me, Vappu. I don't know how to thank you enough for everything.

There is a moment between Vappu and Johanna. Then Johanna ties her bundle, says goodbye and exits right.

Kerttu comes running from the left, pushing a one-wheeled cart full of potatoes. The boys who had been playing chase after her.

A policeman follows.

Boy 1. Homsantuu, gypsy girl!

Boy 2. Homsantuu! Whose potatoes have you been stealing?

Kerttu. (*Shoos the boys away.*) Would you calm down? Go away.

Policeman 1. Where did you grow these potatoes?

Kerttu. Nowhere. I got every one of them as pay for digging them. What's it to you?

¹¹¹ This moment between Vappu and Johanna is a valuable illustration of the importance, and indeed possibility, of solidarity and compassion between women. I wanted to emphasise it in my feminist translation, to prevent it going unnoticed.

¹¹² Just as Johanna's opening lines of this act served to remind us of her status as a wife and a working woman, Kerttu enters with a cart of potatoes to sell, similarly marking herself as a worker.

¹¹³ The policeman's automatic presumption that Kerttu came by the potatoes dishonestly, and the automatic doubt that she would have any land to grow them on, is a reminder of the prejudice that the law enforcement have against her as Roma woman.

The policeman is dissatisfied but nods and steps back to watch from a distance.

Boy 1. Hey missus, does the missus have a mister?

Boy 2. Don't get too close. She's got a mouth like a hungry wolf.

Boy 3. Did you get your looks from a crow, Homsantuu, and did you snatch that nose from a raven?¹¹⁴

Boy 1. And how did you end up so dark-blooded? Did your mother pick you from embers, birth you from charcoal?¹¹⁵

Risto and Toppo enter at the back. Toppo holds Risto back from going over to Kerttu.

Boy 2. You think we don't know where you come from, Homsantuu? Your mother was a gypsy.

Boy 3. Husk bucket, tar barrel, coal bin –¹¹⁶

Risto. (*Tears himself free from Toppo and chases the boys away.*) Oh, I'll teach them. Are you running away, or –? Little brats. Just you try and come back here again. (*Goes back over to Kerttu.*) Hello, Kerttu. It's been a while. How are you?

Boy 3. Hey missus, you got a mister?

Boy 1. Don't get too close. She's got jaws like a hungry wolf.

Boy 2. Did you get your face from a crow, Homsantuu? Did you snatch that beak from a raven?

Boy 3. And how come you look like that? Did your mother scrape you from the fireplace, give birth to you in charcoal?

Risto and Toppo enter left. Toppo holds Risto back from going over to Kerttu.

Boy 1. You think we don't know where you come from, Homsantuu? Your mother was a gypsy.

Boy 3. Barrel of tar, bucket of coal –

Risto. (*Tears himself free from Toppo and chases the boys away.*) Oh, I'll teach them. Are you running away, or –? Little brats. Just you try and come back here again. (*Goes back over to Kerttu.*) Hello, Kerttu. It's been a while. How are things?

¹¹⁴ From *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 198 'Itse hullu hukkasimme' ['I, fool, lost myself']): 'Varikselt' on varren saanut, / Korpilta nenän kopannut, / Muovon mustalta sialta, / Suun kun syövältä suelta.' ['From a crow he's got his figure, / From a raven snatched his nose, / His shape is from a black pig, / And his mouth from a biting wolf.'] In the song, which comes from the 'Songs for Women' section, the singer laments their decision to marry.

¹¹⁵ From *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 59 'Minä musta pikkarainen' ['I, little dark one']): 'Kekäleistä mun keräsi, / Sysilöistä synnytteli.' ['She gathered me from the embers, / from charcoal birthed me.'] It is from the 'Bridegroomless' sub-section of the 'Songs for Girls' section. The singer laments how others are beautiful and fair, whilst she is small and dark.

¹¹⁶ Reference to *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 93 'Sepä vasta sen pahempi' ['That is worse still']): 'Puhelevi ruumenpurnut, / Tervakimut tempoavat, / Syltysammiot sanovat' ['Barrels of chaff chat, / Churns of tar joke, / Vats of coal speak']. Kerttu herself references the same song in act one, in relation to townsfolk mocking her.

*Kerttu sits down on her cart and juggles potatoes. Pretends not to see Risto.*¹¹⁷

Risto. I rescued you from those naughty boys.

Kerttu. Wasted effort. I'd have dealt with them myself.

Toppo. Now, see how she repays you? Why do you bother running after that louse?¹¹⁸ Come on, back to the pub. We'll play a couple of rounds of cards and drink up a bottle.

Risto. You go ahead, I'll come as soon as I can. A man must surely say hello to his old sweetheart, or what, isn't that right, Kerttu?

Kerttu. Just stay away. I have nothing to do with you.

Toppo. There you go.

Risto. Are you still angry with me? You know, that old love flared up in me again the moment I saw you run past the pub window.

Kerttu. (*Jumps up.*) Get away from me!

Kerttu sits down on her cart and starts juggling potatoes. She pretends not to see Risto.

The crowd gathers around the boxing ring once more.

Risto and Toppo are abhorrent.

Risto. I rescued you from those naughty boys.

Kerttu. Wasted effort. I'd have dealt with them myself.

Toppo. Now, see how she repays you? Why do you bother running after that louse? Come on, back to the pub. We'll play a couple of rounds of cards and drink up a bottle.

Risto. You go ahead, I'll come as soon as I can. A man must surely say hello to his old sweetheart, isn't that right, Kerttu?

Kerttu. Just stay away. I don't want anything to do with you.

Toppo. There you go.

Risto. Are you still angry with me? You know, that old love flared right back up the moment I saw you run past the pub window.

Kerttu. Go away!

¹¹⁷ Kerttu's juggling plays into the already established idea of the marketplace as a performance space.

¹¹⁸ Toppo calls Kerttu a 'turjake', which can mean either something unclean, something 'damned', or an insect like a flea, beetle or louse. I opted for the latter definition in my translation, because it fits with other nature-related, but also dehumanizing, descriptions of Kerttu.

Risto. Now, now, hush, hush. I won't do anything bad to you, will I?

Toppo. Bloody hell, how charming she is. A man can't help taking a fancy to you, Homsaliisa, or whatever you are.

Kerttu. (*Turns to the crowd of people.*)¹¹⁹ Won't anyone buy potatoes? Twenty-five pennies a bag.

Toppo. Let me come closer, Risto. I'm better at playing with girls than you are.

Kerttu. They're good potatoes. Come and see.

Toppo. (*Half singing*) 'Tra-la-la, bla-di-bla, sim-si-la.' Do you still remember the language of your people, you black-eyed child of sorrow? 'Ha-bla-da-la-laaa, tra-la-laaa, bla-di-bla-la-laaaa!'¹²⁰

Kerttu. Why do you twist your tongue and flap your lips for nothing?

Toppo. It's gypsy language, the language of your people, don't you know it? – 'Bla-ba-tra-la-laaa, bla-di-blaaa...'

Kerttu. May your tongue boil like that in the devil's cauldron.

Risto. Now, now, hush, hush. I won't do anything bad to you, will I?

Toppo. Bloody hell, how charming she is. A man can't help taking a fancy to you, Homsaliisa, or whatever you are.

Kerttu. (*Turning to the crowd of people.*) Potatoes, anyone? Twenty-five pennies a bag!

Toppo. Let me have a go, Risto. I'm better at playing with girls than you are.

Kerttu. They're good potatoes. Come and see.

Toppo. (*Singing*) 'Tra-la-la, bla-di-bla, tra-li-la.' (*Speaking*) Do you still remember the language of your people, you black-eyed child of sorrow? (*Singing*) 'Ha-bla-la-laaa, tra-la-la-laaa, bla-di-bla-laaa!'

A shift in Kerttu. A boiling over.

Kerttu. Why do you twist your tongue and flap your jaw for nothing?

Toppo. It's gypsy language, the language of your people. Don't you know it? – 'Bla-bla-tra-laaa, bla-di-blaaa...'

Kerttu. May your tongue boil in the devil's cauldron.

¹¹⁹ The stage direction here is a reminder that this scene is still taking place in a crowded market-place, under watchful eyes.

¹²⁰ I have not replicated the exact nonsense words that Toppo sings here, which are a racist parody of a Roma language. By the late-nineteenth century, the majority of Roma people in Finland are likely to have mostly spoken Finnish. Furthermore, as has been established, Kerttu was raised without any connection to her Roma family, and so would have no connection to the language. There is no pretence that what Toppo says is in any way based on a real language, but is simply an attempt at something that would sound vaguely 'foreign' to Finnish ears. I have replaced it with slightly more neutral 'nonsense-speak'.

Toppo. No, Risto, let's go. It's not worth opening your mouth for that poison tooth.

Risto. Let me try. – Kerttu my dear, my chicken egg, my red rose, my sugar lump, come and shake hands and say: frenzy of hatred away, pure blessings instead!

Kerttu. Stop tormenting me, you vipers; or you'll be sorry.

Risto. (*Sings*) *'Heija, veija, veikkoset
ja heija veija vennen;
Missä on se rakkaus,
jok' oli meissä ennen.'*¹²¹

[*Hey, vey fellows
And hey, vey, ven;
Where is that old love
We had before.*]

Kerttu. If only I had a weapon, I'd strike you dead where you stand.

Toppo. What a little minx.¹²²

Risto. A bear's bile, that girl has.

Kerttu. A bear's bile and ten scythes for nails. Just you come closer, and –

Toppo. No, Risto, let's go. It's not worth opening your mouth for that poison tooth.

Risto. Let me try. – Kerttu my darling, my chicken egg, my red rose, my sugar lump, come and shake hands and say: hatred away, only goodness from now on!

Kerttu. Stop tormenting me, you vipers, or you'll be sorry.

Risto tries to dance with her.

Kerttu. If I had a weapon, I'd strike you dead where you stand.

Toppo. What a minx.

Risto. A bear's bile, that girl has.

Kerttu. A bear's bile and ten scythes for nails. Just you come closer, and –

¹²¹ An old Finnish folk song.

¹²² The word that Toppo uses about Kerttu, 'kiukkupussi', is infantilising, the sort of word used about children having a tantrum. Toppo and Risto infantilise and patronise Kerttu throughout the dialogue.

Risto. Oh, that I'd be scared of you? Come on now. I'll snatch you up onto my lap before you know what's happening.

Kerttu. Leave me alone, or I'll curse you to ash and to clay, and your eyes will roll in your head.¹²³

Risto. You don't even know how to curse. *(Takes her by the waist.)*

Kerttu. *(Pulls herself free and pelts him with potatoes.)* There you go, there, there, there –

Risto. Oh, this child. You think you can beat a grown man with potatoes? *(Tries to take hold of her again.)*

Kerttu. *(Takes sand from the ground and throws it at his eyes.)* How about now – how about now –?

Risto. Don't, damn it! Devil, blinding me.

Kerttu. Have you finally had enough?

Toppo. Well, Risto, you seem to have lost this one.

Risto. Don't joke. This is serious now.

Risto. Oh, I should be scared of you, should I? Come on now. I'll snatch you up onto my lap before you know what's happening.

Kerttu. Leave me alone, or I'll curse you to ash and to clay, and your eyes will roll in your head.

Risto. You don't even know how to curse.

Risto takes Kerttu by the waist. She pulls herself free and starts pelting him with potatoes.

Kerttu. There you go, there, there, there –

Risto. Oh, this child. You think you can beat a grown man with potatoes?

Risto tries to take hold of Kerttu again. She pushes him away, grabs a fistful of dirt from the ground and throws it at his face.

Kerttu. How about now – how about now –?

Risto. Don't, damn it! Bitch, blinding me.

Kerttu. Have you finally had enough?

Toppo. Well, Risto, looks like you've lost this one.

Risto. Don't joke. This is serious now.

¹²³ As she did at the wedding, Kerttu attempts to use stereotypes about her to her advantage by threatening to curse Risto.

Kerttu. I hope it's painful for a good while. At least you'll remember to leave me in peace then.

Toppo. You should have listened to me and stayed in the pub.

Risto. Help, people. Doesn't anybody have any water or a drop of milk?

People gather around. Kerttu sits on the edge of her cart.¹²⁴

Woman. What's happened to your eyes?

Risto. That girl there threw mud and sand in them.

Woman. What girl?

Kerttu. Me.

Voice 1. Bloody gypsy.

Voice 2. Damned girl needs a beating.

Woman. Sit on the cart there, so I can look at them more closely.

Kerttu rises and gives the woman some space.

Risto. They're burning like they're on fire.

Kerttu. I hope it's painful for a long time. At least then you'll remember to leave me alone.

Toppo. You should have listened to me and stayed in the pub.

Risto. Help, people. Doesn't anybody have any water or a drop of milk?

People gather around. Kerttu sits on the edge of her cart.

Woman. What's happened to your eyes?

Risto. That girl there threw mud and sand in them.

Woman. What girl?

Kerttu. Me.

Voice 1. Fucking gypsies.

Voice 2. That girl needs a beating.

Woman. Sit on the cart there, so I can look at them more closely.

Kerttu rises and gives Risto and the woman some space.

Risto. They're burning like they're on fire.

¹²⁴ The crowd, who have been present all the way through the act, assert themselves here. Having not intervened whilst Risto and Toppo harassed Kerttu, they join in now, siding automatically with Risto and laying blame on Kerttu.

Woman. No wonder. Good god, they're bleeding. Poor man, don't rub them anymore. Ooh, oh. They won't be of any use now, these eyes.

Toppo. Oho? Have things really gone so wrong?

Woman. The poor man will go blind without help. Call me a liar.

Kerttu. Blind? Will he go blind? – That's not true.

Voice 1. Sauna-Anna knows. She knows about eyes.

Kerttu. You can't lose your eyesight that easily.

Woman. Come and look. His eyes are like balls of blood.

Risto. Are you happy now, Kerttu? Oh, Christ, how sore they are.

Kerttu. Put something in them.

Woman. What've we got to put in them now?

Kerttu. Medicines, salves. Can't you think of anything?

Woman. Yes, but only if you have the money.

Kerttu. I can get some. I'll find it from a hole in a rock if I must. *(Takes a purse from her breast.)* Here's some to begin with. Send someone to the pharmacy. To the new pharmacy, nearby. Quick, quick! I'll get some more money in the meantime. Won't anyone buy potatoes?

Woman. No wonder. Good god, they're bleeding. Poor man, don't rub them anymore. Ooh, oh. They won't be any use now, these eyes.

Toppo. Oh? Have things really gone so wrong?

Woman. The poor man will go blind without help. Call me a liar.

Kerttu. Blind? Will he go blind? – That's not true.

Rising panic.

Voice 1. Anna should know. She knows about eyes.

Kerttu. You can't lose your eyesight that easily.

Woman. Come and look. His eyes are like balls of blood.

Risto. Are you happy now, Kerttu? Oh, Christ, how sore they are.

Kerttu. Put something in them.

Woman. What've we got to put in them now?

Kerttu. Medicines, salves. Can't you think of anything?

Woman. Yes, but only if you have the money.

Kerttu. I can get some. *(Takes a purse from her pocket.)* Here's some to begin with. Send someone to the pharmacy. To the new pharmacy, up the road. Quick, quick! I'll get some more in the meantime. Won't anyone buy some potatoes!

The woman whispers something to a boy, who runs off.

Run, boy, run as fast as you can.

Risto. The pain's getting worse and worse. My poor eyes really have gone now.

Kerttu. Don't panic yet. We'll wait. The boy will bring the medicine soon. Perhaps it will help. If you get a lot of medicine. (*Runs to the back, where some gentlemen are standing, smoking cigarettes.*)¹²⁵

Voice 1. What a fright that girl got.

Voice 2. She certainly did. Didn't take much.

Kerttu. Good sirs, would you give me some money? I'll dance such a wonderfully beautiful gypsy dance for you.

Gentleman 1. Tusan till vacker flicka.¹²⁶

Gentleman 2. Zigenerska, tror jag.

The woman whispers something to a boy, who runs off.

Run, boy, run as fast as you can.

Risto. The pain's getting worse. My poor eyes really have gone now.

Kerttu. Don't panic yet. We'll wait. The boy will bring the medicine soon. Perhaps it'll help. If you get a lot of medicine.

Kerttu catches sight of some upper-class men stood at the back, smoking cigarettes and talking. She watches them for a moment, thinking. She gathers herself. She runs over to them.

Voice 1. What a fright she got.

Voice 2. She certainly did. Didn't take much.

Kerttu. Good sirs, would you give me some money? I'll dance such a wonderfully beautiful gypsy dance for you.

Gentleman 1. Tusan till vacker flicka. [Swedish: A damned pretty girl.]

Gentleman 2. Zigenerska, tror jag. [A gypsy girl, I think.]

¹²⁵ Although Kerttu does make this decision in a moment hastened by panic, in my feminist translation I wanted to emphasise that it is not an easy decision for her to essentially exploit herself and exploit the exoticized views held about her.

¹²⁶ Translation (from Swedish): 'A damned pretty girl' 'A gypsy girl, I think.' 'She begs so earnestly' 'No, but look at those eyes!' 'We'll let her dance.' 'Yes, yes, of course.' 'Excellent!' Finland had been under Russian rule since 1809, but prior to that had been part of Sweden. Throughout the nineteenth century, Swedish was typically spoken by the upper classes, whilst Finnish was predominantly spoken by working-class people.

Kerttu. Will you give me some money?

Gentleman 1. Så innerligt hon ber.

Gentleman 3. Nej, men se på de ögonen!

Gentleman 4. Charmant!

Kerttu. Good gentlemen, can I dance for you?

Gentleman 1. Vi låta henne dansa.

Gentleman 2. Ja, ja, naturligtvis.

Gentleman 3. Ypperligt!

Gentleman 4. Dance, dance. You beautiful girl. We give! Beautiful girl gets always much money. Much money.¹²⁷

Kerttu. *(Pushes her cart out of her way.)* Make space and sing along!

Kerttu. Will you give me some money?

Gentleman 1. Så innerligt hon ber. [How earnestly she begs.]

Gentleman 3. Nej, men se på de ögonen! [No, but look at those eyes!]

Gentleman 2. Charmant! [Charming!]

Kerttu. Good gentlemen, can I dance for you?

Gentleman 1. Vi låta henne dansa. [We'll let her dance.]

Gentleman 2. Ja, ja, naturligtvis. [Yes, yes, of course.]

Gentleman 3. Ypperligt! [Excellent!]

Gentleman 1. Dance, dance. You beautiful girl. We give! Beautiful girl gets always much money. Much money.

Kerttu. *(Pushes her cart out of her way and takes a microphone out of her pocket.)* Make space and sing along!

Time stops. Kerttu sings and the crowd watch. She dances, but the dance is strange. Not sexy, and not what you expect. It is excruciating. Whilst she sings, the daylight quickly dims, and the moon begins to slowly rise.

¹²⁷ The preceding dialogue is in Swedish, but this line is written in slightly broken Finnish, which I have mirrored with this slightly grammatically incorrect English.

*The crowd sings along. Kerttu dances.*¹²⁸

Crowd. (Singing.)

*'Ilta on raitis,
Hauska on hyppely
Sävel on kaunis,
Vilkas on vippely.
Tulkaapa tänne
Mua katsomaan,
Teille ma tanssin
Ja laulan vaan.
Ma hyppelen ja laulelen,
Ma hyppelen ja laulelen.*

*Musta mun tukka,
Kaunis mun vartalo.*

Unlike the other songs in the play, the one that Canth uses here is not a traditional Finnish folk song. As far as I can tell, it is one Canth wrote herself. You can set it to a tune or swap it out for an alternative song, as long as it is fitting. Personally, I would suggest having her do a karaoke cover of Janis Ian's 1975 hit, 'Love is Blind'.

Kerttu. (Singing.)

*'Ilta on raitis,
Hauska on hyppely
Sävel on kaunis,
Vilkas on vippely.
Tulkaapa tänne
Mua katsomaan,
Teille ma tanssin
Ja laulan vaan.
Ma hyppelen ja laulelen,
Ma hyppelen ja laulelen.*

*Musta mun tukka,
Kaunis mun vartalo.*

¹²⁸ In the first production of *The Worker's Wife*, the role of Kerttu (or Homsantuu) was played by the most famous Finnish actress of her day: Ida Aalberg. It was in part this dance that attracted Aalberg to the role. She had recently starred as Nora in *A Doll's House*, and had taken dance lessons in Norway to learn the tarantella that Nora dances in the play. In his review of the production, Hjalmar Neiglick wrote: 'The ragged Homsantuu, who had grown up in Savo, was selling potatoes at the Kuopio market when she began to dance to get money for medicine for Risto, and she would not have known even the name of that thing that Ida Aalberg ramped up in her dance. The actress had learnt an un-Finnish manner of speech abroad, which might have suited the speeches of Juliet or Mary Stuart, for example, but hardly fit the mouth of a Finnish country girl, whether or not she was half gypsy. Ida Aalberg's Homsantuu was more like some gypsy princess than a scorned child of the land.' (Hjalmar Neiglick, cited in Nieminen, 109-110). Clearly, the dance has the potential to be misrepresented as an unquestioning, exotic, romanticised display designed to entertain the audiences, but such a portrayal is inconsistent with the context. Rather, it is a deeply uncomfortable moment, where the audience are forced to reckon with stereotyped preconceptions they hold, and the effect of their complicit gaze in this moment.

*Köyhä oon rukka,
Kurja kohtalo.
Ja iloitsen,
Öisin ma itken
Ja huokailen.
Niin öisin itken, huokailen,
Vaan nyt mä nauran tanssien.* ¹²⁹

*['The evening is fresh,
And it's fun to jump.
The tune is sweet,
A lively jig.
Come here
and look at me,
For you alone I dance
And sing.
I jump and sing,
I jump and sing.*

*Black is my hair,
Beautiful my form.
A poor girl am I,
Wretched is my fate,
By day I dance
And happy am I,
By night I cry
And sigh.
Yes, by night I cry and sigh,
but now I laugh and dance.]*

*Köyhä oon rukka,
Kurja kohtalo.
Ja iloitsen,
Öisin ma itken
Ja huokailen.
Niin öisin itken, huokailen,
Vaan nyt mä nauran tanssien.'*

*['The evening is fresh,
And it's fun to jump.
The tune is sweet,
A lively jig.
Come here
and look at me,
For you alone I dance
And sing.
I jump and sing,
I jump and sing.*

*Black is my hair,
Beautiful my figure.
A poor girl am I,
Wretched is my fate,
By day I dance
And happy am I,
By night I cry
And sigh.
Yes, by night I cry and sigh,
but now I laugh and dance.]*

¹²⁹ Unlike the other songs in the play, which are folk songs either from *Kanteletar* or elsewhere, this one seems to have been written by Canth for the play. The song is seemingly written from Kerttu's perspective, but is sung by the crowd whilst she dances. In my feminist translation, I have given the song to her, rather than the crowd.

Kerttu gathers money into her apron and takes it to Risto.

Curtain down.

At the end of the song, Kerttu gathers money into her apron.

Minna. Go away, all of you. Fuck off.

Everyone except Kerttu melts away.

For a moment, the moon shines blindingly bright, and then plunges into darkness.

ACT III

*Forest. A haybarn on the right. Moonlight.*¹³⁰

*Kerttu enters from the right.*¹³¹

Kerttu. Away from here, far, far away. – Forever to where the moon doesn't glow and the sun doesn't shine. Or to the bottom of the lake, so deep in the mud that not even the waves could find one lost down there. What am I doing on this earth? I have no place here; not one person would miss me or cry for me. Why, god, did you create such a wretched creature, who brings joy to no one, and who no one, no one, no one loves?¹³²

She throws herself down at the foot of a tree on the left and bursts into melancholy tears. From the left, a group of Finnish-Roma people enter, Helka at the front, Hagert, Ilona and their two children at the rear.

Helka. Hey, come over here! There's a barn here that'll make for an excellent sleeping place. We'll lie better on hay than on feather pillows.

¹³⁰ The third act is the only act to take place in a rural setting, outside of the town, differentiating it from the rest of the play. Indeed, it feels almost like a transplant from another play, with its moonlit forest setting, melodramatic turn of events, and poetic mode of speech, it is almost fairy-tale-like. What the act offers is the possibility of life removed from the influence of society and societal structures; and for Kerttu, a glimpse of happiness.

¹³¹ The act opens with a short monologue by Kerttu, mirroring Johanna's monologue at the start of act two.

¹³² Although there is not a direct citation from the *Kalevala* or *Kanteletar* in this speech, Kerttu's alliterative, lyrical, melancholy, language here is very reminiscent of the language of Finnish folk poetry.

ACT III: The Forest

Gentle moonlight.

*There is something uncanny – dreamlike, even – about what follows here. The sound of the cotton mill is conspicuously absent.*¹⁴⁸

Kerttu enters.

Kerttu. Away from here, far, far away. – Forever to where the moon doesn't glow and the sun doesn't shine. Or to the bottom of the lake, so deep in the mud that not even the waves could find one lost down there. What am I doing on this earth? I have no place here; not one person would miss me or cry for me. Why, god, did you create such a wretched creature, who brings joy to no one, and who no one, no one, no one loves?

She throws herself down at the foot of a tree and bursts into melancholy tears. A group of people enter, Helka at the front, followed Hagert, then Ilona, carrying their baby.

Helka. Come over here! There's a barn here that'll make for an excellent sleeping place. We'll lie better on hay than on feather pillows.

Iloa. Ma, can you see someone lying under that tree?

Helka. True! There is somebody there. Hey, who's there?

Kerttu. Worm of the earth, maggot of the underworld, food for fish.

Helka. God help us if you aren't almost more miserable than we are.¹³³ Where are you from, poor girl?

Kerttu. Where am I from? I'd tell you, if I knew. Do the needy have shelter, do the unhappy have homes? Wild ducks have their place, and geese have quiet nests, but the ill-starred have the backwoods as their home, the wilderness as their sauna and a nook in a fence as their shelter.¹³⁴

Iloa. (*Aside to Hagert.*) Do you hear what she's saying, Hagert? She doesn't have a home any more than we do.

Hagert. Hush. Do you think she'd want to join us even then?

Helka. You look young, yet already so unhappy. Don't you have anyone in the world to take care of you? Parents, family, or friends even?

Iloa. Ma, can you see someone lying under that tree?

Helka. Who's there?

Kerttu. It is a worm of the earth, maggot of the underworld, food for fish.

Helka. God help us if you aren't almost more wretched than we are. Where are you from, poor girl?

Kerttu. Where am I from? I'd tell you, if I knew. Do the needy have shelter, do the unhappy have homes? Wild ducks have their place, and geese have quiet nests, but the ill-starred have only the backwoods for a home, the wilderness for their refuge.

Iloa. Do you hear what she's saying, Hagert? She doesn't have a home any more than we do.

Hagert. Hush. Do you think she'd want to join us even then?

Helka. You look young, yet already so unhappy. Don't you have anyone in the world to take care of you? Parents, family, or friends even?

¹³³ Helka exclaims 'Kies' avit'', which I have translated as 'God help us.' 'Kies' comes from 'Kiesus', which is a colloquial way of saying 'Jesus'. 'Avit' is a shortening of 'avittaa', a form of 'auttaa' – to help.

¹³⁴ Kerttu's language in this speech references some lines from *Kanteletar* (Book 1 Song 35 'Minun on koti koivikossa' [My home is in the Birch Grove]): 'Sorsall' on siansa suojat, / Tyynet allilla asunnot' ['Wild ducks have their place, and geese have quiet nests.']. Then from Book 1 Song 36 'Korpi kurjalla kotina' ['The backwoods are home to the wretched]: 'Korpi kurjalla kotina, / Salo sauna vaivasella.' ['The wretched have the backwoods as their home, / The miserable have the wilderness as their sauna.']. And lastly from Book 2 Song 226 'Minä pyy pesätönlintu' ['I, hazel grouse, nest-less bird']: 'aian soppi on suojani.' ['a nook in a fence is my shelter.']

All are melancholy songs about displacement and homelessness, and finding a home in natural, often harsh, landscapes. The line also have a Biblical resonance, calling to mind Jesus' words in Matthew 8:20: 'And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.'"

Kerttu. No one. My mother is on a path unknown, my father lies beneath the churchyard grass. I know no one but the sky's gusts and gales, have friends no dearer than the cold eternal winds. But what of that? They don't reproach you for no reason, and they don't betray you as treacherously as people do.¹³⁵

Helka. True, my child, true!

Kerttu. From now on I won't go where people are, I'm not fit to be in their company. It is better to be alone. Not in anybody's way, or for anyone to mock, or to ruin anybody's eyes.

Iiona. Oh, Hagert, I feel so sorry for this unhappy girl.

Hagert. Shh, let Ma speak to her.

Helka. What's your name, poor girl?

Kerttu. Kerttu.

Helka. Kerttu? – Did you hear that, Hagert? Her name is Kerttu. What about your surname, child, your surname?

Kerttu. Väänänen.

Kerttu. No one. My mother is on a path unknown, my father lies beneath the churchyard grass. I know no one but the sky's gusts and gales, have friends no dearer than the cold eternal winds. But what of that? At least they don't reproach you for no reason, and they don't betray you as treacherously as people do.

Helka. True, my child, true!

Kerttu. From now on I won't go where people are, I'm not fit to be in their company. It is better to be alone. Not in anybody's way, or for anyone to mock, or to ruin anybody's eyes.

Iiona. Oh, Hagert, I feel so sorry for her.

Hagert. Shh, let Ma speak to her.

Helka. What's your name, poor girl?

Kerttu. Kerttu.

Helka. Kerttu? – Did you hear that, Hagert? Her name is Kerttu. What about your surname, child, your surname?

!

Kerttu. Väänänen.

¹³⁵ Kerttu's line 'Tuttuja ei ole muita kun taivaan tuiskut ja tuulet, ystäviä ei armaampia kuin ahon ainaiset ahavat' ['I know no one but the sky's gusts and gales, have friends no dearer than the cold eternal winds'] recalls a line from *Kanteletar* (Book 1 Song 38 'Koista erotettu' [Severed from home]): 'Tunnen tuulet, tunnen tuiskut, / Tunnen ainaiset ahavat.' ['I feel the gusts, I feel the blizzards, / I feel the cold eternal winds.'] Again, this song is about displacement, about being an outsider, a stranger even to one's family.

Helka. From Tuusniemi?¹³⁶

Kerttu. My father was from there.

Helka. And your mother, child, who was your mother?

Kerttu. They say she was of one of you, that she left my father when I was only a small, swaddled child. And nothing has been heard of her ever since.

Helka. Come here out of the shadow of the tree, child, here into the moonlight, so I can see your eyes. Ooh, heavenly father, you are my own Aili, quite alive. Hagert, look at those eyes, that forehead, that hair. You truly are my flesh and blood. Come into my arms, child, come into your grandma's arms.¹³⁷

Hagert. Hello, Kerttu, here you see your uncle.

Iiona. And here his wife. Now you aren't alone anymore, Kerttu, you have a family and friends.

Helka. From Tuusniemi?

!

Kerttu. My father was from there.

Helka. And your mother, child, who was your mother?

Kerttu. They say she was...well, of one of you, and that she left my father when I was only a small, swaddled child. And nothing has been heard of her ever since.

Helka. Come here out of the shadow of the tree, child, here into the moonlight, so I can see your eyes. Ooh, heavenly father, you are my own Aili, quite alive. Hagert, look at those eyes, that forehead, that hair. You truly are my flesh and blood. Come into my arms, child, come into your grandmother's arms.

!!

Hagert. Hello, Kerttu. I am your uncle.

Iiona. And I am his wife. Now you aren't alone anymore, Kerttu, you have a family and friends.

¹³⁶ Tuusniemi is an area east of Kuopio, where the play is set. It has already been mentioned, by Laura in act one, as being where Kerttu's father was from.

¹³⁷ The ease and extreme coincidence of this reunion is what really makes this act feel as though it belongs in another play altogether; it is completely unbelievable, and at odds with the harsh realism of the previous acts. However, this is the only moment of mercy granted to Kerttu in the whole play (and, clearly, in her whole short life). This encounter could only take place in the forest, away from the society that persecutes and oppresses Kerttu. The forest offers her a glimpse of a world in which she is not forced into the position of outsider, where she is permitted love and companionship. Maijala (2008, p.97) describes the encounter as being important for Kerttu's character because 'her relatives are the only ones who care about Homsantuu and see the events from her perspective, and thus act as important reflectors of her passions and fate.' Theatrically, however, it is difficult to pace, and the theatre-makers performing it would have to put careful thought into how to slow this encounter down and make it convincing. Perhaps leaning into the 'dream' of it would help.

Kerttu. I have a family, friends? Is that possible? And my mother, where is she?

Helka. In earth's bosom, child. Gentle sands have covered her eyes for sixteen years already.¹³⁸ Your mother suffered greatly on her journey through this life, Kerttu. The father of heaven let all the harshest winds blow over her.¹³⁹

Kerttu. My poor mother!

Helka. Do you see, Kerttu, she threw aside her people, she abandoned her own family, and for that she was undone by a terrible punishment.¹⁴⁰ She thought she could find a safe home and a better life when she left us, but only then did the poor girl's sorrows really begin. In her husband's home she was as if on a rock surrounded by gulls.¹⁴¹ She was despised for her race, oppressed and persecuted, until she, child in her arms, ran away, back to us. But those beasts chased after her and snatched you, wretched, from her breast, and from that moment on your mother lived not another healthy day. Hopeless longing gnawed at her heart and took the poor girl away from the world's troubles at last, to eternal rest.¹⁴²

!!!

Kerttu. I have a family, friends? Is that possible? And my mother, where is she?

Helka. In earth's bosom, child. Gentle sands have covered her eyes for sixteen years already. Your mother suffered greatly on her journey through this life, Kerttu. The father of heaven let all the harshest winds blow over her.

Kerttu. My poor mother!

Helka. Do you see, Kerttu, she thought she could find a safe home and a better life when she left us, but for that she was undone by a terrible punishment. Only then did the poor girl's sorrows really begin. In her husband's home she was as though on a rock surrounded by gulls. She was despised for her race, oppressed and persecuted, until she, child in her arms, ran away, back to us. But those beasts chased after her and snatched you, wretched, from her breast, and from that moment on your mother lived not another healthy day. Hopeless longing gnawed at her heart and took the poor girl away from the world's troubles at last, to eternal rest.

¹³⁸ Helka's line references a lines from *Kanteletar* Book 1 Song 3 'Kiven alla kieltäjäni' ['Beneath a rock is my denier']: 'silmillä heliät heikat.' ['on their eyes are gentle sands.'] Kerttu references different lines from the same song in act one, when she says 'My denier lies beneath a stone, my crusher far beneath the earth.'

¹³⁹ Here, Helka's language becomes more lyrical, reflecting Kerttu's.

¹⁴⁰ Helka references *Kanteletar* Book 1 Song 39 'Suvultaan heitetty' ['From family cast out']: 'Suku suuttui, heimo heitti, / Hylkäsi hyvä sukuni' ['My family got angry, my tribe expelled me, / My good family forsook me.'] This song is about someone being cast out by their family, as opposed to choosing to leave their family.

¹⁴¹ A reference to *Kanteletar* Book 2 Song 110 'Tule ei päivä polvena' ['The day will never come']: 'Loi kun lokkien sekahan, / Karille meren kajavan.' ['Made as though surrounded by gulls, / On a gull-rock in the sea.'] This song comes from the 'Orphaned' subsection of the 'Songs for Girls' section.

¹⁴² What I have translated as 'to eternal rest' is, in Finnish, 'Manalan majaan' ['to Manala's hovel']. Manala is the name of the underworld in Finnish mythology.

Kerttu. (*Crying softly*) Happy woman!

Helka. Long years have rolled by since that time, and still we tread through this land. But only now has our path brought us back to these haunted parts. What strange fortune guided us to one another? Of course, you will come with us from now on, or what, my child?

Hagert. Of course you must, Kerttu. Don't even think otherwise.

Iiona. We'll stay together always, until death, isn't that so, Kerttu?

Helka. And though we own neither land nor manor houses, we have our golden freedom. What do we lack, when we wander muds and marshes, when in forests we listen to the cuckoo's call, or when in berry-filled glades we stretch in the sunshine? Our shelters are on country roads, our homes are on grass, and our warming fires are love and unity.¹⁴³ No, no matter what, I wouldn't change this life, not for a king's crown.¹⁴⁴

Kerttu. (*Crying softly*) Happy woman!

Helka. Long years have rolled by since then, and still we tread through this land. But only now has our path brought us back to these haunted parts. What strange fortune guided us to one another? Of course, you'll come with us from now on, or what, my child?

What strange fortune, indeed!

Hagert. Of course you must, Kerttu. Don't even think otherwise.

Iiona. We'll stay together always, until death, isn't that so, Kerttu?

¹⁴³ This is another citation from *Kanteletar* Book 2 Song 226: 'Maantiellä minun majani, / Turpehessa muut tupani' ['On country roads are my homes, / On grasses my other shelters.] Kerttu quotes from the same song a few lines earlier.

¹⁴⁴ I have chosen to cut this speech from my feminist translation, because it is entirely based on an exoticizing romanticisation of 'gypsy life'. In his otherwise effusive review, O.E. Tudeer (Appendix D) criticises this particular speech: '[characters] act and think, they express their thoughts and feelings precisely according to their own natures and circumstances. The only exception is perhaps the passage in which Helka, the old gypsy woman, extols the joys of gypsy life, because these feel somewhat academically rhetorical.' Unlike Tudeer, I do not have an issue necessarily with these lines being 'rhetorical' – in fact, there are other passages in the play that I think are also rhetorical, and where I have sought to emphasise this quality. Rather, the speech, steeped in romanticism that bears no meaningful resemblance to the reality experienced by members of the Roma community, risks undermining the portrayal, turning Helka and her family entirely into problematic clichés.

Kerttu. Grandma, I'll come with you. Oh, this will be a new life. And those children – are they yours? Come into my arms, little ones, come. I will keep you so well, so very well. Can your cousin always carry you in her arms along the way, and care for you and treasure you, can she?

Children. She can, she can.¹⁴⁵

Kerttu. And sometimes we'll play blind man's buff and hide and seek and catch. And your cousin will teach you to dance, too – the *kaakkuri* [diving duck], the *köttö* [schottische], the *pitkinsilta* [bridge], the *kopukan vaihto* [horse's leap] and the *hallin lumppu* [old rag].¹⁴⁶ We'll have such fun, such great fun. But aren't you cold, poor thing, with your neck so exposed? Look, your cousin will tie a scarf round you. There now, now the child is warm. What's your name, my little one?

Little Ilona. I'm Ilona, like my ma.

Kerttu. Oh, so you're your mother's namesake? And you, my boy, you're probably your father's namesake?

Herman. No, I have my own name: Herman Gabriel.

Kerttu. We will probably become good friends, Herman, do you believe that?

Kerttu. Grandma, I'll come with you. Oh, this will be a new life. (*To Ilona*) And is this your baby? Come into my arms, little one. (*Takes the baby from Ilona and cradles her.*) I will keep you so well, so very well. Can your cousin always carry you in her arms, and care for you and treasure you, can she? And when you're bigger, we'll play hide and seek and catch. And I'll teach you to dance too. – We'll have such fun, such great fun. But aren't you cold, cold, poor thing, with your neck so exposed? Here, your let me tie a scarf around you. There now. What's her name?

Hagert. She's Ilona, like her mother.

Kerttu. We will probably become great friends, little Ilona, do you believe that?

¹⁴⁵ The interaction with the children is a little saccharine, even for my forgiving tastes, so I decided to cut the children and swap them to a baby in my feminist translation (which would also make things simpler from a production perspective.)

¹⁴⁶ The dances listed by Kerttu are all nineteenth century style folk dances, without obvious English equivalents. I have chosen to keep the names in Finnish, but offering an English literal translation.

Herman. Yes. And I already know how to make potato cakes, but Ilona doesn't know how. How could a *girl* know how to do that?

Kerttu. Oh – potato cakes – (*Lets go of the children and stands up, restless.*) How could I forget? Grandma, you are old and wise, you must know many medicines. Wouldn't you know how to make a sort of salve for eyes, to stop someone going blind? Today I threw mud in a man's eyes and they say he'll go blind! Think, blind, blind for the rest of his days! And I, miserable, made him so unhappy. Grandma, if you can, then heal his eyes, or I'll never know peace again.

Helka. Why on earth did you throw mud in his eyes, child?

Kerttu. Because I am wicked, grandma. I hated him, fiercely even, and I wanted to send him to hell. If I'd had a weapon in my hands, I'd probably have struck him dead. I'm so vicious and so wicked.¹⁴⁷

Helka. And why did you hate him so, Kerttu?

Kerttu. Why did I hate him? Yes, why! Because I loved him so fiercely before.

Helka. Did he betray you?

Kerttu. Don't ask about everything, grandma.

Helka. Did he betray you, Kerttu? I want to know.

Ilona. We'll soon be teaching her to cook potato cakes and –

Kerttu. Oh – potato cakes – (*Hands the baby back to Ilona and stands up, restless.*) How could I forget? Grandma, you must know many medicines. Wouldn't you know how to make a sort of salve for eyes, to stop someone going blind? Today I threw mud in a man's eyes, and they say he'll go blind! Think, blind, blind for the rest of his days! And it's my fault. Grandma, if you can, then heal his eyes, or I'll never know peace again.

Helka. Why on earth did you throw mud in his eyes, child?

Kerttu. Because I was angry. I hated him, and I wanted to send him to hell. If I'd had a weapon in my hands, I'd probably have struck him dead.

Helka. And why did you hate him so, Kerttu?

Kerttu. Why did I hate him? Yes, why! Because I'd loved him so fiercely before.

Helka. Did he betray you?

Kerttu. Don't ask about everything.

Helka. Did he betray you, Kerttu? Tell me.

¹⁴⁷ I have chosen to cut the final sentence here in my feminist translation, along with a few other lines throughout the play where Kerttu voiced particularly vehement self-loathing that corresponded to stereotypes about Roma people as 'fiery' and 'wicked'.

Kerttu. And if he did, what then? Can you blame him for that, for leaving a gypsy girl when someone better came along? Anyone else would have done the same.

Helka. Of course, that is their way. It's not a sin for a man to seduce a 'cheap' woman and lead her to misfortune. Thousands have it done and not been punished for it. They have not been fined for it or put in jail for it.¹⁴⁸ Oh, you Christians, what a people you are. Hypocritical, sanctimonious, nothing else. They're certainly pious enough when they sit in church on Sundays and listen to the priest's dull sermon; but as soon as they leave their pews, then the wolf steps out of the lamb's clothing. Those miserable sinners preach one thing, and live another, that is true as true. And 'gypsy' as I am, I will say only this: those people disgust me.¹⁴⁹

Hagert. But don't judge everyone, ma. There can be good among the bad.¹⁵⁰

Kerttu. And if he did, what then? Can you blame him for that, for leaving a – someone like me when someone better came along? Anyone else would have done the same.

Beat.

Helka. Of course, that is their way. It's not a sin for a man to seduce a 'cheap' woman and lead her to misfortune. Thousands have it done and not been punished for it. They have not been fined for it or put in jail for it.

She speaks out to the audience.

You Christians, what a people you are. Hypocritical, sanctimonious, nothing else. You're certainly pious enough when you sit in church on Sundays and listen to the priest's dull sermon; but as soon as you leave your pews, then the wolf steps out of the lamb's clothing. You miserable sinners preach one thing, and live another, that is true as true. And 'gypsy' as I am, I will say only this: you people disgust me.

Beat.

¹⁴⁸ Here, Helka echoes Canth's own sentiments about the hypocritical treatment of 'fallen women' in her article 'On the Woman Question' (Appendix A).

¹⁴⁹ Helka's rousing speech reflects the views that Canth herself held about the hypocritical church institution (Appendix A & C). The speech also suggests that, despite the sometimes problematic portrayals of the Roma characters in the play, Canth did feel genuine sympathy for the plight of Roma people, and acknowledged how oppressed they were and the hypocrisy of this persecution. In my feminist translation, I have picked up on Canth's use of the second person, the accusatory 'Oh, you Christians', and have directed the speech towards the audience and used 'you' throughout the rest of the speech.

¹⁵⁰ In Finnish, Hagert's line here is idiomatic: 'On lampaan päässä hyviäkin paikkoja' ['There are good places in a lamb's head too']. I chose not to translate it literally, as I felt that the meaning would not be completely clear, so translated unidiomatically as 'there can be good among the bad.' I also chose to cut this interjection in my feminist translation, as I think it disrupts and softens the impact of Helka's speech.

Helka. I've seen no good ones, as much of the world as I have travelled. They're all alike, not one is better than the other. And still they reject us, hold us as less worthy than their dogs. They say their god has cursed us and sent us to eternal exile. But all the same we should go to church, and serve that god? Of course! What was it again? You wanted me to help that man who betrayed you? To make a salve for his eyes?

Kerttu. Yes, grandma, if you can.

Helka. I could yes, but I don't want to. Do you hear me? I don't want to. I'd sooner make a salve to take away the very last light from his eyes. Yes, god help me, *that* I'd want to do.

Kerttu. You could heal his eyes and you don't want to. Won't you, even if you know that I must drown myself if he goes blind?

Helka. What madness! You would drown yourself for the sake of that man who betrayed you? You pity those beasts who drove your mother to death, and curse your people? No! My daughter's daughter is not so stupid. I won't believe that.

Kerttu. Grandma, in short: will you heal his eyes, or not?

Helka. I won't! Even if he must live in eternal darkness, I won't! Even then, I won't!

Ilona. (*Wraps her arm around Kerttu.*) Kerttu, don't speak to your grandmother about this anymore. Wait until she's calmed down.

I've seen no good ones, as much of the world as I have travelled. They're all alike, not one is better than the other. And still they reject us, hold us as less worthy than their dogs. They say their god has cursed us and sent us to eternal exile. But all the same we should go to church, and serve that god? Of course!

Helka turns back to the scene.

What was it again? You wanted me to help that man who betrayed you? To make a salve for his eyes?

Kerttu. Yes, grandma, if you can.

Helka. I could yes, but I don't want to. Do you hear me? I don't want to. I'd sooner make a salve to take away the very last light from his eyes. Yes, god help me, *that* I'd want to do.

Kerttu. You could heal his eyes and you don't want to. Won't you, even if you know that I must drown myself if he goes blind?

Helka. What madness! You would drown yourself for the sake of that man who betrayed you? You pity those beasts who as good as murdered your mother, and who curse your people? No! My daughter's daughter is not so stupid. I refuse to believe that.

Kerttu. Grandma, in short: will you heal his eyes, or not?

Helka. I won't! Even if he must live in eternal darkness, I won't! Even then, I won't!

Ilona. (*Wraps her arms around Kerttu.*) Kerttu, don't speak to your grandmother about this anymore. Wait until she's calmed down.

Helka. What are you whispering, Ilona? Away, go into the barn with your children. Everyone onto the hay to sleep now. You too, Kerttu. Or calm yourself out here first, if you want to. But don't speak another word to me about that man, remember that. (*Follows the others into the barn.*)

Kerttu. Goodbye, grandma! Goodbye, all of you. You won't see me again. Better to be at the bottom of a lake, as a sister of whitefish, than with such a hard-hearted family.¹⁵¹ (*Goes to leave.*)

Risto. Well, hello! I've caught you at last. I had a feeling I wouldn't find you anywhere other than the Niittylä's hay barn.¹⁵²

Kerttu. How are your eyes, Risto? Will you really go blind?

Risto. Not good, I'm afraid. I can't see much at all. Especially not with this one.

Kerttu. What about the medicines and salves? Didn't they help?

Risto. Pointless. They just made them hurt twice as much.

Kerttu. Why don't you take your revenge, Risto? You should take your knife and stick it in my breast.

Helka. What are you whispering, Ilona? Away, go into the barn. Everyone onto the hay to sleep now. You too, Kerttu. Or calm yourself out here first, if you want to. But don't speak another word to me about that man, remember that. (*Follows the others into the barn.*)

Kerttu is alone for a moment. Then Risto enters.

The earlier uncanny feeling shifts to something darker. Very faintly, the sound of the cotton mill starts up again.

Risto. Finally – I've caught you! I had a feeling I'd find you here.

Kerttu. How are your eyes, Risto? Will you really go blind?

Risto. Not good, I'm afraid. I can't see much at all. Especially not with this one.

Kerttu. What about the medicine? Didn't it help?

Risto. Pointless. Just made them hurt twice as much.

Kerttu. Why don't you take revenge, Risto? You should take your knife and stick it in my breast.

¹⁵¹ The phrase 'sister of whitefish' – 'siikojen sisarena' in Finnish – is another phrase that appears in the *Kalevala*. It is a phrase spoken by the character Aino in Canto 4, where she is weeping to her mother because she has been promised to wise old Väinämöinen, the central character, who Aino does not want to marry: 'Oisit ennen käskennä / Alle aaltojen syvien / Sisareksi siikasille, / Veikoksi ve'en kaloille.' ['Better far if thou hadst sent me / Far below the salt-sea surges, / To become the whiting's sister, / And the friend of perch and salmon.' – translation by John Martin Crawford] In the *Kalevala*, Aino does drown rather than submit to marrying Väinämöinen, and turns into a fish. I chose to cut this line from my feminist translation because I felt, again, that it leaned too strongly into the portrayal of Kerttu as temperamental and hot-headed.

¹⁵² Risto's line suggests that the forest, by the Niittylä's hay barn, is a place where they have met before. There is an implication that the forest, outside of the town and away from the townspeople, has always been a place of refuge for Kerttu, and a place where she has experienced moments of happiness.

Risto. Come on now. Would that heal them?

Kerttu. If only I could somehow make this right, Risto.

Risto. And you'd actually want to do that, Kerttu? To tell you the truth, I followed you here because I hoped you would.

Kerttu. Would I want to? I would give my life to get you your eyesight back.

Risto. That's impossible now. But you could make things right some other way.

Kerttu. Risto, I know! If you go blind, you won't be able to earn your own keep. But I will work and support you. And I can do it, you'll see. No one is as strong as me. How stupid I was! I'd already decided to throw myself in the lake, because I was so angry at myself and at life. It didn't even occur to me that I could be of any help or use to you.

Risto. There might be something in that. But they don't pay much for women's work. You can't get very far on those wages.¹⁵³

Kerttu. Yes, but I know another way. I'll travel to marketplaces and I'll dance and sing. And better yet, to gentlemen's drinking places. Ooh, yes, I'll think of ways. Do you remember how much money

Beat.

Risto. Come on now. Would that heal them?

Kerttu. If only I could somehow make this right, Risto.

Risto. And you'd actually want to do that, Kerttu? To tell you the truth, I followed you here because I hoped you would.

Kerttu. I would give my life for you to get your eyesight back.

Beat.

Risto. That's impossible now. But you could make things right some other way...

Kerttu. Risto, I know! If you go blind, you won't be able to earn your own money. But I will work and support you. And I can do it, you'll see. No one is as strong as me. How stupid I was! I'd already decided to throw myself in the lake, because I was so angry at myself and at life. It didn't even occur to me that I could be of any help or use to you.

Risto. There might be something in that. But they don't pay much for women's work. You can't get very far on women's wages.

Kerttu. Yes, but I know another way – *(Gathers herself. Thinks. The decision is a painful one.)* I'll travel to marketplaces and I'll dance and sing. And better yet, to

¹⁵³ Here Risto unquestioningly acknowledges the gender pay gap. His continual unquestioning references to unjust laws and status quos mark him as completely archetypally indoctrinated in dominant ideology.

those men gave me at the market today?¹⁵⁴

Risto. Yes, that's not a bad idea. I was thinking of something like that myself.

Kerttu. You will live like an king from now on, Risto. I will always come and bring you money. And every time you will be happy. Isn't that so, Risto?

Risto. You can be sure of that. Once I have some money.

Kerttu. What a silly girl I am.¹⁵⁵ I'm laughing and crying at the same time. – I feel so good and light now, though water still wells in my eyes. It's a wonder I didn't realise sooner how I could fix – even a little – that terrible thing I did.

Risto. How sweet you are. Funny creature. Just this morning so angry and now so good again. Where did your bad mood get to, when there's no sign of it left at all?

Kerttu. It melted like wax. Disappeared like dew drops from grass. Don't think about that anymore, Risto. I'm already ashamed of how stupid I was.

Risto. But you know what, Kerttu?

Kerttu. What?

gentlemen's drinking places. I'll think of ways. Did you see how much money those men gave me at the market today?

Risto. Yes, that's not a bad idea. I was thinking of something like that myself.

Kerttu. You'll live like a king from now on, Risto. I will always come and bring you money. And you'll be happy every time. Isn't that right?

Risto. You can be sure of that.

Kerttu. I'm such a fool – laughing and crying at the same time. – I feel so good and light now, even though water's still welling in my eyes. I can't believe Until now I didn't see how I could fix – even a little – that terrible thing I did.

Risto. How sweet you are. Funny creature. Just this morning so angry and now so good again. Where did your bad mood get to? There's no sign of it left at all now.

Kerttu. It melted like wax. Disappeared like dew drops from grass. Don't think about that anymore, Risto. I'm already ashamed of how stupid I was.

Risto. But you know what, Kerttu?

Kerttu. What?

¹⁵⁴ Kerttu's solution demonstrates how the only way for her to make a viable wage is through self-exploitation.

¹⁵⁵ Kerttu uses the word 'hupakko' ['silly girl'] about herself here – the same word Risto used about her in act one.

Risto. Take me with you, then we can travel together from market to market and gather a whole load of money.

Kerttu. Together? You and me?

Risto. Yes, exactly, you and me. See, I know better where gentlemen gather and that sort of thing anyway. You won't know where to find them, unless I come to guide you to them and advise you.

Kerttu. But how can you do that if you go blind?¹⁵⁶

Risto. Perhaps I won't in the end. Well, I mean of course, perhaps not completely blind.

Kerttu. What about Johanna?

Risto. Let her stay here and live her own life. She has nothing to worry about. She gets as much work as she wants.¹⁵⁷

Kerttu. Yes, but –

Risto. She won't miss me, don't worry about that. She'll just be glad to be rid of me.

Kerttu. Of you, her husband? How is that possible?

Risto. Take me with you, then we can travel together from market to market and gather a whole load of money.

Kerttu. Together? You and me?

Risto. Yes, exactly, you and me. See, I know better where gentlemen gather and that sort of thing anyway. You won't know where to find them, unless I come to guide you to them and advise you.

Kerttu. But how can you do that if you go blind?

Risto. Perhaps I won't in the end. Well, I mean of course, perhaps not completely blind.

Kerttu. What about Johanna?

Beat.

Risto. Let her stay here and live her own life. She's got nothing to worry about. She can get as much work as she wants.

Kerttu. Yes, but –

Risto. She won't miss me, don't worry about that. She'll just be glad to be rid of me.

Kerttu. Of you, her husband? How is that possible?

¹⁵⁶ Maijala (2008, p.99), tracing the motif of blindness and sight in the play, notes how: 'Risto's blinding is a sham, conversely Homsantuu is blinded by love and does not see Risto's true nature. Risto sees in Homsantuu this propensity for being seduced, but sighted Homsantuu does not see her own position. The "blind" can see, but the sighted is blind.'

¹⁵⁷ This is a questionable claim, considering he himself has just pointed out how poorly women are paid.

Risto. Believe it, or not, that's how things are. Well, what do you think? Shall we do it?

Kerttu. When I've asked my grandmother.

Risto. Your grandmother?

Kerttu. My grandmother and my uncle, who are asleep there in that barn. It's with them we'd surely be traveling.

Risto. Christ! So there are people in that barn? We'll speak quietly then. Come and sit under this tree, Kerttu, then we can speak – a bit further away.

Kerttu. Why there? Here is just as good.

Risto. No, come here, and I'll whisper something in your ear. Well – what's the matter?

Kerttu. I don't know. It's already night and it's so dark over there.

Risto. Don't be silly, come over here. *(Pulls Kerttu by the hand.)*

Helka. *(Shouts from the hut)* Kerttu! Hey, Kerttu, are you outside?

Kerttu. *(Pulls her hand away.)* Let me go, grandma's shouting. And leave quickly, Risto; go, go, so grandma doesn't see you.

Risto. *(Grips her hand again.)* Shh! – Let's wait a moment, surely she won't come out here.

Risto. Believe it, or not, that's how things are. Well, what do you think? Shall we do it?

Kerttu. When I've asked my grandmother.

Risto. Your grandmother?

Kerttu. My grandmother and my uncle – they're asleep in that barn. We'd obviously be travelling with them.

Risto. Christ! There are people in that barn? We'll speak quietly then. Come and sit under this tree, Kerttu, then we can speak – a bit further away.

Kerttu. Why there? Here is just as good.

Risto. No, come here, and I'll whisper something in your ear. Well – what's the matter?

Kerttu. I don't know. It's already night and it's so dark over there.

Risto. Don't be silly, come over here. *(Pulls Kerttu by the hand.)*

Helka. *(Shouting from the barn)* Kerttu! Hey, Kerttu, are you outside?

Kerttu. *(Pulls her hand away.)* Let me go, grandma's shouting. And leave quickly, Risto; go, go, so she doesn't see you.

Risto. *(Grips her hand again.)* Shh! – Let's wait a moment, surely she won't come out here.

Helka. Kerttu, where are you?

Kerttu. Let me go, Risto, she will. You'll hear from me in a couple of days, goodbye 'til then.

Risto. Do you promise?

Kerttu. I promise. She's coming now.

Risto. Alright, goodbye 'til then! (*Goes.*)

Helka. (*Watches from the barn door.*) Why are you out there so late? Come and sleep already.

Kerttu. Grandma, listen! Do you love me at all?

Helka. Well, now, child! Why do you ask so fiercely? Of course I love you. Are you not one of my own oppressed people, and are you not my own flesh and blood? Of course I love you.

Kerttu. Then you will take my friend into your group and see him as a member of our family, the same as you do me. Will you do that, grandma?

Helka. Do you mean that man who betrayed you?

Kerttu. He won't do it again.

Helka. And if I don't agree to take him with us, what then, Kerttu?

Kerttu. In that case we will take our own path.

Helka. Kerttu, where are you?

Kerttu. Let me go, Risto, she will. You'll hear from me in a couple of days, goodbye 'til then.

Risto. Do you promise?

Kerttu. I promise. She's coming now.

Risto. Alright, goodbye 'til then! (*Exits.*)

Helka. (*Watches from the barn door.*) Why are you out there so late? Come to bed already.

Kerttu. Grandma, listen! Do you love me at all?

Helka. For goodness' sake girl! Of course I love you. Are you not one of my own oppressed people, are you not my own flesh and blood? Of course I love you.

Kerttu. Then you will take my friend into your group and treat him like a member of our family, the same as you do me. Will you do that, grandma?

Helka. Do you mean that man who betrayed you?

Kerttu. He won't do it again.

Helka. And if I don't agree to take him with us, what then, Kerttu?

Kerttu. In that case we will take our own path.

Helka. Child, child, it is you who are blind, not that man you call your friend. Come into the barn now out of this cold night. It is not healthy to spend nights awake in loneliness, Kerttu. Your mother had the same habit and it didn't lighten her heart's sorrows.

Kerttu. Answer me first. Do you agree or not?

Helka. I suppose I must. What else can be done?

Kerttu. Thank you, grandma!

Helka. But know this: if he betrays you once more, then I will kill him.

Kerttu. If he betrays me once more, then *you* won't kill him, *I* will.

Curtain down.

Helka. Child, child, it is you who are blind, not that man you call your friend. Come into the barn now out of this cold night. It's not healthy to spend nights awake in loneliness, Kerttu. Your mother had the same habit and it didn't lighten her heart's sorrows.

Kerttu. Answer me first. Do you agree or not?

Helka. I suppose I must. What else can I do?

Kerttu. Thank you, grandma!

They embrace. Helka pulls away and takes a microphone out of her pocket, as Kerttu did earlier, and sings a karaoke cover of the song 'Eihän tämä maa' ['This Country Was Not My Own'] by noted Finnish-Roma singer and collector of Romani songs, Hilja Grönfors. In this song, the singer reflects sadly that 'this land was never my own, after all,' longs for her former life, and mourns the end of a relationship. A translation of the lyrics should be provided. Kerttu watches her whilst she sings. At the end of the song, Helka embraces Kerttu once more.

Helka. Know this: if that man betrays you once more, then I will kill him.

Kerttu. If he betrays me once more, then you won't kill him, I will.

!!!

ACT IV

Johanna and Risto's home. To the left a loom with a cloth attached to it. To the right a cradle. On the right side of the back wall, a bed; in the middle a door to the porch. Johanna sits on a stool, singing a lullaby to the child and rocking the cradle. Risto is lying on the bed.

Johanna. *(Singing.)*

*'Tuuti lasta tuonelahan,
Tuonne kirkon kammiohon.
Siell' on tupa turvekatto,
Hieno hiekka peltomaana.
Tuonen viita, rauhan viita!
Kaukana on vaino, riita,
Kaukana kavala maailma –'*¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ This lullaby is very similar to one in the 'Lullabies' sub-section of the Songs for Women section of *Kanteletar* (Book 2, Song 178 'Tuuti last tuonelahan' ['Rock the Child to Tuonela']). 'Tuonela' is a name for the underworld in Finnish mythology. In the introduction to his translation of poems from *Kanteletar*, Keith Bosley (1992) touches on the strangeness of this lullaby, where the mother seems to wish death for her child. He writes that 'we must return to Finland, where poverty and child mortality were the norm,' citing the interpretation that 'a mother wished her baby in another, better world, but the only language available to her was that which identified the otherworld as that of death.' (Bosley, 1992, p.xxiii). In act two, Johanna lamented that her child had been unwell and that she struggled to feed him. Given that context, this melancholy lullaby seems fitting.

ACT IV: The Home

Johanna and Risto's home. On one side, a loom with a cloth attached to it. On the other, a cradle. A bed. In the middle, a door to the porch. Johanna sits on a stool, singing a lullaby to the child and rocking the cradle. Risto is lying on the bed.

Minna. We hope you have enjoyed - well, perhaps not enjoyed... We hope you feel *edified* by what you have seen so far. Having left behind the forest and that 'happy' couple, we return once more to the town. This time, to a domestic scene, to the marital home of Risto, his wife Johanna, and their little child. Let us see what manner of things might unfold here...

Johanna. *(Singing.)*

*'Tuuti lasta tuonelahan,
Tuonne kirkon kammiohon.
Siell' on tupa turvekatto,
Hieno hiekka peltomaana.
Tuonen viita, rauhan viita!
Kaukana on vaino, riita,
Kaukana kavala maailma –'*

[*'Rock the child to Tuonela
There into the church's cell.
There is a hut with a turf roof,
A field of finest sand.
Grove of death, grove of peace!
Far away is persecution, conflict,
Far away the treacherous world –'*]

Risto. (*Turns impatiently onto his other side.*) Quiet over there, I'm trying to rest.

Johanna. (*Stops singing. Continues to rock the cradle for a moment, checks if the child is asleep, and rises quietly.*) Risto – are you awake?

Risto. What then?

Johanna. I'd ask you to mind the child for a little while. I have to go to Mrs Vörsky's house to get the weft for the cloth.

Risto. Will you be long?

Johanna. No more than a blessed moment.

Risto. I'll be in trouble if it wakes up and starts screaming while you're gone. I'll never get it to stop, whether I try to or not.¹⁵⁹

Johanna. He's unlikely to wake up when he's only just gone to sleep.

[*'Rock the child to Tuonela
There into the church's cell.
There is a hut with a turf roof,
A field of finest sand.
Grove of death, grove of peace!
Far away is persecution, conflict,
Far away the treacherous world –'*]

Risto. Quiet over there, I'm trying to rest.

Johanna. (*Stops singing. Continues to rock the cradle for a moment, checks if the child is asleep, and rises quietly.*) Risto – are you awake?

Risto. If I was?

Johanna. I'd ask you to mind the child for a little while. I have to go to Mrs Vörsky's house to pick up some threads for the cloth.

Risto. Will you be long?

Johanna. No more than a moment.

Risto. I'll be in trouble if it wakes up and starts screaming while you're gone. I'll never get it to stop, if I try to or not.

Johanna. He's unlikely to wake up when he's only just gone to sleep.

¹⁵⁹ I have used the pronoun 'it' for the baby, to mirror the use of 'se' in Finnish. 'It' is a more jarring pronoun to use for a baby in English than 'se' is in Finnish, but the objectifying, cold tone matches Risto's general attitude of disinterest towards the child throughout.

Risto. You might ask Mrs Vörsky for a couple of marks in advance. Surely she won't say no.

Johanna. That's so hard, Risto. I can't go asking for advance money. And we don't need any more at the moment when we've got bread and food at home.

Risto. We need money for other things too, not just food. My boots are broken, I should be taking those to be mended and all.

Johanna. You have another pair. Wear those until I've got the cloth woven. (*At the door*) You will be at home now, won't you, so the baby won't be alone?

Risto. Off you go; perhaps I can look after it.

Johanna exits.

Risto. (*Shouts*) Actually – did she leave already? Johanna! Listen, one more thing. Jo-han-na!

Johanna opens the door and stands on the threshold.

Risto. Bring us a bit of money from there now, anyway, so I can at least finally get a bottle of beer.

Johanna. Impossible! What would the lady say if I asked her for money for beer?

Risto. Do you have to tell her that, silly? You could say, for instance, about my being ill and needing medicine.

Risto. You could ask Mrs Vörsky for a couple of pennies in advance. She won't say no.

Johanna. That's so hard, Risto. I can't go asking for money in advance. And we don't need any more at the moment, we've got bread and food.

Risto. We need money for other things too, not just food. My boots are broken. I need to get them mended, for one thing.

Johanna. You have another pair. Wear those until I've got the cloth woven. (*At the door*) You will stay at home now, won't you? So the baby won't be alone?

Risto. Off you go; perhaps I can look after it.

Johanna exits.

Risto. Actually – she gone already? Johanna! Listen, one more thing. Jo-han-na!

Johanna opens the door and stands on the threshold.

Risto. Go on, bring us a bit of money from there, so I can at least get a beer.

Johanna. Impossible! What would the lady say if I asked her for beer money?

Risto. Do you have to tell her that, silly? You could say, for instance, about my being ill and needing medicine.

Johanna. I won't start telling lies, Risto.

Risto. You won't, you won't! That's just like you. Always, *always* against, never with. Get on your way then, so you'll be back again soon, just go already.

Johanna leaves.

Risto. (*Yawns widely and sits up.*) Nothing will come of this. Evenings are dull and days are as long as famine years. And that Homsantuu doesn't seem to be coming either, even though she promised. I shall have to go and fetch her again.

Toppo puts his head in through the door.

Toppo. Hullo! You're at home then?

Risto. Where else?

Toppo. What a question. You've generally been found at the pub before now.

Risto. What can a man do there when all his money's pissed down the drain?

Toppo. And it didn't last long in your claws, it has to be said.

Risto. No wonder. Only six hundred marks. You can't run far with that.

Johanna. I won't start telling lies, Risto.

Risto. You won't, you won't! That's just like you. Always, always against, never with. Get on your way then, so you'll be back again soon, just go already.

Johanna leaves.

(*Yawns widely and sits up.*) Nothing'll come of this. Evenings are dull and days feel as long as famine years. And that Homsantuu doesn't seem to be coming either, even though she promised. I shall have to go and fetch her again.

Toppo enters.

Toppo. Hullo! You're at home then?

Risto. Where else?

Toppo. 'Where else'! I'd usually find you at the pub before now.

Risto. What can a man do at the pub when all his money's pissed down the drain?

Toppo. It didn't last long in your hands, it has to be said.

Risto. No wonder. Only six hundred marks. You can't get far with that.

Toppo. Well, it's not an amount to go *very* far on, but you can certainly work up a sweat to save that much.¹⁶⁰

Risto. Have you been to the pub then, by the way?

Toppo. That's where I've just come from.

Risto. And there were men there?

Toppo. As usual. There's always a crowd there, whatever time of day.

Risto. Day or night. We really are a bunch of rascals, Toppo, when it comes down to it.

Toppo. Don't say that! We, in fact, are the very best of men, if you really think about it. The world could hardly stay upright without us.

Risto. Come on now! Do you seriously mean that?

Toppo. Well, listen! Whose shoulders carry the load here, the lords' or the workers'? Who labours, and who enjoys the fruits of those labours? Explain that.¹⁶¹

Toppo. Not very far, no, but you can certainly work up a sweat to save that much.

Risto. So have you been at the pub then?

Toppo. That's where I've just come from.

Risto. And there were men there?

Toppo. As ever. There's always a crowd there.

Risto. Day or night. When it comes down to it, Toppo, we're a right bunch of rascals.

Toppo. Don't say that! We, in fact, are the very best of men, if you really think about it. The world could hardly stay upright without us.

Risto. Come on now! Do you seriously mean that?

Toppo's speech is rousing, but every now and then we hear the sound of the cradle creaking.

Toppo. Well, listen! Whose shoulders carry the load: the lords' or the workers'? Who labours, and who enjoys the fruits of those labours? Explain that.

¹⁶⁰ Toppo's remark recalls Johanna's earlier line about how she had worked for ten years to save that money.

¹⁶¹ I really love the following speech. I think it is witty and apt, and illustrates the impossible position of working-class men in nineteenth-century Finland. However, the speech conspicuously fails to mention the doubly impossible situation of working-class women, which is what Canth explores in this play. Toppo certainly does not take into consideration the additional domestic labour unquestioningly performed by women, and the impact this has on their lives. Despite the fact that Risto is meant to be looking after the baby, the men completely ignore its presence throughout this long dialogue.

Risto. Yes, yes, maybe so. But I really meant, well, the sorts of ‘gentlemen of leisure’, like you and me and the others.¹⁶²

Toppo. Who drink? Well but that’s just it, too. See, in this country, our lots are ordered so wisely that, no matter what we do, we can’t be unnecessary participants in society. Whether we live like this or that, we always do what’s best for our country. If we work, that’s good, if we drink, that’s not bad. If there were no liquor drinkers, there’d be no distilleries, and then the state wouldn’t get alcohol taxes. And then how would they build schools and railways?

Risto. True! I’ve never thought of that. You’re no fool, you, Toppo.

Toppo. But the lords, on the other hand! They drink expensive foreign drinks, dress in foreign cloth, food, furniture, and every last useless thing, everything must be bought from abroad. Isn’t that a burden on the country? And how is it made up for, if not with the very sweat and strength of the lowest citizens?

Risto. And hunger.

Toppo. Yes indeed. With hunger too. Let a person toil as much as he can, and even then he can’t get enough to properly get by on. A fool works hard, a wise man lives on less. And for my part, I don’t care to weigh my shoulders down with too much work, I’d rather just drink, because by drinking I can benefit mankind more nobly still.

Risto. Than with work?

Risto. Yes, yes, maybe. But I really meant, well, the sorts of ‘gentlemen of leisure’, like you and me and the others.

Toppo. What, who drink? Well, but that’s just it. See, in this country, our lots are ordered so wisely that no matter what we do, we can’t be unnecessary members of society. Whether we live like this or that, we always do what’s best for our country. If we work, that’s good, if we drink, that’s not bad. If there were no liquor drinkers, there’d be no distilleries, and then the state wouldn’t get alcohol taxes. And then how would they build schools and railways?

Risto. True! I’ve never thought of that. You’re no fool, you, Toppo.

Toppo. But the lords, on the other hand! They drink expensive foreign drinks, dress in foreign clothes, food, furniture, and every last useless thing, everything must be bought from abroad. Isn’t that a burden on the country? And how is it made up for, if not with the very sweat and strength of the lowest citizens?

Risto. And hunger.

Toppo. Yes, indeed. With hunger too. Let a person toil as much as he can, and even then he can’t get enough to properly live on. A fool works hard, a wise man lives on less. And for my part, I don’t care to weigh my shoulders down with too much work, I’d rather just drink, because by drinking I can benefit mankind more nobly.

Risto. Than with work?

¹⁶² In Finnish, Risto calls them ‘Maaillan Mattit’ [‘Mattis of the world’], using the male name ‘Matti’ in the same way that Vappu does at the beginning of act one. The expression means ‘men of the world’, i.e. ordinary, worldly, men. I must credit David Hanhila and Mary Taanila Lehtinen (1981, p.41) for the translation of this phrase as ‘gentlemen of leisure’, as I borrowed this from their translation, it seeming so apt.

Toppo. Well, exactly. Look now, isn't it clear? If I work, I simply make the rich richer, so they can live their lives in even greater luxury, but if I drink, then I further civilisation in this country, and that, we know, that – that's something else. When I just read in the paper, too, what big gains the pubs made last year, and how that meant there were enough funds for a reading room, for the national library, a girls' school and all sorts of good facilities, then already I thought to myself (*Sings*): *'Ei saa moittia juomaripoikaa, juomaripoikaa, juomaripoikaa. Mies se on paikallansa ja mies se on paikallansa –'*¹⁶³ [*'You can't scold the drinking boy, the drinking boy, the drinking boy. A man he is in his place, and a man his is in his place –'*](*Breaks off suddenly; speaks*) Come, man, to the pub.¹⁶⁴

Risto. No money.¹⁶⁵

Toppo. Don't you have anything here you can pawn?

Risto. Wait!¹⁶⁶ Truth again, you said the word. So be it. Let's cut Johanna's cloth off there and take it to the pub to pawn. What do you think? Will that work?

Toppo. Why not? But what will your wife say about it?

Risto. I'm not worrying about Johanna. What can she do to me? Cry a few tears first, then find the money and get the cloth back. That'll do it. Come and help, I don't really know how to proceed here.

¹⁶³ A traditional drinking folk song.

¹⁶⁴ Knowing that Canth was a passionate advocate for temperance, it is clear that this speech was penned with a heavy degree of sarcasm. However, Toppo's speech does shed light on the difficulty of working-class men's position in nineteenth century Finland, who were poorly paid and worked in very poor conditions, for whom drinking was a sole escape from the world.

¹⁶⁵ In the Finnish text Risto says 'Dengi nietu', a rough transliteration of 'no money' in Russian.

¹⁶⁶ He switches to Swedish here, saying 'Vänta'. I chose to keep neither the Russian or Swedish here in my translation. These would have been familiar languages to original audiences, and it would be common to loan words in a colloquial context, but the languages are unlikely to be familiar to most anglophone audiences. Instead, I have tried to reproduce the slangy effect elsewhere in Risto's dialogue.

Toppo. Well, exactly. Look now, isn't it clear? If I work, I simply make the rich richer, so they can live their lives in even greater luxury, but if I drink, then I further civilisation in this country, and that, we know, that – that's something else. When I just read in the paper, too, what big gains the pubs made last year, and how that meant there was enough money to pay for a reading room, the national library, a girls' school and all sorts. (*He pauses. Both sit for a moment, in reverie. Then Toppo breaks off suddenly; speaks*) Come, man, to the pub.

Risto. No money.

Toppo. Don't you have anything here you can pawn?

Risto. Ahs! Truth again, you said the word. Let's cut Johanna's cloth off and take that to the pub to pawn. What do you think? Will that work?

Toppo. Why not? But what'll your wife have to say about it?

Risto. I'm not worrying about Johanna. What can she do? Shed a couple of tears, then find the money and get the cloth back. That'll do it. Come and help, I don't really know how to proceed here.

Toppo. Don't cut so close, leave some of the woven bit and then let it go along that stripe. Like that. And now it's cut. Just pull it off still. Nothing to worry about here. You can always get a drink with a cloth like that. (*Sings*) 'Mitäs minä muuta kuin juon ja rallaan henttuni tavaralla ja ralla, Mitäs minä muuta kuin juon ja rallaan henttuni tavaralla –'¹⁶⁷ ['What do I do but drink and sing, What do I do but drink and sing with my darling's things –']

Risto. Stop singing now and help me roll the cloth. Knowing my luck Johanna will come home before we can get out of here.

Toppo. (*Stamps the beat with his foot.*) 'Mitäs minä muuta kuin juon ja rallaan henttuni tavaralla ja ralla, Mitäs minä muuta kuin juon ja rallaan henttuni tavaralla –'

Risto. You're completely mad, or have you already had a few drinks too many this morning?

Toppo. 'Man eats and man receives, and for men God too provides.'¹⁶⁸ Weren't we blessed with more now, when the last lot ran out? We really are lucky boys, aren't we?

Risto. But I'm completely lost with this cloth, with it so long. I can't get it together. And you're flapping your jaw about nothing over there and can't be bothered to help.

Toppo. What a fool you are. Show it here. What's the problem here?

Toppo. Don't cut so close, leave some of the woven bit and then let it go along that stripe. Like that. Easy does it. And now pull it off. No problem! A man can certainly get a drink with a cloth like that. (*Starts dancing around.*)

Risto. Stop messing around now and help me roll the cloth up. Knowing my luck Johanna'll be home before we can get out of here.

Toppo ignores him, dancing more boisterously.

You're completely off your head. Have you already had a few too many this morning?

Toppo. The lord always provides. Weren't we blessed with more now, just when the last lot ran out? We're lucky boys, aren't we?

Risto. I'm completely lost with this cloth, with it being so long. I can't get it together. And you're flapping your jaw about nothing over there and can't be bothered to help –

Toppo. What a fool you are. Show it here. What's the problem?

¹⁶⁷ Toppo sings a different folk drinking song.

¹⁶⁸ The line is in quotation marks in the published text, implying that it is a quotation from something. I have been unable to trace the quotation, and have only found the same expression in a fiction book published in 1885 by G.A. Heman, which did not offer any further illumination.

You're just panicking for no reason. It has to go like this, like this, and this. There, there like that. Put it nicely onto your arm, and now quickly to the pub. A boy can be proud with a cloth like that in his arms.

Risto. As long as we don't meet Johanna on the road. There'd be a row before we could get out of the way.

Toppo. Don't be scared, she won't come. We've got enough luck on our side for that.

They are about to go, when at the same time the door opens and Leena-Kaisa steps inside.

Risto. (*Jumps behind Toppo and tries to hide the cloth*). Now we're in trouble.

Toppo. Shit, said the Russian, when his beard caught fire.¹⁶⁹

Leena-Kaisa. To God's health! Why did I give you such a fright?

Risto. We thought you were Johanna. Good day!

Leena-Kaisa. Where are we off to?

Risto. Nowhere really. We just thought we'd quickly nip into town.

Leena-Kaisa Is Johanna at home?

You're just panicking for no reason. It has to go like this, like this, and this. There, like that. Put it nicely on your arm, and now quickly to the pub. A boy can be proud with a cloth like that in his arms.

Risto. Just as long as we don't meet Johanna on the road. The last thing we need is a row.

Toppo. Don't you worry, she won't come. We've got enough luck on our side for that.

They are about to go, when at the same time the door opens and Leena-Kaisa steps inside. Risto jumps behind Toppo and attempts to hide the cloth.

Risto. Oh, here we go.

Toppo. Shit!

Leena-Kaisa. God be with you. Why did I give you such a fright?

Risto. We thought you were Johanna. Hello!

Leena-Kaisa. Where are we off to?

Risto. Nowhere really. We just thought we'd nip into town quickly.

Leena-Kaisa. Is Johanna at home?

¹⁶⁹ In the Finnish, Toppo says 'Hulipit', the meaning of which I have not been able to track down. Based on context, I assume it is a mild expletive of some kind. He also uses the word 'ryssä', a slightly derogatory word for a Russian person, close to 'russki' in English, but I chose to translate it as 'the Russian'.

Risto. She's not. She went to Mrs Vörsky's. Had some business, I think.

Leena-Kaisa. But then how can you go out and leave the child alone?

Risto. Bloody hell! I forgot about the child.

Toppo. So *men* should start shepherding children? Now the world really is upside down.¹⁷⁰

Risto. Perhaps Leena-Kaisa will sit here with the boy for now? Johanna will be home soon, she won't be out long.

Leena-Kaisa. It's all the same to me. I suppose I can stay here, since you have somewhere to be.

Risto. In that case we'll go, Toppo.

Toppo. Onward, march!

Risto and Toppo leave.

Leena-Kaisa. Why did he hide that cloth behind his back like that? Was he scared I'd steal it with my eyes? (*sits on the stool and rocks the cradle with her foot; takes her knitting, a sock, from her pocket.*) And no sign of that Johanna either. How she can bring herself to leave her husband to look after the child, while she gallivants about town. Some business, said Risto. Yes, I'm sure! Very likely. One can soon make 'business' out of anything, when one feels like going to town. Ooh, these people. (*Sings softly*)
'Ah suruton!

Risto. She's not. She went to Mrs Vörsky's. Had some business, I think.

Leena-Kaisa. But then how can you go out and leave the child alone?

Risto. Bloody hell! I forgot about the child.

Toppo. So men are supposed to start minding the kids, are they? Now the world really is upside down.

Risto. Perhaps Leena-Kaisa would sit here with the boy for now? Johanna'll be home soon, she won't be out long.

Leena-Kaisa. It's all the same to me. I suppose I can stay here, since you have somewhere to be.

Risto. In that case we'll go, Toppo.

Toppo. Onward, march!

Risto and Toppo leave.

Leena-Kaisa. What was all that about? (*Sits on the stool and rocks the cradle with her foot; takes her knitting, a sock, from her pocket.*) No sign of that Johanna, either. How she can bring herself to leave her husband to look after the child, while she gallivants about town. Some business, said Risto. Yes, I'm sure! Very likely. One can soon make 'business' out of anything, when one feels like going to town. (*Tutting*) These people! (*Sings a hymn to herself softly.*)

'Ah suruton!

¹⁷⁰ Again, a reinforcement of the way gender roles are strictly enforced, and of how women's domestic labour is dismissed.

*Koskas synnistä lakkaat,
Kuink' kauvan synniss'
murheetonna makaat?
Ah herää, herää,
aika on jo tull',
Viel' tahtoo Jumal'
laupias olla sull''¹⁷¹*

*[Ah carefree!
When will you cease from sin,
How long will you lie
in sin without sorrow?
Ah wake, wake,
the time has come,
God still wants
to grant you mercy.]*

Johanna enters.

Johanna. Oh, Leena-Kaisa. Good day!¹⁷²

*Koskas synnistä lakkaat,
Kuink' kauvan synniss'
murheetonna makaat?
Ah herää, herää,
aika on jo tull',
Viel' tahtoo Jumal'
laupias olla sull''*

*[‘Ah, carefree!
When will you cease from sin,
How long will you lie
in sin without sorrow?
Ah wake, wake,
the time has come,
God still wants
to grant you mercy.’]*

Johanna enters.

Leena-Kaisa does not look at Johanna throughout. Her speeches are declamatory, as if she were making them from the pulpit, as opposed to in Johanna’s living room.

Johanna. Oh, Leena-Kaisa. Good morning!

¹⁷¹ This is a Lutheran chorale, appearing in the 1701 Finnish *Vanha virsikirja* [*Old Hymn Book*] (408:1). The words summarise what Leena-Kaisa goes on to say to Johanna in the following scene.

¹⁷² In his review of the play (Appendix D), O.E. Tudeer compares all the side characters to a chorus in a Greek tragedy, and names Leena-Kaisa as the Coryphaeus (the leader of the chorus). Throughout the scene, Leena-Kaisa parrots the hegemonic societal views that uphold the oppression of women. In particular, Leena-Kaisa represents the church (as Tudeer puts it, “Christianity” from which the spirit of love and justice has faded away, leaving only a dry husk’). Canth has already introduced the way in which the church oppresses women under the guise of Christianity in act one. Many of Leena-Kaisa’s lines have a preacherly, declamatory quality, and I wanted to emphasise that, and also emphasise the way that she refuses to see the reality of Johanna’s position by physically not looking at her. It is as though the two are living in different realities.

Leena-Kaisa. (*Turns.*) God willing.

Johanna. Hello! How are you?

Leena-Kaisa. Same as ever. But what about yourself?

Johanna. Thank you for asking. Thank god, things are beginning to pick up a little around here. Did you know – I had such luck, that I got some weaving work? Vappu got it for me, from Mrs Vörsky. A truly blessed person, that Vappu.

Leena-Kaisa. How much does Mrs Vörsky pay per cubit?

Johanna. Only twenty-five pence, but isn't that something? If you sit at the loom from morning to evening, you can weave four cubits and that already makes a mark.¹⁷³ Where else can someone like me earn that? And two people can nearly stay in bread with that, too. The only trouble is that with the child I can't always get so much done.

Leena-Kaisa. That reminds you not to start desiring too much of this world's goodness.

Johanna. I suppose so. But listen, Leena-Kaisa. Don't you think so too, that from now on I'll get plenty of work, once the ladies get to know me and see what sort of cloth I can weave? That's what I've been so happy about, I can't tell you.

Leena-Kaisa. Don't overly concern yourself with rejoicing over unimportant things like that. They won't get you to heaven in any case.

Leena-Kaisa. God willing.

Johanna. Hello! How are you?

Leena-Kaisa. Same as ever. But what about yourself?

Johanna. Thanks for asking. Things are starting to pick up a bit around here, thank god. Did you know – I got so lucky, I got some weaving work? Vappu got it for me, from Mrs Vörsky. She's a saint, that Vappu.

Leena-Kaisa. How much does Mrs Vörsky pay per cubit?

Johanna. Only twenty-five pence, but isn't that something? If you sit at the loom from morning to evening, you can weave four cubits, and that already makes a mark. Where else can someone like me earn that? And that's nearly enough to keep two people in bread, too. Only trouble is, with the child I can't always get so much done.

Leena-Kaisa. That reminds you not to start coveting too much worldly goodness.

Johanna. I suppose so. But listen, Leena-Kaisa, don't you think I'll get plenty of work from now on? Once the ladies get to know me and see what sort of cloth I can weave? That's what I've been so happy about, I can't tell you.

Leena-Kaisa. Don't overly concern yourself with rejoicing over unimportant things like that. They won't take you to heaven in any case.

¹⁷³ Again, Canth is very precise about how much women earn for their work.

Johanna. Not there, no, that's true enough.¹⁷⁴ But when just getting bread is such hard work, you can't help being preoccupied by that. – Mrs Vörsky is coming here in a moment to look at her cloth. Let's see what she thinks of it. She can't criticise me for *that*, at least.

Leena-Kaisa. You always go back to talking about your cloth. You can hardly talk about anything else anymore.

Johanna. Yes, that's what I'm like – silly! I have to laugh at myself for it. But it's not so strange, when you really think about it. Here I sat night and day, knitting sock after sock, nearly dead with hunger, the baby, too. How peacefully he lies now, little thing, now that he's had some food.

Leena-Kaisa. Do you take any care of your eternal soul anymore, poor woman?

Johanna. There doesn't seem to be much time for that, god help me. Since I had the boy, I haven't even been able to go to church.

Leena-Kaisa. That is very sad. Think, if you died this moment, then where would you end up?

Johanna. I'm sure I don't know.

Leena-Kaisa. In a bad place, without mercy.

Johanna. God protect us from sudden death.

Leena-Kaisa. Soon you will grow so hardened, that you won't want to better yourself at all anymore, or to hear God's word.

Johanna. Not there, no, that's true... But getting bread is so hard, it tends to take over your thoughts. – Mrs Vörsky's coming here in a minute to look at her cloth. Let's see what she thinks of it. She can't criticise my work on the basis of that, at least.

Leena-Kaisa. You always go back to talking about your cloth. You can hardly talk about anything else anymore.

Johanna. Yes, that's what I'm like – silly. I have to laugh at myself for it. But it's not so strange, when you really think about it. Here I sat night and day, knitting sock after sock, nearly dead with hunger, the baby, too. How peaceful he is now, little thing, now that he's had some food.

Leena-Kaisa. Do you take any care of your eternal soul anymore, poor woman?

Johanna. Doesn't seem to be much time for that, god help me. Since I had the boy, I haven't even been able to go to church.

Leena-Kaisa. That is very sad. Think, if you died this moment, where would you end up?

Johanna. Who knows.

Leena-Kaisa. In a bad place, without mercy.

Johanna. God protect us from sudden death.

Leena-Kaisa. Soon you will grow so callous, that you won't want to better yourself at all anymore, or to hear God's word.

¹⁷⁴ I have added the ellipsis in my feminist translation to leave a little room to suggest that Johanna is frustrated by Leena-Kaisa's disinterest in her current, earthly situation.

Johanna. But of course I read it at home sometimes, Leena-Kaisa. And I remember to thank god for giving me days as good as this. Many others less fortunate suffer much more lack and hardship than me.

Leena-Kaisa. So you are *that* happy? Then there might not be any truth in what people are saying about Risto having begun to drink a lot.¹⁷⁵

Johanna. People know about all sorts. Well, it's no good calling it a lie. But others drink too, don't they? And at least Risto isn't unkind to me when he's drunk. Bad men beat their wives all the time, but Risto has never once hit me.

Leena-Kaisa. At least you're more humble than you used to be. I still remember how stubborn you were on your wedding day.

Johanna. Life teaches us all, Leena-Kaisa.

Leena-Kaisa. So it does. – By the way, what cloth was that Risto carrying to town just now?

Johanna. Cloth? I've no idea. But I meant to ask, was he still at home when you got here?

Johanna. But of course I read it at home sometimes, Leena-Kaisa. And I remember to thank god for giving me days as good as this. There are plenty less fortunate who suffer much more than me.

Leena-Kaisa. So you're as happy as that? (*Looking at Johanna for the first time.*) Then there might not be any truth in what people are saying about Risto drinking a lot these days.

Leena-Kaisa looks away again. On-lookers begin to appear, slowly, at the windows.

Johanna. People know about all sorts. Well, it's no good calling it a lie. But other men drink too, don't they? And at least Risto isn't unkind to me when he's drunk. Bad men beat their wives all the time, but Risto has never once hit me.

Beat.

Leena-Kaisa. At least you're more humble than you used to be. I still remember how difficult you were on your wedding day.

Beat.

By the way, what cloth was Risto carrying to town just now?

Johanna. Cloth? No idea. I meant to ask, was he still at home when you got here?

¹⁷⁵ Leena-Kaisa, as the Coryphaeus, is a voice for the chorus – i.e. the rest of the townsfolk. Whilst the first two acts took place in busy crowd scenes where the societal scrutiny was made physically apparent, this scene ostensibly takes place in the privacy of Johanna's home. However, Leena-Kaisa brings in and embodies that external scrutiny, showing that Johanna has no escape from it.

Leena-Kaisa. He and Toppo were just leaving. We bumped into each other in the doorway.

Johanna. And Risto was carrying a cloth?

Leena-Kaisa. He was. A beautiful cloth it looked to be, too. White base, with blue and red stripes.

Johanna. Strange. I can't think what cloth that would have been. White base, you say, with blue and red stripes? (*Goes to the loom, cries out and falls to sit at the loom.*)

Leena-Kaisa. Well, what is it now? Johanna, what's come over you?

Johanna tries to speak, but can't.

Leena-Kaisa. Has something happened?

Johanna. (*Stammering*) Good god, good god –

Leena-Kaisa. The cloth?

Johanna. They've taken Mrs Vörsky's cloth from me! – The whole long cloth –

Leena-Kaisa. Really and truly? Well, no wonder Risto was hiding it behind his back like that.

Johanna. What will I do? What will I, unhappy, do now?

Leena-Kaisa. He and Toppo were just leaving. We bumped into each other in the doorway.

Johanna. And Risto was carrying a cloth?

Leena-Kaisa. He was. A beautiful cloth it looked to be, too. White base, with blue and red stripes.

Johanna. Strange. I can't think what cloth that would have been. White base, you say, with blue and red stripes? (*Goes to the loom, cries out and falls onto the seat.*)

Leena-Kaisa. Well, what is it now? Johanna, what's come over you?

Johanna tries to speak, but can't.

Has something happened?

Johanna. Good god, good god –

Leena-Kaisa. The cloth?

Johanna. They've taken Mrs Vörsky's cloth! – The whole long cloth –

Leena-Kaisa. Have they really? Well, no wonder Risto was hiding it behind his back like that.

Johanna. What can I do? What can I do now?

Leena-Kaisa. I don't know. But don't panic like that. That won't improve things in any case. Rather, let us try and come up with something.

Johanna. If we could find them – if we could still get the cloth from them. Good, dear Leena-Kaisa, help me. Did you see where they went?

Leena-Kaisa. Don't go. You wouldn't find them by now anyway. They will have already sold it. And how would you know where to look for them?¹⁷⁶

Johanna. At the pub, where else?

Leena-Kaisa. It is completely pointless, believe me. It would just start an argument between you, and it is best to avoid that sort of thing. No wonder people blame you for Risto's drinking.

Johanna. Me? – How would that be my fault?

Leena-Kaisa. I don't know, but that's just what they say. And they don't seem to be so wrong either, as – don't take this badly – but the blame always lies more or less with the wife, when the husband drinks. If you were different – so you are going to go then?

Leena-Kaisa. I don't know. But don't panic like that. That won't improve things in any case. Rather, let us try and come up with something.

Johanna. If we could find them – if we could still get the cloth from them. Good, dear Leena-Kaisa, help me. Did you see where they went?

Leena-Kaisa. Don't go. You wouldn't find them by now anyway. They'll have already sold it. And how would you know where to look for them?

Johanna. At the pub, where else?

Leena-Kaisa. It's completely pointless, believe me. It would just start an argument between you, and it's best to avoid that sort of thing. No wonder people blame you for Risto's drinking.

Beat.

More on-lookers arrive.

Johanna. Me? – How would that be my fault?

Leena-Kaisa. I don't know, that's just what they say. And perhaps they're not so wrong either, as – don't take this badly – but the blame always lies more or less with the wife, when the husband drinks. If you were different –

¹⁷⁶ There is something nightmare-ish to me about the disparity between Leena-Kaisa and Johanna's reactions to the realisation that Risto has stolen the cloth; how slow Leena-Kaisa is to understand what has happened, and how resolutely she refuses to share Johanna's fear and anger. The nightmare of someone refusing to comprehend the gravity of your situation.

Johanna. Yes, I have to. Perhaps I can at least get the money from them.

Leena-Kaisa. There is no way you can go like this, poor woman. You look like death. And you really are staggering. No, stay here now and try at least to calm down a little bit. I would probably rather go and fetch them myself, but I know it's pointless. – Lord protect us, what are you doing?

Johanna. Me? I'm not doing anything.

Leena-Kaisa. You're throwing everything on the floor. Look at that now.

Johanna. Did they go on the floor? – Good Leena-Kaisa, I am lost, nothing will save me – nothing.

Leena-Kaisa. Risto did badly, there's nothing else to say.

Johanna. If he had beaten me until I was sick and miserable, it would be nothing to this.¹⁷⁷ I would give myself to be beaten to death, if I could only get the cloth back.

Beat.

So you are going, then?

Johanna. Yes, I have to. Perhaps I can at least get the money from them.

Johanna begins to frantically look through her few belongings, throwing things on the floor and making a mess.

Leena-Kaisa. There is no way you can go like this, poor woman. You look like death. No, stay here now and try to calm down a little bit. I would probably rather go and fetch them myself, but I know it's pointless. – Lord protect us, what are you doing?

Johanna. Me? I'm not doing anything.

Leena-Kaisa. (*Gesturing to the mess Johanna has made*) Look at that now.

Johanna. Did I do – ? – Good Leena-Kaisa, I am lost, nothing will save me – nothing.

Leena-Kaisa. Risto did badly, there's nothing else to say.

Johanna. If he had beaten me until I was sick and miserable, it would be nothing to this. I would give myself to be beaten to death, if I could only get the cloth back.

¹⁷⁷ The words Johanna uses here ('rammaksi ja vaivaiseksi') are closer to 'crippled and lame', but both the Finnish words and their English counterparts are now understood to be derogatory, ableist language. For this reason, I have used 'sick and miserable', which convey a similar meaning. Johanna's line is nonetheless jarring to a contemporary reader, and I debated cutting it from my feminist translation. I have opted to keep it, because it expresses both Johanna's complete desperation, and also the normalisation of domestic violence.

Leena-Kaisa. Some are tried one way, others another. God has as many rods as he has children.

Johanna. If only I could trust that this comes from god, but it doesn't. God didn't make them steal my cloth. It was more likely the devil.

Leena-Kaisa. God allowed it to happen, and you must be humble to his will. And so what if a person suffers here in the valley of sorrow, however much? In the life to come all will be rewarded to him. 'You punish and you help,' we sing in the hymn. You should rejoice, Johanna, this way you are simply polishing your crown.

Johanna. Did you hear? – Someone drove into the yard. – Mrs Vörsky! (*Goes trembling to the corner.*) – Good god – good god –

Leena-Kaisa. (*Looks out the door.*) Don't panic, there's nobody here. Probably just a noise from the street. – Come away from the corner, good woman. You are quite out of your senses, worrying so much about unimportant, earthly things.

Johanna. (*Holds her head.*) I am polishing my crown this way, you said? Oh, I would be happy with a much dimmer crown, if only Risto would stop drinking and behave – and if Mrs Vörsky could get her cloth back.

Beat.

Leena-Kaisa. Some are tried one way, others another. God has as many rods as he has children.

Johanna. If only I could believe that this comes from god, but it doesn't. God didn't make them steal my cloth. It was more likely the devil.

A proper crowd has gathered by now.

Leena-Kaisa. (*With fervour, almost shouting.*) God allowed it to happen, and you must be humble to his will. And so what if a person suffers here in the valley of sorrow, however much? In the life to come all will be rewarded to him. 'You punish and you help,' we sing in the hymn. You should rejoice, Johanna, this way you are simply polishing your crown.

Johanna. Did you hear? – Someone drove into the yard. – Mrs Vörsky! Good god – good god –

Leena-Kaisa. (*Looks outside.*) Don't panic, there's nobody here. Probably just a noise from the street. – Come away from the corner, woman. You are quite out of your senses, worrying so much about unimportant, earthly things.

Johanna. I am polishing my crown this way, you said? Oh, I would be happy with a much dimmer crown, if only Risto would stop drinking and behave – and if Mrs Vörsky could get her cloth back.

Leena-Kaisa. One can certainly, certainly hear that you are a carefree child of the world. God will punish you greatly yet before you turn to the right path, poor woman.

Johanna. Leena-Kaisa – someone is in the porch now.

Leena-Kaisa. (*Looks through the door.*) It's nothing but the wind rattling the outside door.

Johanna. Still, she'll soon be here and then – then I am lost. I can't bear this, Leena-Kaisa, it is impossible.

Leena-Kaisa. He who places the load upon us, also helps us to bear it.

Johanna. Don't blame god for this load. It's nothing other than Risto's good work, but he doesn't help me to bear it.

Leena-Kaisa. Again the same verse: not from God, not God's fault. How deep you have fallen into the terrible sin of unbelieving, poor wretch.

Johanna. But reason says that god doesn't force people to wickedness.

Leena-Kaisa. What is your reason? Blind, dark. It doesn't understand those who belong to God's kingdom. 'Reason must be taken captive to the obedience of faith,' says Saint Paul.¹⁷⁸

Johanna. If I at least had the money to pay Mrs Vörsky for the cloth.

Leena-Kaisa. One can certainly, certainly hear that you are a carefree child of the world. God will punish you greatly yet before you turn to the right path, poor woman.

Johanna. Leena-Kaisa – someone is in the porch now.

Leena-Kaisa. (*Looks outside.*) It's nothing but the wind rattling the outside door.

Johanna. Still, she'll soon be here and then – then I am lost. I can't bear this, Leena-Kaisa, it is impossible.

Leena-Kaisa. He who places the load upon us, also helps us to bear it.

Johanna. Don't blame god for this load. It's nothing other than Risto's good work, but he doesn't help me to bear it.

Leena-Kaisa. Again the same verse: not from God, not God's fault. How deep you have fallen into the terrible sin of unbelieving, poor wretch.

Johanna. But reason says that god doesn't force people to wickedness.

Leena-Kaisa. What is your reason? Blind, dark. It doesn't understand those who belong to God's kingdom. 'Reason must be taken captive to the obedience of faith,' Saint Paul says.

Johanna. If I at least had the money to pay Mrs Vörsky for the cloth.

¹⁷⁸ A reference to 2 Corinthians 10: 'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

Leena-Kaisa. Isn't there anyone you could borrow from?

Johanna. No one. – Perhaps –

Leena-Kaisa. Well –?

Johanna. Could I ask Yrjö?

Leena-Kaisa. Why not? You can try.

Johanna. But that is so hard, too. So very hard.

Leena-Kaisa. It wouldn't be anything, in my opinion. You have permission to ask, and he'll give if he wants to.

Johanna. No, no – I can't turn to him.

Leena-Kaisa. Are you scared he'll say no?

Johanna. That's not why. It just feels so impossible.

Leena-Kaisa. Well, do as you wish. I'll neither command, nor forbid. But I only think that it would be good if you could put the money in Mrs Vörsky's hand as soon as she arrives.

Johanna. Of course it would be good. Perhaps she wouldn't be so angry then. – Can't you hear footsteps outside now?

Leena-Kaisa. (*Speaking more calmly.*) Isn't there anyone you could borrow from?

Johanna. No one. – Perhaps –

The on-lookers disperse.

Leena-Kaisa. Well –?

Johanna. Could I ask Yrjö?

Leena-Kaisa. Why not? You can try.

Johanna. But it's so hard.

Leena-Kaisa. It wouldn't be anything, in my opinion. You have permission to ask, and he'll give if he wants to.

Johanna. No, no – I can't ask him.

Leena-Kaisa. Are you worried he'll say no?

Johanna. That's not why. It just feels so impossible.

Leena-Kaisa. Well, do as you wish. I'll neither command, nor forbid. I just think it would be good if you could put the money in Mrs Vörsky's hand as soon as she arrives.

Johanna. Of course it would be good. Perhaps she wouldn't be so angry then. – Can't you hear footsteps outside now?

Leena-Kaisa. (*Listens for a moment.*) No, your ears are lying.

Johanna. Yes, if I had the money to give straightaway. Perhaps actually – because you don't think it would be anything either – good Leena-Kaisa, you go to Yrjö.

Leena-Kaisa. I suppose I can go.

Johanna. Perhaps you might still get back before the lady comes.

Leena-Kaisa. I'm not likely to be long. (*Exits.*)

Johanna. (*Looks out of the window.*) I can't see anyone on the street. (*Looks out of the door.*) Nor out here either. – Maybe she's not coming yet. Maybe she won't come today at all. It is possible that something got in the way. Guests or something else. (*Listens; gives a choked cry.*) A horse is driving up to the steps. – It's her – it's her.

*Mrs Vörsky enters.*¹⁷⁹

Mrs Vörsky. Here I am at last. I spent so long at the drapers, because I didn't really know what I should buy for weaving. Because it will absolutely have to be something different now. You did say that you had twenty-five cubits woven? Yes, that will be exactly enough for me and little Alma. We don't need more than that. I have a few new samples here. What do you say to this, for example?

Leena-Kaisa. (*Listens for a moment.*) No, your ears are lying.

Johanna. Yes, if I had the money to give straightaway. Perhaps actually – because you don't think it would be anything either – good Leena-Kaisa, you go to Yrjö.

Leena-Kaisa. I suppose I can go.

Johanna. Perhaps you might still get back before the lady comes.

Leena-Kaisa. I'm not likely to be long. (*Exits.*)

Johanna looks out of the window.

Johanna. Maybe she's not coming yet. Maybe she won't come today at all. It is possible that something got in the way. Guests or something else.

Mrs Vörsky enters. There is something about her that makes her seem much larger than Johanna. She, too, tends not to look directly at Johanna.

Mrs Vörsky. Here I am at last. I spent so long at the drapers, because I didn't really know what thread I should buy. Because it will absolutely have to be something different now. You did say you had twenty-five cubits woven? Yes, that will be exactly enough for me and little Alma. We don't need more than that. I have a few new samples here. What do you say to this, for example?

¹⁷⁹ Like Leena-Kaisa before, Mrs Vörsky refuses to see Johanna's actual situation and engage with what she is saying throughout the following scene. I also wanted to heighten the nightmare-ish nature of the scene in my feminist translation, and to emphasise the way that upper-class characters belittle Johanna.

Johanna mechanically takes the sample in her hand.

Mrs Vörsky. (*Hands her another sample.*) What about this one? That's not ugly either. On the other hand, it does have a slightly different warp, but that doesn't matter. Perhaps it will be even more beautiful with this warp. Or what do you think?

Johanna. Perhaps?

Mrs Vörsky. Weave a bit of it to test, then we can see. I will sit here meanwhile. (*Throws her over clothes off, sits.*) Yes, and I'll tell you something fun. At the drapers' I met Mrs Hanhinen, who is the president of the Women's Association, and she has promised to give you work for the whole winter.¹⁸⁰ Not exactly cloth weaving, but sewing work, and isn't that the same sort of thing, or what? Of course you know how to sew? Yes, why am I even asking that sort of thing. The Women's Association, you see, has received large orders from the barracks, and we need honest and talented seamstresses for that. Well – but you're not saying anything? I thought I was doing you a great kindness by answering your request so soon.

Johanna. Good lady, if you could just listen, if I could dare –

Mrs Vörsky. To rely on that? Certainly, since Mrs Hanhinen has promised it.

Johanna. No, no, I don't mean that. If I could just dare to tell you –

Johanna takes the sample mechanically. Mrs Vörsky hands her another one.

What about this one? That's not ugly either. On the other hand, it does have a slightly different warp, but that doesn't matter. Perhaps it will be even more beautiful with this warp. Or what do you think?

Johanna. Perhaps?

Mrs Vörsky. Weave a bit of it to test, then we can see. I'll sit here meanwhile. (*Takes a seat.*) Yes, and I'll tell you something fun. At the drapers' I met Mrs Hanhinen, who is the president of the Women's Association, and she has promised to give you work for the whole winter. Not exactly weaving, but sewing work, and isn't that the same sort of thing, or what? Of course you know how to sew? Yes, why am I even asking that sort of thing. You see, the Women's Association has received large orders from the barracks, and we need honest and talented seamstresses for that. Well – but you're not saying anything? I thought I was doing you a great kindness by answering your request so quickly.

Johanna. Madam, if you could just listen, if I could dare to –

Mrs Vörsky. To rely on that? Certainly, since Mrs Hanhinen has promised it.

Johanna. No, no, I don't mean that. If I could just dare to tell you –

¹⁸⁰ The Finnish Women's Association was at that point a relatively new organisation, founded in Helsinki in 1884. When the Kuopio branch opened in 1886 (a year after this play was first performed), Minna Canth herself was its Finnish-language secretary. The founders of the association were mostly upper-class women, and the purpose of it was to 'work towards elevating women's intellectually and morally, and improving their economic and societal position' (Suomen Naisyhdistys)

Mrs Vörsky. Tell me? What is it? What's troubling you, Johanna? Has something happened?

Johanna. Yes.

Mrs Vörsky. An accident? With the cloth? Surely not. (*Rises and goes to the cloth.*) My goodness, what is this? Have you cut it off?

Johanna. It has been cut, madam.

Mrs Vörsky. And where is the cloth?

Johanna. That's the very worst thing, it's not here anymore.

Mrs Vörsky. It isn't? Why not?

Johanna. It's been taken. And there's nothing I can do about it, nothing.

Mrs Vörsky. Taken? Cut and taken? Twenty-five cubits of cloth? No, but this is – I don't know what to think any more.

Johanna. I have been in such great distress because of it, dear madam. If I could somehow get it back at least, but there's no hope of that.

Mrs Vörsky. What a disaster! And what will my husband say now? Oh, that I started this whole business. – After this you're not likely to

Mrs Vörsky. Tell me? What is it? What's the matter, Johanna? Has something happened?

Johanna. Yes.

Mrs Vörsky. An accident? With the cloth? Surely not. (*Rises and goes to the loom.*) My goodness, what is this? Have you cut it off?

Mrs Vörsky looks at Johanna for the first time.

Johanna. It has been cut, madam.

Mrs Vörsky. And where is the cloth?

Johanna. That's the very worst thing, it's not here anymore.

Mrs Vörsky. It isn't? Why not?

Johanna. It's been taken. And there's nothing I can do about it, nothing.

Mrs Vörsky. Taken? Cut and taken? Twenty-five cubits of cloth? No, but this is – I don't know what to think any more.

Johanna. I have been in such terrible distress because of it, dear madam. If I could somehow get it back at least, but there's no hope of that.

Mrs Vörsky. What a disaster! And what will my husband say now? Oh, that I started this whole business. – You're not likely to get any

get any work from the Women's Association after all.¹⁸¹

Johanna. Nor from anyone else, that's clear. Bad luck follows me everywhere.

Mrs Vörsky. When was it taken, then? You didn't say anything about it just now.

Johanna. It happened whilst I was at your house, madam.

Mrs Vörsky. And how did the thief get inside? Was the door not locked?

Johanna is silent.

Was the door not locked, I asked?

Johanna. No.

Mrs Vörsky. You left it open? Why on earth? How could you be so careless?

Johanna is silent.

That's exactly how you invite misfortune. Is it any wonder that it's been stolen, when the door was left open with nobody in the room?

Johanna. You are mistaken, madam – it wasn't like that.

work from the Women's Association after this.

Johanna. Nor from anyone else, that's clear. Bad luck follows me everywhere.

Beat.

Mrs Vörsky. When was it taken then? You didn't say anything about it earlier.

Johanna. It happened whilst I was at your house, madam.

Mrs Vörsky. And how did the thief get inside? Was the door not locked?

Johanna is silent.

Was the door not locked, I asked?

Johanna. No.

Mrs Vörsky. You left it open? Why on earth? How could you be so careless?

Johanna is silent.

That is exactly how you invite misfortune. Is it any wonder it's been stolen, when the door was left open with nobody at home?

Johanna. You're mistaken, madam – it wasn't like that.

¹⁸¹ This emphasises the complete power disparity between Johanna and Mrs Vörsky, the way the latter is able to effectively withdraw all work and leave Johanna destitute.

Mrs Vörsky. Then how was it? Tell me.

Johanna. I want to tell the truth. But it is so terribly hard.

Mrs Vörsky. And I don't understand how you can leave the child alone, either. A poor little thing like that. He could have cried himself to death while you were gone. You don't seem to love your child at all.

Johanna. Oh, dear madam. Who loves him, if not me?

Mrs Vörsky. And yet you leave him all alone for an hour. What glorious love!

Johanna. He wasn't alone.

Mrs Vörsky. He wasn't alone? You're contradicting yourself. Ah – now everything is becoming clear to me. You are deceiving me, lying to me all the time. You yourself lost the cloth. Your fear and shaking prove it. Unlucky woman, what sort of company have I ended up in?

Johanna. Don't get so upset, dear madam. Let me explain everything to you from the beginning.

Mrs Vörsky. I don't want to hear a word, and I won't believe another thing you say, because you are so horribly deceitful. I will go and tell my husband about this. I will leave everything in his hands. Yes, that will be best. A nice, civilised lady does not do business with unrefined and dishonest people. Besides, people like you are more scared of men. (*Puts her over clothes back on.*)

Mrs Vörsky. Then how was it? Tell me.

Johanna. I want to tell you the truth. But it's so terribly hard.

Mrs Vörsky. And I don't understand how you can leave the child alone, either. A poor little thing like that. He could have cried himself to death while you were gone. You don't seem to love your child at all.

Johanna. Oh, dear madam. Who loves him, if not me?

Mrs Vörsky. And yet you leave him all alone for an hour. What glorious love!

Johanna. He wasn't alone.

Mrs Vörsky. He wasn't alone? You're contradicting yourself. Ah – now everything is becoming clear to me. You are deceiving me, lying to me the whole time. You yourself lost the cloth. Your fear and trembling prove it. Poor me, what sort of company have I ended up in?

Johanna. Don't get so upset, dear madam. Let me explain everything to you from the beginning.

Mrs Vörsky. I don't want to hear a word, and I won't believe another thing you say because you're so horribly deceitful. I will go and tell my husband about this. I will leave everything in his hands. Yes, that will be best. A nice, civilised lady does not do business with unrefined and dishonest people. Besides, people like you are more scared of men. (*Rises to leave.*)

Johanna. Oh, madam, stay a moment, so I can tell you truthfully what happened.

Mrs Vörsky. I don't believe you, I've already said that. How can you expect something like that when *this* is how you've thanked me for all my goodness? And what do you think you have gained here? You've done yourself far more damage than you have me.

Johanna. If you weren't so quick-tempered –

Mrs Vörsky. Away, don't come near me. I must get out of here, or I'll suffocate.

Mrs Vörsky opens the door. Yrjö is visible on the porch, and moves out of the lady's path and enters after she has gone out.

Johanna. Yrjö, thank God! You will help me. (*To the porch in the lady's tracks.*) Madam, madam, wait, come back.

Mrs Vörsky. You're troubling yourself in vain. Matti, quickly now, first to Vappu, and then home.

Johanna. (*Returns.*) She's going to tell everything all wrong to Vappu, too. No, this will drive a person insane.

Yrjö. What's happened to you, Johanna? I had to come and hear it from your own mouth, what Leena-Kaisa said was so strange, I couldn't believe it. But it seems to have been true, since you're so upset.¹⁸²

Johanna. Oh, madam, stay a moment, so I can tell you truthfully what happened.

Mrs Vörsky. I don't believe you, I've already said that. How can you expect me to, when this is how you've thanked me for all my goodness? And what do you think you've gained here? You've done yourself far more damage than you have me.

Johanna. If you weren't so quick-tempered –

Mrs Vörsky. Away, don't come near me. I must get out of here, or I'll suffocate.

Mrs Vörsky opens the door. Yrjö is visible on the porch, moves out of the lady's path, and enters after she has gone out.

Johanna. Yrjö, thank God! (*Rushes to the porch after Mrs Vörsky.*) Madam, madam, wait, come back.

Mrs Vörsky. You're troubling yourself in vain. (*Calling to her driver*) Quickly now, first to Vappu's, and then home.

Johanna. (*Returns.*) She's going to tell everything all wrong to Vappu, too. No, this is too much.

Yrjö. What's happened to you, Johanna? I had to come and hear it from your own mouth, I couldn't believe what Leena-Kaisa said. But it seems to have been true since –?

¹⁸² There might be something in the significance of Yrjö's name. Yrjö is the Finnish equivalent of George, and I was thinking about him as a sort of Saint George figure, coming in to 'save' the damsel in distress. He's the 'nicest' male character in the play, and a breath of fresh air in that sense, but he does still make misogynistic comments (even if Canth perhaps didn't mean them to come across like that).

Johanna. All is lost. I can't think straight anymore.

Yrjö. Calm yourself. Perhaps we can get things sorted out, if we think together.

Johanna. They think I'm a thief. Until now everyone has trusted me, now nobody will again. This will break me, I can't bear it anymore. My poor baby.

Yrjö. But listen, please Johanna. You can't give over to sorrow like this. It'll make you ill.

Johanna. Now she's probably already scolding Vappu. That's the thanks she gets for her kindness. What will she think of me?

Yrjö. Nothing. She knows you well enough. I will go and tell her what happened. – No, truly, this won't do. You must try to recover, Johanna. (*Lays his hand on her shoulders.*) You don't actually have anything to panic about, when you think more carefully. I'll give you the money, you'll pay back the full price of the cloth and then they won't be able to say anything. Do you hear?

Johanna. I hear. But can I take money from you, when I don't know how I'll pay it back? I can't, no, no. I'd rather let them take me to jail.

Yrjö. Whatever happens you won't be taken to jail, you don't need to worry about that. And don't worry yourself about paying back the money. It won't make me any poorer, even if I don't get all of it back. (*Bends over Johanna.*) Come now, Johanna, be sensible. Here's my purse. In there are fifty marks, the cloth probably didn't cost more than that. Well, Johanna, what are you worried about?

Johanna. All is lost. I can't think straight anymore.

Yrjö. Calm yourself. Perhaps we can get things sorted out, if we think together.

Johanna. They think I'm a thief. Until now everyone has trusted me, now nobody will again. This will break me, I can't bear it anymore. My poor baby.

Yrjö. But listen, please Johanna. You can't give over to despair like this. It'll make you ill.

Johanna. Now she's probably already telling Vappu off. That's the thanks she gets for her kindness. What will she think of me?

Yrjö. Nothing. She knows you well enough. I will go and tell her what's happened. – No, truly, this won't do. You must try and get a grip, Johanna. (*Lays his hand on her shoulders.*) You don't actually have anything to panic about, if you think about it. I'll give you the money, you'll pay back the full price of the cloth and then they won't be able to say anything. Do you hear me?

Johanna. I hear you. But how can I take money from you, when I don't know how I'll pay it back? I can't, no, no. I'd rather let them put me in jail.

Yrjö. Whatever happens you won't be put in jail, you don't need to worry about that. And don't worry yourself about paying back the money. It won't make me any poorer, even if I don't get all of it back. (*Bends over Johanna.*) Come now, Johanna, be sensible. Here's my wallet. There's fifty marks in there, the cloth probably didn't cost more than that. Well, Johanna, what are you worried about?

*Suddenly, Kerttu comes through the door. She stands there for the blink of an eye.*¹⁸³

Kerttu. Oho! Risto was right, then, when he said he wouldn't be missed here. Well, well; what more did I expect?¹⁸⁴

Johanna. Who's there?

Yrjö. It's just that silly girl. Don't be afraid. What business do you have here?

Kerttu. What do you care about a silly girl's business? I just wanted to tell you that you won't have to take responsibility for Risto anymore. I will take care of him now. Goodbye. (*Leaves.*)

*Suddenly, Kerttu comes through the door. She stands there for the blink of an eye. Yrjö seems not to see her.*²⁰³

Kerttu. Oh! Risto was right, then, when he said he wouldn't be missed here. Well, well; what more did I expect?

Johanna. Who's there?

Kerttu. I just wanted to tell you that you won't be responsible for Risto anymore. I will take care of him now.

Time stops. Johanna and Kerttu face each other. They are bathed in moonlight. For a moment they are the only two people in the world, and then they aren't.

Goodbye. (*Exits.*)

After this, Johanna remains rooted to the same spot for most of the rest of the scene.

¹⁸³ Other than in act one, this is the only time when Kerttu and Johanna encounter each other in the play. It is a pivotal moment for both of them. Johanna's life has now tipped over into disaster because of Risto, and Kerttu is on that same precipice. In my feminist translation, I decided to cut Yrjö's lines in order to keep the focus on the two women who Canth juxtaposes throughout the play. This is a fleeting moment in quite a frantic scene, and I wanted to place a little more emphasis on it than Canth does. Leave room for revelation. Leave room to ask: what if things had been otherwise?

¹⁸⁴ Maijala (2008, p.99) cites this moment as another example of 'blindness' in the play – Kerttu is blind to the actual situation, seeing instead a false image (Johanna having an affair with Yrjö) – and argues that Kerttu's blindness leads to her ultimate downfall.

Johanna. Is she going to hurt Risto?

Yrjö. Come now. What of that half-mad girl's nonsense? And really, Risto can take care of himself; you worry about your own affairs. I'll put this purse in your hand by force, if you won't take it nicely. There. And now you must pay that lady every penny of the cost of the cloth, so she can't abuse you anymore. And you mustn't seem so scared and timid. Just be brave, you haven't done anything wrong. In this world you've got to defend yourself, or you won't get by.

Johanna. It's well for you to say, when you're a man. It's different for us wives. What can we do?

Yrjö. Try, try anyway. You are people too, don't forget that.¹⁸⁵ – There she is, driving into the yard. Perhaps it's best if I leave. She doesn't need to know you got the money from me. Goodbye now, Johanna. Don't let her intimidate you, remember that. You be a man too, for once.¹⁸⁶ Do you promise?

Johanna. I'll try.

Yrjö. Well, good. I'll go then.

Johanna. (*Takes him by the hand.*) Yrjö, god bless you.

Yrjö. Thank you! (*Goes.*)

¹⁸⁵ Thanks Yrjö...

¹⁸⁶ Is that good advice?

Johanna. Is she going to hurt Risto?

Yrjö. Risto can take care of himself; you worry about your own affairs. I'll put this wallet in your hand by force, if you won't take it nicely. There. And now you must pay that lady every penny of the cost of the cloth, so she can't abuse you anymore. And you mustn't seem so scared and timid. Just be brave, you haven't done anything wrong. In this world you've got to defend yourself.

Johanna. It's well for you to say. You're a man. It's different for wives.

Beat.

Yrjö. Try, try anyway. You are people too, don't forget that.

Beat.

Perhaps it's best if I leave. She doesn't need to know you got the money from me. Goodbye now, Johanna. Don't let her intimidate you, remember that. You be a man too, for once.²⁰⁷

Beat.

Well, good. I'll go then.

Johanna. Yrjö, god bless you.

Mr and Mrs Vörsky as well as Mrs Hanhinen come inside.

Mrs Hanhinen. Was that her husband?

Mrs Vörsky. No, that was some other man. Come and look, Ville. It has been cut like so and the cloth taken away. Twenty-five cubits. Think what a disaster. Twenty-five cubits. I am so, so sorry that I want to cry.

Mr Vörsky. You will go and put your trust in all sorts of people. Haven't I warned you several times already?

Mrs Vörsky. How could I have predicted this sort of thing, when Vappu so vouched for her?

Mr Vörsky. By rights, Vappu should be made to pay for the cloth herself now.

Mrs Hanhinen What does Vappu have to say about this?

Mrs Vörsky. What indeed! She just keeps defending that woman and won't believe anything bad of her. She came close to calling me a liar.

Mr Vörsky. She has most likely tricked and pulled Vappu's leg too, like she has yours, I would guess. She seems to be quite a piece of work.

Yrjö exits. Mr and Mrs Vörsky and Mrs Hanhinen enter. Like Mrs Vörsky earlier, all three of them seem somehow much larger than Johanna. Again, none of the three of them tend to look directly at Johanna.

Mrs Hanhinen. Was that her husband?

Mrs Vörsky. No, that was some other man. Come and look, Ville. It has been cut like so and the cloth taken away. Twenty-five cubits. Think what a disaster. Twenty-five cubits. I am so, so sorry, I could cry.

Mr Vörsky. You will go and put your trust in all sorts of people. Haven't I warned you several times already?

Mrs Vörsky. How could I have predicted this sort of thing, after Vappu so vouched for her?

Mr Vörsky. By rights, Vappu should be made to pay for the cloth herself.

Mrs Hanhinen. What does Vappu have to say about all this?

Mrs Vörsky. What indeed! She just keeps defending that woman and won't believe anything bad of her. She came close to calling me a liar.

Mr Vörsky. She has most likely tricked and led Vappu along too, like she has you, I would guess. She seems to be quite a piece of work.

Mrs Hanhinen. That's what the town's poor are like, on the whole. One learns to know what they're like, when one has as much to do with them as, for example, I do.¹⁸⁷

Mr Vörsky. Is it that one standing over there?

Mrs Vörsky. Her it is.

Mrs Hanhinen. You can quickly see from her face that she isn't any good sort of person. That sort of shifty look is always the mark of a bad conscience.

Mr Vörsky looks sternly at Johanna and goes a few steps closer to her.

Mrs Vörsky. (*Aside to Mrs Hanhinen.*) Oh, how uncomfortable this is. It really troubles me.

Mrs Hanhinen. Don't let it. You must be hard on that sort. Or else where would we be?

Mr Vörsky. Well, woman! Where have you lost our cloth?

Johanna. (*Panics.*) I haven't – it isn't – I haven't – well –

Mr Vörsky. (*Bangs his cane on the floor.*) Straight answer. Where is the cloth?

Mrs Hanhinen. That's what the poor are like, on the whole. One learns to know what they're like, when one has as much to do with them as, for example, I do.

Mr Vörsky. Is it that one standing over there?

Mrs Vörsky. It is.

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Mrs Hanhinen. Don't let it. You must be hard on that sort. Or where would we be?

Mr Vörsky. Well, woman! Where have you lost our cloth?

Johanna. I haven't – it isn't – I haven't – well –

Mr Vörsky. (*Bangs his cane on the floor.*) Straight answer. Where is the cloth?

¹⁸⁷ Canth's portrayal of the upper-class women, Mrs Vörsky and Mrs Hanhinen, is biting. This line is particularly ironic given that we know Mrs Hanhinen is president of the Women's Association. Director Kaarlo Bergbom, giving feedback on a draft of the play, suggested that perhaps Canth's portrayal was a little too harsh, even inaccurate. Canth responded to Bergbom saying: 'Dear Doctor, you are not a woman, you have not come to know the poisonous wounds that my own sex, in all their piety and gentleness, can inflict on others; how that tender-hearted, 'highly civilised', 'heliga prestinna vid hemmets fridfulla härd' ['holy priestess at the peaceful heart of the home'] is a rock-hard, ice-cold oppressor of those weaker and 'worse' than her, who she does not even recognise as people, because they are supposedly not equal to her in worth or refinement.' (Appendix E iv).

Johanna. (*Stammering*) I – don't know where it is.

Mr Vörsky. What if I gave you a little beating? Perhaps then you might know?

Mrs Vörsky. Let it be, Ville dear. It makes me feel so terrible.

Mr Vörsky. Come now, she must feel the cane at least a little.

Mrs Vörsky. No, no, let it be. For my sake, Ville. I'm already afraid enough of the consequences for my health with all this mental strain.

Mr Vörsky. Why did you come here then, if you're so sensitive? You might have stayed away.

Mrs Hanhinen. Mr Vörsky, I too pray for that miserable woman. It's true that she does deserve a really proper punishment, that wouldn't be too much at all. But it would be so hard for us to see it.

Mr Vörsky. You women's hearts are far too gentle. Well, so be it then. You can thank these ladies for letting you get away without a beating. But don't think that this ends here. I will pull you up before the law. You will get such a fine that it will ruin you. And on top of that you will be taken to jail. You will be put on bread and water. Quite! You will lie in chains, that I can promise. We shall see whether you cheat your superiors again.

Johanna. Jail? – Beloved, heavenly father! Will these sorrows never end?

Johanna. I – don't know where it is.

Mr Vörsky. What if I gave you a little beating? Perhaps then you might know?

Mrs Vörsky. Let it be, Ville dear. It makes me feel so terrible.

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Johanna. Jail? – Beloved, heavenly father! Will these sorrows never end?

Mr Vörsky. Aha! Do you begin to see the reality of the situation now?

Johanna. For what reason will I be imprisoned? I have never wronged anyone in my life, nor stolen from or betrayed anyone. Ask those who know me, if you don't believe me. I've always tried to get by on honest work, they can't deny that.

Mrs Hanhinen. No, but listen to that shamelessness. Still she tries to make out that she's blameless.

Mr Vörsky. Do you still dare to lie to us, before our eyes? Oh, I will teach you.

Johanna. I would have told you the truth. I would have confessed everything, from beginning to end, but you haven't let me. You haven't wanted to hear anything I could say to defend myself.

Mr Vörsky. Stop blathering already, or I will –

Johanna. Don't take me to court. Have mercy on my poor child at least. Where will he end up if his mother is imprisoned? In a stranger's care, a little one like that, not even four months old?

Mrs Vörsky. Yes, think, she has a child too. What sort of person will that unfortunate child grow up to be, raised by such a bad mother? When, from a young age, they see only wickedness around them?

Mrs Hanhinen. We would do right by god if we rescued him from his wretched mother's hands. I will speak to the Women's Association about the matter.

Mr Vörsky. Aha! Do you begin to see the reality of the situation now?

Johanna. Why will I be locked up? I've never wronged anyone in my life, nor stolen from or betrayed anyone. Ask those who know me, if you don't believe me. I've always tried to get by on honest work, they can't deny that.

Mrs Hanhinen. No, but listen to that shamelessness. Still trying to make out that she's blameless.

Mr Vörsky. Do you still dare to lie to us, before our eyes? Oh, I will teach you.

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Mrs Hanhinen. We would do right by god if we rescued him from his wretched mother's hands. I will speak to the Women's Association about the matter.

Johanna. You would take my child away from me? Not in a moon and a day, I won't give him up. Not if the whole world rose up against me. You are cruel beasts. – No, no, I am confused, I don't know what I'm saying anymore. Don't be offended. Pity me, unhappy woman that I am. – Oh, yes, I hadn't even remembered. I have the money here, fifty marks. More than the cloth cost by half. Take it, sir, take it all. Come to an agreement. For God's sake, let your hearts soften. What use is it to you if you put me in jail and wrench my baby from me? Good merciful sir, here is two times more than the price of the cloth.

Mr Vörsky. What a flood of words! Well, what shall we do? Shall we agree? And shall I take the money? You know better than I whether it is sufficient compensation for the damage.

Mrs Vörsky. Don't take it before you know where she got it from.

Johanna. I haven't stolen it, don't worry. Just take it, sir. No one will come and demand it from you.

Mrs Hanhinen. I suspect something.

Mrs Vörsky. So do I, so do I. Oh, oh, still more terrible, still more terrible.

Mr Vörsky. What? You mean –?

Mrs Hanhinen. That woman probably has other wicked ways.

Johanna. You would take my child away from me? Not in a moon and a day, I won't give him up. Not if the whole world rose up against me. You are cruel beasts. – No, no, I am confused, I don't know what I'm saying anymore. Don't be offended. Pity me, unhappy woman that I am. – Oh, yes, I hadn't even remembered. I have the money here, fifty marks. More than the cloth cost by half. Take it, sir, take it all. Come to an agreement. For god's sake, let your hearts soften. What use is it to you if you put me in jail and wrench my baby from me? Good merciful sir, here is two times more than the price of the cloth.

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Johanna. I haven't stolen it, don't worry. Just take it, sir. No one will come and demand it from you.

Mrs Hanhinen. I suspect something.

Mrs Vörsky. So do I, so do I. Oh, oh, still more terrible, still more terrible.

Mr Vörsky. What? You mean –?

Mrs Hanhinen. That woman probably has other wicked ways.

Beat.

Mr Vörsky. Ah! Very likely. Who was that man who hurried away from us just now?

Mrs Hanhinen. That's just what I was thinking. Believe me, the money is from him.

Mrs Vörsky. What terrible morals! Ville dear, let us leave! I'm beginning to feel unwell. It feels as though even the air here is polluted. You can make all the claims through the court.

Mrs Hanhinen. Absolutely; I don't feel like staying here any longer.

Mr Vörsky. Then we will go. (*The ladies leave.*) You will hear from us yet, woman.

Johanna. (*On her knees*) Sir, sir, good sir, don't leave without coming to an agreement. Take the money, my clothes, everything I have –

Mr Vörsky. (*At the door as he goes*) Shut your mouth – whore!¹⁸⁸

Johanna. Ooh! Ooh! (*Falls down at first, but rises again suddenly.*)

Mr Vörsky. Ah! Very likely. Who was that man who hurried away from us just now?

Mrs Hanhinen. That's just what I was thinking. Believe me, the money is from him.

Mrs Vörsky. What terrible morals! Ville dear, let us leave! I'm beginning to feel unwell. It feels as though even the air here is polluted. You can make all the claims through the court.

Mrs Hanhinen. Absolutely; I don't feel like staying here any longer.

Mr Vörsky. Then we will go.

Mrs Vörsky and Mrs Hanhinen exit.

You will hear from us yet, woman.

Johanna. Sir, sir, good sir, don't leave without coming to an agreement. Take the money, my clothes, everything I have –

Mr Vörsky. Shut your mouth – whore! (*Exits.*)

Johanna. Oh! (*Looks at the wallet in her hand. Throws the wallet far*

¹⁸⁸ Mr Vörsky's final line, spoken after his wife and her friend have left, is notably cruder than his earlier dialogue. In the Finnish, the line is colloquially succinct - 'i' is dropped off the end of 'suusi' ('your mouth'), and the command is only two words ('mouth shut'), rather than something more grammatically complete, making the line brusquer and cruder.

Whore, he said. (*Looks at the purse in her hand.*) Whore and thief.¹⁸⁹ (*Throws the purse far across the floor.*) Has god abandoned me too? Is there no help, no refuge anywhere in the world? Is everyone free to trample and crush me like this? And they will steal the baby too. My own beautiful boy. No – by heaven and earth. That they will not do. Risto will come home. He will help me, he is the child’s father. Yes, yes! He’ll be moved by this disaster, which *he* has landed me in, and he will help, he will defend the child and me. If he would only come soon. This agony – this – shh – quiet! I can hear sounds from the street. He’s coming– he’s coming.

Toppo walks past the window, singing, and then enters.

Toppo. (*Sings*) ‘*Kultani minust’ eron teki, teki toisen kanssa liiton. Enkä mä tuotakaan paljon surrut, nauroin koko viikon.*’¹⁹⁰ [*My darling went and left me, made a union with another. And I didn’t mourn that much, just laughed the whole week long.*] Good day, good day! Don’t be offended, but I’m a very little bit drunk. We have had, you see, some leaving drinks.

Leena-Kaisa follows him inside.

Leena-Kaisa. Yes, have you ever heard anything stranger, Johanna?

Toppo. That there Leena-Kaisa dragged me over here. To give greetings from Risto. Yes! ‘*Kultani minust’ eron teki, teki toisen kanssa –*’

across the floor.) Has god abandoned me too? Is there no help, no refuge anywhere in the world? Is everyone free to trample and crush me like this? And they will steal the baby, too. My own beautiful boy. No – by heaven and earth. That they will not do. Risto will come. He will help me, he is the child’s father. Yes, yes! He’ll be moved by this disaster - which *he* has landed me in - and he will help, he will defend the child and me. If he would only come soon. This agony – this – shh – quiet! He’s coming– he’s coming.

Toppo walks past the window, whistling, and then enters.

Toppo. (*Whistling cheerfully.*) Good day, good day! Don’t be offended, but I’m a very little bit pissed. We’ve been having, y’see, some leaving drinks.

Leena-Kaisa follows him inside.

Leena-Kaisa. Yes, have you ever heard anything stranger, Johanna?

Toppo. That there Leena-Kaisa dragged me over here. To give greetings from Risto. Yes! (*Whistling again.*)

¹⁸⁹ I cut ‘Whore, he said... Whore and thief’ from my feminist translation, because I did not want it to seem as though she thought being called a sex worker was the worst thing about her situation. The Vörskeys and Mrs Hanhinen make assumptions about her based on their classist views, and we recognise prejudiced misunderstanding, but I do not think it is helpful for Johanna to imply her moral superiority over women who do engage in sex work.

¹⁹⁰ A folk song.

Leena-Kaisa. Be quiet, and stop singing those nonsense songs. – Your trials are not yet over, poor Johanna. The worst is only coming now. Can you bear to hear it?

Johanna. What? Tell me quickly.

Toppo. Risto sends greetings. He's gone – gone, gone!¹⁹¹ Already far away with Homsantuu.

Leena-Kaisa. To think! Is the man in his right mind? Going off to roam the land with a half-mad woman, just like that.

Johanna. Which woman? What are you saying?

Toppo. Hey, with Homsantuu, don't you understand? Just lots of greetings. Although he didn't actually send them. He couldn't remember anything by that point, so full of joy he was to be back with his old sweetheart. Yes, he really has left you to your own devices now. But don't you mind it at all. Just sing: '*Kultani minust' eron teki, teki toisen kanssa liiton. Enkä mä tuotakaan paljon surrut, nauroin koko viikon.*'

Johanna. Risto? Gone away? No, that's not true. That cannot be true. Leena-Kaisa, why are you so ready to believe a drunken man's ramblings?

Leena-Kaisa. Be quiet, and stop that noise. – Your trials are not yet over, poor Johanna. The worst is only coming now. Can you bear to hear it?

The on-lookers begin to gather again.

Johanna. What? Tell me quickly.

Toppo. Risto sends greetings. He's gone – gone, gone! Already far away with Homsantuu.

Leena-Kaisa. To think! Is the man in his right mind? Going off to roam the land with a half-mad woman, just like that.

Johanna. Which woman? What are you saying?

Toppo. Hey, with Homsantuu, don't you get it? Just lots of greetings. Although he didn't actually send them. He couldn't remember anything by that point, so full of joy he was to be back with his old sweetheart. Yes, he has left you to your own devices. But don't you mind it at all. You just dance and sing! (*Whistles again and tries to dance with her, before breaking off.*)

Johanna. Risto? Gone away? No, that's not true. That cannot be true. Leena-Kaisa, why are you so ready to believe a drunken man's ramblings?

¹⁹¹ The line in the source text is: 'Risto paa helssa so mykky. Vara porta, - porta, porta!' It is Swedish, but sounded out phonetically in Finnish, rather than 'correct' Swedish. It conveys that Toppo cannot really speak Swedish, but just repeats the phrase by ear. As with most of the other passing uses of Swedish in the play, I decided to keep the phrase in English, as I felt that it being in poor Swedish would not carry any particular resonance for an anglophone audience or reader.

Leena-Kaisa. Others said so too, not just Toppo. He had a leaving party for the men and said that he wouldn't be seen around there for a long time now. – Yes, yes! God's anger holds you harshly, poor Johanna. But receive it all with a humble heart and remember that he punishes you because he loves you.

Johanna. (*Faints to the stool by the cradle.*) Father has left us. Bad, bad father!¹⁹²

Leena-Kaisa. But you can't blame Risto that much. That little hussy – there's no other way to say it – well and truly went to the pub just to seduce him. Women like that certainly know how to pull strings. Is it any wonder if a man gets bewitched and loses his sense?

Johanna groans on the floor.

Leena-Kaisa. But don't let sorrow take hold of you like that. What are you doing on the floor? Listen, good woman, what is the matter with you?

Johanna. Nothing, nothing.

Toppo. (*Looks at the loom.*) Good lord! Where once there was, now there is not.¹⁹³ Don't admit to a thing, Toppo. Not a thing. (*Singing*)

Leena-Kaisa. Others said so too, not just Toppo. He had a leaving party for the men and said that he wouldn't be seen in these parts for a long time now. – Yes, yes! God's anger holds you harshly, poor Johanna. But receive it all with a humble heart and remember that he punishes you because he loves you.

Johanna. (*Goes to the cradle.*) Father has left us. Bad, bad father!

Leena-Kaisa. But you can't blame Risto that much. That little hussy – there's no other way to say it – well and truly went to the pub just to seduce him. Women like that certainly know what they're doing. Is it any wonder if a man gets bewitched and loses his sense?

Beat.

Johanna falls to the floor.

But don't let sorrow take hold of you like that. What are you doing on the floor? Listen, good woman, what is the matter with you?

Johanna. Nothing, nothing.

Toppo. (*Looks at the loom.*) Good lord! Where once there was, now there is not. Don't admit to a thing, Toppo. Not a thing. (*Hums to*

¹⁹² I had some debate over how to translate 'isä' (father). In Finnish, there is no real equivalent to 'dad' – 'isä' is the most common appellation, nowhere near as formal sounding as 'father' is to the contemporary anglophone ear. 'Dad' sounded too modern to me, though, but the other options ('papa', 'pa', 'daddy') sounded too archaic or too classed. I chose 'father' in the end because, although it is rather formal sounding, Johanna's register has shifted to something more poetic, more heightened in the latter part of this act, and I felt that the word matched that best. Perhaps there could also be a godly resonance too.

¹⁹³ In the source text, Toppo uses an idiom which I have been unable to find elsewhere: 'Mikä leivän kontista vei, illalla oli viis' ja nyt ei ole kuin kuus'' Literally, the phrase translates as: 'What took the bread from the knapsack, in the evening there were five, and now there are only six.' The idiom presumably means that something has gone missing. I have replaced it with a non-idiomatic phrase, but one where I have attempted to mirror the rhyme-like tone of the original line.

'Kultani minust' eron teki, teki toisen kanssa liiton –'

Leena-Kaisa. Quiet, Toppo! Look over here. Things are not going well. Stand up, Johanna. How will you manage like that? – Stand up.

Johanna. I can't. The floor is spinning so.

Leena-Kaisa. There it is. She's ill.

Johanna. I'm not ill. My head just burns because my crown is being polished. My whole head seems to be on fire. Take it away, away.

Leena-Kaisa. She's raving. Well, now we're lost.

Johanna. The ladies – my baby, help! They've stolen my baby. Over there, over there. They're running and laughing. Catch them. I can't manage, I can't get up. Don't hit me, sir. Risto, Risto, come and help. He has such a heavy cane.

Toppo. Oh, this is sad.

Johanna. It's pitch black. I can't find my way home. Risto has disappeared too. Left me alone in the wilderness, in the dark. Robbers in every bush. Won't anyone have mercy? Do you hear? The baby is crying. The man is hitting him. Oh, oh help, good people.

Leena-Kaisa. Come and help her to bed.

himself for a bit.)

Leena-Kaisa. Quiet, Toppo! Look over here. Things are not going well. Stand up, Johanna. How will you manage like that? – Stand up.

Johanna. I can't. The floor is spinning.

Leena-Kaisa. There it is. She's ill.

The crowd has gathered. The moon begins to rise.

Johanna. I'm not ill. My head just burns because my crown is being polished. My whole head seems to be on fire. Take it away, away.

Leena-Kaisa. She's raving. Well, now we're lost.

Johanna. The ladies – my baby, help! They've stolen my baby. Over there, over there. They're running and laughing. Catch them. I can't manage, I can't get up. Don't hit me, sir. Risto, Risto, come and help. He has such a heavy cane.

Toppo. Oh, this is sad.

Johanna. It's pitch black. I can't find my way home. Risto has disappeared too. Left me alone in the wilderness, in the dark. Robbers in every bush. Won't anyone have mercy? Do you hear? The baby is crying. The man is hitting him. Oh, oh help, good people.

Leena-Kaisa. Come and help her to bed.

Toppo. I'm coming, I'm coming. You know, Leena-Kaisa, we men really are a load of good-for-nothings. It must be said.

Leena-Kaisa. Concentrate on this now. Just get over here and help, I can't get her anywhere alone.

Toppo. We'll lift her together, we'll lift her together.

Johanna. Away, away. Don't hurt me.

Toppo. No, don't be frightened. We're just taking you gently to bed. There now. Poor thing! Could it be typhoid?

Leena-Kaisa. Who can say. If only that Risto were at home, at least.

Toppo. Yes, you can say that again. Why he had to go just now. But how could he have predicted this, poor man? Look, there's a purse on the floor here. And it's not empty. Here, you look after it. There'll be good need of it, if this is typhoid.

Leena-Kaisa. So there will! Was it sent from heaven?

Johanna. It burns – it burns –

Leena-Kaisa. Run and get the doctor, Toppo.

Toppo. Yes, yes. I'm already a sober man. Surely no one could say otherwise now. I will bring the doctor here, Leena-Kaisa. Oh now, how sad. (*Goes.*)

Toppo. I'm coming, I'm coming. You know, Leena-Kaisa, we men really are a load of bastards. It must be said.

Leena-Kaisa. Concentrate on this now. Just get over here and help, I can't get her anywhere alone.

Toppo. We'll lift her together, we'll lift her together.

Johanna. Away, away. Don't hurt me.

Toppo. No, don't be frightened. We're just taking you gently to bed. There now. Poor thing! Could it be typhoid?

Leena-Kaisa. Who can say. If only that Risto were at home, at least.

Toppo. Yes, you can say that again. Why he had to go just now. But how could he have predicted this, poor man? Look, there's a wallet on the floor here. And it's not empty. Here, you look after it. There'll be good need of it, if this is typhoid.

Leena-Kaisa. So there will! Was it sent from heaven?

Johanna. It burns – it burns –

Leena-Kaisa. Run and get the doctor, Toppo.

Toppo. Yes, yes. I'm already a sober man. Surely no one could say otherwise. I'll bring the doctor here, Leena-Kaisa. Oh now, how sad. (*Exits.*)

Johanna. Take my crown away, away! It burns – it burns – it burns.¹⁹⁴

Curtain down.

Johanna. Take my crown away, away! It burns – it burns – it burns.

The women on-lookers gather around Johanna and sing.

Women. *(Singing)*

*'Kuule neito, kun mie laulan,
jo on ottajat ovilla,
veräjillä viejät miehet.*

*Niinkö luulet, neito rukka,
luulet kuuksi vietäväsi
ja päiväksi otettavasi?*

*Niinkö luulet, neito rukka,
työt loppui, huoli väheni?
Vasta huolta valitahan,
ja ajatusta annetahan.*

*Kyllä huntu huolta tuopi,
liinat liikoja sanoja,
palttina pahoja mieltä.*

*Itke, neito, naitaessa,
vierittele vietäessä.
Ku et itke naitaessa,
itket ikäsi kaiken.'*

¹⁹⁴ Majjala (2008, p.270) argues that Johanna's breakdown is the result of her inability to resolve her 'tragic internal conflict, which paralyzes and blinds her' – she acknowledges and understands that Risto has wronged her, but she is powerless and feels herself beholden to God (or society's understanding of God) and to societal expectations: 'humility destroys Johanna – humility, which in fact served man and society, not God.' Majjala also argues that the metaphorical crown here mimics her physical wedding crown in act one, and also Christ's crown of thorns. Johanna is presented as a martyr.

*['Listen maiden, as I sing,
The takers now are at the door,
The men already at the gate.*

*Did you think, poor maid,
You'd be gone for a month,
Taken only for a day?*

*Did you think, poor maid,
your work and woes were over?
Only now do your woes begin,
And only now you realise.*

*Yes, the veil will bring you sorrow,
the wedding clothes too many words,
and with the linen will come sadness.*

*Weep, maiden, as you wed,
cry as they take you away.
If you do not weep when you are wed,
you will weep for the rest of your days.']*

*They are flooded by moonlight. The walls
collapse and the windows burst.¹⁹⁵*

¹⁹⁵ This act ends in destruction, as the devastating effects of legal and societal misogyny become fully understood, by both Johanna and the audience. The domestic space, Johanna's marital home, becomes an impossibility, and all that remains is the wreckage.

ACT V

The same room. Leena-Kaisa is tidying the room. Risto comes through the door.

Leena-Kaisa. Well, here he finally is, thank God! Do you know what has happened here while you were gone?

Risto. The children out in the yard just told me.¹⁹⁷ Who could have predicted a thing like that? She was completely healthy when I left home.

Leena-Kaisa. A person never knows when their time will come. 'Healthy today, tomorrow an axe is put to the roots of the tree.'¹⁹⁸ But let this be a warning to us all, not to spend these days of mercy without sorrow, but to always remember that 'life is like the scent of ashes, and earthly pleasures like the run of a slippery stream.'¹⁹⁹

ACT V: The Wreckage

The same room as before, but somehow different; emptied, desolate.

Johanna, who is now dead, watches on. When she is present, there is a supernatural feeling.¹⁹⁶

Leena-Kaisa is tidying the room. Risto comes through the door.

Leena-Kaisa. Here he finally is, thank God! Do you know what happened while you were gone?

Risto. The children out in the yard just told me. Who could have predicted a thing like that? She was completely healthy when I left.

Leena-Kaisa. One never knows when one's time will come.

¹⁹⁶ I wanted to bring Johanna in as a physical presence in this act in order to give her more of an active role in the fallout of the play. There is a long lineage of women dying tragic, fated deaths on stage. Canth, with her clear laying out of the conditions that lead to Johanna's death, emphasises that Johanna's death was preventable, and the point of the play was to incite change, overthrow the conditions that paved the way for her tragic ending. I suggest bringing Johanna back on stage as a reminder of this, having her as an assertive presence, a reminder.

¹⁹⁷ Risto and Johanna would have lived in buildings inhabited by several families, built around a shared yard. This was another inspiration for including the 'on-lookers'. The proximity to other people resulting from crowded living quarters heightens the constant scrutiny, the constant presence of 'society.'

¹⁹⁸ From chorale 383 in the 1701 Finnish *Vanha virsikirja* [Old Hymn Book].

¹⁹⁹ This second quotation is from chorale 408:1 – the same one that Leena-Kaisa sings in act four.

Risto. Quite, I'm sure Johanna couldn't have guessed she'd die so soon, that's for certain.

Leena-Kaisa. Don't be offended by my saying so Risto, but you should not have left her like that.

Risto. I regretted it as soon as I heard what had happened. Can't do anything about it now, though. What's done is done. – I suppose the deceased was very upset about me leaving?

Leena-Kaisa. Well, not very. She was already raving when she heard about that. I doubt she even really understood it.

Risto. Well, that's something at least.

Leena-Kaisa. But she was very distressed about the cloth. She was terribly afraid of the lady.

Risto. Yes, the cloth! Of course. So she was upset about that? Well, if we'd known, we wouldn't have taken it. But couldn't she, the deceased, have guessed that of course we wouldn't have sold it, just pawned it? – Afraid of the lady, you said? Yes, I can believe that. Johanna was so timid and always worried about all sorts of silly things before they'd happened. Was she very angry with me about it?

Leena-Kaisa. Not very. A little before it happened she actually thanked you. Said that you had never once yet hit or beaten her, like many other men do their wives.

Risto. Quite, I'm sure Johanna couldn't have guessed she'd die so soon, that's certain.

Leena-Kaisa. Don't be offended by my saying so Risto, but you shouldn't have left her like that.

Risto. I regretted it as soon as I heard what happened. Can't do anything about it now, though. What's done is done. – I suppose the deceased was very upset about me leaving?

Leena-Kaisa. Well, not very. She was already raving when she heard about that. I doubt she even really understood.

Risto. That's something.

Leena-Kaisa. But she was very distressed about the cloth. She was terribly afraid of the lady.

Risto. Yes, the cloth! Of course. So she was upset about that? Well, if we'd known, we wouldn't have taken it. But couldn't she, the deceased, have guessed that of course we wouldn't have sold it, just pawned it? – Afraid of the lady, you said? Yes, I can believe that. Johanna was so timid and always worried about all sorts of silly things before they'd happened. Was she very angry with me about it?

Leena-Kaisa. Not very. A little before it happened she actually praised you. She said that you'd never once hit her or beaten her, like so many other men do their wives.

Beat.

Risto. Did she say that? Well it's true. We got on fairly harmoniously. There was never a bad argument between us.

Leena-Kaisa. That is to your credit. If you have fallen short a little in other areas, it must be forgiven. Flesh is weak and temptations are great. You needn't have a bad conscience about having treated your wife harshly, beaten her or otherwise bullied her, as we, regrettably, often see and hear about round here.²⁰⁰

Risto. No, true. I'm good-natured like that, I won't just hit a person out of nowhere. – Johanna talked about that before she got ill?

Leena-Kaisa. Yes, there it was, a little before. Then, poor thing, she couldn't think about anything other than her child. She raved about him and he's what she spoke about when she got a little more lucid, too.

Risto. But of course! What am I going to do about the child?

Leena-Kaisa. I was just thinking about that, too.

Risto. If he was older at least, what would I have to worry about then? I could send him begging, if nothing else. But a little thing like that. What can I do for him? No, this is a losing game. Do you think the poorhouse would take him? I could try.

Risto. She said that? Well it's true. We got on fairly well. Never had a bad argument.

Leena-Kaisa. That's to your credit. If you've fallen a little short in other areas, it must be forgiven. Flesh is weak and temptations are great. You needn't have a bad conscience about having treated your wife harshly, beaten her or bullied her, as we, regrettably, often see and hear about round here.

Beat.

Risto. No, true. I'm good-natured like that, I won't just hit a person out of nowhere. – Johanna talked about that before she got ill?

Leena-Kaisa. Yes, there it was, a little before. Then she couldn't think about anything other than the child, poor thing. She raved about him, and he's what she spoke about when she got a little more lucid, too.

Risto. But of course! What am I going to do about the child?

Leena-Kaisa. I was just thinking about that, too.

Risto. If he was older at least, then I'd be fine. I could send him out begging, if nothing else. But a little thing like that. What can I do for him? No, this is a losing game. Do you think the poorhouse would take him? I could try.

Johanna picks up the baby.

²⁰⁰ It was not until the 1889 Penal Code (four years after this play was premiered) that domestic violence was considered a crime. As earlier, it is sobering to read how casually characters refer to it.

Leena-Kaisa. I don't believe they would.²⁰¹ But do you know what Johanna wished?

Risto. Tell me!

Leena-Kaisa. That Vappu would take the boy and raise him.

Risto. And would she do that?

Leena-Kaisa. You can ask, at least. What if I took the child to her now and talked to her about it? You never know, she might have mercy.

Risto. That would be a wonderful thing. Then I wouldn't need to worry about the boy at all.

Leena-Kaisa. In that case I will go.

Risto. You do that. I'll come after you as soon as I've tidied myself up a bit.

Leena-Kaisa. There's no rush. If Vappu won't hear of it, I'll bring the child back at once. (*Takes the child into her arms from the cradle.*) Poor little thing! He really is a beautiful child.

Leena-Kaisa. I don't think they would. But do you know what Johanna wished?

Risto. Tell me!

Leena-Kaisa. That Vappu would take the boy and raise him.

Risto. And do you think she would?

Leena-Kaisa. You can ask, at least. Why don't I take the child to her now and talk to her about it? You never know, she might have mercy.

Risto. That would be a wonderful thing. Then I wouldn't need to worry about the boy at all.

Leena-Kaisa. In that case I will go.

Risto. You do that. I'll come after you as soon as I've tidied myself up a bit.

Leena-Kaisa. There's no rush. If Vappu won't do it, I'll bring the child back at once.

Johanna passes her the baby.

Poor little thing! He really is a beautiful baby.

²⁰¹ The Poor Relief Act passed in 1879 had been aimed at making fewer people eligible for support, placing the onus of childcare entirely on the family. That is probably why Leena-Kaisa says it is unlikely that the child, having a living father, would have been accepted. Many of Canth's other works address the inadequacy of the support for and the dire living conditions of working-class children in nineteenth-century Finland.

Risto. Vappu will take him, you'll see. She'll have him trained to be a vicar, even, if things go well.

Leena-Kaisa. He sleeps so deeply, he doesn't even stir. Goodbye for now, then.

Risto. Goodbye, goodbye! Good luck. But listen, Leena-Kaisa. Erm...well...what did I mean to say again? Ah yes! If it suits, then mention to Vappu, just on the side, how good I was to my former wife. Just if it suits, I mean.

Leena-Kaisa. Why not? But are you already thinking of another, when the first is not even cold yet?

Risto. Well, don't you worry about that. Just go and do as I said. I'll come too, in just a moment.

Leena-Kaisa. If I linger, then you can assume that Vappu agrees to the business of the child's situation.

Risto. Good, good! (*Opens the cupboard door, takes out a mirror and comb, begins to tidy his suit.*) Somehow or other, I'm quite a fine man, aren't I? (*Looks in the mirror.*) Why shouldn't I still be good enough for women? I suppose we shall see. (*A knock on the window.*) Who's there? Ahaa, Toppo! Come in, you rascal.

Risto. Vappu will take him, you'll see. She'll have him trained up as a vicar, even, if things go well.

Leena-Kaisa. How deeply he sleeps, doesn't even stir. Goodbye for now, then.

Risto. Goodbye, goodbye! Good luck. But listen, Leena-Kaisa. Erm...well...what was I going to say again? Ah yes! If it suits, then mention to Vappu, just on the side, how good I was to my first wife.

Beat.

Just if it suits, I mean.

Leena-Kaisa. Why not? But are you already thinking of a second, before your first is even cold?

Beat.

Risto. Well, never you mind about that. Just go and do as I said. I'll come too in just a moment.

Leena-Kaisa. If I linger, you can assume that Vappu has agreed to the matter of the child's situation.

Leena-Kaisa leaves. Johanna follows her out.

Risto. Good, good! (*He opens the cupboard door, takes out a mirror and comb, begins to tidy his suit.*) Not too shabby, eh? (*Looks in the mirror.*) Why shouldn't I still be good enough for women? I suppose we shall see. (*A knock on the window.*) Who's there? Ahaa, Toppo! Come in, you rascal.

Toppo enters.

Toppo. You're back soon.

Risto. Very soon. I didn't really fancy travelling about in this autumn weather. It was miserable.

Toppo. That Homsantuu let you go?

Risto. I escaped. Do you think I could have got away from her any other way? Yes I'm sure! The sort of girl she is, too.

Toppo. But you'll be in trouble if she comes after you.

Risto. Let her try. I'll find a way, if she really starts to bother me. I'll send the girl to jail for vagrancy – one, two!²⁰² But she won't come. What can she do to me? She knows that much.

Toppo enters.

Toppo. You're back soon.

Risto. Very soon. Didn't really fancy tramping about in this autumn weather. It was miserable.

Toppo. That Homsantuu let you go?

Risto. I escaped. Do you think I could have got away from her any other way? Yes, I'm sure! A girl like that.

Toppo. But you'll be in trouble if she comes after you.

Risto. Let her try. I'll find a way, if she really starts bothering me. I'll have the girl sent to prison for vagrancy –

He speaks again to the audience, in the rehearsed, declamatory voice.

The law decrees that vagrancy shall not be tolerated. And they don't exactly require proof. And gypsies, as we know, are vagrant by nature.²²⁶

Beat.

He resumes as before.

But she won't come. What can she do to me? She knows that much.

²⁰² When he threatens to have Kerttu imprisoned for vagrancy, Risto references a particular law of the time which criminalised 'vagrancy.' In practice, the law particularly targeted Roma people, and proof was not required for suspected 'vagrants' to be sentenced to forced labour.

Toppo. You can count yourself lucky if you get away that easily. That girl has a fiery nature. I'm afraid it's no good messing her about too much.

Risto. Pah!

Toppo. Well, and your old woman went and died in the meantime.

Risto. So she did.

Toppo. But I'm sure you won't mourn her for long, eh, scoundrel? You'll get a new one as quick as you can.

Risto. That's for sure. What good does being sad do? And no, it won't be long before I have a new one again.

Toppo. Listen to the lad! So he'll show us wonders yet!

Risto. Glance out the window, can you see Leena-Kaisa on her way here?

Toppo. What? Are you considering *her* now?

Risto. Leena-Kaisa? Are you mad?

Toppo. Well, I did wonder... – I can't see anyone here on the street.

Risto. Good, good.

Toppo. You can count yourself lucky if you get away that easily. That girl's a piece of work. I'm afraid it's no good messing her about too much.

Risto. Pah!

Toppo. Well, and your old woman went and died in the meantime.

Risto. So she did.

Beat.

Johanna re-appears.

Toppo. But I'm sure you won't mourn her for long, eh, scoundrel? You'll get a new one as quick as you can.

Risto. That's for sure. What good does being sad do? And no, it won't be long before I have a new one again.

Toppo. Listen to the lad! So he'll show us wonders yet!

Risto. Glance out the window, can you see Leena-Kaisa on her way here?

Toppo. What? Are you considering her now?

Risto. Leena-Kaisa? Are you mad?

Toppo. Well, I did wonder... – I can't see anyone on the street.

Risto. Good, good.

Toppo. What are you doing, getting yourself up like that? Are you going somewhere?

Risto. I thought I might pay Vappu a visit.

Toppo. (*Whistles.*) He-he-he-he-hear! Visit Vappu, eh? As if there's nothing to it. 'The pigs are scrounging very high up this year,' as they say.

Risto. Quiet, you. The brave man goes after his food. Who knows what'll happen? Let's swap jackets. Yours looks cleaner.

Toppo. You can have it. (*They change.*) But I'll be damned if Vappu cares for you. I'll never believe it.

Risto. Don't believe it, no one's forcing you to. – Oh, damn! There's not a drop of water anywhere here, and I need to wash my face.

Toppo. I'll go and get some water from the well. Do you have a pot?

Risto. I can't see that, either. Have a look in the yard and the shed, wherever you can get your hands on a dish or something.

Toppo leaves.

Risto. (*Stands with his back to the door and looks in the mirror.*) Leena-Kaisa doesn't seem to be hurrying back. So she *will* take the child, then. And so it wouldn't be so strange if she agreed to the

Toppo. What are you doing, getting yourself up like that? Are you going somewhere?

Risto. I thought I might pay Vappu a visit.

Toppo. He-he-he-hear! Visit Vappu, eh? As if there's nothing to it. 'The pigs are scrounging very high up this year,' as they say.

Risto. Quiet, you. The brave man goes after his food. Who knows what'll happen? Let's swap jackets. Yours looks cleaner.

Toppo. You can have it. (*They swap jackets.*) But I'll be damned, if Vappu cares for you. I'll never believe it.

Risto. Don't believe it, no one's forcing you to. – Oh, damn! There's not a drop of water anywhere here, and I need to wash my face.

Toppo. I'll go and get some from the well. Do you have a pot?

Johanna hides the pot on the side behind her back.

Risto. I can't see one. Have a look in the yard or the shed, wherever you can get your hands on a dish or something.

Toppo leaves. Risto stands with his back to the door and looks in the mirror.

Leena-Kaisa doesn't seem to be hurrying back. So she will take the child, then. And so it wouldn't be so strange if she agreed to take the

father, too. (*The door opens, Risto jumps and turns.*) Is she coming back already? No – Homsantuu! Damn!

Kerttu stands, silent.

Risto. What are you doing here?

Kerttu is silent; she squeezes the revolver in her hand.

I said, what are you doing here?

Kerttu. I came to say goodbye to you, Risto.

Risto. Goodbye? Is that so. Alright then, if that's all you want. You've just come at a bad time.

Kerttu. How so?

Risto. I was just about to leave.

Kerttu. I won't keep you long.

Risto. You won't? Well that's fine then. But you look so strange. And – what do you have in your hand?

Kerttu. My uncle's revolver. It's well made.

Risto. Why on earth do you have that with you?

Kerttu. This sort of thing comes in useful sometimes.

father, too. (*The door opens, he jumps and turns.*) Is she back already? No – Homsantuu! Shit!

Kerttu stands, silent.

Johanna stands beside her.

Risto. What are you doing here?

Kerttu is silent; she squeezes the revolver in her hand.

I said, what are you doing here?

Kerttu. I came to say goodbye to you, Risto.

Risto. Goodbye? Is that so? Alright then, if that's all you want. It's just, you've come at a bad time.

Kerttu. Have I?

Risto. I was about to leave.

Kerttu. I won't keep you.

Risto. You won't? That's fine then. But you look funny. And – what's that in your hand?

Kerttu. Nice, isn't it?

Risto. Why on earth do you have that with you?

Kerttu. Might come in handy.

Risto. You're holding it so carelessly. Is it loaded?

Kerttu. It is.

Risto. Put it down. You can't play with guns like that.

Kerttu. Why on earth not?

Risto. You'll soon shoot yourself.

Kerttu. Or you.

Risto. Yes, or me.

Kerttu. Or both of us.²⁰³ Where are you going?

Risto. I'm just going outside. I'll be back soon.

Kerttu. If you move an inch, I will shoot immediately.

Risto. You have evil in your mind, Kerttu.

Kerttu. When has there been anything else there?

Risto. Is it loaded?

Kerttu. It is.

Risto. Put it down. You can't play with guns like that.

Kerttu. Why not?

Risto. You'll end up shooting yourself.

Kerttu. Or you.

Risto. Yes, or me.

Beat.

Risto moves to try and leave. Johanna, unseen by him, blocks the front door.

Kerttu. Where are you going?

Risto. Just outside. I'll be back in a sec.

Kerttu. Move an inch and I'll shoot.

Risto. You're sick in the head.

Kerttu. Yeah?

²⁰³ I have mentioned that I cut out some other instances where Kerttu voices self-loathing, and have done so here, too. I don't think it is politically helpful for Kerttu to hate herself, nor for the act of attempting to shoot Risto to be positioned as a hopeless, completely desperate one.

Risto. That's exactly what I'm scared of. It's that gypsy blood of yours, always boiling and foaming. Try and calm yourself for once, Kerttu dear, for heaven's sake try.

Kerttu. Pointless. Heaven wasn't made for the likes of me in any case.

Risto. I promise you anything you want, if you just calm down.

Kerttu. I don't trust your promises.

Risto. And I wasn't going to leave you, Kerttu, although perhaps that's what you thought when I left so suddenly. As soon as I've buried Johanna, I'll come back to you, that's the honest truth.

Kerttu. We'll be together in earth's bosom, when we are both mud; not before.

Risto. But think now, Kerttu dear. If I took you to the altar, you'd be the wife of an honourable man. You wouldn't be rejected by the world anymore, like you have been up 'til now.

Kerttu. Twice you have betrayed me. You won't do it a third time.

Kerttu and Johanna look at each other and roll their eyes.

Risto. This is exactly what I'm scared of. It's that gypsy blood of yours. Just try and calm down for once, Kerttu my love, for heaven's sake try.

Kerttu. (*Spits like a villain in a cowboy movie.*) Your heaven wasn't made for the likes of me.

Risto. I promise you anything – anything you want – if you could just calm down.

Kerttu. Fuck your promises.

Risto. And I wasn't going to leave you, Kerttu – but maybe that's what you assumed when I left so suddenly. I'll come back to you – just as soon as I've buried Johanna – that's the honest truth.

Johanna and Kerttu look at each other.

Kerttu. We'll be together in hell.

Kerttu raises the revolver.

Risto. But think, Kerttu my love – if I married you – you'd be the wife of an honourable man. (*Johanna scoffs.*) – The world wouldn't reject you anymore.

Kerttu. Twice you have betrayed me. You won't do it a third time.

Risto. Just listen to me still. For God's sake, don't shoot. Wait one blessed moment at least. You can see I couldn't get away, even if I wanted to.

Kerttu. Speak then.

Risto. If only I knew what you really wanted. By my soul, I'd be ready for anything at all now. Tell me, is there something you want?

Kerttu. There is.

Risto. What? Kerttu, what do you want?

Kerttu. Revenge.

Risto. *(Wipes his forehead; aside)* Where's that Toppo got to?

Kerttu. Do you have anything else to say?

Risto. I do. Lots, too. But you're scaring me so much I can't speak. Put the revolver down for a moment. Kerttu dear, do that.

Kerttu. No.

Risto. Listen to me! For fuck's sake, don't shoot. Just wait one fucking moment! You can see that I can't run away, even if I wanted to.

Kerttu. Speak then.

Risto. If only I knew what you wanted. I swear, I'd do anything at all now. Tell me, is there something you want?

Kerttu. There is.

Risto. What? Kerttu, what do you want?

Kerttu and **Johanna.** Revenge.²⁰⁴

Beat.

Risto wipes his forehead. He's sweating like a pig.

Kerttu. Do you have anything else to say?

Risto. I do. Lots! But you're scaring me so much I can't speak. Put the revolver down for a second. Kerttu my love, be a good girl.

Kerttu. No.

²⁰⁴ Johanna gets a raw deal in the play, especially from the perspective of a contemporary reader. Although I do think she is a resistant character – there are plenty of examples that make it clear that she comprehends how oppressed she is, even if she finds herself unable to actively rebel - there is something gratingly plaintive about the way she speaks and behaves throughout. I wanted to give her a redemptive opportunity here. A chance to be a bit more badass, or something.

Risto. Just onto that chair, you can stand next to it yourself.

Kerttu. Not there and not anywhere else. And shall we stop this already? We're wasting time.

Risto. No, wait!

Toppo enters.

Thank god. You finally came.

Toppo. You should have told me the corpse was in the shed. I certainly wouldn't have gone in there to look for a bowl if I'd known that.

Risto. It was in there, was it? Yes, yes, where else would they have put it.

Toppo. Lord protect us, what a shock it was. I go into a dark corner and suddenly the corpse is in front me. My heart stopped, and I'm no old coward. Just that it still had its eyes open, that was the worst thing. Hey, don't stare at me like that. I don't have a drop of water either. Was I supposed to carry it in my fist, when I couldn't find a dish? Uh, I still feel faint. They say it's bad when the corpse's eyes stay open. She's inviting others to follow her, they say.

Kerttu. That's right. She's inviting others to follow her.

Toppo. Ah, is that one here? Well, Risto, what did I say?

Risto. Just on that chair, you can stand next to it.

Kerttu. Shall we stop this already? We're wasting time.

Risto. No, wait!

Toppo enters.

In her surprise, Kerttu lowers the revolver for a moment, and Johanna moves aside.

Thank god.

Toppo. You should have told me the body was in the shed. I certainly wouldn't have gone in there if I'd known that.

Risto. In there, was it? Yes, yes, where else would they have put it.

Toppo. Christ alive, what a shock. I go into a dark corner and suddenly the corpse is right there in front me. My heart stopped – and I'm no coward. Just that it still had its eyes open, that was the worst thing. Hey, don't look at me like that. And I don't have a drop of water either. What was I supposed to do, carry it in my fist? Ugh, I still feel faint. They say it's a bad omen when a corpse's eyes stay open. Inviting others to follow them, they say.

Kerttu. That's right. She's inviting others to follow her.

Toppo. Ah, that one's here, is she? Well, Risto, what did I say?

Risto. You came just in time. She was about to kill me.

Kerttu. And she means to still, and will do it too. (*Raises the revolver.*)

Risto. Toppo, Toppo, help!

Kerttu. If you come between us, I will shoot you first.

Toppo. Jesus Christ, now we're lost. (*Runs to the door.*)

Risto. Don't go, Toppo, don't go. She won't shoot you.

Kerttu. Are you leaving, or —?

Toppo rushes out.

Kerttu. Are you ready, Risto?

Risto. (*On his knees*) Have mercy on me, Kerttu! What will you gain by killing me? Have mercy.

Kerttu. Did you have mercy on me, villain? A second time you treacherously betrayed me, worse than before. You thought, 'that is the world's reject, no one will punish me for ruining her'. But you were mistaken! This world's reject, whose side no one takes, will avenge you herself.

Risto. Avenge me some other way. Just spare my life.

Risto. You came just in time. She was about to kill me.

Kerttu. She means to still.

Kerttu raises the revolver.

Johanna mirrors her.

Risto. Toppo, Toppo, help!

Kerttu. If you come between us, I'll shoot you first.

Toppo. Jesus Christ, now we're lost. (*He runs to the door.*)

Risto. Don't go, Toppo, don't go. She won't shoot you.

Kerttu. Are you leaving, or —?

Toppo rushes out.

Kerttu. Are you ready, Risto?

Risto. (*On his knees*) Have mercy on me, Kerttu! What good will killing me do you? Have mercy.

Kerttu. Mercy? Did you have mercy on me? A second time you betrayed me, worse than before. You thought, 'that is the world's reject, no one will punish me for ruining her.' But you were wrong! The 'reject', whose side nobody takes, will avenge you herself.

Risto. Avenge me some other way. Just spare my life.

Kerttu. No, you must die. And so must I.

Risto. Mercy, mercy!

Kerttu. No mercy, not for you and not for me.

Risto. Wait! At least let me pray first.

Kerttu. It's pointless. You won't get into heaven, any more than I will.

Risto. I will, I'm no worse than anyone else. And you don't need anything other than faith. And I believe, I believe truly. I'm sure I'll get in, if you only give me time to pray.

Kerttu. Pray then.

Risto. And you won't shoot before I've said 'amen'?

Kerttu. Start, or I'll shoot already.

Risto. I'm starting, I'm starting! If only I could remember something by heart. No – nothing comes to mind. I'm lost. – Wait, I know: 'When all my days are ended, let me lie in blissful sleep.' I'm so scared my teeth are chattering in my mouth. 'When all my days are ended, let me lie in blissful sleep. When through death –' But you really are hard-hearted – no, no, I'll go on. 'When all my days are ended, let me lie in blissful sleep. When I this world through death depart, among the holy let me rest' – How did it go then again? – 'Among the holy –'²⁰⁵

Kerttu. No, you must die.

Risto. Mercy, mercy!

Kerttu. No mercy. None for me, none for you.

Risto. Wait! At least let me pray first.

Kerttu. It's pointless. You're not going to heaven, either way.

Risto. I am! I'm no worse than anyone else. All a man needs is faith. And I believe, I truly believe. I'm sure I'll get in, as long as you just give me a minute to pray.

Kerttu. Pray then.

Risto. And you won't shoot before I've said 'amen'?

Kerttu. Start, or I'll shoot already.

Risto. I'm starting, I'm starting! If only I could remember something by heart. No – I can't think of anything. I'm lost. – Wait, I know: 'When all my days are ended, let me lie in blissful sleep.' I'm so scared my teeth are chattering. 'When all my days are ended, let me lie in blissful sleep. When through death –' But you really are a cruel bitch – no, no, I'll go on. 'When all my days are ended, let me lie in blissful sleep. When I this world through death depart, among the holy let me rest' – How did it go then again? – Among the holy –

²⁰⁵ The prayer is from the 1701 hymnbook, chorale number 138.

Clattering sound from the porch, Kerttu jumps, looks at the door, through which two policemen and Toppo enter; she shoots. Risto cries out and falls. A policeman hits the revolver out of Kerttu's hand and grabs onto her. Kerttu falls to the floor.

Clattering sounds from the porch.

Kerttu and Johanna jump and look at the door, through which two policemen and Toppo enter.

Kerttu and Johanna shoot.

Risto cries out and falls.

A policeman hits the revolver out of Kerttu's hand and grabs on to her.

Kerttu falls to the floor.

Minna. VERSION 1: Kerttu has shot Risto. In the chaos, she gets up escapes to re-join her family.

VERSION 2: Kerttu's grandmother has fought past Toppo and the police and shot Risto from afar. She grabs Kerttu, they run.

VERSION 3: Johanna has shot Risto, she grabs Kerttu, they run.

VERSION 4: The shot has backfired and hit Kerttu. She and Johanna ascend to heaven.

VERSION 5 (the final version): The shots misfire. Risto falls over. Kerttu is knocked down by the policeman.

*Johanna disappears. The supernatural feeling is gone.*²⁰⁶

Policeman 1. Aha, wolf cub; you've ended up in the trap now.

Toppo. We were too late, damn it!

Policeman 2. (*Kneels to inspect Risto.*) Don't panic. He's still alive. Where did it hit?

Risto. I'm not really sure.

Policeman 2. See if you can get up.

Risto. (*Rises with the policeman's help.*) Perhaps it didn't actually hit me. I think I just got a fright.²⁰⁷

Toppo. It didn't hit you? Well, wasn't that bloody lucky.

Risto. Thank you, Toppo. You didn't do this for free.

Policeman 1. Aha! We've caught you now, she-wolf.

Toppo. We were too late, damn it!

Policeman 2. (*Kneels to inspect Risto.*) Don't panic. He's still alive. Where did it hit?

Risto. I'm not too sure.

Policeman 2. See if you can get up.

Risto. (*Rises with the policeman's help.*) Perhaps it didn't actually hit me. I think I just got a fright.

Toppo. It didn't hit you? Well, wasn't that bloody lucky!

Risto. Thank you, Toppo. You didn't do this for free.

²⁰⁶ Throughout the course of writing *The Worker's Wife*, Canth changed her mind several times about how the play should end. For example, in a letter to director Kaarlo Bergom in 1883, Canth described her planned plot, where the ending was that Risto is about to murder Johanna, but Kerttu intervenes and is killed instead (Appendix Ei). Bergom had suggested to Canth that Johanna should be blinded, rather than dying – a suggestion that she rejected because 'it felt so impossible to present that sort of quiet, peaceful, patient life philosophy now, when my heart is full of bitterness and revolution' (Appendix Eii). Novelist Juhani Aho also recalled visiting Canth later in her writing process, and how they had discussed the ending of the play. During the course of their conversation, Canth had realised that instead of Kerttu actually managing to shoot Risto, it would be more powerful for her to misfire and realise what she had actually meant to shoot (Maijala, 2014, p.168). Tracing the progression of Canth's ideas about the ending of the play shows two things: firstly, it is a reminder of possibility and mutability, and secondly, it illustrates the discursive nature of Canth's process. The idea for these 'versions' came when I held a reading of a draft of my translation, about halfway through the translation process. At the end of act three, the actors discussed their predications (and hopes) for how the play would end. Including these endings here resists the idea of tragic inevitability, reminds us that things did not have to be this way, that alternative, even utopian, endings are possible.

²⁰⁷ Again, like Risto's 'going blind' at the end of act two, Risto's 'getting shot' was also false, another misleading illusion.

Toppo. Don't thank me. One man must always help another. But hasn't that girl had a shock? I've never seen her so deathly pale before. Is there life in the girl anymore?

Policeman 1. She'll come to.

Risto. Just as long as she doesn't escape. Be careful.

Policeman 1. There's no danger. We can manage a little girl like that.

Risto. But she has the strength of nine men, when she starts raging.²⁰⁸

Policeman 1. Raging won't help when she's been thrown in jail. We'll just tighten her shackles.

Risto. And what if they release her? Then my life will be in danger again.

Policeman 1. She won't be released just like that, don't you worry. I know the law that much. First, she'll be tried for attempted murder and spend several years in prison, and then she'll be sent to do forced labour. It's not as though anyone will want to take responsibility for a creature like that.²⁰⁹

Policeman 2. Certainly not. The government can take care of her from now on.

Toppo. Don't thank me. One man must always help another. But hasn't that girl had a shock? I've never seen her so deathly pale before. Is there any life left in her?

Policeman 1. She'll come to.

Risto. Just as long as she doesn't escape. Be careful.

Policeman 1. There's no danger. We can manage a little girl like that.

Risto. But she has the strength of nine men, when she starts raging.

Policeman 1. Raging won't help her in prison. We'll just tighten her shackles.

Risto. And what if they release her? Then my life's in danger again.

Policeman 1. She won't be released just like that, don't you worry. I know the law that much. First, she'll be tried for attempted murder and spend several years in prison for that, and then she'll be sent to do forced labour. It's not as though anyone will want to take responsibility for a creature like that.

Policeman 2. Certainly not. The government can take care of her from now on.

²⁰⁸ Risto is possibly referencing the Finnish proverb: 'karhulla on yhden miehen mieli ja yhdeksän miehen voima' ['a bear has one man's mind and nine men's strength']. The proverb has a second half: 'sudella yhdeksän miehen mieli, ja yhden miehen voima' ['a wolf has nine men's mind, and one man's strength']. One of the policemen has referred to Kerttu as wolf-cub a few lines earlier, and the proverbial resonance of this line is another example of Kerttu being dehumanizingly figured as a wild animal.

²⁰⁹ Risto has referenced the law throughout the play, and finally we hear it reinforced by a law enforcement representative, confirming the rooted misogyny of the legal system.

Risto. Good! Isn't it altogether a blessed thing, that a land has laws and justice, that protect peoples' safety? What would happen to us if people like that were let loose? But when they're taken away – when the law and justice –

Toppo. What is she saying? Listen!

Policeman 1. The girl? I doubt she said anything.

Toppo. She said something, her lips moved. Do you see? Again!

Policeman 1. Her lips are moving, but still no sound. Stand up already, girl, I'm certainly not going to start carrying you. You're very heavy. Come on, try now, see if your legs will carry you.

Policeman 2. And speak more clearly if you have something to say.

Toppo. Yes, let it all spill out so that we can hear too. Don't mutter to yourself.

Risto. Quick, quick!

Kerttu. Your laws and justice, ha, ha, ha, ha.²¹⁰

Risto. Good! Isn't it altogether a blessed thing, that a land has laws and justice, that protect peoples' safety? What would happen to us if people like that were let loose? But when they're taken away – when the law and justice –

Toppo. What is she saying? Listen!

Policeman 1. The girl? I doubt she said anything.

Toppo. She said something, her lips moved. Do you see? Again!

Policeman 1. Her lips are moving, but still no sound. Stand up already, girl, I'm not going to start carrying you. You're very heavy. Come, try now, see if your legs will carry you.

Policeman 2. And speak clearly if you have something to say.

Toppo. Yes, let it all spill out so that we can hear too. Don't mutter to yourself.

Kerttu. Your laws and justice –

²¹⁰ This being the most famous and most often quoted line of the play, I took some time to think about how to translate it. Although there is only one other traceable translation of this play (Hanhilammi and Taanila Lehtinen, 1981), this particular line has been variously translated as a standalone line. Because it is the most famous line of the play, it is generally the only one quoted in the handful of existing English writings about the play. In their full-length translation, Hanhilammi and Taanila Lehtinen (1981, p.67) have it as “‘your law and justice, ha, ha, ha. That’s what I should have been shooting at.’ Then, for example: Jaakko Ahokas (1973, p.114) includes it in *A History of Finnish Literature*, translating it as ‘Your law and order...that’s what I ought to have shot at’; In *A History of Finland’s Literature*, Philip Binham translates it as ‘Your law and your justice...it’s them I ought to have shot’ (Laitinen, 1998, p.88); and finally, Ken Schubert, translating a blogpost about Canth for the *Nordic Women’s Literature* website, has it as ‘Your laws and rights, what a joke. I was really aiming at them’ (Nevala, 2012). A fairly short line, but a few variables to consider. I mulled over whether the second word (‘oikeutenne’) should be ‘rights’ or ‘justice’, and opted for the latter because it also implicates the system that supposedly uploads laws and rights. I chose to cut the ‘ha, ha, ha’ from my feminist translation, because I want to lean away from the somewhat clichéd manic edge it gives, the implication that Kerttu has lost her mind. I also wanted to keep the line as pithy as possible, and so tried to translate the second half with that in mind. How do you adequately translate words that carry revolution within them?

Toppo. ‘Your laws and justice.’ What does she mean?

Kerttu. That’s what I meant to shoot.

Toppo. She’s mixed up in her head. Ugh, this is starting to feel awful. See how her eyes roll in her head?²¹¹

Policeman 1. She really does seem to have gone mad now. But I’m not sure that one’s ever been sane. (*Grabs Kerttu by the arm.*)

Kerttu. Your laws and justice, ha, ha, ha –

Policeman 2. (*Grabs her other arm.*) Shall we get going already?

Kerttu. That’s what I meant to shoot.

Risto. So she’s gone mad now, that one? What next. A wise heathen? Alone in her rage, slandering high justice. She’s not a gypsy for nothing. She deserves to be punished, for threatening our laws and justice.

Kerttu. Your laws and justice –

Toppo. Is that necessary?

Risto. Of course.

Toppo. She’s not saying it in her right mind, poor thing.

Toppo. ‘Your laws and justice.’ What does she mean?

Kerttu. That’s what I meant to shoot.

Toppo. She’s mixed up in her head. I don’t feel good about this.

Policeman 1. She really does seem to have gone mad now. Mind you, I’m not sure that one’s ever been sane. (*Grabs Kerttu by the arm.*)

Kerttu. Your laws and justice –

Policeman 2. (*Grabs Kerttu’s other arm.*) Shall we get going?

Kerttu. That’s what I meant to shoot.

Risto. So she’s gone mad now, has she? Well, she’s not a gypsy for nothing. And she deserves to be punished, for threatening our laws and justice.

Kerttu. Your laws and justice –

Toppo. Is that necessary?

Risto. Of course.

Toppo. She’s not saying it in her right mind, poor thing.

²¹¹ As with cutting the laugh from Kerttu’s line, I have also cut the reference to her rolling eyes in my feminist translation. Firstly, it feeds into the potential for Kerttu’s character to be a heavily stereotyped, overly melodramatic, problematic portrayal of a ‘wild’ Roma woman. Secondly, this is the greatest moment of clarity that Kerttu experiences in the play. There is something helpfully jarring about Kerttu experiencing calm enlightenment, and it being interpreted by the men as insanity.

Kerttu. Your laws and justice, ha, ha, ha, ha –

Policeman 1. Let's go now!

Kerttu. That's what I meant to shoot.

Risto. Do I have permission to ask you sirs to the pub, once you've taken care of the girl? I would offer you a drink at least for all your help here.

Policemen. Many thanks. We'll come.

Kerttu. (*At the door*) Your laws and justice, ha, ha, ha,
ha – ²¹²

Risto. Now we got through that, thank god.

Toppo. Poor girl. Things did go badly for her.

Risto. Whose fault is that? If she'd only behaved herself. – But listen.
How do I actually look now?

Kerttu. Your laws and justice –

Policeman 1. Let's go!

Kerttu. That's what I meant to shoot.

Risto. Do I have permission to ask you sirs to the pub, once you've taken care of the girl? I'd like to offer you a drink for all your help.

Policeman 1. Much obliged. We'll come.

Kerttu. (*At the door*) Your laws and justice –

Kerttu and the policemen are gone.

Risto. We got through that, thank god.

Toppo. Poor girl. Things did go badly for her, in the end.

Risto. Whose fault is that? If she'd only behaved herself. – But listen.
How do I look now?

²¹² In the first production of *The Worker's Wife*, director Kaarlo Bergbom decided to end the performance here, omitting the final scene. In his review of the play, O.E. Tudeer (Appendix D) notes this change, and says: 'This ending is certainly beautiful and satisfying in itself, and it is also the strongest defence against those who have perceived a disdain for religion in Mrs Canth's play. However, the writer has not sought chiefly to hold us before the righteousness which will abolish the power of injustice on the other side of the grave, but rather to open our eyes to the terrible, dehumanising injustices that we, each according to their strength, should be responsible for attempting to remove from this world. And that purpose is, without doubt, best achieved by the piece ending with Homsantuu's imprisonment and the oppressors' boasting. Those who are not affected by this depressing ending would not profit even if we spoke with the tongues of men and angels. That this ending is more effective on stage from a dramatic perspective is hardly necessary to mention.' Lucina Hagman (1911, p.208), Canth's first biographer, also agrees that Bergbom was right to end the play here, saying: 'it did not add dramatic effect and was not necessary to the final development of the piece.' I have naturally included the final scene in my 'literal' translation, in order to present the play in its entirety, as Canth wrote it. However, I have also kept it in my feminist translation (where I might have been at more liberty to omit it), because I disagree with Bergbom, Tudeer and Hagman's idea that it does not add dramatic value to the piece. What follows is, I believe, fundamental to the politics of the play, and also has potential for great dramatic effect as, I hope, you will see.

Toppo. You are as you are.

Risto. I think my eyes might be dirty?

Toppo. Well, perhaps, what's the harm in that?

Risto. Don't say that. Vappu won't like me then. Wait a moment. I'll go to the well to wash.

Opens the door to the porch, but pulls back at once, when he meets Vappu there.

Risto. Hey, here's Vappu now.

Vappu. Good day!

Risto. Good day, good day. I was just about to go to you. Do be so good as to take a seat.

Toppo. Please! Here's a chair.²¹⁴

Vappu. I can manage to stand for as long as I'll be here.

Risto. Surely not, absolutely not. Come in. Your place isn't in the doorway.

Toppo. You are as you are.

Risto. Do I have dirt round my eyes?

Toppo. Well, perhaps a bit, but what's the harm in that?

Risto. Don't say that. Vappu won't like me then. Wait a moment. I'll go to the well to wash.

Risto opens the door to the porch, but pulls back at once when he meets Vappu there.

Kerttu and Johanna follow Vappu in.²¹³

Risto. Hey, Vappu's here!

Vappu. Good day.

Risto. Good day, good day. I was just about to go to you. Do be so good as to sit down.

Toppo. Please! Here's a chair.

Vappu. I can stand.

Risto. Surely not, absolutely not. Come in. Your place isn't in the doorway.

²¹³ Surprise! They're back. As with bringing Johanna in to support Kerttu, I wanted to bring both back here to stand alongside Vappu, emphasising the idea of solidarity between women. I want to concretize the idea that none of these three women stand in isolation. I also want to resist an ending that suggests that Kerttu and Johanna's death and imprisonment are inevitable.

²¹⁴ In the Finnish, Toppo says 'vassakuu!' – another instance of him slightly incorrectly transliterating Swedish (here, 'varsågod' – 'here you are', or 'welcome'). As earlier, I have chosen to simply translate it into an English equivalent.

Vappu. It's all the same, wherever I am. I wanted to say a few words about your child.

Risto. Yes, the child, you see. Yes, yes, that's what I wanted to talk about too.

Vappu. Can I look after him and raise him as though he were my own?

Risto. For god's sake, does she even need to ask? What more could I ask for?

Vappu. So in that case you won't have any say in the matter?

Risto. I won't get involved, I won't meddle with the whole being, I promise you that.

Vappu. Good! In that case I will take your boy and with god's help try to make a person out of him.

Risto. But I had something else I wanted to talk about. Do come and sit down now. You won't? Well, do as you wish. Yes, I had something else to talk about. And you might perhaps have guessed it. You see: I am now a widower. And it is not good for a man to be alone, as we read in the word. Wouldn't it be good if – but it seems you think it's too soon. The way I see it, it might as well be spoken about all the same.

Vappu. It's all the same, wherever I am. I just wanted to say a few words about your child.

Risto. Yes, the child, see. Yes, yes, that's what I wanted to talk about too.

Vappu. Can I look after him and raise him as though he were my own?

Risto. For god's sake, does she even need to ask? What more could I ask for?

Vappu. You won't have a say in anything?

Risto. I won't get involved, I won't meddle, I promise you that.

Vappu. Good! In that case I'll take your boy and with god's help try to make a person out of him.

Risto. But I had something else I wanted to talk about. Do come and sit down now. You won't? Well, as you wish. Yes, I had something else to talk about. And you might almost have guessed it. You see: I am now a widower. And it's not good for a man to be alone, as we read in the word. Wouldn't it be good if –

Johanna and Kerttu raise their revolvers once more. Something starts to build.

– but it seems you think it's too soon. As I see it, we might as well talk about it all the same.

Vappu. Don't talk rubbish. You won't seduce me in any case. Content yourself with the fact that you have already ruined two women's lives. That is plenty for one man.

Risto. Ruined two women's lives! What are you talking about?

Vappu. Your wife died of grief and worry because of you.

Risto. Who's told you that?

Vappu. And that wasn't enough. You have sent that poor, unhappy girl, who the police carried past me out there, to a place two times more terrible still.

Risto. You mean Homsantuu? Don't worry. They are dealing with her according to laws and justice.

Vappu. And according to what are they dealing with *you*?

Risto. Me? What would I be held responsible for?

Vappu. Nothing, that's clear. Nothing! The world has got what it wanted from you, it won't punish you, nor will it hold your faults as faults. Priests and judges both are on your side, for their eyes are blinded by sin. The servants of light use their power in the service of darkness. But things certainly won't end here. The last word has not

Vappu. Don't talk rubbish. You won't seduce me, whatever you say. Content yourself with the fact that you have already ruined two women's lives. That's plenty for one man.

Risto. Ruined two women's lives? What are you talking about?

Vappu. Your wife died of grief and worry because of you.

Risto. Who's told you that?

Vappu. And that wasn't enough. You've sent that poor unhappy girl, who the police just carried past me out there, to a place two times more terrible still.

Risto. You mean Homsantuu? Don't worry. She's being dealt with according to laws and justice.

Whatever is building, rises.

Vappu. And according to what exactly are they dealing with you?

Risto. Me? What am I responsible for?

Whatever is building rises to a peak, drowning out the mill sounds. This is spoken like a prophesy.

Vappu. NOTHING, THAT IS CLEAR. NOTHING! THE WORLD HAS GOT WHAT IT WANTED FROM YOU, IT WON'T PUNISH YOU, NOR WILL IT HOLD YOUR FAULTS AS FAULTS. PRIESTS AND JUDGES BOTH ARE ON YOUR SIDE, FOR THEIR EYES ARE BLINDED BY SIN. THE SERVANTS OF LIGHT USE THEIR POWER IN THE SERVICE OF DARKNESS.

been spoken yet. And as surely as a lord, too, has a lord and the needy has a god, so surely will you stand before his throne, where people cannot just decide what justice and truth are. Then at last your sentence will be cast.

Risto. And where is it, that throne of power?

Toppo. Yes, where, I want to know too?

Vappu. There, where the *righteous* lives and reigns now and for ever and ever. (*Exits.*)

Risto. What did she mean?

Toppo. I'm not sure if she didn't mean god. That's how I understood it.

Risto. You're probably right. Well, but did she really – ? Damn her! I won't be scared yet. What does Vappu know about that? Surely she hasn't been speaking to god. Some woman.

Toppo. But, you know, I was starting to feel sorry for that girl too, all the same.

BUT THINGS WILL NOT END HERE. THE LAST WORD HAS NOT BEEN SPOKEN. AND AS SURELY AS A LORD, TOO, HAS A LORD, AND THE NEEDY HAS A GOD, THEN SO SURELY WILL YOU STAND BEFORE HIS THRONE, WHERE PEOPLE CANNOT SIMPLY DECIDE WHAT IS JUSTICE AND WHAT IS TRUTH. THEN AT LAST YOUR SENTENCE WILL BE CAST.

There is thunder, hell fire, and an awful sound.

Risto explodes into a thousand pieces. The law is destroyed. Justice is destroyed. The church is destroyed. Johanna, Kerttu and Vappu ascend, triumphant, into heaven.

Silence. A moment of uncertainty.

The mill sounds start up again softly.

Risto. What was all that about?

Toppo. Did she mean...god?

Risto. You're probably right. Well, but did she really –? Fuck her! I'm not scared. What does Vappu know? Surely she hasn't been speaking to god?

Little does he know...

Toppo. But, you know, I was starting to feel sorry for that girl too, all the same.

Risto. Come on now, lad. Don't start feeling sorry for a creature like that. Who asked her to go and try and kill someone, who? Feeling sorry for the damned girl. Whatever next.

Toppo. It's all very well for you to say; but, but –

Risto. But what?

Toppo. What if you'd got her – ?²¹⁵ I've heard it said that other women in that condition have been driven off their path.

Risto. Pah, nonsense! Let's go to the pub.

They exit.

Curtain down.

Risto. Come on now, lad. Don't start feeling sorry for a creature like that. Who asked her to go and try and kill someone? Who? Pitying the bitch. Whatever next.

Toppo. Yes, well, that's all very well; but, but –

Risto. But what?

Toppo. What if you'd got her – ? (*Mimes being pregnant.*)

Risto. Pah, rubbish! Let's go to the pub.

They exit.

The clattering of the mill rises to a peak.

Minna C / Minna J / Vappu / Kerttu / Johanna / You. (*This begins as a whisper during the above exchange between Risto and Toppo, but grows steadily louder and more insistent.*) THE NEW AGE HAS AWAKENED NEW IDEAS AND NEW TRUTHS. THOSE IDEAS, THOSE TRUTHS, ARE FIGHTING TO GAIN STRENGTH AND POWER. THEY ARE SHAKING UP OLD, BELOVED CUSTOMS AND HABITS. THEY ARE PULLING AND RIPPING UP PREJUDICES WHOSE FOUNDATIONS HAVE DECAYED. THEY ARE GENERATING NEW PROSPECTS, ALTERING OLD PERSPECTIVES.

²¹⁵ Toppo's line in Finnish is: 'Jos sinä olit toimittanut hänen' – a euphemistic way of saying 'got her pregnant'. On the one hand, it is nice to see him showing sympathy towards Kerttu, and his line emphasises Risto's callousness and women's lack of autonomy. On the other hand, the misogynistic implication in his line is that pregnant people are inclined to madness.

THEY SUGGEST THAT THE UNSHAKEABLE TRUTHS OF
OUR FOREMOTHERS AND FOREFATHERS ARE NO LONGER
TRUTHS FOR US.

LIFE IS BETTER THAN DEATH. WAKING IS BETTER
THAN SLEEP. IF THIS IS TRUE FOR MEN, THEN WHY
NOT ALSO FOR WOMEN?

LIFE IS BETTER THAN DEATH. WAKING IS BETTER
THAN SLEEP. IF THIS IS TRUE FOR MEN, THEN WHY
NOT ALSO FOR WOMEN?

LIFE IS BETTER THAN DEATH. WAKING IS BETTER
THAN SLEEP. IF THIS IS TRUE FOR MEN, THEN WHY
NOT ALSO FOR WOMEN?²¹⁶

Silence.

²¹⁶This text is taken from Canth's article 'On the Woman Question' (Appendix A)

Appendices

Appendices all translated by me.

Appendix A – Extracts from Minna Canth, ‘*Naiskysymyksestä I*’ [On the Woman Question] published in *Valvoja* magazine, January 1884, pages 169-176.

“The woman question has brought about a great disturbance in our country,” we hear many people sigh. And that is true in part. The new age has awakened new ideas and new truths, and those ideas, those truths, are fighting to gain strength and power. They are shaking up old, beloved customs and habits, they are pulling and ripping up prejudices whose foundations have decayed. They are generating new prospects, altering old perspectives, and suggest that the unshakeable truths of our grandmothers and grandfathers are no longer truths for us. These things always create a small disturbance to begin with, but should we complain about that? Should we complain about great spiritual movements that spread across the whole civilised world like great currents, their waves swelling even to our distant shores? Certainly not. Just as we do not complain about being neither deaf nor mute. Life is better than death, waking is better than sleep. If this is an acknowledged truth for men, then why not also for women?

In Finland, nature is hard and scarce, people are poor and few, and are only just taking their first independent steps onto the battlegrounds of spiritual endeavour. If they want to grow and develop, if they want to *live* at all, they must gather all their strength, even the smallest, and grant every constituent the opportunity to progress and work freely. One class cannot prosper from breaking the other, one gender cannot oppress the other nor suffocate the other’s spirit with the weight of their despotic power. The health of

each constituent part is essential to the success of the whole, and only through steady, harmonious development can a sturdy foundation for national civilisation be made possible. As a citizen and a human being, the Finnish woman must strive forward and boldly clear her path of those obstacles that hinder her continuous advancement. She must show her fitness foremost by winning a position for herself where she has the opportunity to use her strength to serve humankind and truth. If she does not, she is neglecting her duty, and her life will have no other meaning than, at most, bringing the next generation into the world.

[...]

Liberty for women! Liberty of action, liberty of thought! The weight of old, stiff ways and habits suffocates and depresses our spiritual strength. The prevention of free competition in the different areas of work in society forces us to suffer material misery. Thus, woman becomes a machine and loses her naturalness, becomes nothing but another’s monkey. Life, and the meaning of life, lies before her like a book secured with seven seals.

It would likely be difficult to illustrate precisely what truth man has used as grounds for wresting all rights from woman and seizing all benefits for himself, as we are no longer a savage people who use bodily force to seize rights.

Here, as elsewhere, the fight for women’s liberty has mostly been met with coldness or mockery, anger and despotic intolerance, whether in refined or cruder form. It does not help to marvel at that, nor to fear the worst. Throughout history, humankind’s evolution has followed the same painstaking path. There are always the old-fashioned ones, enclosed by the sturdy walls of tradition and cloud-capped mountains of prejudice. They hold no room in their hearts for the feelings of the age, nor in their minds for its ideas. But truth

contains the spirit of life. It can break down walls, level mountains and will gain victory by any means necessary.

Although the baselessness of those prejudices is so obvious that it is not worth wasting words on them, we must nevertheless touch on those which cause the most trouble and are evidently the most deep-rooted.

The first, and the one perhaps liable to awaken most doubt in Finnish women, is the Phariseean heresy which dares to use the Holy Bible as its weapon in the defence of oppression and despotism. Ever since the scribes and Pharisees persecuted Christ in the shadow of the Bible, opponents of free will and progress have often made the gullible believe that they are allies of religion. People who are unable to carry the noble spirit of Christ's teaching get lost in the labyrinth of rules and dogmas, because in their blindness they begin to fight against exactly that which they think they serve. We can see how hard an opposition those people have wrought for intellectual truth throughout the course of history. But those truths have always gained victory regardless. After a few generations have passed, they are proved correct, and before long they are held as so essential that even the duller-witted wonder at how they could ever have been denied. Therefore, it is entirely natural that women are chained to darkness and to the position of slave with the help of the Bible. The respect that women in general have for religion makes it an extraordinarily suitable weapon. Paul's words are brought up time and again, particularly with regard to married women's rights.

[...]

The rights which women seek to gain for themselves belong to the societal and not the religious sphere, even though, like all

progress, they are based on true Christian belief. It is therefore pointless to begin mixing two separate things and to argue about them. Only insofar as the woman question concerns moral ideas can we examine it from a religious perspective. But here we come to another misconception.

It is presumed that morality would disappear from the face of earth as a result of women's liberation. There are fears that women's moral ideals would become just as confused and loose as men's are, if the external force which has kept her in place until now were removed. The reverse! If a woman is enlightened at the same time as she is liberated, she will develop a sort of internal power of restraint, which is greater and more valuable than that former external force. It is no longer simply a prohibitive power, but an active one. Opinions and moral ideals will certainly change, but they will change for the better, they will endure. Women will no longer consider conformity their principal goal, nor the actual principal goal a side one. For example, she will be able to walk freely through Kaisaniemi completely alone in the dead of night, just like a man can, and no one will dare impugn her honour for it.¹ However: the shame she feels about connection to and association with a bad, fallen woman, she will also feel about connection to and association with the man through whom that woman has fallen, or with whom she has practiced sin, no matter what position that man holds in society. A man has not the smallest right to immorality, any more than a woman does; judgement and punishment should be as harsh for one as for the other. Now that we have come this far, we must also question the civilised women who, in dance halls and elsewhere, associate with uncivilised and impure men.

¹ Kaisaniemi is an area in central Helsinki.

It is also said that “women will lose their femininity through emancipation.”

That depends on how we understand “femininity”. Is it that modesty that sits on the sofa and crochets? That raises and lowers her eyelids according to the rules, and does not think it appropriate to pronounce a single sensible idea in public, nor a single firm opinion (perhaps because she does not have them)? Is it that angel who does nothing bad – nor anything good? That will be lost, that will certainly be lost. Or is femininity “submissiveness”, “self-sacrifice” and “self-denial” – i.e. those words only ever used about women? The way that women are currently understood to be “submissive”, “self-sacrificing” etc.? Answer: it is the way that she denies her most precious rights and neglects her holiest responsibilities as a *human* in order to be a *woman*; or, in other words, in order to be a beloved toy for some men, and a subordinate slave for others. Let us admit that those women who content themselves with that sort of position, and even aspire to it, are truly not yet so developed that they deserve liberty and greater opportunities, nor would they be capable of using them. If we did want to move forwards with the qualities of “submissiveness” etc., as if women were more obliged to them than men, then can we claim that a woman does not need them on the path of progress? The woman who dares to give and receive blows for the sake of truth does submit to something. The woman who leaves the valley of peace for the battlefield of spiritual progress, powerfully trusting that her weapons are needed in that overall battle against darkness, she too is self-sacrificing. The woman who voluntarily relinquishes men’s favour in order to force them above all to *respect* her – has she not sacrificed something too? I ask those “true” women.

[...]

There are still many prejudices that need tackling, but perhaps the reader is already as tired of them as the writer is. Fighting them is like running a race against fence posts. Therefore, we will leave them in peace for the moment, with the promise of more should the need arise. Instead, we will now examine a few particularities of women’s endeavour.

Appendix B – Extracts from Minna Canth, ‘Naiskysymyksestä II’ [On the Woman Question II], *Valvoja*, 1884, pages 288-303.

In turning to the particulars of the woman question, I feel sorely the inadequacy of my knowledge in all areas concerned. A thorough and precise investigation of the matter would require a good, rigorous education in pedagogy, natural sciences, philosophy, law, economics, social studies, etc. The undersigned is not so fortunate as to be possessed of a scientific education, or capable of building anything on such. My only grounds are life experience and the firm assurance born of it. But even though my lack of knowledge prevents me from handling the matter in as rounded or detailed a manner as it would doubtless require, I am nonetheless certain that the education provided by life experience is exactly what leads to truth. Therefore, on that basis, I will begin boldly and without hesitation to critique women’s education and social standing.

I have already mentioned the word *education*. What is women’s education in modern homes and schools, and what is the purpose of it? Is it not, in truth, simply a great mesh of prejudices and absurdities? Through it, women’s souls are squeezed in iron corsets in the same way that their bodies are, thereby damaging the health that nature would have equipped them with were it not for that puzzling education. Already from infancy, there is an attempt to stifle all naturalness in a woman; instead, as many superficial

adornments as possible are sought for her, again leading to internal emptiness or falseness. That education has been apt for moulding the soul of a slave for a slave. It has been apt for enabling a woman to bend under that yoke with which mankind's still dominant savagery sees fit to oppress the weak. It has been apt for getting women to trust blindly in those wrong and outdated principles which have ordered her confined and difficult lot. And it has also been apt for making women an obstacle to the nation's great effort towards higher civil development.

It is very difficult to discern what exactly the purpose of women's current education is. Is the aim to equip her with a healthy body and soul? Is it to prepare women for life? Is she given the skills and ability to make a living? Is she given the sorts of knowledge and foundation with which she, having reached adulthood, can continue to advance herself through self-improvement? And finally: is she prepared, spiritually and physically, to raise the next generation? - No, unfortunately not! In all this, her education both at home and at school strives towards the exact opposite.

[...]

When a girl finishes school, her 'education' ends too. Do we then allow her to begin real work, where she could, to some extent, better the bad effects of her education? No! Reading novels, "handiwork" (i.e. sewing lace, etc.), examining fashion magazines, playing the piano, a superficial social life, dances and entertainment – these are the means by which she is taken ever further away from true life and its duties. At the expense of her health and her sense, the dulling of that already worn-down sensibility is thus hastened. In addition to an excess of sitting and fantasising come those unfortunate corsets, which probably account for half of all so-called internal troubles,

which women suffer in such high numbers. A constructed conception of beauty is the worst enemy of naturalness. A woman must have a slender figure, and because of that her chest is squeezed, her insides partly flattened, and partly shoved out of their natural positions, whereby they press and damage the body's tenderest parts. Just think how this way all systems are freely prevented from their work, and then understand how the use of corsets affect the health of the body. Nonetheless, women's natural weakness is spoken about constantly, as if this were an obstacle to her gaining her rights. Are boys raised as stupidly and narrow-mindedly as women? Shall we squeeze them into corsets and see how long their strength and health will last?

[...]

Is the aim of education to give women the skills and ability required to make a living? Whatever next! If she has not succeeded in getting a man to maintain her, then let her suffer poverty and die; there is no place for her in society, and she is not really considered to be entitled to a life, though with Christian love and noble tolerance she is permitted to pass her unpleasant and useless days in some fashion. At least, that is what one would assume based on the education system. Extraordinary care is taken to teach young girls skills in the sorts of work with which a person can no longer support themselves. And with the same care, her focus and interest are diverted away from that with which she could materially sustain herself. Our current laws of industry would permit women the opportunity for all sorts of work, if only she were made capable of them through education. But again, those old prejudices and old ways of looking are obstacles here. A woman must be "domestic", and she is only held as such if she sits from morning to night with some pointless handiwork, even though she thereby neglects

economic matters and several other more important activities. Could she not, conversely, better support her household if she did the sort of work which would be of greater use and take less time and energy?

In the fifth edition of the *Teollisuus Lehti* [Industry Newspaper] there is a piece worthy of notice, where Frithoj Foss's ideas about women's position from an economic perspective are put forth. Among other things, it says: [...] "If we consider the work done by women of our age, we notice that it is exclusively so-called handiwork. We do not include housework here, but rather work that produces profit. Ordinary women's handiwork does not sustain, producing only a nominal profit, because the worker's subsistence and livelihood cost the same or more than the product would cost in a shop. The reason for this is that machines and the countless women who do not need to live off their work can prepare handicrafts more cheaply. In many families, the household produces the necessary women's handiwork products for themselves; therefore, it is not necessary to buy them from elsewhere for the price that the work would warrant, because factories are unbeatable competitors in that regard. When we consider this matter, we soon realise how great a loss to the productivity of our age it is that women use up their strength on so-called handiwork. It is clear that many other jobs which would be so much more useful, and which would actually make a profit for the producer are left undone because of low-valued handiwork."

[...]

If we compare girls' and boys' schools to each other even a little, we soon notice how great a wrong the state has done to that so-called weaker sex, and that it should seek to support rather than oppress it. Boys' education is organised so that everything leads to a

clear, definite aim. According to their proclivities and talents, a boy can choose freely how he would like to earn his living and use his strengths for the benefit of humankind. Without taking into consideration the "further education" whereby women are partially trained to become teachers in poorly paid positions, our girls' schools have no practical goal. University is closed to women, and at the same time all those rights are forbidden to her that she could have gained for herself on that path. In the Senate's new girls' school proposal, it specifically still states that the purpose of girls' schools is not to prepare them for university study. Because that was such a great achievement that it had to be explicitly stated. It is certainly already very clear that our girls' schools will not, for a long time, be for that, or any other *sensible* purpose at all.

[...]

Girls' schools must be built on a completely different foundation to before. Throw away that old, worn, empty phrase about women's "higher, moral level." The nation of Finland is too poor to pay for those "highly civilised" idlers. Fix your eye chiefly on life's true needs. In the first place, school must offer women the same knowledge as men, with the help of which she can at least get a sufficient livelihood for herself, according to her disposition and strength. The ability for profitable work and occupation is a necessity for women, whether they marry or not. Secondly: because a woman's natural purpose is inevitably to raise the next generation, she must be given informed teaching for this at school. For that reason, *science* must be of great importance at girls' schools. Explain to students the laws of nature according to the truths that contemporary knowledge has made clear. The learning of healthcare based on natural sciences and the learning of pedagogy. And thirdly: seeing that *housekeeping* is often a woman's most important task,

she must also be given an education in economics. In medium estates the economic loss that currently prevails is largely a result, among other grievances, of mistress's unskilled and uninformed grasp on economics. A woman's narrow station and her being unused to profitable occupation, her lack of property rights, along with several other things, have wrought in her either indifference, confusion, or even misunderstandings of household matters. She does not understand income and expenditure, production and consumption; she is not even able to value and compare the economic use of different jobs and occupations. I could present all manner of illuminating examples, but this is not the place for that. It is only certain that family and society require women's sense to be developed in this area too. Through economic knowledge her perspective will widen and understanding clarify, she will learn to support her family's household, and not to make a loss, as often happens now because of lack of understanding.

In terms of what the other subjects should consist of, the syllabus must be planned so that a woman, having finished school, can complete a university matriculation and thereby have the opportunity to continue her studies at university, if she has the desire and means to do so.

The Senate's proposal for the new organisation of girls' schools has awoken great public resentment. No wonder. The previous schools no longer in the least satisfy the needs of the time. We hoped for improvements and were promised them. We waited year on year; the matter was considered, committees sat (or stood, I don't

know), and the Senate finally examined the matter. And then that proposal was published, in which the principal concern is preventing elementary school students and girls' school students from getting into university. Otherwise, things will stay more or less as before. – Is that how far we have come after all our pleas and prayers, all our hopes and expectations, all the promises and assurances?

Is this not yet again proof of the fact that here, truthfully, they do not want to do anything towards women's civilisation?

Before, in Carthage and Rome, women had the power, enthusiasm and will to do anything for their homeland. Did we put too much faith in the women of Finland, when we believed that they would sacrifice a bottle of eau de cologne, a few pairs of gloves, to be able, for the benefit of their sex, with joint strength, to gain *one proper Finnish language school for our nation's capital city?*

Appendix C – Minna Canth, 'Naiskysymyksestä vielä sananen' [One more word on the woman question], *Valvoja*, October 1885, pages 492-494 ²

Or more accurately, a small critique of this society, in which we women have no rights and never have done, and for the faults of which we therefore hold no responsibility. In fact, the more freely can we stand outside the matter, look, examine and cast our judgement. And there is no doubt that we find several elements of it thoroughly unfit. Already on first inspection, we find evidence of so much falsehood and wrongness, sanctimony and hypocrisy, incoherence and madness, that one ends up in complete despair and asks emphatically: is there anything good there at all? And do those

² The following note was printed before the start of Canth's article: 'The editors did not want to censor the following ideas, some of which they, nonetheless, cannot condone.'

people who are members of that society suffice? Are they fit for anything anymore? Indeed, Bishop Johansson assures us in his pastoral letter that all this is “God’s holy world order.” But for my part, I believe that the bishop blames God completely unfoundedly. That order has clearly been arranged by men, otherwise it would not be so useless. Chiefly, I fear that popes and bishops faithfully uphold this order, though they themselves now call it madness. At the Clergy debates last Diet, women were barred from going to university because, as I understood from the Bishop’s speech, it was thought that women would thereby be corrupted and become as bad as men are now.³ There is perhaps some truth to that. Perhaps men’s civility truly is as stale and hollow as their religion and morals are. In that case, heaven protect us from their universities.

However, it is unsurprising that men again are trying to hold God responsible for their own bad deeds. They have done that since the beginning of the world, as they themselves admit. Let us simply remember father Adam’s words: “the wife, who *you* gave to me -”. Patriarchs and holy men lived in polygyny (publicly, not secretly like men these days), and raped the virgins of conquered nations. This was said to have been God’s will, and not their own wicked desires, certainly not. When the people of Israel warred with neighbouring nations, burned, murdered, destroyed, it was again simply God’s harsh command that forced them to do it. The same God, who said: “love thy neighbour as thyself.” Naturally, our patriarchs follow the example of their ancestors and explain women’s bondage as God’s command. Those wretches can

³ The Diet of Finland was the legislative assembly that met periodically from 1809 – 1906, whilst Finland was under Russian rule. The four Estates of Finland met and debated matters: nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie and peasants. Canth is

champion it in no other way. “People always interpret God in such a way that does not disturb their own weaknesses,” a priest once whispered, and he was right.

As is clear from the above, men have not changed a great deal since the time of Adam, but have somehow stayed the same. So it looks as though Darwin’s theory of evolution does not really hold true when it comes to them. In women, on the other hand, there is a noticeable difference. Sarah called Abraham ‘lord’, but women these days “rebel” and address men informally.⁴ Good-for-nothings! Where will we end up if women’s power continues to grow in that vein?

I have a small suggestion. Would it not be best if at the Synod this coming year we raised once more the question of whether or not women have souls? When they argued about that at the seventh-century Synod of Mâcon, the side who claimed that they do have souls won only by a small majority. But the majority is not always right, as we well know. And what if this time we confirmed that they do not, in fact, have souls? That would fix all of our problems in one go, because a soulless creature does not need to be given any human rights.

Society has become so that there seems to be no place for women in it. But when you consider the matter, is it worth fighting tooth and nail for a place? I, for one, cannot see what exactly would entice me. Schools, perhaps? Terrible! Lessons on lessons and still more lessons. No, Christ used different teaching methods in his day, as did Socrates. And they raised wise people, not the sort of

referencing the ‘Pappisäätty’ [the debate of the Estate of the Clergy] that had taken place earlier that year.

⁴ In Finnish, Canth writes that women address men using the pronoun ‘sinä’ (the informal version of ‘you’), rather than ‘te’ (the formal version).

bureaucratic machines prepared in our current schools. Or should we aspire to public office? Where one gets blinded by abominably devious politics? May all that is holy preserve us from that mess. What about society? Ugh! There, money rules and reigns, and one does not desire to be a slave to its principality. But the church? No, there, women are put in bondage. Only marriage remains. But what can we say about that?

The power of the nation, the spiritual, moral and physical health of the next generation, humanity's natural development, all rely greatly on the moral foundation on which the cohabitation of the sexes is built. That there is something terribly wrong with this societal order too, that it is sick and rotten, is as clear as day. The legalised prostitution-institutions and the ever-increasing number of powerless women are sufficient confirmation of that. Civilisation in this Christian society is like an explosion on earth, from which suffocating dust rises when you nudge it a little with your foot. Some women are pushed down into a position lower than an animal; their humanity is snatched from them in order to protect other women. How long will we endure this? How long will we continue to marry men who are weighed down by the curses of those unfortunate ones?

“We have to,” weak souls remind us, “otherwise we cannot live. All opportunities to sustain ourselves independently have been taken from us.” Fine. What of it? If we cannot live, we might have the strength to die. But in terms of truth, bargaining no longer helps if, namely, we have a proper love for humanity, if we want earnestly to further its happiness. Current living conditions are difficult, perhaps even more difficult for men than for women. The heavy burden of authority, the iron bondage of stiffened ways prevent the free development of life and depress the strength of that life. The

consequence is tiredness, feebleness, and indolence on one hand, and a restless, threatening discontent on the other. The people lack the enthusiasm of assurance, strength of mind, firmness of character. A complaining sigh goes through the whole world; we need complete renewal on every front ever more sorely.

Let woman, too, be freed from those ties that bind her to that rotten society. Let her grow and mature independently for the task ahead. When the opportune moment comes, may she rise to the throne as mother and up-bringer of humanity, and take an effective part in the making of laws, the purification of religion, the creation of knowledge and art, as well as the new ordering of society. Then let the words of the first man echo once more: “the wife, who you gave to me -”, not as a rebuke nor an accusation, but as joyful thanks and praise.

Appendix D – O.E. Tudeer, Review of *The Worker's Wife*, Valvoja, March 1885, pages 166-172.

Since Ibsen's *Nora* stirred us all up so, has no other play at the Finnish Theatre awoken such fervent feelings in audiences, nor been the subject of such passionate discourse as Mrs M Canth's latest work. However, just as it did in *Nora*'s day, the conversation seems at least in part to have gone astray. Before we critique the disputed work, allow us to briefly set forth how literary works in general, and particularly today's 'tendency dramas' should, in our opinion, be critiqued.

It is clear that every literary work – whether it is presented in poetic or prosaic form – ought to be judged for what it is. The critic must ask: what image did the writer want to evoke in our minds, and how have they done it? Typically, dramatic literature depicts characters acting and developing in particular conditions, particular

situations. As far as contemporary ‘tendency dramas’ are concerned, they generally depict how characters in our own time have arrived at the circumstances wrought, or inherited, by our age: miserable wretchedness, a depressing turmoil of emotions, and even moral wreckage. They thereby show how far the current generation still is even from the moral ideal that it is capable of comprehending for itself. And if we, having watched the play, see that ideal more clearly than before, if bitter sorrow for the neglect of that ideal, and fervent eagerness to own and meet it is awakened in our hearts, then the writer has achieved their purpose.

It has often been claimed that this literary genre is not art at all, because supposedly it does not fit the paradigm determined by aesthetics. To counter that opinion, we need only remind you that the paradigms of aesthetics are drawn from the works of artistic masters. Which is to say, they must be drawn according to the progress of art, not the other way around. That is all there is to say about categorisation. Those who do not permit this literary genre to be called art may call it something else. However, it would be a little strange if the writers whose inspired imaginative powers have created the most formidable works of our times, making our souls’ noblest melodies reverberate, were to be erased from the ranks of artists. As we have said, though, let the matter of categorisation be left at that.

If we admit that the purpose of the sort of plays in question is as explained above, then we must also admit that it is through the lens of this purpose that they must be critiqued, and no other purpose should be imposed on them. We wander astray if we ask, as many are wont to do: “in the author’s opinion, how should the characters have behaved in this or that case, in order to avoid the disaster they ended up in?” For example, it has been asked: “should the newly

wed Johanna have broken her wedding vows?” It has even been asked: “would Risto have become a decent man if he had married Vappu?” and so on. These sorts of questions are unnecessary, because the writer has not taken it upon themselves to show how these characters would behave in this or that case; rather, they have wanted to show that people, used to thinking and behaving like the characters in the play, are logically likely to end up in wretched circumstances.

It is natural that when a writer has truly succeeded in creating characters that feel like flesh of our flesh, we cannot watch their mistakes and their sufferings without fitting them to ourselves. But if we take their lessons as actual guidance for how we too should behave in similar circumstances, then we are, again, likely to go astray. For example, had people asked during the Nora controversy: “does Ibsen advise wives who have argued with their husbands to go off immediately without a care for their children?”; or should critics now suspect Mrs Canth of advising betrayed women to murder their betrayers and even to rebel against the laws and rights of the land, then these plays would have been watched from completely the wrong perspective. Such a play has been better understood by the spectator who sorrowfully acknowledges that it has exposed the gnawing wound of humanity’s immorality, and vows in their hearts to endeavour to heal it. Because that is precisely the purpose of ‘tendency dramas’.

There are two distinct pathways in Nordic ‘tendency literature’: the first suggests that individuals must begin the work of eradicating evil, the work of fulfilling the ideal, internally, by suppressing their natural proclivities for evil. The second encourages us to begin by battling those dominant forces that sustain evil externally. In fact, of course, one endeavour is always linked to the other. However,

different writers, each according to their nature, have turned their attentions chiefly to one or the other. Ibsen is the profound proponent of the former, Björnson seems to incline more towards the latter, and Mrs Canth's 'tendency drama' tends that way too.

The ideas above make it clear what perspective we think *The Worker's Wife* ought to be watched and critiqued from. We believe it is also clear what sort of idea we have of the play's value. Overall, it must be acknowledged that the piece has had such a tremendous effect on us that we find it difficult to critique it calmly.

In *The Worker's Wife*, Mrs Canth presents an infinitely wretched depiction of life in our country. She depicts with passionate pity how a selfish man can oppress his wife with impunity, without her having any possibility of defending herself. She shows how this possibility has been wrenched from her partly by "laws and justice"; partly by society's interpretation of laws and justice; partly, and most of all, by the way of thinking and the temperament which, because it is the general way of thinking about things, has rooted itself in the wife, too. And how the same man, in order to satisfy his selfish, base desires has ruined another woman's life, too. And as this woman is yet more vulnerable, the worse the man's behaviour, and the less he need fear rebuke, let alone punishment. This bleak depiction is performed with exceptional dramatic power and vitality. One really feels that it has not been artificially manufactured, but that it is the creation of a true poet. The acute powers of perception already apparent in Mrs Canth's earlier plays have greatly developed. In her previous works, the sharp eye discernible in the depiction of general citizens and passing characters did not always extend to more profound, emotive principal characters, whose portrayals occasionally felt a little abstract. In *The Worker's Wife*, on the other hand, all the characters are full-blooded, real people. They

act and think, they express their thoughts and feelings precisely according to their own natures and circumstances. Perhaps the only exception is the passage in which Helka, the old gypsy woman, extols the joys of gypsy life, because it feels somewhat academically rhetorical. In terms of the depictions of the various personalities, they are all natural and consistent. Of course, consistency of nature is not equal to logical consistency. When people criticise Homsantuu's behaviour in Act Three for its inconsistency, they are forgetting that the logic of a fiery nature is completely different to that of cool one. It seems that several critics critiqued her in the same way they would the everyday people depicted in the play. When they do not find a serious, ordinary Finnish nature in that unhappy, vulnerable girl who has been oppressed and mocked since childhood, and in whose veins runs the raw blood of the far-off, hot south, some think her insane, and some unnatural. Doesn't that shrewd Laura describe how Homsantuu had started dancing on the ice whilst washing clothes: "That sort learn to behave? Yes, I'm sure!" In particular, some have remarked that Homsantuu's final words are not consistent with the character's way of thinking and her mental capacity. But has the whole of society not been unanimous in oppressing her? Has she not already had to learn that she has no place there? When, at last, that "worm of the earth, maggot of hell" lifts her head to avenge herself on the man who cast her from an already unhappy position to infinite misery, that man invokes laws and justice. They then ensure that he need never fear revenge for the rest of his life. What is more natural, more coherent, than for that unhappy woman, who should supposedly have loved and respected society's laws and institutions, to reply in her rage: "Your laws and justice, ha, ha, ha, - that's what I meant to shoot."

It is a great credit to the writer that she has been able, and with such a benevolent heart and prodigious powers of depiction, to portray two such different women as Homsantuu and Johanna. Johanna is a “true woman,” but is not depicted with any derision, rather, conversely, with gentle compassion, igniting similar feelings also in the heart of the spectator. However, one important aspect of her depiction does seem to be at odds with her nature: how did this sort of serious, sensible, sensitive girl fall in love with the sort of thoroughly worthless man that Risto is from beginning to end? Here, we touch on the matter which, in our opinion, is the weakest element of the piece. However, the fault lies not with Johanna, but with Risto. Certainly, his character is, unfortunately, truthful and consistent in and of itself. However, it does not completely fit the role it has been given in the play. – To our mind, the writer has intended Risto to be a sort of ‘Don Juan’ type. And, good heavens, it is certainly true that from gentle Lemminkäinen through to our own time, societies and individuals, men and women, have marvelled at and loved the archetype of the irresistible seducer of women.⁵ But that archetype possesses more than good looks: Don Juan is a hero; he wins hearts because he has many virtues too, even though he squanders them playfully on frivolities. In particular, that archetype is brave, even reckless. It is precisely the seducer’s manliness that, according to the old idea, makes women’s weakness for him forgivable. Risto, on the other hand, is despicable from head to toe. We neither hear nor see anything good of him, other than that he has never beaten his wife. Perhaps we can also presume that he was not a complete drunkard before he got his hands on Johanna’s 600 marks. However, he is shown to be a real brute already at his

wedding – even before his deceitful behaviour towards Homsantuu has been exposed – and by the end he is shown to be a pitiful coward. The writer has, in her compassion for the oppressed, depicted an oppressor as wretched and odious as possible, but thereby she has, to some extent, weakened the effect. The pity we feel towards Johanna is mingled with the doubt that there was some fault in her which meant she took a worthless louse like that for a husband.

The other characters are penned by the same hand that depicted the principal characters so completely naturally. As a whole, they could also be compared to the chorus in an ancient tragedy, who represent the world’s judgement of the characters. The only difference is that in old tragedies the chorus’ perspective was typically also that of the writer and audience, whereas in *The Worker’s Wife* both audience and writer are against them. The Coryphaeus (leader of the chorus) is old Leena Kaisa, who represents that “Christianity” from which the spirit of love and justice has faded away, leaving only a dry husk. In contrast to the other side characters, that witty fellow Toppo brings levity to the social situations depicted, showing what sort of conclusions one could logically draw from them.

It is clear that the inconsistency mentioned in relation to Johanna and Risto’s characters had, to some extent, an adverse effect on the whole piece. Otherwise, the plot is presented with commendable skill. On the one hand, the different scenes do not tie together with that inevitable causal fulfilment which is so exceptionally effective in Ibsen’s plays. In comparison to them, it could be said that scenes in Mrs Canth’s plays appear rather as independent tableaux.

⁵ Lemminkäinen is a character from the *Kalevala*.

Nonetheless, they follow coherently and naturally one after the other, and are ordered effectively. For example, we note the moment of gentle relief permitted to us in the third act, between the heart-chilling realism of the second and fourth acts.

Although the plot structure of *The Worker's Wife* is, in our opinion, generally very successful, the dialogue wins still greater eminence. In this regard, the writer of *The Worker's Wife* has nothing to learn from anyone, for in the writing of it, "Nowhere see we hammer-traces. Nowhere find a single tongs-mark."⁶ So fluent, so lively, so natural is the characters' conversation, that the audience forget both writer and theatre; and every line is skilfully composed and placed so that it has the most brilliant effect. That sort of thing is accomplished by nothing other than the intellect and zeal of a true poet.

The Worker's Wife has been performed on our national stage in such a way that its many good elements have been enabled to step clearly into sight and have the intended effect. Even the important change made to the final act of the piece in performance allows the central meaning to become clear. Those who have had the opportunity of comparing the original text to what was performed on stage will certainly have noticed that the final scene has been omitted, where Vappu, after Homsantuu has been taken to prison, comes to Risto's home and demands that he answer before the throne of the righteous for the two women whose lives he has destroyed. This ending is certainly beautiful and satisfying in itself, and it is also the strongest defence against those who have perceived a disdain for religion in Mrs Canth's play. However, the writer has

⁶ From the *Kalevala*, Rune VII. Translated by John Martin Crawford, *The Kaleva*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company, 1898), 95.

not sought chiefly to hold us before the righteousness which will abolish the power of injustice on the other side of the grave, but rather to open our eyes to the terrible, dehumanising injustices that we, each according to their strength, should be responsible for attempting to eradicate from this world. And that purpose is, without doubt, best achieved by the piece ending with Homsantuu's imprisonment and the oppressors' boasting. Those who are not affected by this depressing ending would not profit even if we spoke with the tongues of men and angels. That this ending is more effective on stage from a dramatic perspective is hardly necessary to mention.

As far as the actual theatrical elements are concerned, it is already sufficiently known that they hold an unerring place at our national theatre. Nonetheless we cannot go without separately noting how exceptionally well-rehearsed all the side characters in this piece were. The depiction of market life, for example, was comparable to what can be seen on the Meiningen stage.⁷

Typically, at our theatre, we rarely see so great and profound a play executed in all aspects as excellently as *The Worker's Wife* was. As regards the principal characters, Miss Avellan as Johanna proves to have advanced to a level at which she merges completely with the character she performs. Her Johanna did not strike a single wrong note; she performed so completely naturally and straightforwardly, and it is perhaps precisely for this reason that she was so deeply moving. In particular, in our opinion, we must marvel at the fine moderation exercised in the final scene of Johanna's suffering, which gave her hard fate a simply heart-chilling effect. In

⁷ The Meiningen Company were a late-nineteenth century German acting ensemble, famous for their effective crowd scenes.

performing Homsantuu, that child of nature at the mercy of her feelings, Miss Aalberg had an excellent opportunity to display her multifaceted genius; sweet in her sorrow and love in the third act, and depressingly brilliant when demanding revenge at the beginning and end of the piece. Of the other characters, we cannot fail to separately mention Mr Rautio. His Toppo was so full of humour that better cannot be seen anywhere; the Finnish audience will receive with delight the good promises Mr Rautio has shown with this role.

Appendix E – Extracts from Canth’s letters.

i. To Kaarlo Bergbom, 2.8.1883 (Kannila, 106-7)

Honoured Sir Doctor!

How terrible I feel, dear Doctor, for not leaving you in peace even abroad. During these weeks of rest which you have allowed yourself you should be permitted to be free from everything. But when Miss Bergbom heard that I have been working on “Homsantuu” and cannot move forward with it at all, she wanted me to send the beginning of it to the Doctor, and to explain how I intend to plot it.

If it was dim to me before, it has become dimmer yet since I saw “The Perjured Farmer” yesterday.⁸ I can never, ever achieve something so good. This will be a tragedy too, but I am certain I will not be able to make it as great a tragedy as “The Perjured Farmer.” And yet, I still want it to be either great and good, or nothing at all.

To please Miss Bergbom, I suppose I shall have to lay out the hazy outline of my plot for the piece, nonetheless. But it feels so

trivial and insignificant compared to “The Perjured Farmer.” The first scene of act two is at the marketplace. There are shoppers and sellers. The song-seller sings at the back and sells his song sheets to those standing around. Some boys are throwing a ball about on the right. Johanna arrives. She only has one mark, with which she intends to buy food, and milk for her sick child. Paavo arrives with his drinking partner and snatches the money from her.⁹ Johanna objects, prays, threatens. Paavo does not care. Homsantuu arrives pushing a cart of potatoes. She has earned them as harvesting-pay. She is proud, but her love for Paavo ignites once more. Some youths demand that she dances a “gypsy dance.” She refuses. Eventually she concedes when Paavo asks. The next scene is at Homsantuu’s home, a haybarn. Homsantuu has no better home. It is night. Homsantuu sleeps on a pile of hay. Or more precisely, she lies there awake. Paavo enters. He teases Homsantuu by asking her to run away with him to southern Finland. Homsantuu refuses. The third act is at Johanna and Paavo’s home. Johanna has a cloth on the loom. It is almost ready, and that day she plans to take it to the lady who has commissioned it. Paavo cuts the cloth off, sells it and drinks away the money. Johanna is blamed for the deceit. She bears it, without saying anything. Left alone, she faints in despair. Her former admirer arrives. He wants to help Johanna, but Johanna refuses, thinking that Risto is still in love with her.¹⁰ Johanna throws herself over her child’s cradle as an assurance of her refusal. Risto tries to persuade her and bends over her. At that moment, the door opens. Homsantuu stands there, and sees their position, misunderstands it, and decides to run off with Paavo. She closes the

⁸ A three-act folk play by Austrian writer Ludwig Anzengruber.

⁹ Canth initially intended to call Risto’s character ‘Paavo’.

¹⁰ Confusingly, Risto here is the character Canth would later name ‘Yrjö’.

door without Risto or Johanna having noticed her. Risto has now understood Johanna's concern and explains that he is engaged to another young woman, to whom he has given his heart. After that, Johanna gratefully accepts Risto's offer. The fourth act is on a street at night, in front of the pub. Paavo is in the pub. Homsantuu hides on one side of the street, Johanna on the other. The dim streetlamp does not light the shadows. Both are afraid and are trembling. Homsantuu intends to join Paavo and leave with him. There are university students serenading beneath a window at the back. After they leave, Paavo goes onto the street and speaks to Homsantuu. They are about to run away, when Johanna suddenly appears before them, accuses them, and warns them. Paavo grabs his knife and intends to strike Johanna, but Homsantuu throws herself between them, takes the hit of the knife and dies. How to get rid of that miserable Paavo, that I do not know. If he simply gets taken to jail, Johanna will not be free of him; but on the other hand, he is too big a coward to commit suicide. – So, I have nothing more to add. I hope to receive some newer, more vigorous, better denouement from the Doctor. Miss Bergbom wanted it to be finished already this year. I do not know how that would be possible. I work so slowly. Soon, I hope, we will be able to say “Welcome to Kuopio” to the Doctor. Until then: God be with you!

ii. To Kaarlo Bergbom, 23.2.1884 (Kannila, 130)

[...] Yes, dear Doctor! If I have ever been ashamed of my incapability and my inefficiency, it is at this moment, when I must update you on how far my play has come. And all the while, I have been as hard-working as my strength and health have permitted. I suppose the subject is too difficult and that is the reason for my

slowness. When, after some time has passed, I come back to what I have written, it seems to me so childish, so immature and untruthful, that I absolutely cannot leave it like that. Even now the fourth act, which I had written in November, and which I somehow thought was good then. Now when I picked it up again, I would hardly have used a single line of it. This could lead a person to despair. Nothing is clear about the fifth act yet. – Yes, that blind wife! I did consider her, but it felt so impossible to present that sort of quiet, calm, abiding life philosophy now, when my heart is full of bitterness and revolution. It would not do. Perhaps, once I become humble and resigned again, but not now. Now I must use hardness against hardness and give as many blows as I can. I have a sort of irresistible internal compulsion to do so. But please do not expect anything too great of this play, dear Doctor, rather let us comfort ourselves with the fact that after me will come those who are better. – It might not even be long until then. I hope to be able to send this to the Doctor at the end of May, and then during the summer I will write it again, after I have heard the Doctor's advice. There is no rush to publish it. Let us leave that further off, so that I still have time to improve and edit.

iii. To Emilie Bergbom, 11.8.1884 (Kannila, 164-166)

[...] I have started to write ‘The Worker's Wife’ over again for the final time. But there still seems to be lots to correct in it. I did not dare to write to you about how things were in the spring and summer. You see, the whole piece started to feel so miserable and bad to me, everything seemed wooden, and I could not, not with my strongest will, work on it for several months. I read it to others so that they might praise it and that might give me some desire to work on it, but it did not really help. However, now that Mrs and Kasper

Järnefelt and Jussi Brofeldt praised it, I regained some self-confidence.¹¹ And that will last me now until I get it finished. And I suppose those real worries from the real world, plenty of which I get to experience, inspire me too somewhat. They keep my nerves on edge and develop my soul's strength. How weak we poor humans are, that we need misery and restlessness to stay alive and animated. "Better a restless person than a peaceful pig, better an unhappy Socrates than a happy pigeon," Stuart Mill says somewhere, if I remember correctly.¹² Better – and happier, after all. Admittedly, the wife whose man takes care of the family's livelihood and worries does have a peaceful life. But even though life's battle is often hard when one must bear it alone, struggle alone on behalf of seven children, truly I would not change it. Why did I start talking about this? My heart is so full of worry now, that it will absolutely spill over. And I must offload it to somebody. The fact is that, because of my brother, I have had to suffer damages between 5 and 6,000 marks. I could not avoid it. My old mother got mixed up in his affairs, and of course I had to save her. God alone knows what a great burden of worry that man has been for me these four years, how many sleepless nights I have laid in bed because of him, how I have tried to chastise him, warn him, encourage him; I have been hard, I have been soft, I have utilised all my strength and understanding and – all in vain. If I could at least be angry with him, but he is so good-natured, the best person in the world to everyone but himself. I have to feel sorry for him, grieve for him, cry for him and ask what will happen to him in the end. And I feel sorrow about

¹¹ Jussi Brofeldt was the real name of writer Juhani Aho, Canth's realist contemporary.

the fact that I have lost my children's inheritance. I should have acted more wisely, taken hold of the reins from the start. But – if I did badly, then I did so because I felt I had to. I think I should have helped him to begin with, given him an opportunity to grow and take action. Then, when he did not have credit anywhere, my mother still had some remaining, so some things were done in her name and thus the trouble was born. My own affairs are at least so clear and good that I have nothing to worry about, if God helps us in future as he has until now. It just frightens me that business seems to be getting ever worse, and the sale of timber abroad, which everything seems to rely on, is ever more impossible. – But what am I thinking, bothering Emelie with these personal matters. Forgive me, it was due to weakness on my part, because I cannot close my heart; and from the trust that I know myself to be speaking to a friend who knows and understands the worries of real life. Not all women understand them, that is certain. And how could they understand them when they do not need to experience them? And as I said: everything does one good, as long as one can bear it. Now I know what it would feel like to be the wife of the sort of man who frivolously spends his family's livelihood. But I shall leave the matter there for now.

What name shall we give to the new play? The Worker's Wife – isn't that the most suitable? Or: Johanna and Homsantuu? Or: Bitter Soup? Because it will be bitter for men, and it should be soup for women. And then Risto and Toppo, when they go to the pub at the end, could sing: 'Bitter soup is what we cooked, we mixed in some

¹² The actual quotation is 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.' John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

beans, and stirred it with a spoon,' etc. etc. – But not. Wouldn't that make everything too comic? – The Worker's Wife is probably best after all, even though it feels so mild. [...]

Are you as angry with me about my article in 'Valvoja' as everyone else is? Yes, they have let me know it – a good start. But I just sit comfortably in my rocking chair, drink coffee, and smile. If only that was the worst of my worries!

iv. To Kaarlo Bergbom, 8.12.1884 (Kannila, 182-184)

Dear, honoured Doctor!

Many warm thanks for your critiques! I have been ill and suffered both spiritual and physical pain; but your letter was nonetheless so very restorative and comforting. I have read it over and thought about it. As soon as I am completely better, so that I can manage to think properly, I will start to make your suggested changes – as far as my bad heart will allow. That I have not written the ladies with an exactly benevolent hand is completely true, perhaps I have even exaggerated them. But, dear Doctor, you are not a woman, you have not come to know those poisonous wounds that my own sex, in all their piety and gentleness, can inflict on others; how that tender-hearted, that 'highly civilised', that 'heliga prestinna vid hemmets fridfulla härd' ['holy priestess at the peaceful heart of the home'] is a rock hard and ice cold oppressor of those weaker and 'worse' than her, who she does not even recognise as people, because they are supposedly unequal to her in worth and refinement. And these are Christians! – Oh, how my whole soul despises this false piety, this deceit, this pretence, this idea of women's 'elegant refinement' and 'high morality.' How I pity those 'high priestesses of the home,' who soon lose themselves to admiration. – Do you think that I am bad, cruel, stupid? Yes, I am, but thank God, I am

also a child of the people, 'elegance' has not suffocated my natural feeling, nor does cowardice block me from expressing that feeling. I have lost track of what I was saying. I want to try and improve Mrs [Vörsky] (there is a certain Mrs Mörsky here, so I cannot use that name) if I can, but I do not know quite how I will manage. With regard to the 'woman question,' I would like a small reform. I want to change the admiration of women to the admonition of women. We will not get better, Doctor, until we have really felt the rod, before we have been taught to know the truth and to understand our own weaknesses. All the other changes I will make gladly. – As regards the casting, you know best. It has long been clear to me that Homsantuu will not suit Hilda, which I believe I wrote to her about. Otherwise, I think the Doctor's suggestions are just right. It is pointless to depict the Kuopio marketplace. It would only bring about expenses and I do not know how many times the piece can be performed. The conservatives will probably tear it down. Thank you for inviting me to Helsinki! I cannot say yes or no yet. I cannot express how fun it would be to see the Doctor, Emelie, Hilda and several other friends and acquaintances, but I fear and dread all those unfamiliar people. I really hunger and thirst for those improving conversations with the Doctor, I think I could tolerate and understand everything better than before - but would I get those in Helsinki? And then, if I came simply to gather up the audience's good favour with a net, it would be so pointless, so petty and frivolous. Should I come to hear people squeeze together a few trivial words of praise? Or then, another possibility, equally stupid objections. I can get plenty of both in Kuopio. And I have some bitter memories of Helsinki. My husband and my sister died there. Their graves are there. And still one more thing: the laws of nature dictate that even in the best case I have hardly any strength to work

left. I started late; it is no good wasting time. If I saw ‘The Worker’s Wife’ on stage, it would come to life again so powerfully in my imagination, that I could not start anything new for a long time afterwards. Even now it is such a great hindrance. Do not, dear Doctor, judge me too harshly for those hard words about my own sex. You would understand them too if you had experienced and seen what I have. Perhaps it is different out in the wide world to here in this small town.

You have presumably read Wirsén’s review of Björnson’s ‘The Heritage of the Kurts.’ I read it today and got so angry. ‘It is not so bad if a man sins.’ Fools! How can a man sin without a woman sinning with him? But it is true! As long as those women ‘in happy, well-to-do homes’ are spared, who cares about that poor woman who will live in poverty and destitution, who has no protection, who has no safety, if she is trampled to a position lower than an animal? Beautiful morals! Beautiful ‘respect for women’! And those holy ‘priestesses’ think ‘what of it, if others burn in hell, as long as we get to be sacred in heaven!’ Is that what Wirsén, and the Morgonbladet [‘The Morning Paper’] think; are they so unjust, or are they altogether stupid? Because that whole article was equally mad. And is this the sort of morality that that ‘Christian’ paper advocates? I hope not!

v. To Emilie Bergbom 9.2.1885 (Kannila, 193-195)

Dear Emelie!

What a terrible racket you are all making down in Helsinki just now! Those stormy waves are rolling all the way up here. A.M.

¹³ A.M. stands for Agathon Meurman, the Fennoman politician who wrote a series of scathing articles in the Christian nationalist ‘Finland’ magazine, condemning

seems to have got an even bigger fright than Risto.¹³ Let us hope that he, like Risto, will soon recover and realise that he has nothing to worry about quite yet. Just a tiny little scare. I can guess that your, the Doctor and Emelie’s, ears are kept burning over there. And because of me! Please do not be angry with me. Next time I will try and write something very tame and innocent, milder than mild, so that not even a little mouse would be frightened by it, let alone senators, professors, and other lofty gentlemen. I will try, if I *can*, but I cannot guarantee that I will. What can I do when God has given me such a warlike nature? There were likely great war heroes among my forebears. And the same is probably true for A.M. I was nonetheless a little taken aback the other night, when I read his lashing in that Christian paper of his. But only for a moment. The next moment, my soul soared. “If I am right, then help me on my way, if I am wrong, then stop me at once!” And since he has not stopped me, then I think I must be right. And besides, that internal voice that says that God is with me has not quieted for even a moment. That is what gives me strength. I am calm and contented and wish for nothing more than that the times would soon improve, that the shop would thrive, that my children would grow into good people and that I would not be killed or imprisoned before I have had time to live and do just a little more work in the world. What do I have to worry about? I will withdraw into the shelter of home and family like a mouse into its hole, and will be quiet for as long as A.M.’s storm is still blowing. I will wait for the opportune moment. Then I will perform once more with great zeal on the battleground of spiritual endeavour. If, of course, God gives me the strength, as I

Canth and *The Worker’s Wife* as immoral, anti-nationalist, and unchristian. This was despite the fact that he had not actually seen the play himself.

sorely hope he will. And he will, if not to me then to others. Among our people is the strength of life and progress, even if an individual loses and disappears. But I only mourn the fact that you, Doctor and Emelie, suffer for my sins. Good, dear friends! Why do you not perform ‘Madame Angot’s Daughter’ or ‘Mam’zelle Nitouche,’ which do not have anything morally disturbing in them?¹⁴ Then our Fennomans would be so calm and content. Even I feel a little sorry that we are disrupting their sweet dreams like this. And through theatre! The purpose of which is to bring people nothing but pleasure and amusement! How many will tolerate it before they go back to how they were, young and old? But what a great coward he is, that A.M., and what a vivid imagination! Thinking that we are advocating for the wielding of revolvers just because we show a gypsy girl resorting to it – that poor thing, who knows nothing about normal life or the social order. Even if there is a need for revolution elsewhere in the world, I do not believe that *we* really need it. We do not have injustices as great as elsewhere. We do not have boundless riches beside the most terrible poverty, albeit things are a little that way. We could peacefully improve our conditions here and avoid the injustices born elsewhere in our burgeoning national life. The only danger is that terribly persistent conservatism. The woman question would not have awoken such great fervour if they had not protested it so. Now that it has achieved such a great deal of concession at parliament, I for one am calm and happy – perhaps even too happy. I cannot even bring myself to be angry at Meurman, though he truly deserves it. Something else, and what makes my blood boil, is precisely that hypocrisy, that wrong morality, that Christian veil under which heathenism hides. Oh, if I could get hold

of some good subject matter through which I could raise those questions. I had begun to make a good start, but when this storm arrived I abandoned it because it felt so mild. It was too mundane. I am ashamed of being so unproductive. Others have the ability, lots of it.

You are not upset about these storms? And you won’t be taken aback if more of the same appears? Those pharisees at the ‘Finland’ paper have promised it, after all. Quite, quite! I can guess that you are supporters of ‘Finland,’ but I must nonetheless call it hypocritical and pharisean. Christ had mercy on all women, always defended them against men, never said even one harsh word to women. But the Christian ‘Finland’ does not support women. Christ was the best friend of poor working men, but the Christian-minded Meurman sneers at and mocks “maids” and working people. They have girded themselves with manmade dogmas, but they are far from the spirit of Christianity and the heart of Christian life. And I could pour forth what I think and feel on that subject, how gladly I would bear any purgatory at all for that. Would that I were permitted such a great mercy!

And now finally, the thing I should have said first of all. Thank you from the very depths of my heart for everything you have done for ‘The Worker’s Wife’! Give my regards and thanks to everyone who has had a role in it. I would like to know what they think. Have you had all sorts of problems because of it? Do you still dare to perform it? And does the public still come to see it? If Ida Aalberg was not so popular, then the conservatives would probably put a stop to it. Will the theatre come to Kuopio next autumn? I would gladly come to Helsinki this spring if I had an opportunity to do so.

¹⁴ Comic operas by Charles Lecocq and Hervé respectively.

Thank God I do not need to fear any “mess” anymore. I hate that sort of thing. But there are so many other obstacles. – What great, wonderful works you have planned for this spring. I really must get there to see them for once. Trade has been even worse this year than last. Things have given me many sleepless nights. Those worries are real and have probably hardened me towards other problems. – I just hope that they do not cause you too much unpleasantness. Tell the conservatives that you will just as gladly put their plays on as a balance to ‘tendency’ repertoire, as soon as they present them to you. But they will not present them, at least not good ones, because they will not have the spirit of life in them. The task of our national theatre will be great yet. People will see that it truly is: “Ej blot til Lyst” [Not for pleasure alone].¹⁵

vi. To Hilda Asp, 26.2.1885 (Kannila 133-134)

[...] I really do need some encouragement now, because I have been so, so depressed. My responsibilities have been so great, I have had so much work, and no joy at all. I hope to get new strength from my visit to Helsinki, new zeal, new bravery. And how much we will talk then. You know, Hilda dear, I think now, and thought a few days ago in a *certain person's* company, that you really ought to be here. You shook me out of my apathetic frame of mind with your wonderful desire for debate, and the success of ‘Homsantuu’ is all thanks to you in the first place. Or was it really a ‘success’? – You should have heard what Dr Calamnius wrote about it. “Immoral, unchristian, inaesthetic.” Because it does not follow the “rules of aesthetics,” which require “resolution,” nor Christian doctrine, which requires that good prevails and evil gets its just reward. To

the former I say that we are some 50 years in the past, because modern aesthetics don’t impose “rules” anymore, and do not tell writers that: “you need to write like this and that,” but rather gives them complete freedom and only tries to explain why a writer has written things in exactly that way, and not in another. And in this piece the reasons are natural and as clear as day. To the latter, I reply: Christian doctrine is one thing, human life is another. Truth, justice, and light are blocked here, and oppressed. Priests themselves, those valued servants of the prince of darkness, confirm that by barring women from universities. Those true heroes prevent that, but certainly do not go to battle against the sins of their own sex, against prostitution, for example. Oh, how I hate and despise that hypocrisy. And may that hatred and disgust grow a hundredfold, so that it might birth another play. – I do think ‘The Worker’s Wife’ is a success. It will come to live, that is certain. In the future it will be a reminder of what spirit moved in the Finnish women of our time, what feelings they felt, what battles they fought. And men’s attitudes to women will be clear in it too.

vii. To Robert and Olga Kiljander 18.4.1885 (Kannila, 206-7)

Dear friends!

Heartfelt thanks for your letter! Robert asked what I thought of the performance. Truthfully, I had already managed to get bored of the whole piece. I have worked on it for too long. Because of that it is difficult to say this or that. But Rautio delighted me as Toppo. The market scene was wonderfully arranged. Miss Aalberg was excellent, Miss Avellan was truthful and moving, especially at the

¹⁵ The motto of the Royal Danish Theatre.

end of the fourth act. Overall, everyone fulfilled their tasks well, but I am not pleased with myself. The whole piece is built too much on effect. It does have theatrical power, but it does not contain truth, nor psychological development. The whole gypsy group and Hosmantuu are pure imagination. Johanna and Risto are not drawn entirely from life either. Toppo is the only one who satisfies me. In a

word, the piece does not contain *the truth of life*. If only I might do better next time. I only fear that the audience love theatrical devices and romance more dearly. But I must not let that affect me. I will now take up a social subject matter.

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