Aspazija’s play **“An Aim Unattained”** (*„Neaizsniegts mērķis”*) (1895)

Aspazija wrote the play “An Aim Unattained” in 1894 and finished it by the start of the year 1895. It continues the series of realistic plays that had started with the drama “The Lost Rights” (*„Zaudētas tiesības”*). If at the center of the last one was a woman entering the labor market with its oppressing economic conditions, then this one is about a woman’s strife for education. The author switches the roles of the beloved traditional fairy tale characters of a stepdaughter and the mother’s real daughter. This time it’s the stepdaughter that wraps intrigue around the real daughter and hates her. The main character is the landlord’s daughter Velta with her longings for education and a different life. The problem of the heroine isn’t poverty, but the society’s notions about what is a woman’s proper place in life — being a property of her father or husband. She isn’t content with a profitable marriage; she wishes to be an equal member of the society together with her beloved man. This is a new type of a woman, who wishes to create an active and independent lifestyle and use her gained knowledge for the good of society, by doing a useful job. In the character of Velta, Aspazija etched out multiple moments of her autobiography — the wish to continue her education, contacts with her neighbor Kārlis Emīls Jansons, who studied at the University of Terbata (nowadays called the University of Tartu) and the reading of his books, etc.

The first version of the play titled “Velta” wasn’t accepted by the censorship, it was suggested to soften some of the sharpest moments of the play. Aspazija partly abides by the suggestions and gives the play a new name — “An Aim Unattained”. In July and August of the year 1895 the play was being serialized by the newspaper “Dienas Lapa”, but in autumn it was published as a book. The Riga Latvian Theater (Rīgas Latviešu teātris) didn’t accept the play. After the scandalous performings of the drama “The Lost Rights” the Riga Latvian Society refused to work with Aspazija. The premiere of “An Aim Unattained” was performed at the theater of the Liepaja Latvian Society of Charity (*Liepājas Latviešu labdarības biedrība*) in August of 1895, which was followed by a staging in “Uļeja” in Riga and many other amateur theaters. The topic of emancipation secured the popularity of this work and, similarly to “The Lost Rights”, caused passionate discussions. Under the trained outlook of a romantic Aspazija raises the story’s conflicts and action, this ends in allowing Velta’s husband to die in a burning house. The importance of the play rather lies in its place in the history of the feminism idea development in Latvia, than in its artistic value.