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# An Introduction to Ellen Key's "Beauty in the Home"

Barbara Miller Lane

*Bryn Mawr College*, [blane@brynmawr.edu](mailto:blane@brynmawr.edu)

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1. Hanna Hirsch Pauli. Untitled (Ellen Key). 1903. Pastel on paper, 24  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 30  $\frac{3}{8}$ " (61.5 x 77 cm).  
Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm

# An Introduction to Ellen Key's “Beauty in the Home”

Barbara Miller Lane

Ellen Key (1849–1926; fig.1), Swedish philosopher, socialist, feminist, pacifist, pedagogue, and design theorist, was one of the most influential intellectuals of her time. She was famous not only throughout the Scandinavian countries, but in continental Europe and the United States as well. More than forty books and hundreds of essays and journal articles flowed from her pen. Most of these works grew out of the many hundreds of lectures she gave: in the Scandinavian countries, in France, Italy, Finland, and most extensively in Germany. Her major publications were translated not only into English but into almost all European languages before the First World War.<sup>1</sup> By 1900 she was able to make a living (though a frugal one) from her books and lecture tours.<sup>2</sup> A great many of Key's works dealt with aesthetics—with the importance of the love of beauty in all realms of life.<sup>3</sup> In an early essay (“Beauty,” 1897–98) she speaks of a “religion of beauty” and calls for “a visionary prophet . . . to preach fanatically . . . the laws of beauty and the evangelism of the personality.”<sup>4</sup> The “prophet,” of course, was Key herself. She foretells a new era, a “Third Empire” of reason, social justice, creativity, peace, and beauty.<sup>5</sup> She predicts that when a new art has conquered industry, “making everyday life festive and beautiful, for rich and poor,” the beauty of the home will spread outward to society, to architecture and city planning. Then, “under . . . modern social conditions, beautiful cities, monuments, and buildings [will] be created.”<sup>6</sup>

In “Beauty in the Home,” translated here into English for the first time, Key asserts that the new aesthetic sensibility must begin in the domestic setting.<sup>7</sup> The beautiful, she writes, is that which is practical, useful, informed by its purpose, and expressive of the soul of its user or creator. All people, she adds, need to create beautiful surroundings for themselves, and this creation begins in the home. If beauty exists in the home, Key writes, lives will be transformed, and so, ultimately, will every aspect of society. The new aesthetic would not be restricted to the wealthy, or to artists and connoisseurs. Ordinary people—farmers and workers—would achieve it more easily in fact because their taste had not been corrupted by fashion and because they possessed fewer *things*. Every worker, Key once wrote, is a potential artist.<sup>8</sup>

Key also believed that every woman is a potential artist. The new taste and the new aesthetic would be created principally by women, partly because of their devotion to utility—"that whatever is useful is worthy of respect, all women realize"—but also in their role as nurturers and artists of the home, "of which [the woman] is the soul."<sup>9</sup> The mother, in particular, is the fountainhead of change, Key believed, as both the artist of the home and the educator of the children within it. By educating a new generation, mothers would found a new era, beginning with "the century of the child" (the title of Key's most famous book, published in 1900).<sup>10</sup> Outside the home, Key said, women also had a special role to play: they were the source of nurturing, caring, and indeed passion, within society. Their tasks were those of "motherliness," which she saw as the fostering of creative individuality and the reeducation of taste among all walks of life.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to writing on design and on art education, Key was an outstanding liberal and an early proponent of women's political rights.<sup>12</sup> A committed yet idiosyncratic socialist, she insisted that social justice be combined with personal self-expression and creativity.<sup>13</sup> There was a strain of anarchism in her thought too, stemming partly from her powerful commitment to individualism, and partly from her rebellious and contentious nature.<sup>14</sup> She was a leading pacifist before, during, and after the First World War. She condemned Christianity, saying that it and asceticism were the enemies of beauty, art, and culture. She developed a personal religion, prophetic of modern existentialism, in which holiness is immanent in nature, in ordinary people, and in everyday life.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the origins of Key's ideas lie in her childhood and youth. As a girl growing up at the family estate in Sundsholm, she learned to care deeply for the condition of the poorer farmers; she taught their children and involved herself in the "folk high school" movement.<sup>16</sup> Key loved the Swedish countryside, with its age-old handcraft and folk traditions (fig. 2). She also admired traditional rural buildings, especially the typical red-painted farmsteads of the provinces and the simple rustic classicism of her own home and others like it (figs. 3 and 4).<sup>17</sup> As a teenager, she began to gather artifacts for historian and ethnographer Artur Hazelius (1833–1901), who was collecting and re-creating early buildings, furniture, and fabrics; these collections ultimately became the world-famous museum at Skansen (fig. 5).<sup>18</sup> Later, in "Beauty in the Home," Key came to see the traditional architecture and crafts of rural Sweden as potential models for a new kind of design.

The love of painting that informs all Key's writings also began at an early date. In 1873, on the way to the Vienna World's Fair with her father, she visited the most important art museums of Europe (in Berlin, Dresden, Florence, Paris, London, Kassel, and Vienna). She repeatedly revisited these museums, as well as those of Copenhagen, Rome, and Munich. Like the German museum director Alfred Lichtwark (1852–1914), whom she came to admire, she believed that looking at works of artistic genius offered unique educational benefits for children and untutored people.<sup>19</sup> Key took this idea further, though, arguing in her publications and speeches that even reproductions of good paintings were better for the viewer than ugly originals.

Educated almost entirely at home, Key early on formed a lifelong habit of voracious reading and self-education. In addition to her admiration for English women novelists, and for the greatest works of German Romanticism, she was deeply influenced by the writings of Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, and Auguste Comte. Thus her early philosophical stance can be characterized as strongly rationalist and positivist, yet based on a fundamental attachment to a rural way of life, and with an undercurrent of Romantic beliefs.

When around 1875 she moved to Stockholm and began to act as informal secretary to her father, Emil Key (1822–1892), a landowner and member of the newly





2. Cushion. Skåne, early nineteenth century. Wool embroidery on handwoven cloth, 22 1/4 x 19" (56.5 x 48.5 cm). Nordiska museet, Stockholm

3. Key's childhood home in Sundsholm, Småland. Eighteenth century. Photograph: collection Ellen Keys Strand, Ödeshög

4. Farm laborer's cottage, Södermanland, now in the Skansen outdoor museum, Stockholm. Early nineteenth century. Skansen, Stockholm

5. Mora Cottage, Mora, Dalarna, now in the Skansen outdoor museum, Stockholm. Eighteenth century. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm

reformed Swedish Parliament, she was especially eager to work with him on liberal issues such as education and the political rights of women and farmers.<sup>20</sup> She became a forceful proponent of political reforms and acquainted herself with Stockholm's leading liberal politicians and intellectuals. In the 1880s she drew progressively closer to avant-garde artists and literary figures: to the painters among The Opponents and the writers of the Young Sweden movement. Both groups rebelled against traditional taste and espoused Naturalism; for the artists, this meant plein air painting and a new appreciation of the northern landscape; for the writers, often, a concern with women and the working classes.<sup>21</sup>

In 1883 Key's family suffered financial reverses, the family estate was lost, and she was forced to support herself in Stockholm.<sup>22</sup> While teaching at the new Stockholms arbetareinstitut (Stockholm workers' institute, founded in 1880), she began to lean toward socialism. Sweden's industrialization began in the last decades of the nineteenth century—late, as compared to England, France, Germany, and the United States. Stockholm especially experienced large-scale population growth, absorbing a rapidly increasing number of new immigrants, without much new building. The living conditions of Stockholm's poor toward the end of the century were considerably worse than in most of the rest of Europe. Working-class families with as many as eight children often crowded into a single room.<sup>23</sup> The poorest people lived in the decaying wooden structures of Stockholm's outer periphery.

In this context, Key transferred her early concern for Sweden's rural poor to the working classes of Swedish cities. Inspired by reformist ideas not unlike those of Jane Addams, Key formed an association called Tolfterna (The twelves) that brought middle-class professional women together with working-class women to help them improve their way of living.<sup>24</sup> In 1885 she cofounded Nya Idun (New Idun), an organization for women artists and intellectuals that she led until 1900.<sup>25</sup> During the same years, she befriended leading Social Democrats. In 1889 Key forcefully (and famously) defended socialist leaders who had been imprisoned by the Swedish government for atheist writings, among them August Palm (1849–1922) and Hjalmar Branting (1860–1925), founders and first leaders of the nascent Social Democratic Party. After the formal establishment of the party in 1889, she appeared with Branting at party meetings, where she spoke about working conditions for women. An admirer and disciple was Gustaf Steffen (1864–1929), prominent Swedish political economist and social democratic representative to the Riksdagen, often seen as one of the progenitors of the Swedish "middle way" in politics and social policy.<sup>26</sup>

Key's lectures at the Workers' Institute were open to the public; soon she also began to lecture at workers' unions and clubs in Stockholm, and to student groups at Swedish and Finnish universities. Her lectures gained her great fame: she was, by all accounts, a bewitching speaker. Her talks—vivid, extemporaneous, presented with a modest (almost shy) demeanor and in a low voice—commanded attention from huge audiences of artists, architects, philosophers, literary figures, politicians, students, and workers.<sup>27</sup> By the early 1890s, Key was a central figure in Stockholm's intellectual life. She wrote regularly for radical periodicals, lectured widely, and began to publish her lectures and articles as books. She had already read and appreciated Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and would promote Nietzsche's ideas among Stockholm's intellectuals. She and her intimates gathered together at her apartment on Valhallavägen or at the home of artist Hanna Pauli (1864–1940) for weekly conversations about socialism, pacifism, education, philosophy, religion, and art (fig. 6).<sup>28</sup> Often discussed among Key's artist and literary friends were the writings of the eighteenth-century aesthetic philosopher Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745–1800). She and her circle subscribed to Ehrensvärd's belief that Swedish artists and architects had a special mission to achieve an almost primitive



6. Hanna Hirsch Pauli. *Vänner* (Friends). 1900–07. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x 8' 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (204 x 260 cm). Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

simplicity.<sup>29</sup> They also shared Key's view that Sweden must begin to play a leading role in educating continental Europe and the rest of the world in a new aesthetic.<sup>30</sup>

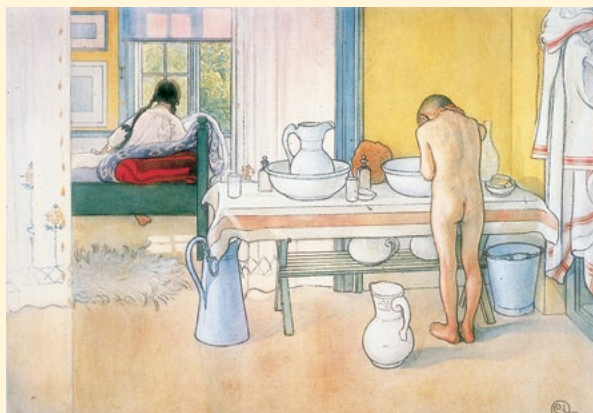
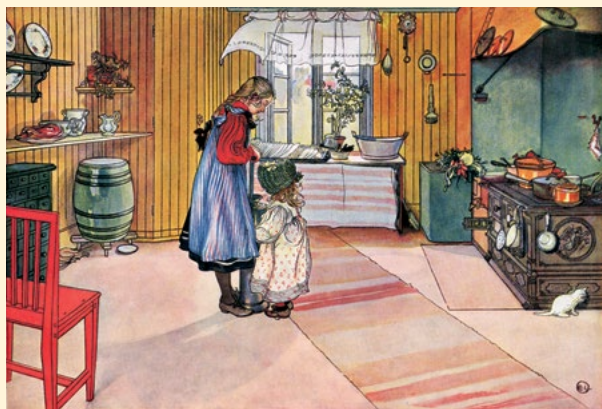
Key and her friends were in touch with the Swedish crafts revival and reform movements of the time, and they were aware of the English Arts and Crafts movement. They knew and admired the revival of Swedish crafts promoted by Föreningen Handarbetets Vänner (The association of friends of textile art) and attended Erik Folcker's lectures on English wallpapers sponsored by Svenska Slöjdföreningen (The Swedish arts and crafts society) in 1892.<sup>31</sup> They read the English art periodical *The Studio* as soon as it began publication in 1893. (Key probably read William Morris and John Ruskin at about this time.<sup>32</sup>) And they went to the new Swedish exhibitions, most notably the major Stockholm Exhibition of May 1897, where watercolors of "the home" by the painter Carl Larsson (1853–1919) were displayed. Key reviewed the Stockholm Exhibition, highlighting the paintings of her close friend. Larsson published these paintings in an enormously successful series of books beginning in 1899; it is from the first of this series, *Ett hem* (A Home), which Key quotes in "Beauty in the Home."<sup>33</sup>

In his paintings and books, Larsson depicted an ideal home, furnished with colorful, simple, and somewhat rustic-looking pieces designed by him and his wife, Karin, and decorated with textiles created by Karin, who was inspired by traditional crafts. Larsson peopled the dwelling with an idealized version of his own family (Karin and their eight children), leading an idealized life, plain and unpretentious, close to the soil and to local traditions. In Larsson's home, children worked and played, the family put on theatricals, light flooded in. Perpetual sunlight seemed to illuminate the life of the home, and strong colors predominated (figs. 7, 8, and 9). Key's own emphases on color and light are very similar to Larsson's, and, as she writes in "Beauty in the Home," she strongly approved of his depiction of family life.



Acting on her commitment to workers' education, Key joined with artists Gerda Bergh (1864–1919) and Richard Bergh (1858–1919) and art historian Carl G. Laurin (1868–1940) to organize furnishing and decoration exhibits at the Workers' Institute in the spring and fall of 1899, calling them the "Blue Room" and the "Green Room."<sup>34</sup> The "Blue Room" attempted to show a typical Swedish interior made tasteful by simplifying its contents and decorations. Plain white curtains, straw mats on the floor, tableware by designer Alf Wallander (1862–1914), and reproductions of works by artists (including Albrecht Dürer, Jean-François Millet, and Larsson) combined to display a "simple and purposeful form."<sup>35</sup> The "Green Room," intended as the model for a more humble worker's dwelling, was papered with an English wallpaper "in a pattern of small poppies" against a "background of yellow, green, and red tones" (figs. 10, 11, and 12).<sup>36</sup> The furniture, designed by architect Carl Westman (1866–1936), was stained green in a "mixture of Swedish country and modern English styles"; the pattern of the wood was permitted to show through the stain. The sideboard was bright red, like much of the furniture in the Larsson home. As in the "Blue Room," vases of flowers, bookcases, and art reproductions enhanced the interior. The exhibition showed, Key said, that the best effects could be achieved "with inexpensive materials and little effort;" by employing harmonious colors and simple, practical furniture.<sup>37</sup>

About five thousand people visited the "Green Room" exhibition, and this success encouraged Key to expand the short essay published in 1897 into the much longer work translated here. In 1899 she collected the expanded essay and three earlier short writings on related subjects into *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for all). Verdandi,



7. Carl Larsson. *Köket* (The kitchen). 1898. Watercolor on paper. Seen here as published in Larsson, *Ett hem* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899)

8. Carl Larsson. *Namnsdag på härbret* (Name day in the storehouse). 1898. Watercolor on paper. Seen here as published in Larsson, *Ett hem* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899)

9. Carl Larsson. *Sommarmorgon* (Summer morning). 1908. Watercolor on paper. Seen here as published in Larsson, *Åt solsidan* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1910)





10. Couch, table, and stove in the “Green Room” at Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm, September 1899. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm

11. Sideboard in the “Green Room” at Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm, September 1899. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm

12. Bed, window, washstand, and closet in the “Green Room” at Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm, September 1899. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm



an influential radical students' organization based at Uppsala University, published the book, with a cover by Larsson.<sup>38</sup> The essays in *Beauty for All* differ greatly in tone and subject matter. “Vardagsskönhhet” (The beauty of everyday life) (first published in *Julbloss*, 1891) speaks of the importance for the individual soul of sensing a connection to nature and creative work in art, music, and literature. “Festvanor” (Domestic celebrations) (*Idun*, 1896) argues that domestic festivals (Christmas, New Year’s, May Day, birthdays, name days, and other traditional household gatherings) awaken the understanding of each new generation to continuities, providing a kind of religious appreciation of everyday life. In “Skymningsbrasan” (Twilight fire) (*Idun*, 1895, written in 1870) Key writes of the experience of light and the role of the hearth in the dwelling.<sup>39</sup> The tone of these three essays, as of many of her other works, is often ecstatic, mystical, and prophetic.

“Beauty in the Home” is much more down-to-earth. Full of specific advice, it is a do-it-yourself manual for people of humble means, people seeking to establish some kind of judgment in the face of bad taste in home decoration. In the Swedish home of 1899, Key believed, “the most garishly cheap German taste” prevailed: ugly, ostentatious, crowded, dark, and gloomy.<sup>40</sup> Manufacturers instead should be guided by artists and craftsmen who would impart “beautiful form and appropriate decor to all things, from the simplest and smallest . . . to the largest.”<sup>41</sup> We are told to avoid dark colors in upholstery and wall coverings, to mistrust pictures on the walls, to despise artificial flowers, doilies, knickknacks, imitative styles, any appearance of ostentation—or, indeed, of wealth. The home and its furnishings must be close to nature, made as far as possible of natural materials, not from industrial products at least insofar as these imitate



13. Yngve Rasmussen. Strand, Key's home on Lake Vättern. 1910. Ellen Keys Strand, Ödeshög



14. Key's bedroom in Strand. Ellen Keys Strand, Ödeshög

something that they are not. We must not use certain kinds of varnish, but choose others that are lighter and more natural looking. Light colors are always good, but strong, bright, and cheerful ones must complement them. There is a discussion of the ideal number of guests to seat at dinner and finally a list of good buildings and paintings the reader should know about, in order to improve her taste.

Underlying these sometimes amusing and sometimes distracting instructions is a central vision that stresses simplicity, naturalness, and the path to a new kind of self-expression for each individual in society. Out of this vision will come a new way of life for each, and ultimately for all. References to light occur over and over again, not only as advice in decorating, but also as metaphors of enlightenment and transformation. To achieve the moral and social progress that will begin in the home, to move on to the century of the child and the millennial empire of justice and beauty, we must "let the sunshine come flooding in!"<sup>42</sup>

The editors have chosen to translate "Beauty in the Home" as it was published in its 1913 edition, the final version during Key's lifetime and the one most widely read. The essay did not change very much between 1899 and 1913: the major change was the addition, in 1904, of a long passage praising the home of Carl and Karin Larsson.<sup>43</sup> The list of organizations, buildings, paintings, and sculptures of which Key approved was also added to and emended in each new edition, but the text as a whole was never rewritten after 1904.<sup>44</sup> Thus "Beauty in the Home" is very much a product of the turn of the century, and of Key's life before she became a peripatetic traveler and an internationally famous author.

That there was never after 1904 a revised edition of *Beauty for All* nor a new edition after 1913 during Key's lifetime probably has to do not only with Key's busy schedule in her fifties and sixties, but also with her preoccupation with her house at Strand, on Lake Vättern, built according to her specifications by her architect and brother-in-law, Yngve Rasmussen, in 1910.<sup>45</sup> Key occupied Strand almost continuously from December 1910 on. Here she put some of her ideas about design into practice (figs. 13 and 14). There were strong colors on the walls, simple mats and runners on the floors, a mixture of relatively plain-looking (but by no means rurally inspired) furniture, and reproductions of Symbolist paintings on the walls. (Her favorite was Arnold

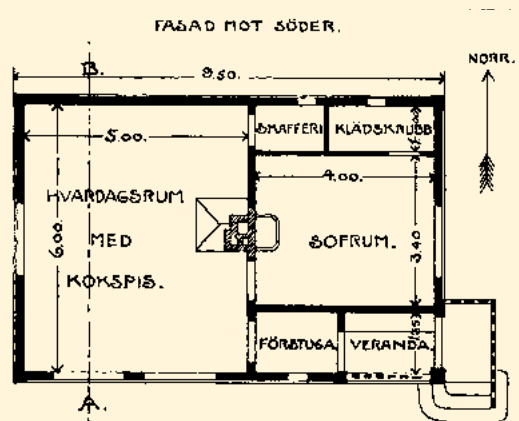
Böcklin's *Island of the Dead*)<sup>46</sup> The exterior bore a certain resemblance to Sundsholm, her childhood home.<sup>47</sup> In keeping with Key's wishes, Strand was used as a vacation place for working-class women after her death.<sup>48</sup>

From about 1900 to 1909, Key's lectures outside of Sweden magnified her fame. At this time too she began an enormous correspondence with foreign intellectuals, a correspondence she carried on until the end of her life.<sup>49</sup> She also started to attract disciples from abroad, of whom perhaps the most well known to scholars are the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, Austrian novelist and librettist Stefan Zweig, Lou Andreas-Salomé (German journalist, companion to Nietzsche and Rilke), and Mamah Bouton Borthwick and her lover Frank Lloyd Wright. Borthwick was one of Key's earliest visitors at Strand; she translated four of Key's works into English (from German), and she and Wright arranged for their publication in the United States.<sup>50</sup>

Ellen Key had a genius for gathering up the most progressive ideas of her contemporaries—artists, crafts enthusiasts, designers, writers, politicians, labor leaders, reformers of all types—and welding them together through the force of her own intellectual passions into novel and persuasive arguments. Within Sweden, she was powerfully influential for a time. Among the younger generation of architects, housing planners, and design theorists, Carl Westman, Ragnar Östberg, and Gregor Paulsson owed her a great deal (figs. 15 and 16).<sup>51</sup> In the longer term, her insistence that individualism and socialism must be joined together probably played some part in the evolution of Swedish social thought; certainly this idea provided a foundation for the social conscience so prevalent in later Swedish design and architecture.<sup>52</sup> Her significance for twentieth-century educational theories has often been noted. Her ideas about feminism are still significant, and still hotly debated. The further dimensions of her importance are difficult to measure. Scholars have only recently begun to scale the veritable mountain of material—her own letters, speeches, essays, journal and newspaper articles, and books, as well as comparable publications and manuscripts from her admirers and detractors—involved in studying her work. Thus there is much in Key's life and thought that remains obscure. Still it is clear that Key's belief that the home, the dwelling, could be the source of creative change in both the arts and in society had a decisive and long-lasting impact on Swedish design theory, applied arts, and architecture.



15. Carl Westman and Elin Anderssen. Pressens Villa, Saltsjöbaden. 1901–02. Main hall. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm



16. Ragnar Östberg. Proposal for workers' housing. 1905. Plan as published in Östberg, *Ett hem, dess byggnad och inredning*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter no. 131 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1906)



## Notes

1. Translated into all European languages except Italian, Hungarian, Croatian, and Bulgarian; also into Yiddish.
2. For general works in English on Key, her context, and her relation to later design theorists, see especially Clarence Burton Sheffield, Jr., "Social Needs and Aesthetic Demands: Ellen Key, Gregor Paulsson, and Swedish Design, 1899–1939" in *The Brilliance of Swedish Glass 1918–1939: An Alliance of Art and Industry*, eds. Derek E. Ostergard and Nina Stritzler-Levine (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 34–51; and Kerstin Wickman, "Homes," in *20th Century Architecture: Sweden*, eds. Claes Caldenby, Jöran Lindvall, and Wilfried Wang (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1998), pp. 198–225. Still useful on a number of issues is Ronald De Angelis, "Ellen Key: A Biography of the Swedish Social Reformer" (dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1978).
3. See, for example, Key, *Folkbildningsarbetet: Särskildt med hänsyn till skönhetsinnets odling* (Uppsala: Appellbergs Boktryckeri, 1906); and Thorbjörn Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten* (Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag, 2002).
4. "Skönhet," *Tankebilder*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1898), pp. 130–31. Key dated this essay 1897–98. Translated in its entirety in German as "Schönheit," in *Die Wenigen und die Vielen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1900), pp. 283–307.
5. According to Key her concept of a "Third Empire" came from Henrik Ibsen's 1873 play *Emperor and Galilean: A World-historic Drama*. See *The Torpedo under the Ark: "Ibsen and Women"*, trans. Mamah Bouton Borthwick (Chicago: Seymour, 1912), p. 28; and *The Century of the Child* (New York: Putnam, 1909), in which she relates the idea to the millenarian teachings of medieval mystic Joachim of Flora, p. 315, and to Nietzsche's idea of the age of the superman, pp. 105, 121.
6. "Skönhet," pp. 140, 146.
7. "Skönhet i hemmen," in *Skönhet för alla*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter no. 77 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1913); facsimile edition (Stockholm: Rekolid, 1997), pp. 3–37. *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for all) was first published in 1899, and in five further editions (another in 1899, an expanded version in 1904, again in 1908 and 1913, and finally in 1939, thirteen years after Key's death). By the start of the First World War it had sold twenty thousand copies in Sweden, a significant number in a country of about five million people. *Skönhet för alla* was never translated as a whole, but a version of "Skönhet i hemmen" appeared in German newspapers in 1910; see Reinhard Dräbing, *Der Traum vom "Jahrhundert des Kindes"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 516. An early, extremely short version of "Skönhet i hemmen" appeared in the magazine *Idun* in 1897 as part of a series on "the modern home." See Key, "Skönhet i hemmen: Små utläggningar af Ehrensvärds text," *Idun: praktisk veckotidning för kvinnan och hemmet*, julnummer (Christmas issue, 1897): p. 4.
8. See Ronny Ambjörnsson, ed., *Ellen Key: Hemmets århundrade* (Stockholm: Aldus, 1976), p. 54.
9. Key, in the present volume, p. 36.
10. *Barnets århundrade* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1900); translated into English as *The Century of the Child*, 1909. On Key's educational ideals, a useful English source is Thorbjörn Lengborn, "Ellen Key," *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, vol. XXIII, no. 3/4 (1993): pp. 825–37. See also Lengborn, *En studie i Ellen Keys pedagogiska tänkande främst med utgångspunkt från 'Barnets århundrade'* (Stockholm: Ljungberg, 1977).
11. Ronny Ambjörnsson, *Samhällsmodern: Ellen Keys kvinnouppfattning till och med 1896* (Göteborg: Göteborg Universitet, 1974). See also Ambjörnsson, "Family Ideas in Sweden and the Tradition of Ellen Key" in *Traditional Thought and Ideological Change: Sweden and Japan in the Age of Industrialism*, eds. S. Cho and N. Runeby (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1988), pp. 49–56; and Ambjörnsson, "En skön ny värld—Om Ellen Keys visioner och en senare tids verkligheten," *Fataburen* (1991): pp. 260–78. Ambjörnsson is preparing a definitive biography of Key.
12. Key was one of the first Swedish women to call for female suffrage. She also consistently argued that women must and should have additional rights in society, a position that in the 1890s led her into conflict with the emerging Swedish suffragist movement. She scandalized many feminists of her time (and others ever since) by arguing (in *Missbrukad kvinnokraft*, 1896) that women, being biologically different from men, should remain at home in nurturing roles. This publication has been much misunderstood: it was an overstatement of her views, almost certainly intended to provoke controversy and also to protect working women and children from exploitation. Key never wavered from a commitment to women's political and economic rights; she simply wanted to add to them. She modified her statements on careers for women in *The Century of the Child* and her 1909 *Kvinnorörelsen*, published in English as *The Woman Movement*, trans. Mamah Bouton Borthwick (New York: Putnam, 1912), and certainly her own public life was not restricted by concerns for home and family. Key's personal life has been troublesome to those who have tried to understand her feminism: she carried on a long and ill-fated affair with Urban von Fellitzin, Norwegian landowner and intellectual, from 1875 to 1890, but she never married, bore children, or otherwise conformed to traditional women's roles. In *Om kärlek: Litteratur, sexualitet och politik hos Ellen Key* (Stockholm: Symposium, 2002), Claudia Lindén has argued persuasively against trying to understand Key's philosophy in terms of her personal life. On the same point, see Sabine Andresen and Meike Sophia Baader, *Wege aus dem Jahrhundert des Kindes: Tradition und Utopie bei Ellen Key* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1998), pp. 85–89.
13. *Individualism och socialism: Några tankar om de få och de många*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter, no. 55 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1895).
14. Key carried on a lively correspondence with Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), a leading Russian anarchist, from 1900 on, and arranged to meet him during one of her European lecture tours (Ellen Key Archive, Manuscripts Division, Royal Library, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm; and De Angelis, p. 228). Key's library at Strand includes six of his books (in German, English, and Swedish); four contain inscriptions or dedications to Key.
15. Ambjörnsson, *Samhällsmodern*, p. 28.
16. A movement to promote schools for farmers that began in the 1860s in Denmark and spread to all the Scandinavian countries. Key founded a school of this type for women in her home district. See De Angelis; and Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

17. Key grew up in an eighteenth-century manor house in Sundsholm, in the south-eastern province of Småland (near Kalmar).
18. For Key's description of the Mora Cottage and Skansen, see Key, in the present volume, pp. 38–39. On Skansen, see Lane, *National Romanticism*, p. 40. On Key's work for Hazelius, see Louise Nyström-Hamilton, *Ellen Key: Her Life and Her Work* (New York: Putnam, 1913), p. 57.
19. For Key's views on the proper role of art in education, see especially her *Folkbildningsarbetet* (Uppsala: K. W. Appelberg, 1906), which contains many references to Lichtwark. On Key and Lichtwark, see Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 91–98.
20. In 1866 the Swedish Parliament democratized to some extent: a bicameral legislature replaced the four-part parliament of "estates" and the electorate was broadened. Emil Key, one of the founders of the large Lantmannapartiet (Ruralist party), represented his district in the lower house from 1867 to 1883. In 1869 Key and her parents moved to Stockholm during the winters. In 1875 the rest of the family moved back to Sundsholm for most of the year, while Ellen Key remained with her father as his housekeeper and secretary.
21. The Opponents (Ernst Josephson, Richard Bergh, Nils Kreuger, Karl Nordström, Anders Zorn, Carl Larsson, Georg Pauli, and other young artists and students) seceded from the Royal Academy in 1886 and founded the new and ultimately very successful Konstnärsförbundet (Artists federation). The Young Sweden movement, including Gustaf af Geijerstam, Victoria Benedictsson, and (for a time) August Strindberg, called for an emphasis on current social and political issues in literature and drama.
22. At the Stockholm Workers' Institute from 1883 to 1903, Key taught the history of Swedish civilization, with an emphasis on the history of literature and art. She also taught at Anna Whitlock's progressive new elementary school from about 1880 to 1899. During the same period she gathered together the daughters of Stockholm's intellectual elite for informal tutorials that later grew into large classes on literature and art. See Nyström-Hamilton, *Ellen Key*, p. 70; and Ambjörnsson, *Samhällsmodern*, p. 26.
23. Wickman, "Homes," p. 203.
24. See Gerd Örtegren, *Ellen Key och Tolfterna* (Väderstad: Ellen Key-sällskapet, 1982); and Svante Hedin, "Bildning och solidaritet: Ellen Key och Tolfterna," in *Ny syn på Ellen Key*, ed. Siv Hackzell (Stockholm: Bembo Bok, 2000), pp. 52–79.
25. Hedin, "Bildning," pp. 64–67. Idun was the Norse goddess of eternal youth; the name was adopted by the women's magazine for which Key often wrote, and by the Idun society for men; Nya Idun was founded as a rival to the latter.
26. Another friend was Anton Nyström (1842–1931), founder of the Workers' Institute and early social democratic leader. Nyström was married to Key's friend and disciple Louise Nyström-Hamilton, her earliest biographer. For her defense of Palm, Branting, and others, see *Några tankar om huru reaktioner uppstå jämte samt om yttrande- och tryckfrihet* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1889); and De Angelis, p. 152. On Gustaf Steffen, see Benny Carlson, "Wagner's Swedish Students: Precursors of the Middle Way?" *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 437–59. See also *acceptera*, in this volume, p. 337 and n. 65. Key was also close to Georg von Vollmar (1850–1922), Bavarian aristocrat, chairman of the Socialist Party in Bavaria, journalist, member of the German parliament (1881–87, 1890–1918), and to his wife, the former Julia Kjellberg. Through the Vollmars, whom she often visited in Bavaria, she became acquainted with the ideas and politics of "revisionist" (non-revolutionary) socialism in Germany.
27. "When she enters a lecture room there is something of the priestess about her, and by the time she has reached her place on the platform, such absolute silence reigns that one would think oneself alone. . . . Her first words are uttered so low that one hears them with a slight effort, but the silence in the room sharpens the hearing, and without raising her voice, her words reach the farthest corners." Nyström-Hamilton, *Ellen Key*, p. 83.
28. This was the Juntan group, which included the painters Georg and Hanna Pauli, Eva Bonnier, and Richard and Gerda Bergh. Also often present were publisher Karl Otto Bonnier and his wife (Eva Bonnier's parents). Bonnier was the publisher of the Verdandi booklets and of Carl Larsson's books; he came to be Key's principal publisher.
29. Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 110–11; and Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 35–38.
30. "Skönhet," pp. 133–35, 140–41. Key argues that "the northern countries" (Norrland) will be the purveyor of English and Belgian arts and crafts ideas to Germany and elsewhere. But she also says that many people in these northern countries have had the same ideas "without reading Ruskin." In these northern countries, she believes, people have a special awareness of nature—of light, stillness, and solitude—and a special aptitude for bringing the experience of nature to everyone.
31. Föreningen Handarbetets Vänner, founded in 1874 by Sophie Adlersparre; Svenska Slöjdföreningen, founded in 1845. Key also knew, and mentioned in the 1899 text of "Skönhet i hemmen," the influential Austrian art historian Jacob von Falke, director of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, whose Swedish lectures and publications promoted a notion of "the home as a work of art." See especially Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, "Hemmet som konstverk. Heminredning i teori och praktik på 1870- och 80-talen," *Fataburen* 1 (1984): pp. 129–48; and Ingeborg Glambek, "Jacob Falke og Justus Brinkmann: representanter for to stadier av den kunstindustrielle bevegelse," *Om kunst-industry, Årbok for kunstinstituttrimuseene i Norge* (Trondheim, 1991), pp. 31–45. Erik Folcker was an officer in the Svenska Slöjdföreningen and proprietor of the shop Sub Rosa, which sold products of the English Arts and Crafts movement.
32. According to Lengborn, Key's first acquaintance with Ruskin's work dates to 1894 and with Morris's, probably to 1895; *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 39–40. Key mentions both in *Individualism och socialism* (1895), and Ruskin makes frequent appearances in "Skönhet," 1897–98. A reference to Morris appears in the 1899 edition of "Beauty in the Home," but not in the 1897 version. She returns to Morris in "Folket och konsten," *Varia. Illustrerad månadstidskrift* vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1900): pp. 34–44. (My thanks to Eva Eriksson for obtaining this rare article for me.) As so often in her publications, Key reissued this text at a later date, after changing it substantially; see *Folkbildningsarbetet*, pp. 77–90, 139–45.

33. See Key, in the present volume, pp. 41–42 Key and Larsson had been friends since the mid-1880s. Larsson, *Ett hem: 24 målningar* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899); revised with the addition of one further image in 1904; further editions in 1910, 1912, 1913, and 1920. On Key and Larsson, see Wickman, “Homes”; Michael Snodin and Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, eds., *Carl and Karin Larsson: Creators of the Swedish Style* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997); and Lane, *National Romanticism*.

34. Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 69–75; Lengborn, *Ellen Key—Richard Bergh* (Linköping: Ellen Key-Sällskapets årsskrift, 1997); Wickman, “Homes”; and Key, “Folket och konsten,” *Varia*. Carl G. Laurin was one of the founders of Föreningen för skolors prydnad med konstverk (The association for the decoration of schools with works of art), which Key mentions in her essay in the present volume, n. 29. He was also the brother of prominent art collector Thorsten Laurin and a partner in the publishing firm P. A. Norstedt & Sons.

35. Key, “Folket och konsten,” *Varia*, pp. 40–41.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Verdandi was a Norse goddess. The Verdandi student organization was founded at Uppsala in 1882 as a political opposition group, liberal and increasingly tending toward socialism. It also favored temperance, pacifism, and efforts to retain closeness to nature. It sponsored lectures and arranged debates. See Facos, *Nationalism*, p. 13. The “Verdandi booklets” series, begun in 1888 and published by Bonnier, came to offer progressive intellectuals an important forum. In the early twentieth century, the series included, in addition to studies of the working classes and of a multitude of philosophical issues, important books on the artists Carl Larsson, Anders Zorn, and Bruno Liljefors, together with Ragnar Östberg’s *Ett hem* (see n. 51 below).

39. Windows must admit light, especially in the northern countries, and, she says, only those countries that have a tradition of the hearth really have a tie to a notion of home or homeland. It was this conception of “home,” reaching beyond the dwelling to include local traditions and homeland, that so appealed to Rilke, who corresponded with Key about “homelessness.” See Lane, *National Romanticism*, pp. 132, 352, n. 169; and Facos, *Nationalism*, pp. 62–63. Key

does not differentiate here among the “northern” countries.

40. Key, in the present volume, p. 34.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*, p. 43. The same phrase occurs in all editions. Key’s preoccupation with light was shared by Swedish artists of the 1890s. Since the publication of Kirk Varnedoe’s *Northern Light: Nordic Art at the Turn of the Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988) art historians have paid increasing attention to the treatment of light in Scandinavian painting and to its influence on the development of modern painting elsewhere. As yet, there has been no comparable study of the role of light and sunshine in the development of modern architecture and interior design.

43. Key, in the present volume, p. 42. A short passage on the Larsson home appears in the 1899 edition.

44. The 1904 edition includes a new mention of Axel Lindegren. Minor variations over time included changing references to authorities she approved of and changing bits of advice about decoration. The list of buildings and works of art she liked includes Boberg, Östberg, and Wahlman by name in 1908, but omits the names in 1913. A line-by-line comparison of the five editions and the first publication of 1897 would show a good deal about Key’s intellectual development, but is beyond the scope of our publication.

45. Rasmussen’s work was not very well known in Sweden; perhaps she chose him because of the family connection and for financial reasons. He designed a number of railroad stations, in which Key was interested. See her essay, in the present volume, p. 34.

46. There were many other paintings, drawings, and reproductions at Strand. Reproductions of Renaissance masters vied for space with Larsson prints and original oils by Prince Eugen, Hanna Pauli, and Richard Bergh. Another of Key’s favorite images was “Prayer to Light” (*Lichtgebet*, 1905) by the contemporary German artist Fidus, who was prominent in the German “Life Reform” movement; see Lane, *National Romanticism*, pp. 140–42.

47. It also resembled Heinrich Vogeler’s Barkenhoff house at the Worpswede art colony in Germany; Key knew of this house through Rilke, who sent her his book on

Worpswede in 1903. She also kept in her workroom at Strand a picture of the Barkenhoff, with a note describing it as Rilke’s house.

48. Strand was made a national monument in 1992; today it offers short-term accommodations to female scholars. Nearby is the Ellen Key institutet ([www.eki.nu](http://www.eki.nu)), which organizes exhibitions, publishes works on Key, and in 2006 issued a modernized and popularized Swedish version of *Skönhet för alla*. I am grateful to Helena Kåberg and Hedda Jansson, curator at Ellen Key’s Strand, for much of my information on the contents and history of Key’s home.

49. A few examples from the vast collection of letters to Key preserved in the Ellen Key Archive, Manuscripts Division, Royal Library, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm: Rainer Maria Rilke, Prince Peter Kropotkin, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Mamah Bouton Borthwick, Stefan Zweig, Georg Brandes, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Edmund William Gosse, Romain Rolland, Frank Lloyd Wright, Knut Hamsun, Juhani Aho, Isadora Duncan, Maurice Maeterlinck, Yrjö Hirn, Franziska Mann, Upton Sinclair, Bertha von Suttner, and Emile Verhaeren.

50. Borthwick signed the guestbook at Strand (which had opened for visitors at the end of December 1910) on June 9, 1911. (Our thanks to Hedda Jansson, curator at Ellen Key’s Strand, for providing us with photocopies of the first pages of the guestbook.) Borthwick’s translations of Key’s works (from the German) included *The Morality of Woman and Other Essays* (Chicago: Seymour, 1911); *The Torpedo under the Ark: “Ibsen and Women”* (Chicago: Seymour, 1912); *Love and Ethics* (Chicago: Seymour, 1912); and *The Woman Movement* (New York: Putnam, 1912). *Love and Ethics* bore Frank Lloyd Wright’s name as co-translator. The details of Borthwick’s and Wright’s contacts with Key remain unclear. They are explored in two excellent articles: Lena Johannesson, “Ellen Key, Mamah Bouton Borthwick and Frank Lloyd Wright: Notes on the Historiography of Non-existing History,” *Nova: Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1995): pp. 126–36; and Alice T. Friedman, “Frank Lloyd Wright and Feminism: Mamah Borthwick Cheney’s letters to Ellen Key,” *JSAH*, vol. 61:2 (June 2002): pp. 140–51. Unfortunately the documentation accessible at the time of their research led both Johannesson and Friedman to date Borthwick’s visit to Strand as June 9, 1910, and their



further deductions about dates of contact, based on the series of undated letters from Borthwick to Key in the Ellen Key Archive, Swedish Royal Library Manuscript Division, are colored to a certain extent by this misunderstanding. Friedman still believes, however, that internal evidence in these letters suggests a first personal contact between Borthwick and Key in the spring of 1910 (letter to the author, August 19, 2007). In any case, Borthwick's and Wright's later letters to Key from the United States display deep admiration and attachment. As a token of gratitude, at some point between 1912 and 1914 Wright sent Key a Hiroshige print, which now hangs in the upper hall at Strand (Johannesson).

51. Westman's work on the "Green Room" was significant for his future interior design. Westman and Östberg were active in the movement to help workers build their own small homes in new suburban settlements outside Stockholm; Key praised their work in the essays collected in *Folkbildningsarbetet*, pp. 188–89; Östberg acknowledged her influence in his *Ett hem, dess byggnad och inredning*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter no. 131 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1905). On Key's influence on Paulsson, see Kåberg, Introduction, p. 61. On the movement for "owner-occupied

homes" see especially Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, *Villabebyggelse i Sverige 1900–1925: Inflytande från utlandet, idéer, överkligande* (Lund: Nordiska museets handlingar, 1971); Lane, *National Romanticism*, pp. 120–22; and *acceptera*, in the present volume, n. 51.

52. On the role of individualism in Swedish Social Democracy, see Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa? Gemenskap och oberoende i det moderna Sverige* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2006).