

The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm

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Susan Brantly

The Life and Writings of
Laura Marholm



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The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm

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Throughout the 1890s, Laura Marholm played an influential role in the realm of German-Scandinavian literary relations as writer, translator, and amateur expert on the psychology of women. Marholm's literary career intersects with many of the influential figures of her age: Georg Brandes, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Jonas Lie, Arne Garborg, August Strindberg, Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Dauthendey, Hermann Bahr, Arthur Schnitzler, Havelock Ellis and many more. The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm provides the first complete account of Marholm's fascinating life story. This study documents not only Marholm's work as a cultural mediator between Scandinavia and the German-speaking countries, but in addition, the evolution of Marholm's controversial ideas about the psychology of women is traced against the background of the intellectual history of the times, and an attempt is made to explain the sudden popularity Marholm achieved with Das Buch der Frauen in 1895 and her subsequent fall to obscurity.

Susan Brantly
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Laura Marholm (1889)

Introduction

In the not-too-distant past, the genre of literary biography became suspect as a result of the overuse and abuse of biographical information in interpreting literary texts.¹ This is an issue, however, that primarily plagues scholars of canonical authors, for whom the wealth of biographical information can prove a hindrance to the consideration of the purely artistic or theoretical merits of a given literary text. With regard to authors inhabiting the fringes of literary history, however, a dearth of information generates its own kind of obstacles. Much more basic questions present themselves: Who was the author? What did he or she write? Why did he or she fall into obscurity?

At its inception, this project was meant to be more a study of Laura Marholm's works than of her life. Quickly it became evident that basic information about Laura Marholm's person was lacking, and what information did exist was often erroneous. Most of Laura Marholm's writing is thoroughly a product of the historical age in which it was written and without a knowledge of this context, her work makes little sense to a modern reader. For these reasons, this monograph evolved into a study of both her life and her work.

Until Ingvar Holm's valuable book, *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttitalsromantik* (1957), if scholars knew anything about Laura Marholm, they knew her as "Frau Blaubart," the domineering woman who sought to unman August Strindberg in Berlin. As might be expected, Strindberg's appraisal can hardly be considered fair. Overall, the latest Ola Hansson scholarship, especially Arne Widell's *Ola Hansson i Tyskland* (1979) and Inger Månesköld-Öberg's *Att spegla tiden – eller forma den* (1984), has provided the most useful and accurate information about Laura Marholm. Even so, it has not been within the scope of these studies to paint a complete portrait of Ola Hansson's wife.

In recent years, Laura Marholm's name has been mentioned in contexts independent of Ola Hansson. In the late 1970's, the Nordic Institute at Kiel launched a research project dealing with the reception of Scandinavian literature in Germany. The project generated a series of handsome monographs and valuable

¹ For a penetrating discussion of the issues surrounding literary biography, see: Jeffrey L. Sammons, "Dilemmas of Literary Biography: The Case of Heine," *Heinrich Heine. Dimensionen seines Wirkens*, eds. Raymond Immerwahr and Hanna Spencer (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1979).

bibliographies, in which Marholm is mentioned not a few times. In 1966, George Schoolfield had called for an investigation of German translators of Scandinavian literature, mentioning Laura Marholm in particular “who labored valiantly, and erratically, to bring the North to Germany, and Germany to the North.”² Alken Bruns answered this call with *Übersetzung als Rezeption. Deutsche Übersetzer skandinavischer Literatur von 1860 bis 1900* (1977), although his attention is primarily focused on translators other than Marholm. In Barbara Gentikow’s *Skandinavien als präkapitalistische Idylle* (1978), Marholm receives mention as an early critic of Bjørnson’s *En fallit* and Ibsen’s *Et dukkehjem* and also in terms of her relevance to the reception of Ellen Key’s *Missbrukad kvinnokraft* in Germany. Walter Baumgartner invokes Marholm’s polemic with Paul Ernst over Arne Garborg’s authorship in his study, *Triumph des Irrealismus. Rezeption skandinavischer Literatur im ästhetischen Kontext Deutschlands 1860 bis 1910* (1979). Each of these studies illuminates a facet of Marholm’s career as a translator and critic, but understandably these facets lack a context within the overall production of Laura Marholm.

This decade has witnessed a rapidly growing interest in turn-of-the-century women, and, of course, Marholm’s name appears in this company as well. Marholm had a part in the drama between Victoria Benedictsson and Georg Brandes which unfolds in the recently published diaries of Benedictsson (1985), expertly edited by Christina Sjöblad. In Margaret Stetz’ Harvard dissertation “‘George Egerton’: Woman and Writer of the 1890’s” (1982), Marholm emerges as a correspondent and admirer of George Egerton. Marholm crossed paths with Lou Andreas-Salomé, and thus she receives mention in both Rudolph Binion’s *Frau Lou* (1968) and Angela Livingstone’s *Lou Andreas-Salomé* (1984). For a time, Marholm and Ellen Key exchanged similar ideas about the nature of women, and so, with good reason, Marholm is included in Kay Goodman’s study of the cult of motherhood in Germany at the turn of the century (1986).³ Marholm has even been accorded a study of her own by Marilyn Scott-Jones in her article “Laura Marholm and the Question of Female ‘Nature’” (1982).⁴ Marholm seems to have achieved sudden popularity in the eighties; however, each of the above-mentioned studies would have benefitted from a more extensive acquaintance with Laura Marholm’s life and work.⁵

² George C. Schoolfield, “Scandinavian-German Literary Relations,” *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 15 (1966), p. 31.

³ Kay Goodman, “Motherhood and Work: The Concept of the Misuse of Women’s Energy, 1895–1905,” *German Women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres and Mary Jo Maynes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁴ Marilyn Scott-Jones, “Laura Marholm and the Question of Female ‘Nature,’” *Beyond the Eternal Feminine: Critical Essays on Women and German Literature*, eds. Susan L. Cocalis and Kay Goodman (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982).

⁵ In general, readers of Scandinavian languages have been more successful in their treatments of Laura Marholm, since they have had access to the Ola Hansson scholarship.

Among historians of the women's movement, Marholm is remembered as the author of *Das Buch der Frauen*, her greatest commercial success.⁶ The central theme of this text is best summarized in the winged words: "Des Weibes Inhalt ist der Mann."⁷ Marholm's relationship to the women's movement was, however, much more complicated than is indicated by this single book from 1895. Eight years earlier, she had espoused a rather different position: „Was weg soll, ja, das ist der mosaische Begriff, daß für den Mann Alles da ist und daß das Weib für den Mann da ist."⁸ Fourteen years after *Das Buch der Frauen*, Marholm changed her mind again: "Und soweit Menschen zurückdenken können, ist das Weib mit Argwohn betrachtet, niedergehalten, gefürchtet, unterworfen worden. Der Kranz und der Schleier waren das Zeichen der Unterwerfung, – das Zeichen des Verzichts auf das eigene Wesen."⁹ How does one account for these contradictions? Marholm's position changed through time as a result of the cultural, political, and scientific waves that passed through Europe, as well as of personal factors. Thus a biographical and historical perspective is necessary to make sense of the apparent contradictions in her work. In many respects, the progression of Marholm's reasoning on these matters is representative of changes within the age itself. Marholm wrote in the preface of the last book she ever published:

German and English-speaking scholars tend to make more mistakes. One example can be taken from Angela Livingstone's book on Lou Andreas-Salomé, where Livingstone writes: "Ola Hansson-Marholm, who lived in Friedrichshagen from 1889 to 1900, was writer and spokesman for Danish poets. [. . .] His wife, Laura Marholm, wrote plays and novellas." (p. 232) Hansson would surely have complained bitterly at being called Ola Hansson-Marholm. The fact that Andreas-Salomé herself called him this is an insult which seems to have escaped Livingstone. As a Swede, Hansson would hardly want to be remembered as a spokesman for Danish poets, and the Hanssons lived in Friedrichshagen with interruptions only from 1890 until 1893. Marholm wrote more than plays and novellas, and it was no doubt her essays on women which were of the greatest interest to Andreas-Salomé. A specific source of misinformation in German about Marholm can be found in Elisabeth Friedrichs' otherwise excellent *Die deutschsprachigen Schriftstellerinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981), p. 116. Friedrichs lists the year of Marholm's death as 1905, twenty-three years too early.

⁶ See for example, John C. Fout, "Current Research on German Women's History in the Nineteenth Century," *German Women in the Nineteenth Century. A Social History*, ed. John C. Fout (New York: Holms & Meier Publishers, 1984). Marholm is also presented as such in the above-mentioned books on Lou Andreas-Salomé and Kay Goodman's study on Ellen Key in Germany. In each of these cases, the common source for the characterization is Hedwig Dohm's article "Reaktion in der Frauenbewegung," *Die Zukunft*, 29 (18 November 1899), pp. 279–291, which characterizes and compares the work of Marholm, Key, and Andreas-Salomé.

⁷ Laura Marholm, *Das Buch der Frauen* (Paris and Leipzig: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 44.

⁸ Laura Marholm, "Norwegische Dichter in Paris," *St. Petersburger Zeitung* 7 and 8 May 1887.

⁹ Laura Marholm, "Zum Wahlrecht der Frauen," manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

Der innere Zusammenhang ist ja in allen meinen Büchern vorhanden, da er so organisch ist, wie das Leben selbst. Ich habe jedesmal gesagt, was und wieviel ich wußte und begriff, und darin ist jeder Zeitraum eine Stufe. Darum habe ich auch nichts zurückzunehmen und nichts hinzuzufügen.¹⁰

It would not be totally inappropriate to consider Marholm's life and literary career as a case study in the intellectual history of the turn of the century.

The reconstruction of Laura Marholm's life and its effect on her work has presented various practical difficulties. Most of what Marholm wrote appeared in German and Austrian newspapers, which are no longer readily accessible. Regrettably, no comprehensive bibliography of German newspaper articles from this period exists. Although some references could be gleaned from Robert Faltenstein and Christian Henning's *Rezeption skandinavischer Literatur in Deutschland 1870 bis 1914* (1977) and from Hansson scholarship, many of the articles in Laura Marholm's bibliography were uncovered and collected by the laborious process of tracking down clues in her correspondence and searching through years of journals and newspapers to which she was known to contribute. I have tried to be as thorough as possible, but I suspect that a few items have probably eluded my search. I console myself with the thought that even Marholm lost track of what she had written. Toward the end of her life, she wrote: "Det er meget sandsynligt at der ligger rund i disse Tidningar og Tidskrifter, endnu ganske mange, bortglemte baade af ham og mig, Artikler, Studier, Skizzer, Novelleter og lignende [sic]."¹¹ A few of them lie there even now.

My quest for Marholm material was in part made more difficult by the problem of Marholm's many names. Modern systems of library and archive cataloguing were not designed with women writers in mind. Women writers are often fond of pseudonyms; they may go by their maiden name or by one or, sometimes, several married names. In Marholm's case, libraries have not reached a consensus about which name Marholm should be catalogued under. In the Lund University Library, she is filed under "Mohr," but in Stockholm's Royal Library, she is located under "Hansson." German libraries show a preference for "Marholm." *The National Union Catalogue* in the United States is unaware that Laura Hansson and Leonhard Marholm are the same person. Quite early in my research I learned to supply libraries with all of Marholm's names. Furthermore, since Marholm has been regarded as only a marginal figure in literary and intellectual history, her name does not always appear in general catalogues of manuscript holdings. For this reason, I often discovered treasures by checking under the names of people I guessed had been among Marholm's correspondents. In this way, for example, I found her letters to Maxi-

¹⁰ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau I* (Berlin: Carl Duncker Verlag, 1903), p. ix.

¹¹ Laura Marholm, "Omrids til en Biografi," manuscript in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "It is quite likely that lying around in these newspapers and journals there are still many – forgotten by both him and me – articles, studies, sketches, novellas and the like."

milian Harden. Once again, I have tried to be as thorough as possible in my search for archival material, but it is quite possible that letters from her hand still lie undetected in some corner of the globe. In this work, I have chosen to refer to Laura Marholm-Hansson, geb. Mohr as “Marholm.” When referring to both Laura Marholm and Ola Hansson, I often resort to “the Hanssons.”

Such are the difficulties raised by the seemingly simple questions: “What did she write?” and “What was her name?” Another problematic issue is establishing Marholm’s nationality. One of the reasons for Marholm’s obscurity is no doubt the fact that she cannot be fitted neatly into the regular categories of nationalistic scholarship. Marholm was never very clear on this issue herself and, in fact, succeeded in confusing a number of her contemporaries. The confusion worked to her advantage when she was able to receive higher honoraria in both Sweden and Germany as a native author. Putting the matter of her national allegiance as clearly and succinctly as possible: Marholm was a German-speaking Dano-Russian from Latvia with Norwegian relatives and a Swedish husband. Marholm preferred to think of herself as Russian, although she did not speak a word of the language. Regarding her in terms of the culture by which she was the most influenced and upon which she had the most effect, I tend to place her in the German tradition. Marholm herself, however, would most likely not have approved.

It is especially difficult to define the language, or languages, in which she wrote. Perhaps Oscar Levertin came closest to describing it when he accused the Hanssons of writing in Mesopotamian. Marholm’s native tongue was German and although her father was Danish, little or no Danish was spoken at home. Her acquaintance with the writings of Georg Brandes prompted Marholm to begin learning Danish late in life, and her mastery of the language was never perfect. While living in Copenhagen, Danish began to interfere with her German and characteristically German mistakes pervaded her Danish. Once she married Ola Hansson, her Danish became infiltrated with Swedisms. Swedisms are particularly prevalent in Marholm’s letters to Swedish correspondents. Marholm frequently could not be bothered with adopting a consistent orthography and would happily use both “å” and “aa”, “ä” and “æ”, “ö” and “ø” in the same sentence. When citing from her Scandinavian correspondence and manuscripts, I have chosen not to correct these orthographic inconsistencies or grammatical errors. In most cases, her language is still comprehensible, and the mistakes are interesting in and of themselves. Rather than peppering her quotations with “sic” or other editorial marks, I have chosen to insert one ‘sic’ at the end of Marholm’s Scandinavian quotes, in order to assure the reader that the quote is as it was in the original manuscript. I have not, however, attempted to reproduce Marholm’s various linguistic foibles in my translations of the Scandinavian quotations.

In piecing together Marholm’s biography, I have relied heavily on primary sources, but, often, evaluating the reliability of these sources has been somewhat problematic. Marholm had a penchant for writing autobiography, both fictional and non-fictional. She began her memoirs in the years between 1900 and

1905, the period in which Marholm's psychotic episode escalated to its peak. Obviously, such sources must be treated with a good deal of scepticism. In other cases, Marholm did not make a strong distinction between fiction and biography. For example, the first version of Marholm's essay about Victoria Benedictsson is called a psychological sketch, whereas the second version is given a literary frame and called a novella. Marholm offers a dangerous temptation to her biographer – to mine her fiction for biographical information. When making use of Marholm's memoirs and autobiographical fiction, I have always tried to indicate that I refer to subjective interpretations of actual events. In doing so, I have also made it a policy to confirm that a given event did take place through some outside source. Overall, the guiding force that I used to navigate my way through the hazards of evaluating letters, articles, anecdotes, and memoirs was my best judgment.

I believe that a study of Laura Marholm's life and letters is a useful project on many counts, even if for no other reason than to prevent future scholarship from committing further regrettable factual errors. Marholm was a significant landmark on the intellectual horizon of the *fin de siècle*; in the mid-nineties, Marholm was much more widely read than her now famous contemporaries, Ellen Key and Lou Andreas-Salomé. She was well known, both personally and through her writing, to many of the major literary figures in Scandinavia and Germany during this period. Germany learned of several Scandinavian authors through her mediation. Furthermore, Marholm was a major force in shaping the understanding of the psychology of women during the gestation period of psychoanalysis.

Marholm's story is also a contribution to our expanding understanding of women's history. In our age, which has begun to draw away from demands of sexual equality toward exploring the special qualities of women, Marholm's example underscores the fact that one should be on guard against myths of femininity. To define the feminine is often to confine the feminine. Once ideas about femininity are solidified into a definition, they are immediately restrictive in individual cases and doomed to obsolescence. Any definition of the feminine needs a historical context. The "eternal feminine" is always in flux.

In writing this study, I have been fortunate to receive help and support from a number of individuals. First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor George C. Schoolfield whose advice and encouragement have made this project possible. Further, I would like to thank Professor Ingvar Holm for introducing me to the research facilities at Lund, Professor Ingeborg Glier for her helpful comments, Professor Peter Demetz for directing my attention to various Marholm references, and Professor Jeffrey Sammons for his support as Director of Graduate Studies during my years at Yale.

Special thanks are due to the American-Scandinavian Foundation and the German Academic Exchange Service, whose financial support enabled me to

conduct my research in Sweden and Germany. In addition, thanks go to the Humanistisk-Samhällsvetenskapliga Forskningsrådet for the generous grant which helped to make the publication of this project possible. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to each of the archives which have provided me with source material. Especially, I would like to thank Esbjörn Belfrage and the staff of Lunds Universitetsbibliotek for their friendly assistance. I would also like to thank Dr. Jochen Meyer of the Schiller-Nationalmuseum Deutsches Literaturarchiv and S. Malinkovskaja of the Scientific Library of the Peter Stuchka Latvian State University in Riga for helping me to locate useful research material. Görgen Antonsson has my gratitude for helping me to keep my facts straight about the Hanssons' vagabond existence.

I would like to express a further debt of gratitude to Kathy Saranpa Anstine and, posthumously, to Birgit Baldwin, colleagues beyond compare, for their ready support and willingness to proofread my unwieldy manuscript in its early stages. Professor Jenny Jochens, Professor Harald Næss, and Stefanie Neumann have provided valuable assistance in helping me to double-check Danish, Norwegian, and German citations. Donna Brantly and Scott Mellor deserve thanks for their proofreading help in the late stages. Most of all, I would like to thank my parents, Jim and Donna Brantly, for their unwavering support and affection.

Growing up in Riga: 1854–1885

By 1854, Livonia, or what is now Latvia, had been formally under Russian rule for over 130 years. Nevertheless, most of the land and the political power was still controlled by a minority of German-speaking nobles. Social reform was slow in coming to Latvia, and although serfdom was legally abolished by the Russian Agrarian Law in 1861, vestiges of feudal organization remained current in Latvia for many years after that.¹ Russia's chief interest in Latvia was the capital, Riga, an old Hanseatic seaport and a strategically important gateway to the Baltic Sea. In 1854, Russia, England and France became involved in the Crimean War, and on May 1, Laura Katarina Mohr was born to the sound of gunfire from the British fleet as it blockaded the harbor of Riga.²

Marholm's father, Fredrik Wilhelm Theodor Mohr (August 30, 1820–May 5, 1915), was a sea captain with roots in Denmark. Mohr was a well respected name in Denmark and Norway. In later years, Marholm liked to boast that she was related to Conrad Mohr, German consul in Bergen and friend to Kaiser Wilhelm, as well as August Mohr, chamberlain to the Norwegian king. In actual fact, Marholm shared a common great-grandfather with these two important men, a distinction which she shared with hundreds of other members of the prolific Mohr clan.³

Fredrik Mohr was born in Nykjøbing, Denmark, and travelled as a young man to America, where he stayed for 15½ years. Upon his return to Denmark, he took a first officer's examination and went to sea as a captain. During his travels he

¹ Alfred Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 229.

² At the time, two calendars were in use in Latvia: the Julian Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar, which is the calendar in common use today. Laura Marholm was born on April 19th, according to the Julian Calendar and May 1st according to our current calendar. The Julian Calendar was abandoned in Russia shortly after the "October" (actually November) Revolution in 1917. The fact of this dual calendar will also explain the double dates in references to letters written in Riga and the *St. Petersburger Zeitung*.

³ Anthon Mohr Wiesener, *Slegten Mohr fra Bevern* (Bergen: John Griegs Bogtrykkeri, 1909).

met and married Amalie Roeder (November 13, 1823–October 1897). In 1866, Fredrik Mohr gave up the sea and became a harbor official in Riga.⁴

Amalie Roeder was one of the five children of Andreas Roeder and Dorothea Brun. Amalie was “eine geborene Rigenserin,” whose father had emigrated to Riga from Göttingen.⁵ During Marholm’s childhood, the Roeder side of the family exerted the dominant cultural influence: “Mein Vater in Riga hatte mich nicht näher in den dänisch-norwegischen Familienstammbaum eingeweiht, weil meine Mutter streng ‘auf das Deutsche’ hielt. Und mein Vater, das läßt sich nicht leugnen, stand unter ihrem deutschen Pantoffel.”⁶ The marriage was evidently not a particularly happy union, and Marholm was their only child.

For the first twelve years of Marholm’s life, her father was often at sea, and even when he finally settled down in Riga, he would frequently spend the evenings away from home at the house of his brother who also lived in Riga. In her later autobiographical writings, Marholm did not remember her father kindly. She writes that when he was home he would brim with criticism: “Mama gab zuviel Geld aus und Fratzl sollte aus dem Hause, sich ihr Brod [sic] selbst verdienen. Da nun Mama die Sparsamkeit selbst und Fratzl erst zwölf Jahr alt war, so waren das wirklich ungerechte Forderungen.”⁷ Although this characterization seems exaggerated, it may be somewhat justified. In the few preserved letters to Marholm from her father, a critical tone is clearly detectable and a frequent topic is money: “Vær nu sparsam [sic] min Laura thi neppe er jeg i stand til i længere Tid at kunde sende dig noget af Betydenhed [sic].”⁸ In a family where each of the members had a strong will, Fredrik Mohr’s primary sense of power lay in the fact that he controlled the family finances, which may explain why he was so obsessed with the issue. Fredrik Mohr was not poor; he simply did not like spending money. Ola Hansson once characterized his father-in-law at a family gathering in terms of his voice: “Sie [die Stimme] wußte nicht recht, wie sie sich benehmen sollte; sie verhielt sich abwartend, nicht recht zufrieden, weder mit mir, noch mit sich selbst, noch mit der übrigen Welt, aber auch darin nicht ganz entschieden.”⁹ After the death of Marholm’s mother in 1897, communication became sparse between father and daughter, and in 1911, Fredrik Mohr, through the English Consul in Riga, refused to give Marholm his current address, breaking contact with her completely.¹⁰

⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

⁵ Laura Mohr to Franz Brümmer, 22 April/5 May 1883.

⁶ Laura Marholm, “St. Annaplatz,” *Der Tag*, 13 March 1903.

⁷ Laura Marholm, “Das Amulet,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 25 December 1902. In the series of autobiographical sketches that Marholm published in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, she refers to herself as “Mohrenfratz” or “Fratzl.”

⁸ Fredrik Mohr to Laura Marholm, 10 November 1891. “Be thrifty, my Laura, because I will not be in a position to send you anything of significance for a long time.”

⁹ Ola Hansson, “Der gestohlene Schwiegervater,” *Die Zukunft*, 33 (1900), p. 170.

¹⁰ A. Woodhouse to Laura Marholm, 1 May 1911.

Marholm's relationship with her mother was somewhat more complicated, since in her daily life, Marholm was very much under her mother's influence. The figure of her mother appears often in both Marholm's autobiographical and fictional writing. Amalie was an unhappy woman, who dominated her family through her moodiness: "die Mama regierte ihr kleines Reich nach streng absolutistischen Grundsätzen."¹¹ Later, Marholm understood that her role in the house was to compensate her mother for the inadequacies of her father. Amalie was jealous of Marholm's social contacts and often demanded that her daughter spend long and dreary hours by her side. As Marholm writes of one of the mother figures in her fiction, "'Ich lebe nur für mein Kind,' pflegte Mama gewöhnlich mit gereizter Stimme zu sagen. Und: 'Das ist ein schlechtes Kind, das nicht für seine Mutter lebt!'"¹²

No doubt, Marholm had her own mother in mind when she wrote the following speech for Karla Bührung:

Hat deine Mutter dich nicht abgerichtet, wie meine Mutter mich, zur Dienstbotin ihrer Eigensucht, zum Prügelkind ihrer üblen Launen, zum Affen ihrer Zärtlichkeit? hat sie dich nicht eingesperrt in die heiße, ungelüftete Stube, wenn draußen der Frühling lachte, bei dummen Handarbeiten? Und dir die frische, schöne Luft verbittert durch den Putz, in den sie dich steckte, wenn sie dich ausgehen ließ? hat [sic] sie nicht alle deine jungen Hoffnungen vergiftet mit der Galle ihrer eigenen Lebensenttäuschungen, und deinen guten, frohen, unbewußten Glauben an dich selbst geknickt durch Sticheleien auf deine Häßlichkeit . . .¹³

Marholm was no beauty, and it was generally held by her family that she would never marry. At that time, girls who were not likely to marry were expected to make themselves useful. Marholm became a competent seamstress and spent hours on end darning socks in her mother's company.¹⁴ Marholm writes of herself and a penniless cousin that they belonged to the category of young girls, "von denen man zwar gern entgegennahm, was sie leisten konnten, für die man aber gar nichts that."¹⁵

Marholm's refuge from her dismal environment was the library of her wealthy, childless aunt, Katharina Meijssel, sister to Marholm's mother:

¹¹ Marholm, "Das Amulet."

¹² Laura Marholm, "Die Tochter," *Schweizerische Rundschau*, 6 (1896), p. 57.

¹³ Laura Marholm, *Karla Bührung* (Paris, Leipzig, München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 52. Compare this speech with Marholm's portrayals of her mother in "Die kleine Fanny," *Buch der Toten* (Mainz: Verlag Franz Kirchheim, 1900), and "Im Bann," *Der Weg nach Altötting und andere Novellen* (Mainz: Verlag Franz Kirchheim, 1900).

¹⁴ Apparently, the habit of darning socks never left Marholm. Compare the characterizations of Marholm by Max Dauthendey, *Ein Herz im Lärm der Welt* (München: Albert Langen, 1933), p. 74, and by Frida Strindberg, *Strindberg och hans andra hustru*, vol. 1, trans. Karin Boye (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1933), p. 44. Both mention the fact that Marholm was eternally darning socks.

¹⁵ Marholm, "Die kleine Fanny," p. 78.

Mein Ecksitz war im Schlafzimmer auf Onkels eisernem Geldkasten. Dort sass ich, weltlich weltabgewandt, und verschlang Gutzkow. Die romantische Tante, die in der Leihbibliothek abonniert war, die einzige in der ganzen Familie, die las, hatte einen ästhetischen Instinct für schöne Kleider und beunruhigende Bücher, und so war Gutzkow unter die Philister gerathen. Tantes damalige Lectüre glaubten Mutter und Vater, in diesem Punkt einig, im Interesse meiner sittlichen Entwicklung mir verbieten zu müssen; es war daher immer ein unsicheres und daher doppelt spannendes Vergnügen, Gutzkow zu verschlingen; es hatte nicht soviel zu bedeuten, daß ich ausgescholten werden konnte, aber es bedeutete einen unerträglichen, anwidernden Sonntag, wenn mir das Buch weggenommen wurde. So verschlang ich auf der eisernen und eisigen Geldkiste “Die Ritter vom Geist” und den “Zauberer von Rom”, immer mit einem Ohr hinaushorchend, ob nicht Jemand [sic] auf der Entdeckungsreise nach mir war, hastig und angestrengt concentrirt den Inhalt in mich aufsaugend und so kam es, daß Gutzkow einer meiner stärksten Erinnerungseindrücke wurde.¹⁶

Gutzkow’s influence evidently remained with Marholm for some time to come. In later years, Minna Cauer presented Marholm as the direct heir to Gutzkow’s views on women and “Sinneslust.”¹⁷

Marholm’s parents also considered Goethe’s *Faust* especially dangerous reading, and so they hid the work in an old trunk in the cellar. When she accidentally stumbled across the book, Marholm decided to memorize central portions “um ein für alle Mal im ungestörten Besitz des Wesentlichen zu sein.”¹⁸ For the rest of her life, Marholm identified the “eternal feminine” with the self-sacrifice embodied by Gretchen. In addition to the classics, Goethe and Schiller, other favorite authors from her youth included Paul Heyse and Gottfried Keller.

Marholm was a covert autodidact. Although she attended local schools and even received a teaching certificate, women’s education at the time typically withheld more than it explained. The books Marholm read in secret gave, by comparison, much more than her school lessons. Because of this inadequate instruction, Marholm developed a great mistrust of institutionalized education. She once claimed proudly that she was “ohne Universitätsbildung und ohne Respekt vor ihr.”¹⁹ On another occasion, she wrote, “Ich habe ja selbst eine sorgfältige deutsche Erziehung genossen und ich vergelte es den Schulräumen, in denen ich gesessen, und der Stadt, in der ich aufgewachsen, mit meinem aufrichtigsten Abscheu.”²⁰ Since what she was taught coincided so poorly with what she discovered herself, these experiences developed in Marholm a strong re-

¹⁶ Laura Marholm, “Vom alten ‘Jungen Deutschland,’” *Nord und Süd*, 65 (1893), pp. 200–201.

¹⁷ Minna Cauer, *Die Frau im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Verlag Siegfried Cronbach, 1898), p. 85.

¹⁸ Marholm, “Die kleine Fanny,” p. 65.

¹⁹ Laura Marholm, “Zur Frauenfrage: Die beiden Seiten der Medaille,” *Freie Bühne*, 1 (1890), p. 586.

²⁰ Laura Marholm, “Stimmung auf und außer dem Theater,” *Freie Bühne*, 3 (1892), p. 324.

spect for the powers of individual judgment and no respect at all for prevailing dogma.

As she grew older and a “remainder” on the Riga marriage market, Marholm was allowed more freedom in her reading, and she engaged in detailed studies of Latvian history. Out of her interest in the property reductions imposed on the Latvian nobility by Charles XI grew her first historical drama *Johann Reinhold Patkul*. Marholm took the pseudonym Leonhard Marholm, “da mein Vater seinen Familiennamen nicht an meine jugendlichen Schreibereien riskieren wollte.”²¹ A male pseudonym also brought with it other advantages, since, as Marholm later pointed out to Arne Garborg: “Kvindelig Produktion bliver jo paa mange Steder anset som Kontrabande i Tyskland.”²²

Marholm perhaps best summed up her motives for beginning to write in terms of her alter-ego, Mohrenfratz:

Sie schrieb ja gar nicht aus Eitelkeit, nicht einmal aus Trieb – sie schrieb blos [sic] aus Nothwehr. Denn es war ihr zu eng in dieser Stadt, in diesem Land, unter den Flügeln ihrer Eltern. Sie wollte hinaus, sich ausdehnen, sich umschauen, – leben! Und sie hatte keinen anderen Schlüssel zur Welt da draußen, als ihren lebhaften Beobachtungssinn und ihre Fähigkeit, sich auszurücken.²³

In another context, she explained that she turned to writing since it was easier for her than learning how to cook.²⁴

Marholm’s literary debut was a tremendous local success. The first part of *Johann Reinhold Patkul* was subtitled “Gertrud Lindenstern,” and was approved by the Russian censors for publication, but not for performance. This was perhaps due to the sensitive issue of political rebellion which lies at the center of the play’s action. “Gertrud Lindenstern” is based upon the intrigues surrounding Patkul’s spokespersonship on behalf of the Latvian nobility against the reductions of Charles XI, his sentencing to death, and his escape from Sweden.

As the subtitle indicates, however, the focal point of the play is Gertrud Lindenstern. Gertrud is a figure whom Marholm has found in the historical sources, but she has transformed her into her own image of ideal womanhood.²⁵ Patkul is the impulsive hero and Gertrud is the sensible girl who tempers his rough edges. When Patkul threatens to ruin his own cause by assaulting Räter, Gertrud stops him. When he is determined to rot in prison out of spite for Charles XI, Gertrud

²¹ Marholm, “Die kleine Fanny,” p. 47.

²² Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 18 November 1888. “In many places, feminine works are considered contraband in Germany.”

²³ Laura Marholm, “Die schiefe Nase. Theaternovelle,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 30 January, 3 and 6 February 1901.

²⁴ Marholm, “Die kleine Fanny,” p. 80.

²⁵ As my historical authority on the facts surrounding the life of Patkul, I have consulted: Yella Erdmann, *Der livländische Staatsmann Johann Reinhold von Patkul* (Berlin: Haude & Spensersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970).

convinces him that he can best serve Latvia by escaping and continuing the struggle elsewhere. Patkul appreciates this quality in Gertrud: “Dank, Dank, da Sie sich nicht gescheut, dem Rohen/Den eignen edlen Sinn zu öffnen . . .”²⁶ The relationship between Patkul and Gertrud is an enactment of the age-old idea that woman is meant to bring out the nobler qualities of man. Furthermore, Gertrud is willing to sacrifice life and limb for the man she loves. By agreeing to marry Hastfer so that Patkul can escape from prison, Gertrud places her love’s happiness before her own and puts her own life in jeopardy.

Marholm’s treatment of Gertrud’s character in this first literary attempt becomes especially significant when one takes into account two comments made by Marholm much later in life: “I räntmästaredottern Gertrud Lindenster skildrade jag som tjuguarig flicka min uppfattning om kvinnans självbestämmelse, ingripande i politiken och självupoffring.”²⁷ In the German version of this essay, the reference to “Gertrud Lindenster” reads: “‘Gertrud Lindenster’ – in der ich mich selbst zeichnete . . .”²⁸

With regard to the first comment, at this early stage in her development, Marholm believed that men were the active agents in history and that women should influence events through their men. Gertrud Lindenster embodies the ideal woman: smart, sensible, supportive and willing to sacrifice everything for the one she loves. She lives not for herself, but for the sake of someone else. The Gertrud-type is the fabled woman behind every great man. This is essentially the same view of women that Marholm will put forward 16 years later in *Das Buch der Frauen* and *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, causing an uproar in the women’s movement. This attitude will also help to shed light on some aspects of Marholm’s marriage to Ola Hansson.

To understand the second comment, one might look forward in time to Gabriele Reuter’s excellent novel, *Aus guter Familie*, which describes the upbringing of young women of the bourgeoisie from Marholm’s generation. In her late teens, the protagonist, Agathe Heidling, develops a passion for the darkly attractive persona of Lord Byron and dreams of being able to sacrifice everything for him. This fantasy of a great love breaking into a young girl’s colorless existence and giving her the chance to show the world what she is made of essentially describes the plot of “Gertrud Lindenster.” When Marholm writes that she portrayed herself in the figure of Gertrud Lindenster, she is perhaps admitting the same sort of fantasy that enlivened the existence of Agathe Heidling. Marholm knew that she possessed considerable intellectual gifts and

²⁶ Leonhard Marholm, *Johann Reinhold Patkul*, Theil I: “Gertrud Lindenster” (Riga: Verlag F. Deubner, 1878), p. 38.

²⁷ Laura Marholm, “Kvinnornas valrätt,” *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 31 January 1919. “In the treasurer’s daughter, Gertrud Lindenster, I depicted, as a 20-year-old girl, my understanding of women’s autonomy, intervention in politics and self-sacrifice.”

²⁸ Laura Marholm, “Zum Wahlrecht der Frauen,” manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

strength of character, but she was waiting for a man to enable her to demonstrate these qualities.

“Gertrud Lindenstern” appeared a few weeks before Christmas 1878, and by Christmas it was sold out, “ein bis dahin in der guten Stadt Riga noch nicht dagewesener literarischer Erfolg.”²⁹ This success at the tender age of 24 brought about a change of status for Marholm: “In dem Jahre war das junge unbekannte Mädchen eine locale Berühmtheit geworden.”³⁰

Marholm suggested one reason why she was granted such immediate attention: “Sie wurde einfach in dem literaturlosen Lande, wo der Zufall sie hatte geboren werden lassen, ein Unicum.”³¹ She was particularly celebrated in aristocratic circles and described the phenomenon in a letter to Georg Brandes:

Als mir zum ersten Mal die geistige Armut meiner Umgebung, die Öde eines inhaltlosen Daseins, zugleich mit dem Angstgefühl darin zu Grunde zu gehen, zum Bewußtsein kam, schaffte ich mir Befreiung und – ich glaube wenigstens, es hing so zusammen – schrieb ein baltisches Drama, “Patkul”. Der Stoff war mein Glück. Ich wurde in unsere sog. ästhetischen und ein paar adeligen Kreise gezogen und wie ein seltener Schoßhund herumgezeigt. Mir gefiel das anfangs sehr. Ich merkte nicht gleich, daß man nicht nur *mit* mir Vorstellungen, daß man auch mir welche gab. Man fühlte sich als Stoff, den ich zur Verherrlichung des Vaterlandes behandeln konnte – man zeigte sich, wie man gesehen zu werden wünschte, ganz ideal.³²

The members of the aristocratic circles that Marholm frequented postured for her so that they might be included in her next patriotic drama. However, these aristocratic fans seem not to have noticed the criticism of the German nobility inherent in the tale of Patkul’s betrayal.

Even though she won the flattery of her hometown, she could not win the approval of her parents. Marholm describes their reaction to her sudden success with bitter irony: “Sie bewahrten sich vollkommen rein von dem Laster der Eltern-Eitelkeit. Sie waren nicht [. . .] im geringsten stolz auf ihre Tochter . . .”³³

Riga awaited the completion of the second part of *Johann Reinhold Patkul*, “Patkul’s Tod,” with interest, and Marholm was encouraged to publish excerpts from her work in progress in *Baltische Monatsschrift*.³⁴ This second part of Marholm’s historical drama deals with the intrigues of the Saxon court when Friedrich August, Elector of Saxony, also known as August II, King of Poland, surrendered Patkul to Charles XII as part of their peace agreement.

²⁹ Laura Marholm, “Dreimal,” *Die Zukunft*, 40 (1902), p. 530.

³⁰ Marholm, “Die kleine Fanny,” p. 80.

³¹ Marholm, “Das Amulet.”

³² Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 1/19 June 1885.

³³ Marholm, “Das Amulet.”

³⁴ Leonhard Marholm, “Scenen aus einem Trauerspiel ‘Patkul’s Tod,’” *Baltische Monatsschrift*, 26 (1878/79), pp. 179–196.

For this play, Marholm seems to have used as her sources not only the documents available to her in the Riga library, but also Karl Gutzkow's drama, *Patkul. Ein politisches Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*. Even more so than in "Gertrud Lindenstern," however, Marholm has employed her own imagination and, in the process, reveals a great deal about her personal value system at the time. Although "Patkul's Tod" is supposed to be the tragedy of Patkul, the women in the play repeatedly steal the scene.

Marholm puts two women in Patkul's life: Anna, whose real interest in Patkul lies in his wealth and status in court, and Hedwig, Patkul's sister and the faithful supporter of his interests. The real Anna Einsiedel is a rather colorless figure in the history books, but Marholm has created out of Patkul's betrothed a vain, ambitious and fickle woman. The figure of Patkul's loyal sister Hedwig has no roots in reality whatsoever, but she steps into the role left by the demise of Gertrud. The contrast between the noble Hedwig and the selfish Anna is a central feature of the play.

Anna is not interested in politics, although it is the profession of her future husband. She only becomes interested in politics when her own prosperity is threatened. Anna's first interest is her own comfort and status, and she betrays Patkul because of "Weiberschwäche und Weibereitelkeit."³⁵ Patkul's fickle fiancée cannot endure misfortune or accept responsibility, and so, when her machinations result in a life-or-death crisis for Patkul, Anna flees from the dire situation she has created and distracts herself at a party. Hedwig, on the other hand, follows political developments with interest since what concerns her brother concerns her. Hedwig's first priority is her personal loyalty, and when Patkul is arrested, she enters the camp of Charles XII and begs on her knees for her brother. From Marholm's perspective, the figure of Anna represents the epitome of feminine failings; Hedwig is a tower of feminine strength.

Early in the play, Patkul explains to Anna:

Nicht um Dein Geld, noch um des äußern Scheins
Gebrechlichkeit – um Deines tiefsten Innern
Verborg'nen Werth hab ich erworben, Weib:
Wir selber kennen unsre Seele nicht,
Bis des entscheidungsschweren Augenblicks
Gewaltige Erschütt'rung sie entbindet.
Dann strömt es aus und reißt uns mit sich fort.
Wir wissen nicht, wie wir dazu gekommen,
Wir fühlen nur, daß nichts uns halten kann.
Das ist der Wendepunkt im Menschenleben.³⁶

Money, status, and beauty are but transitory, so the real worth of a person lies in his inner qualities. These qualities come to the fore in times of need. Gertrud

³⁵ Leonhard Marholm, *Johann Reinhold Patkul*, Theil II: "Patkul's Tod" (Riga: Verlag F. Deubner, 1880), p. 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Lindenstern responds to her decisive moment as a heroine. Anna Einsiedel fails. Hedwig remains faithful in adversity. Between the lines, we may detect the sentiments of a woman burning to prove her mettle, but frustrated by the need to wait for the man who might call upon her to do so.

Another theme in “Patkul’s Tod” is the confusion of duty and desire, “Pflicht und Willen.” Patkul is all too ready to annul his political duties for the sake of this private desire. Anna accuses him: “Ha, Pflicht und wieder Pflicht! Der Mantel, den/Du über jede That der Willkür breitest/Und Deine Pflicht umgehst!”³⁷ Yet, Anna’s adherence to duty is not without self-interest either. She preaches to Patkul of his obligations to Friedrich August only because this duty conforms with her desires. The theme of hiding one’s desires under the mantle of duty appears again in Marholm’s novella “Im Dienste zweier Herren.”³⁸ In that lengthy tale, David Hilchen must choose between siding with the political majority, represented by his future father-in-law, or with the forces of liberalism, represented by his childhood friend Martin Giese. David chooses the path that will mean the most for his own personal success and deserts his friend Martin who is eventually executed. From the narrator’s point of view, David has made the wrong choice and ultimately comes to a bad end. In Marholm’s moral universe, it is a crime to adhere to societal norms simply because it is the path of least resistance. Or, correspondingly, an individual such as Patkul may break with societal expectations if his moral conscience demands it of him, but not if his motive is purely self-interest. Such attitudes as these made Marholm highly receptive to the works of Ibsen and Brandes, which she read later.

Though *Johann Reinhold Patkul* is meant to be a political-historical drama, the personal dimensions of the play tend to overwhelm the action. In several passages, Marholm makes it clear that she has done her historical research, but these scenes lack the dramatic vitality of the personal relationships in the play. A number of her characters appear somewhat flat or idealized: Gertrud is too good and Hastfer is too evil. Such flaws can be accounted for by the inexperience of the playwright. Marholm’s public in Riga, however, did not seem to mind these failings. When “Patkul’s Tod” was published in 1880, it was also well received. Shortly thereafter, however, Marholm’s publishing company declared bankruptcy so she was not paid a penny in royalties.³⁹

At about this time, a significant incident took place in Marholm’s life: her first love. Marholm is somewhat coy about divulging the details, but the central features of the episode are worth relating. In her autobiographical novel, *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*, the object of her affections is named Dr. Unterholz, and in a novella entitled “Nur die Stimme,” he bears the name Dr. Brand.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁸ Leonhard Marholm, “Im Dienste zweier Herren,” *Rigascher Almanach für 1882* (Riga: W. F. Häker, 1882).

³⁹ Marholm, “Die schiefe Nase.”

In both cases, he is co-editor of a work entitled *Monumenta Germaniae*. For her intended autobiography, “Mohrenfratz,” Marholm took the novella “Nur die Stimme,” crossed out references to Fräulein Haller and replaced them with Mohrenfratz. From the common details of these narratives, one can piece together an account of what happened.

As a result of her literary successes, Marholm was invited to become a contributor to a local newspaper, *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*. Between the years 1878 and 1886, Marholm’s articles appeared in this paper under the signature “-m.”⁴⁰ At the home of her editor, she made the acquaintance of the man who was to be her first love. He was a scholar and, as a man of learning, was able to appreciate Marholm’s intellectual gifts. The two were instantly attracted to one another. Marholm was convinced that he would have proposed to her if he had had the means. But since this poor scholar was the sole supporter of his mother and sisters, a marriage of inclination was out of the question. When a brother-in-law died leaving him with even more financial responsibilities, he began to avoid Marholm’s company. Marholm experienced this as a bitter disappointment, and, at the same time, an underestimation of her personal qualities: “Sie hätte Muth gehabt, wozu er nicht den Muth hatte, – sich ein Hüttchen zu gründen, wenn es kein Haus werden konnte.”⁴¹

This episode is significant from two perspectives. Firstly, the theme of willingness to sacrifice everything for the beloved is already present in *Johann Reinhold Patkul*, and will repeat itself often both in Marholm’s fiction and in her life. Her experience with this first love gave her fantasies of self-sacrifice a dimension of reality. Secondly, this disappointment reinforced in her mind the injustices of the prevailing marriage system, where money and social status were primary considerations, but talent, character, and, most of all, love were merely of secondary importance.

In 1881, she published in *Zeitung für Stadt und Land* a novella entitled “Verklungne Namen,” about the Baroque poet Johann Christian Günther. A local actor, in all likelihood Otto Vischer, saw dramatic possibilities as well as a good role for himself in her study of Günther and encouraged Marholm to develop the novella into a play.⁴² Flattered by the attention, Marholm complied and wrote *Frau Marianne*.

Frau Marianne is a less ambitious project than *Johann Reinhold Patkul*, and, perhaps for this reason, it succeeds somewhat better. Marholm has followed her

⁴⁰ Hildegard Reinharde, “Laura Marholma-Hanssona,” *Filoloģijas materiāli. Prof. J. Endzelīnam sešdesmitajā dzimšanas dienā veltīts rakstu krājums* (Riga, 1933), p. 207. Regrettably, because of the inaccessibility of *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, I have not been able to obtain or identify any of these articles.

⁴¹ Laura Marholm, “Nur die Stimme,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 13 April 1902.

⁴² Compare Marholm’s account in “Die schiefe Nase” with the information given in: Reiner Bölhoff, *Johann Christian Günther 1695–1975*, Band I (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1980), p. 478.

own artistic inclinations, rather than simply copying old forms. The play is a tragedy, but not in the traditional sense of the word. *Frau Marianne* has four acts, broad insets of humor, some realistic pub scenes, and a hero who is an alcoholic. The plot is based on elements from the biography of Johann Christian Günther, and the central event is his unsuccessful bid to become the Saxon court poet.

Once again, Marholm seems fascinated by the women in the play, as the title seems to admit. Marholm creates a triangle similar to that of Grillparzer's *Sappho*. Günther is loved by two women: Marianne von Breßler, referred to as the Sappho of Silesia, Günther's intellectual equal and moral superior, and the young Leonore, an inexperienced and characterless beauty. Günther's affections turn to Leonore, and, succumbing to her jealousy, Marianne refuses to support Günther at a critical moment, and he is banished from court. Once Günther has lost his prospects for material success, the fickle Leonore deserts him. Marianne repents her jealousy and dedicates herself to serving Günther's genius. She publishes his poetry and locates the author just in time for him to die in her arms.

The subtext of the play is that Günther should have valued Marianne's intellect more highly than Leonore's beauty. Marholm also takes the opportunity to sow some cautious social criticism into the play. Günther has been destroyed by a hierarchical social structure that stifles creativity and enthusiasm. Marholm would imply that the failings of Günther's society are also the faults of her own environment.

Marholm probably came upon this subject matter while doing research for *Johann Reinhold Patkul*. The intrigue of *Frau Marianne* is still attached to the court of August II, although it has been sixteen years since Patkul's execution. Yet, whatever her motives for choosing this material, Marholm found herself in the midst of a trend. In the same year that *Frau Marianne* was published, no less than two other plays were published in German based on the same subject: Ludwig Fulda's *Christian Günther. Ein Trauerspiel in 5 Aufzügen* and Max Grube's *Christian Günther. Schauspiel in fünf Acten*. Each of these three plays treat the material quite differently, though a common denominator seems to be an interest in the clash of poetic genius with restrictive societal norms. The figure of Christian Günther even continued to fascinate authors in subsequent years.⁴³

Of the three dramatizations of Günther's life from 1882, only Marholm's play came to performance. With Otto Vischer in the role of Günther, *Frau Marianne* was performed six times in Riga, but the run was stopped when the theater burned down.⁴⁴ Despite the short run, critics could speak "vom durchschlagenden Erfolge, den das Drama bei seiner Aufführung in Riga erzielt hat."⁴⁵ Vischer

⁴³ For an account of the portrayals of Johann Christian Günther in literature, see Bölhoff, pp. 466–492.

⁴⁴ Marholm, "Zum Wahlrecht der Frauen," manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

⁴⁵ Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, "Frau Marianne," *Baltische Monatsschrift*, 29 (1882), p. 602.

brought *Frau Marianne* to the attention of the famous German actor Ludwig Barnay, who hastened to secure the rights to the play, in order to open the fall season of the Berliner Residenztheater with it. He, of course, would star as Günther. The success of *Frau Marianne* seemed to have been rescued from the ashes of the Riga Stadttheater.

Marholm also sent a copy of the play to the director of the Burgtheater in Vienna, Adolf von Wilbrandt, who declined to accept the play for performance, but kindly expressed an interest in future plays by the author. Marholm's play also came to be read by the former persecuted member of *Das Junge Deutschland* turned influential potentate of Viennese theater, Heinrich Laube. Laube, a retired director of the Burgtheater, praised the piece highly and, in a personal letter, promised her success in Berlin.⁴⁶

Receiving no support from her parents, Marholm used her own savings, consisting of years of collected birthday gifts and her few honoraria, to pay for a trip to Austria and Germany so that she could make the acquaintance of her admirers and be present at the première of her play in Berlin. Her journey brought her through Bremen, Cologne, Frankfurt, Munich and then to Vienna where she was taken under the wing of the aging Laube, who introduced her to members of the Viennese theater world. After her stay in Vienna, she moved on to Berlin to await her première.

Barnay had rechristened *Frau Marianne* to *Ein Verkommener*, a maneuver which focused attention upon the male lead, rather than the female lead. He admonished Marholm not to speak to the press and made her wait ten days before allowing her to attend a rehearsal. When she was finally able to view a rehearsal, what she saw was less than encouraging: "Schon nach den ersten Szenen sah sie, daß noch alles ganz unfertig war und nicht klappte. Nach dem zweiten Akt, in dem der Titelheld auftrat, wußte sie mit Bestimmtheit, daß man das Stück fallen lassen würde."⁴⁷ The première itself confirmed her fears and she left the theatre before the performance was over. The play closed on the third night. The failure of *Ein Verkommener* came as a tremendous blow to Marholm, and, back in her hotel room, she toyed with thoughts of suicide. She dreaded returning to the gossip of Riga and to her family, "wo die Frage: 'Was werden die Leute sagen?' der entscheidende Maßstab für Alles war."⁴⁸ She describes her situation to Georg Brandes: "Die Dinge lagen so, daß ich damit den Boden unter den Füßen verlor und in eine alte Abhängigkeit zurücksinken mußte, wenn ich mich nicht ohne Zaudern zusammennahm."⁴⁹

Marholm did pull herself together after this fiasco and returned to Riga to deliver a series of lectures for women on Baltic history. The series was comprised of no less than 25 lectures. To begin with, attendance was quite high, but

⁴⁶ Marholm, "Die schiefe Nase."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 1/19 June 1885.

toward the end of the lecture series interest began to flag.⁵⁰ As she describes to Brandes, she made a discovery during her lecture preparations: "Ich erkannte, daß die Methode, nach der baltische Geschichte bei uns getrieben wird, aus einem politischen Zweck, nicht aus historischer Kritik hervorging."⁵¹ With this initial questioning of the prevailing authorities, the foundations were laid for Marholm's intellectual revolution.

At some point in 1883, Marholm came across the writings of Henrik Ibsen and Georg Brandes. Marholm's aesthetic views changed drastically; however, the most profound impact was made on her moral universe. Ibsen's social dramas revealed to her that society was not the faultless bastion of morality that it pretended to be, and in fact, an individual could have moral right on his or her side while society was in the wrong. Marholm felt she recognized her own situation in Ibsen's dramas: "Die Menschen und die Verhältnisse in seinen Gesellschaftsdramen, das war ja eben mein Kreis, meine Verhältnisse, meine ganz persönliche Umwelt. Ich sah alles, was mich band und unterdrückte mit einer Deutlichkeit wie nie."⁵²

Ibsen suggested to Marholm the possibility that, in the fashion of Dr. Stockmann in *En folkefiende*, she could flaunt tradition and public opinion and rely on her own judgment of what was right and wrong. The nature of her altered values is expressed in the following comparison between Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Ibsen: "Während Bjørnson das gesellschaftliche Gewissen als Regulativ der Einzelhandlung gelten läßt, statuiert Ibsen zwischen dem sittlich strebenden Individuum und der gesellschaftlichen Moral einen Gegensatz, den man vielleicht nicht ganz unzutreffend mit jenem in glaubensstarken Zeiten zwischen 'Christ' und 'Welt' angenommenen vergleichen könnte."⁵³ All at once, Marholm had support for the belief that the societal norms that regulated her behavior were

⁵⁰ In later years, Marholm blamed the thinning attendance at her lectures on unfriendly agents who frightened away her audience. (See Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt.") The phenomenon of steadily decreasing attendance for such a long lecture series, however, seems neither ominous nor inexplicable.

⁵¹ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 1/19 June 1885.

⁵² Laura Marholm, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* (Berlin: Verlag Carl Duncker, 1896), pp. 13–14. In context, this speech is presented as an account given to Laura Marholm by a gifted woman of her acquaintance. Marholm is, however, obviously citing herself. It is characteristic of Marholm throughout her authorship that she is not able to express intense personal feelings directly. Either she writes about herself in the third person, or she cites herself, but puts the words in a non-existent third party's mouth. Compare, for example, Marholm's account of Paul Heyse's rejection of a book, "dessen litterarischen Wert und dessen Verfasser ich sehr hochstellte, während er mir zugleich sehr nahe stand." [Laura Marholm, "Erinnerungen an Paul Heyse," *Die Kultur*, 1 (1900), p. 358.] Their correspondence reveals that it was Marholm's own *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* that Heyse rejected.

⁵³ Leonhard Marholm, "Vom Rigaschen Stadttheater," *Nordische Rundschau*, 2 (1884), p. 182.

wrong, and furthermore, the individual who follows his own conscience against the prevailing order is comparable to Christ. Throughout her childhood and youth, Marholm had been sensitive to the approval and disapproval of her parents and of Riga society, but she had always chafed in the role of dutiful unmarried daughter of the bourgeoisie. Marholm's reading of Ibsen encouraged her to break with tradition. In many respects, Ibsen's social dramas exerted a liberating influence on Marholm and other women in the 1880's, comparable to the impact that Nietzsche's writings would have on the intellectual world in the 1890's.

Of Brandes' work, Marholm read, in German translation, *Moderne Geister* and *Hauptströmungen der Literatur des XIX Jahrhunderts*. In Brandes, she found liberation from the weight of the intellectual traditions which stifled creativity in Riga. She also found in Brandes an interpreter of Ibsen. On April 22, 1884, Laura Mohr wrote Georg Brandes a fan letter. In this letter, she describes her intellectual revolution:

Ich hatte mich aber schon schwerer [?] freigerungen, seit ich vor einem Jahr halb zufällig über Ibsens vier Hauptdramen gerathend, die mir noch ziemlich barock schienen, mehr und mehr von dieser großartigen Vertiefung des sittlichen Begriffs erfasst ward. Sie haben mich seitdem keinen Tag mehr verlassen, diese befreienden, erhebenden und zugleich so furchtbar peinigenden Forderungen, sie sind um mich bei der Arbeit, sie haben Besitz von mir bei der Erholung, sie machen einem das Leben lebenswerther. Ich sehe in ihnen die Hauptzüge der modernen ethischen Ideen, die die künftigen Geschlechter erziehen werden. Den Ausdruck, der mir mangelte, fand ich in Ihren Hauptströmungen scharf zugespitzt in dem Ausspruch: die wahre Moral ist das radikalste Element, das es giebt. Zugleich aber fand ich, daß wer als Schriftsteller wirklich etwas leisten will, das Anspruch auf Bedeutung und Dauer hat, sich Probleme zum Vorwurf nehmen muß, wie Ibsen sie aufstellt, nicht bloß psychologische, sondern ethisch-soziale.⁵⁴

The four "Hauptdramen" of Ibsen to which Marholm refers are *De unges forbund* (1869), *Samfundets støtter* (1877), *Et dukkehjem* (1879), and *En folkefiende* (1882). Marholm explains further in her letter to Brandes that she sees it as her task to breathe some fresh intellectual air into the stagnant atmosphere of Riga by writing essays and reviews about and inspired by Ibsen's and Brandes' ideas. As an indication of her earnestness, she enclosed a copy of her first substantial literary essay, entitled "Henrik Ibsen. Literarische Skizze."

In her study of the German reception of Ibsen's *Nora* before 1890, Barbara Gentikow describes Marholm's Ibsen-essay as "eine der wenigen verständnisvollen und positiven 'Nora'-Rezensionen aus diesem Zeitraum."⁵⁵ Gentikow considers Marholm's essay remarkable, since at this early stage of Ibsen recep-

⁵⁴ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 10/22 April 1884.

⁵⁵ Barbara Gentikow, *Skandinavien als präkapitalistische Idylle* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1978), p. 120.

tion, Marholm seemed to be the only German critic capable of treating *Nora* as a drama of ideas; other critics could not move beyond a discussion of the psychological improbability of Nora being able to leave her children. Moreover, Gentikow views Marholm's essay as especially significant for Ibsen reception, since Marholm possessed a sufficient knowledge of the current German theater repertoire to treat *Nora* in the context of public taste.

Georg Brandes answered Marholm's fan letter. Pil Dahlerup in her book, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder*, documents the fact that Brandes frequently received letters of admiration from struggling young women writers.⁵⁶ Brandes was looked up to as the father figure for a literary generation, and many women wrote to credit him with their spiritual awakening. Brandes enjoyed such letters and usually answered them quite kindly.

Dahlerup illustrates the phenomenon in detail by following the correspondence between Amalie Müller Skram and Brandes. The patterns which Dahlerup finds in their initial exchange of letters correspond precisely to those in the first letters between Laura Mohr and Brandes:

Amalie Müller spiller i et og alt op til Brandes egen faderfønmelse og rammer i øvrigt på en plet hans syn på kvindekunst som formløs. Desuden rummer brevet jo en god portion smiger ved siden af den utvivlsomme ægte beundring. Og Brandes svarer som en kærlig fader sin søde, men lidt ubehjælpomme datter.⁵⁷

Marholm excelled in the art of flattering Georg Brandes, which, in part, explains her later success in his literary circle in Copenhagen. It is apparent from her letters and her essay that Ibsen was her primary intellectual liberator; Brandes was secondary. She is very careful of Brandes' ego, however, and makes him responsible for her understanding of Ibsen. In her first letter to Brandes, with generous amounts of flattery, she humbly submits her own Ibsen-essay for his approval, after having first praised his superior insights. Brandes' fatherly reply to this homage reads as follows:

Sie sollen sich in Ihrem tapferen Streben nicht entmuthigen lassen. Was bedeutet es wohl, daß ich Ibsen genauer kenne als Sie, es ist ja nur selbstverständlich, daß mein Aufsatz eindringlicher ist als der Ihrige.⁵⁸

At this point in time, Marholm did not seem to mind Brandes' condescension, but instead was flattered that he took the time to answer her letter. Brandes expressed no appreciation for Marholm's relatively progressive approach to

⁵⁶ Pil Dahlerup, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (København: Gyldendal, 1984), pp. 93-104.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97. "In everything, Amalie Müller plays up to Brandes' own paternal feelings and furthermore hits Brandes' view of women's art as formless right on the head. In addition, the letter contains a good portion of flattery alongside undoubtedly genuine admiration. And Brandes, as a loving father, answers his sweet, but slightly awkward daughter."

⁵⁸ Georg Brandes to Laura Mohr, 26 April 1884.

Ibsen. For her part, however, Marholm considered Brandes' reply an affirmation of her new-found goals, and promptly began breaking lances for her new convictions in the conservative arena of Baltic journalism.

One profound effect of Marholm's aesthetic revolution was that she came to view her own previous literary efforts as epigonal romanticism. Perhaps for this reason, Marholm stopped writing fiction for over 10 years, devoting herself instead to translations and criticism.

Marholm's immediate forum for her new views was *Nordische Rundschau*, a Baltic periodical which had asked Marholm to become its theater critic in Riga. Her first review, in 1884, begins with a diatribe against the intellectual isolation and conservatism in her home town: "Es ist ein abgeschlossenes, engumfriedetes Leben, das wir führen, wir Ostseeprovinzialen. Fernab von dem rauschenden Durcheinanderschießen der Dinge sitzen wir still in verlorener Ecke, den Blick mehr nach innen gewandt."⁵⁹ She writes in Brandesian terms of a transitional age of overcoming the old forms and creating new. One can also clearly perceive the undertone of Marholm's own frustration with her circumstances and environment.

This irreverent tone and dramatic change of attitude raised eyebrows in Riga. Marholm had been warmly received by the nobility as long as she was writing patriotic, historical dramas. She retained their support even for *Frau Marianne*, though some objected to her choice of low subject matter: "Wenn er in Zukunft Stoffe wählt wie 'Patkul' und sie behandelt wie 'Frau Marianne', darf er des Siegeszuges über die Bühne sicher sein!"⁶⁰ Delivering lectures on Baltic history was also a sanctionable endeavor. Her new critical attitude, however, was unacceptable.

In this same review, Marholm further alienated politically important circles in Riga by harshly reviewing Ernst von Wildenbruch's *Opfer um Opfer*. Marholm later summed up her objection to the piece with the question: "Ist die Dummheit tragisch?"⁶¹ Rashly, Marholm pulled no punches in assessing Wildenbruch's authorship: "Wildenbruch ist kein Dichter, einen wirklichen poetischen Werth hat keines seiner Werke, das ich kenne, und bis auf 'Harold' und 'Väter und Söhne' kenn ich sie so ziemlich alle; einen wirklichen poetischen Werth etwa in seinen künftigen Schöpfungen zu erreichen, traue ich ihm auch nicht einmal zu."⁶² Wildenbruch, whose father was an illegitimate son of Prince Louis Ferdinand, enjoyed an influential post in the German Foreign Ministry and had powerful connections in Riga. Marholm's opinions about Wildenbruch were not appreciated, and a mild retraction of her views in her second review for *Nor-*

⁵⁹ Leonhard Marholm, "Vom Rigaschen Stadttheater," *Nordische Rundschau*, 1 (1884), p. 310.

⁶⁰ Ungern-Sternberg, p. 606.

⁶¹ Marholm, "Das Amulet."

⁶² Marholm, "Vom Rigaschen Stadttheater," 1 (1884), p. 319.

dische Rundschau did not help much. Marholm was on her way to becoming *persona non grata* in Riga.

Marholm continued in the same vein with an essay entitled “Georg Brandes und die moderne literarische Kritik,” which appeared in the *Rigasche Zeitung*.⁶³ Marholm explained her intentions to Brandes: “Ich schrieb den Aufsatz über Ihre litterarische [sic] Persönlichkeit, Ihre Methode und Ihre Ziele, den ich mit-zusenden mir erlaube. Durch die Anknüpfung an unser geistiges Leben, oder vielmehr den Mangel desselben, suchte ich ihn gleich für unsere heimische Production fruchtbar zu machen . . .”⁶⁴ The novel that she chose to examine with Brandes’ methods was Theodor Pantenius’ *Die von Kelles*. *Die von Kelles* is a realistic historical novel set in Latvia during the 1500’s. The novel graphically portrays the self-indulgence of the nobility, the greedy rivalry of the burghers, the abuse of the farmers, and the inhuman treatment of the “Undeutschen”.⁶⁵ Marholm found in the novel a mirror for the present day.

This time, she provoked the ire of Friedrich Bienemann, then the editor of *Baltische Monatsschrift*, who responded in the pages of his journal. Bienemann takes exception to her charge of intellectual isolationism, and remarks, “Zwischen den Zeilen ist vielleicht der Vorwurf zu lesen, daß er von den heimatischen Interessen sich abgewandt, daß er ihr entfremdet sei.”⁶⁶ In passing, Bienemann points out some factual errors, and then arrives at the controversial part of her essay, namely, her praise of Pantenius’ *Die von Kelles* and her dissatisfaction with the reception given the novel in Latvia. Bienemann defends the Latvian press from the charge that it has ignored the novel, but he does not himself go so far as to endorse Pantenius’ work.

Marholm answered Bienemann’s charges in “Ein Widerhäkchen” in *Baltische Monatsschrift*. Marholm is able to grant Bienemann some of his criticisms, but is generally unrepentant. On the issue of Pantenius’ novel, she claims that *Die von Kelles* should be made “ein Hausbuch der Balten.” She further charges that realism used upon German or Norwegian society is accepted, “auf uns selbst angewendet aber ist uns das zu nackt, unsere Scham und unsere Selbstliebe empören sich dagegen.”⁶⁷ By exploiting the privileges of editorship, Bienemann, however, was able to get the last word. He allows Pantenius’ novel certain literary praise,

⁶³ Leonhard Marholm, “Georg Brandes und die moderne literarische Kritik,” *Rigasche Zeitung*, 1 June 1885.

⁶⁴ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 1/19 June 1885. During the period in which Marholm published most of her articles, there seems to have been little consensus over whether the German word for literature should be spelled “Literatur” or “Litteratur.” Publications which chose the spelling, “Litteratur,” include: *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, *Freie Bühne*, and Leo Berg’s *Der Übermensch in der modernen Litteratur*.

⁶⁵ Theodor Pantenius, *Die von Kelles* (Bielefeld und Leipzig: Verlag Velhagen & Klasing, 1885).

⁶⁶ Friedrich Bienemann, “Ein Häkchen an ‘Georg Brandes etc.’ von L. Marholm,” *Baltische Monatsschrift*, 32 (1885), p. 612.

⁶⁷ Leonhard Marholm, “Ein Widerhäkchen,” *Baltische Monatsschrift*, 32 (1885), p. 794.

however: “So warnen wir doch ausdrücklich, es als Quasi-Handbuch der Zeit- und Sittengeschichte aufzufassen.”⁶⁸

Although Marholm was unrepentant in public, she was somewhat chastened in private. She sent a copy to Brandes on the day the essay appeared, which he thanked her for, but he did not comment on it. When Marholm brings up the issue in her correspondence with Brandes more than a year later, it is to describe Bienemann as follows: “. . . unser ‘großer’ Bienemann, Stadtbibliothekar, Dr. [sic] honoris causae der Berliner Universität, baltischer Historiker und strenger Conservativer, der mich vorigen Winter wegen meines mangelnden Patriotismus in dem schlechten Aufsatz angriff, den ich über Sie geschrieben.”⁶⁹ It may be said to Bienemann’s credit that he did not hold a grudge. In 1888, he moved to Leipzig and took over the editorship of *Unsere Zeit* and *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*; he invited Marholm to contribute to both of these journals, a considerable break for her at the time.

Even before this debate over Pantenius, Marholm had begun to realize that overcoming tradition and intellectual conservatism in her home province was much more difficult than she had imagined. She told Brandes that “Die geistige Atmosphäre, die mich umgiebt, mich bis zum physischen Schmerz einschnürt.”⁷⁰ She can only see one remedy: “Ich möchte nach Kopenhagen.”⁷¹

Brandes’ response to her wish is positive with reservations: “Sie wollen nach Kopenhagen – es kann mir nur lieb sein, daß eine Ausländerin sich um uns kümmert und uns studieren will; insofern werde ich gewiss nicht abrathen. Indessen möchte ich Sie doch gerne vor Täuschungen bewahren.”⁷² He explains that his position in Copenhagen is not as glorious as she might imagine and tells her of the “betrayals” of Drachmann and Gjellerup. He also brings up the practical point that if Marholm wants to attend his lectures, she has to learn Danish.

Despite having a Danish father, Marholm had never learned Danish. In her response to Brandes’ letter, she assures him that she had already begun studying Danish and that she plans to arrive in Copenhagen a few months before his lectures begin, so that she can begin to grow accustomed to spoken Danish. In the fall of 1885, Marholm arrived in Copenhagen.

⁶⁸ Friedrich Bienemann, “Nachwort der Redaction,” *Baltische Monatsschrift*, 32 (1885), p. 795.

⁶⁹ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 6/25 September 1886.

⁷⁰ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 1/19 June 1885.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Georg Brandes to Laura Mohr, 29 June 1885.

Brandes and Copenhagen: 1886–1889

Laura Mohr came to Copenhagen sometime in late October 1885.¹ Under rainy skies, she arrived at Dragør accompanied by a great deal of luggage and a sack full of bedding that her mother had packed for her, “damit ich nicht ‘in fremden Betten schliefe.’”² This paraphernalia caused one customs official to remark: “Fräulein kommt nach Kopenhagen, um zu heiraten.”³ When she arrived at her hotel and inquired about the impending state visit of the Russian Czar, one of the guests drew the conclusion that Marholm was a nihilist out to murder the Czar and that her bedding sack was probably filled with dynamite.⁴

Marholm’s immediate goals were to learn Danish and to meet and study with Georg Brandes. Marholm’s first address in Copenhagen was Leopold’s Hotel, a popular hostel for travelling literati. The chambermaid at Leopold’s was named Ingeborg, and under Victoria Benedictsson’s cross-examination, Ingeborg had this to report about Laura Mohr:

Fröken Mohrs far är någon slags embetsman i tullen. Ingeborg trodde icke att hon var förmögen, efter hon behöfde beräkna så noga för att ej öfverskrida sitt bestämda. [. . .] Hon var så mån om och så ihärdig att lära danska, att hon för öfnings skull kunde sitta qvällarne igenom och prata med Ingeborg.⁵

According to Ingeborg’s opinion, Marholm’s Danish was “ganska bra.”⁶

Although Brandes had made a faint attempt to discourage Marholm from coming to Copenhagen, he nevertheless received her warmly:

¹ In her article, “St. Annaplats,” *Der Tag*, 13 March 1903, Laura Marholm claims that she arrived in October of 1884. Her letters to Georg Brandes, however, show that Marholm has mistaken the year.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Victoria Benedictsson, *Stora boken och Dagboken*, Vol. III, ed. Christina Sjöblad (Lund: LiberFörlag, 1985), p. 81.

⁵ Benedictsson, p. 84. “Miss Mohr’s father is some sort of customs official. Ingeborg did not think she was wealthy, since she needed to calculate carefully, so as not to exceed her allowance. [. . .] She was so eager and persistent about learning Danish, that for practice she could spend entire evenings talking with Ingeborg.”

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81. “rather good.”

Georg Brandes führte mich sofort auf allen Straßen herum und schleppte mich in die Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, wo er mir Ibsens Dramen aushändigen ließ, damit ich aus ihnen “dänisch lernen könne”. Ich habe aber von Ibsen kein “dänisch” gelernt.⁷

Brandes also invited Marholm to attend a dinner party at his home at Skt. Annæ Plads. Present on this occasion were the influential German Social Democrat Georg von Vollmar and his Swedish wife, Julia, the Danish politician Viggo Pingel, the Finnish actress Ida Aalberg, and Alexander Kielland. This was a collection of celebrities the likes of which Marholm had never seen in Riga, and the experience was overwhelming: “[Es ging] mir im Kopfe herum wie ein Mühlrad.”⁸

For Marholm, this was simply the beginning: “Seitdem habe ich viele Abende in dem kleinen Salon am St. Annaplatz gegessen – das Brandessche Haus war wirklich für mich der feste Punkt in Kopenhagen geworden.”⁹ This rapid intimacy with the Brandes circle may have come about for several reasons. For one, Marholm was a gifted conversationalist, and therefore an asset to the Brandes salon. Her ability to speak German was certainly useful on a number of occasions. Most importantly, however, she managed to befriend Gerda Brandes. Brandes’ wife had the reputation of being insanely jealous of her husband’s female acquaintances, and this jealousy was not entirely without cause. Perhaps since Marholm was not a beauty, Mrs. Brandes did not consider her a threat to her marriage. As a consequence, Marholm was one of the few single women in Copenhagen who was an acceptable guest should the sex ratio at a dinner party need to be evened out.

Marholm kept her eyes and ears open during these evenings at the Brandes house. The people she met and things that she learned at such gatherings often appeared later in the feuilleton articles she wrote to support herself. For example, one need only look at the guest list of this initial dinner party. Marholm subsequently wrote articles about both Georg von Vollmar and Alexander Kielland. Kielland also gave Marholm permission to translate some of his short stories. Although she did not write about Viggo Pingel, in four years, he would be the best man at her wedding with Ola Hansson. After their falling out, Brandes accused Marholm of making her reputation by “Spionvisitter hos berømte Mænd.”¹⁰ This characterization is certainly ungenerous, but it is true that Marholm made rich use of the connections that Brandes presented to her on a silver platter.

⁷ Marholm, “St. Annaplatz.”

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Georg Brandes to Helga Johansen, 31 May 1897. Cited in Pil Dahlerup, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (København: Gyldendal, 1984), p. 90. “Espionage visits to the homes of famous men.”

Marholm had not been in Copenhagen very long when scandal struck the house of Brandes. Georg Brandes had been involved with a woman named Bertha Knudtzon, and, one day, Gerda Brandes intercepted one of Bertha's letters to Georg. In a jealous rage, she contacted Bertha Knudtzon's family who insisted that Georg Brandes promise never to see Bertha again. The scandal reached its peak in December 1885, and, shortly thereafter, Georg Brandes left for Poland.¹¹

In Brandes' absence, Gerda Brandes and Marholm became close friends. Marholm claimed that she never sought to become Mrs. Brandes' confidant, but rather, the role was imposed upon her. In the play *Karla Bühnung*, Hildegard, the Gerda figure, admits to this and adds: "Ich muß einen Menschen haben, dem ich mich anvertrauen kann; ich muß schreien können, wenn ich getreten werde. Sonst zünde ich das Haus an, oder ich nehme meine Kinder und gehe ins Wasser –."¹² Gerda Brandes confided in Marholm many of her jealous suspicions about her husband. The bond between them was further strengthened during that winter when Mrs. Brandes' mother died and she had to travel to Hannover. Marholm looked in on the Brandes children every day while Gerda Brandes was away.

On March 7, 1886, Brandes wrote to Marholm from Warsaw. He apologized for having left Copenhagen so soon after her arrival: "De var dog nærmest kommet dertil for min Skyld."¹³ However, the real motive behind Brandes' letter seems to be curiosity as to whether his wife had gotten over the scandal or not: "Jeg hører sjældent fra mit Hjem; De kan maaske sige mig, hvorledes De har fundet Tilstanden der."¹⁴ Brandes felt that Marholm's intimacy with his wife made her a potentially valuable ally. Brandes must have destroyed Marholm's reply, but his second letter from Warsaw in which he responds to Marholm's intelligence report has been preserved. Marholm must have handled her role as intermediary very well, showing sympathy for Gerda Brandes, while at the same time withholding judgment on Brandes' behavior, hence the praise: "Deres Brev var saa smukt og godt, at jeg med største Glæde har læst det om igjen. Deres Væsens Godhed og Kløgt aabenbarer sig deri."¹⁵

Within a few months of her arrival, Marholm was initiated into the private tribulations of the Brandes family. During her years in the Brandes circle, she was often called upon to act as babysitter, marriage counselor and peacekeeper.

¹¹ Benedictsson, pp. 212–213.

¹² Laura Marholm, *Karla Bühnung* (München: A. Langen, 1895), p. 12.

¹³ Georg Brandes to Laura Mohr, 7 March 1886. "You came there essentially for my sake."

¹⁴ Ibid. "I seldom hear from my home; perhaps you can tell me how you have found circumstances there?"

¹⁵ Georg Brandes to Laura Mohr, 18 March 1886. "Your letter was so beautiful and good, that I have read it over again with the greatest pleasure. Your soul's goodness and wisdom reveal themselves there."

Marholm was a good listener, and her apparent fairness encouraged many more confidences over the years.

Perhaps in order to help her with her Danish, Brandes gave Marholm the task of translating his book *Berlin som tysk Rigshovedstad* to German. Marholm published the translated chapters in the feuilleton section of the *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, and the first of these appeared in February of 1886. At about this time, Brandes received an invitation to lecture in St. Petersburg, which he eventually did in April of 1887.¹⁶ In connection with this lecture tour, Marholm tried to arrange for Brandes to lecture in Riga, but these plans fell through.¹⁷

Marholm's collaboration with *St. Petersburger Zeitung* lasted for almost three years. The appearance of the Brandes translations in 1886 was well-timed and sparked a growing interest in Scandinavian issues, which Marholm was prepared to feed. As her network of Scandinavian connections grew, Marholm was able to supply *St. Petersburger Zeitung* with translations of novellas by Arne Garborg, Alvide Prydz, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Jonas Lie, and August Strindberg.¹⁸ *St. Petersburger Zeitung* also became a forum for Marholm's own views on the state of Scandinavian literature. Marholm's contributions to the *St. Petersburger Zeitung* reached a peak in the fall of 1887, when hardly an issue appeared without a Scandinavian article or translation, either written or arranged by "Leonhard Marholm." At the end of December 1887, Marholm is referred to in the pages of *St. Petersburger Zeitung* as "Leonhard Marholm, der unseren Lesern als origineller und selbständiger Kritiker, wie als gediegener Übersetzer skandinavischer Novellen und Romane wohl bekannt ist . . ."¹⁹

Marholm's first stay in Copenhagen ended in the spring of 1886, when she returned to her parents' home in Riga for the summer. Her letters to Brandes indicate that she spent the summer reading and translating. Clearly discernible is an enhanced dissatisfaction with her environment. Her life in Riga was infinitely more restrictive than her life had been in Copenhagen. A further contributing factor to the bleak atmosphere in Riga was the ongoing program of intensive Russification instituted by Alexander III in 1885.

Marholm returned to Copenhagen on October 1, 1886, and moved into a pension at Holmens Kanal 18. During this winter, Georg Brandes became less involved in the affairs of Laura Mohr, even though she was still a frequent visitor in his home. Brandes had other admirers to occupy his time. On October 1, 1886,

¹⁶ Bertil Nolin, *Den gode europén. Studier i Georg Brandes' idéutveckling 1871–1893*. (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965), p. 224.

¹⁷ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 6/25 September 1886.

¹⁸ Arne Garborg, "Eine Großthat," *St. Petersburger Zeitung* (1/2 December 1886); Alvide Prydz, "Das kleine Nest," *SPZ* (4–10 December 1886); Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, "Der Halbe," *SPZ* (5/6 June 1887) and "Gefährliche Freite," *SPZ* (9 June 1887); Jonas Lie, "Jon Sunde," *SPZ* (11/13–15/17–21 March 1887) and "Der Improvisator," *SPZ* (14 October 1887); August Strindberg, "Bosse's Erfahrung. Ein Bild aus dem 15. Jahrhundert," *SPZ* (4–10 December 1887).

¹⁹ "Hervorragende deutsche Journale," *St. Petersburger Zeitung* (10 December 1887).

Georg Brandes and Victoria Benedictsson had met for the first time. Brandes visited Benedictsson often at Leopold's Hotel, and these encounters are faithfully recorded in her journal. At first, Benedictsson thought that she had a rival in Laura Mohr, whose role in the Brandes household seemed to mystify her. Brandes enjoyed describing his female conquests to Benedictsson, and, on more than one occasion, he boasted that Marholm had come to Copenhagen purely for his sake.

Brandes' remarks prompted the following speculation on Benedictsson's part:

Och hur har han burit sig åt emot denna fröken Moor? Hon kom hit ungefär den 1^o November 1885, således för något öfver ett år sedan. Hon bodde här på hotellet till den 1^o Januari 86, således två månader, så flyttade hon, ingen visste hvart. Och hon är kvar ännu, bunden af honom, ännu efter öfver ett års förlopp, – föremål för hans medömksamma löje. På detta samma hotell besökte han henne nästan hvarje qväll, som han nu besöker mig, och på detta samma hotell, der han sökt henne och vunnit henne, sitter han nu för mig – sin nya, fast kanske inte nyaste bekantskap – och gör sig lustig öfver att hon är ful och trofast. Och dock säger Ingeborg att hon icke är ful, men att hon ser äldre ut än sina år (24–25). Han säger att hon har en fullständig kalmuckfysionomi. "Hun översätter nogle Smaating for mig," sade han så der hånkastadt. Till arbete kan kalmuckskan vara god nog.²⁰

In this passage, Benedictsson reads into Marholm's situation her own fears for her relationship with Brandes, including her insecurity about her own looks. There was never any hint of romance between Georg Brandes and Laura Mohr.

²⁰ Benedictsson, Vol. III, pp. 198–199. "And how has he behaved toward this Miss Moor? She came here on approximately November 1, 1885, that is to say a little over a year ago. She lived here in the hotel until the 1st of January 86, or two months, then she moved, no one knew where. And she is still here, bound by him, even after the course of a year, – the object of his passionate ridicule. In this same hotel he visited her almost every evening, as he now visits me, and in this same hotel, where he sought her and won her, he now sits with me – his new, although perhaps not newest acquaintance – and makes fun of the fact that she is ugly and faithful. And yet Ingeborg says that she is not ugly, but that she looks older than her years (24–25). He says that she has a completely Kalmuck physiognomy. 'She is translating some small things for me,' he said in passing. The Kalmuck can work well enough." Though this passage shows that Benedictsson had conducted research into Marholm's past, she had been misinformed on more than one account. Marholm did not leave Copenhagen in January 1886, but was there until sometime after March. At the time of her arrival in Copenhagen, Marholm was 31 years old. The editor of Benedictsson's journal, Christina Sjöblad, found that in *Nordisk familjebok* (1910), Kalmucks are described as follows: "Stort hufvud, bredt ansikte, utstående kindknötar, mörka blixtrande ögon, hvilka sitta långt ifrån hvarandra, bred, platt, något uppstående näsa, med vida näsborrar, stora, utstående öron, tjocka, köttiga läppar samt glest skägg med grofva, svarta hår." [Large head, wide face, prominent cheekbones, dark flashing eyes, which lie far apart from each other, wide, flat, somewhat turned-up nose with broad nostrils, large prominent ears, thick fleshy lips and a sparse beard with coarse, black hair.], p. 405n166.

Marholm's exuberant admiration of Brandes had been somewhat dampened by her rapid introduction to the Brandes family skeletons. Although she continued to admire him as a critic and writer, she had her reservations about him personally. Brandes' remarks about Marholm on Benedictsson's account do not put him in a very flattering light. Marholm's loyalty was simply more fodder for his vanity.

This fall, Marholm had other matters on her mind besides Georg Brandes' behavior. She returned to Copenhagen filled with ambition and a sense of purpose. In mid-October, she wrote her mentor Brandes a letter outlining her plans for the immediate future. She writes that she would like to translate J. P. Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne* and some works by Arne Garborg. Furthermore, she would like to write literary portraits of Scandinavian authors for German periodicals and mentions specifically the possibility of writing about Strindberg for *Neue Freie Presse*.

As to the realization of these plans, her translation of *Niels Lyhne* never came about, and her essay on Strindberg was delayed for a year. However, shortly after announcing her intentions to Brandes, Marholm wrote to Arne Garborg and asked for his permission to translate "Stordaad."²¹ Arne Garborg answered promptly and affirmatively, so that "Eine Großthat" appeared in the *St. Petersburger Zeitung* on December 1, 1886.²² This was the beginning of a rich correspondence between Garborg and Marholm which would last for several years.²³ Marholm also wrote to Theofile Zolling, editor of *Die Gegenwart*, in an effort to interest him in the fruits of her pen. She writes of herself: "Ich lebe jetzt im zweiten Winter in Kopenhagen um die neue skandinavische Litteratur zu studieren, die skandinavischen Sprachen an der Quelle zu lernen, aus ihnen zu übersetzen und mit den skandinavischen Schriftstellern persönlich bekannt zu werden um über sie zu schreiben [sic]."²⁴ Zolling was indeed interested in her works, and Marholm became a frequent contributor to *Die Gegenwart* over the next few years.

In her report to Brandes, Marholm writes further that, in addition to the translation and criticism of Scandinavian literature, she would like to develop something of her very own: "Ich sammle seit einer Weile Eindrücke zu der Entwicklungserwarten [sic] und der Psychologie der modernen Frau."²⁵ She feels

²¹ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 10 November 1886.

²² Marholm's translation of "Stordaad" also appeared later in *Magazin für Litteratur* 59 (1890), pp. 483–487.

²³ Aspects of this correspondence and Marholm's activities as Arne Garborg's translator are discussed in Johannes A. Dale, *Garborg-studier* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1969), pp. 92–93, pp. 96–98. I have also made use of Nor Torp's "En Korrespondanse mellom Arne Garborg og Laura Marholm," M. A. Diss. University of Ohio, Cincinnati, 1959; however, quotations from these letters are taken from the originals in the Lund and Oslo University Libraries.

²⁴ Laura Mohr to Theofile Zolling, 25 November 1886.

²⁵ Laura Mohr to Georg Brandes, 14 October 1886.

that modern authors tend either to depict women as fully awakened erotic beings or in a stage of ignorance devoid of erotic stirrings. But Marholm maintains: "Es giebt aber vieles was unter der Bewusstseinschwelle liegt, es giebt ein specifisch weibliches Seelen- und Vorstellungsleben, es giebt Nuancen, die zwischen dem Anziehen und Abstoßen liegen, Bedingungen die sich unter die alte Ordnung nicht klassificieren lassen."²⁶ This is the first mention of the direction which will dominate Marholm's writing in the 1890's.

Marholm's interest in women's issues was evident even in the historical dramas she wrote in Riga. It was not until the fall of 1886, however, that Marholm encountered the women's movement proper in the persons of Clara Bergsøe and Alvilde Prydz. Bergsøe was the unmarried sister of the Danish author Vilhelm Bergsøe. She was also a close personal friend and biographer of Camilla Collett. In a letter from November 2, 1886, Marholm thanks Bergsøe for the books that she has lent her and expresses an interest in receiving more: "Jeg kjender saa lidt af skandinavisk Kvindeliteratur og det jeg kjender er ofte saa [illegible] og tør, saa det jeg mødte hos Dem slaar mig desto stærkere [sic]."²⁷ Marholm closes with the wish that they can get to know each other better. Bergsøe provided Marholm with books to read; they discussed women's issues together; and Marholm even encountered Camilla Collett herself at Bergsøe's home.²⁸ Alvilde Prydz was a Norwegian author, and, at the time, a frequent visitor to Camilla Collett's salon. She was a steadfast writer of novels about women's issues throughout her life. In Copenhagen, Marholm and Prydz had a good deal of personal contact, and Marholm translated one of her novellas for *St. Petersburger Zeitung*. Although Marholm had some reservations about the women's movement, clear traces of Bergsøe's and Prydz's influence can be detected in Marholm's writing at this time.

In the fall of 1886, the "Great Northern War over Sexual Morality" began to pick up its pace dramatically, although the most heated battles would be fought in the summer of 1887.²⁹ Many of the controversial texts appeared at this time: August Strindberg's *Giftas II* and Stella Kleve's "Pyrrhussegrar" in October; Henrik Pontoppidan's *Mimoser* in November; December saw the appearance of Alexander Kielland's *Tre Par* and Arne Garborg's *Mannfolk*, as well as the appearance and confiscation of Christian Krohg's *Albertine*. The debates

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Laura Mohr to Clara Bergsøe, 2 November 1886. "I am not very familiar with Scandinavian women's literature, and what I am familiar with is often so [illegible] and dry, so that what I found in you struck me all the more intensely."

²⁸ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil I* (Berlin: Duncker, 1903), pp. 3-17. Once she married Ola Hansson, Marholm lost contact with Clara Bergsøe. Over the years, Marholm came to think of Bergsøe as representing the pathetic side of the women's movement, which is why a sketch of Clara Bergsøe functions as the introduction to *Zur Psychologie der Frau*.

²⁹ Elias Bredsdorff, *Den store nordiske krig om seksualmoralen* (København: Gyldendal, 1973).

sparked by these publications provided ample food for thought for anyone interested in the psychology of the sexes.

Marholm's position in these debates changed during the course of the next year and a half, as she became caught in a tangle of conflicting loyalties. Marholm's first utterance on the matter came in the form of a review of Bjørnson's *Det flager i byen og på havnen* in the *St. Petersburger Zeitung* in late October 1886. Bjørnson's *Det flager* was a prose rendition of *En hanske* which spelled out in detail Bjørnson's position in the morality debates and his hopes for the sexes in the future. Bjørnson favored chastity for both sexes until marriage. The arguments in the sexual morality debates were many and varied, but the opposing camps to this Bjørnsonian position might be roughly characterized as 1) the advocates of free love and 2) the preservers of the double morality of the status quo.

By and large, Marholm's review is sympathetic to Bjørnson's position. Marholm explains that up until the present, only men have had the ability to choose between sexual freedom or chastity. Women have never had a choice. However, since both men and women possess "polygamische Neigungen," the same criteria should be applied to both sexes.³⁰ Marholm seems to favor "die Gleichstellung von Mann und Frau unter erhöhten Sittlichkeitsforderungen," since she accepts as a prerequisite the fact that "physische Bedingungen sich der Lebensweise akkomodieren und durch Gewöhnung, Beispiel, Erziehung und Vererbung modifiziert werden können."³¹ Marholm seems most taken by Bjørnson's model for women's education as represented by the school established by fru Rendalen. The most attractive feature of this system is sexual education for women before marriage, so that they are able to make responsible decisions about their own lives.

Marholm made her next pronouncements on the morality debates in a journalistic sketch of Alexander Kielland's authorship. Marholm credits Kielland with the insight, "daß die conventionelle zarte Weiblichkeit ein Parasitenthum sei, das von dem Mark des Mannes lebt."³² In Kielland's *Tre Par* emphasis is placed not so much on a stricter morality as on the equality of expectations for both sexes. Marholm is drawn to the utopia that she sees in Kielland's authorship, a utopia in which woman is "kein Kind mehr, vor dem man gewisse Dinge geheimhalten muß – kein Luxus- und Genußgegenstand, den man sich nur anschaffen kann, wenn man die Mittel dazu hat" and which presents "die Voraussetzung eines weit wirklicheren Füreinanderlebens der Geschlechter in dem freiwilligen Vertrag zweier gleich freier und gleich verantwortlicher Wesen."³³ In the context of discussing Kielland's authorship, Marholm takes the opportunity

³⁰ L. Marholm, "Ein Erziehungsroman von Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson," *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, 23/24 October 1886.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² L. Marholm, "Alexander Kielland," *Die Gegenwart*, 31 (1887), p. 151.

³³ *Ibid.*

to voice positions which she herself has held for some time. For example, the critique of the traditional feminine ideal as parasitic was embodied by the character of Anna Einsiedel in "Patkul's Tod."

Curiously, at the same time that Marholm was writing a positive review of Bjørnson's *Det flager*, she was also translating Arne Garborg's novella "Ungdom," a "moralische Skizze," which she offered to Theofile Zolling for *Die Gegenwart*.³⁴ This is noteworthy since Garborg's "Ungdom" was written in direct protest to the "hanskemoral" preached by Bjørnson in *Det flager*. The main character in "Ungdom" is Anne Malene, about whom it is written, "die Sünde [glitt] von Anne Malene ab, weil sie so ohne Gewissen war."³⁵ As soon as the book came out in 1885, Garborg sent Georg Brandes a copy. Brandes' reviews of "Ungdom," in which he argued that the amorality of Anne Malene was healthy and natural, caused an enormous stir in Copenhagen and upset Bjørnson greatly.³⁶

All of Scandinavia was becoming polarized over these issues, and Marholm found herself torn between Bjørnson on one side, and Garborg and Brandes on the other. At this point in time, Marholm did not perceive Bjørnson and Garborg's positions as unbridgeable. She herself was in favor of "erhöhte Sittlichkeitsforderungen;" however, as the debates grew more heated, Bjørnson grew more and more insistent upon total celibacy for unmarried men and women. The fanaticism with which Bjørnson held to this principle drove many people, among them Marholm, over to the opposition.

In March of 1887, Marholm travelled to Paris where she mingled with the Scandinavian colony and received an audience with Bjørnson himself. As Marholm tells it, when she first arrived at Bjørnson's apartments, he was still working, so she chatted with Mrs. Bjørnson until the great man appeared. Bjørnson invited Marholm to accompany him on his daily walk through the Bois de Boulogne. Bjørnson began to talk about morality and became fervently involved in his subject: "Er hatte sich allmählig [sic] in Hitze geredet, seine Stimme bebte, seine Augen funkelten hinter Thränen, die Vorübergehenden fingen an stehen zu bleiben . . ."³⁷ Bjørnson's lecture reached a crescendo with the statement: "Und die Zeit wird kommen, wo das die natürliche Form der Beziehungen zwischen edlen Männern und Frauen sein wird, daß sie nichts Anderes wollen, als

³⁴ Laura Mohr to Theofile Zolling, 25 November 1886.

³⁵ Arne Garborg, "Jugend," trans. by Leonhard Marholm, *Die Gegenwart* 31 (1887), p. 302.

³⁶ The reception of Garborg's "Ungdom" at the time of its appearance is documented in Bredsdorff, pp. 100-117.

³⁷ Laura Marholm, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* (Berlin: Carl Duncker, 1896), p. 140. An earlier version of this essay about Bjørnson appeared as "Björnstjerne Bjørnson," *Nord und Süd*, 63 (1892), pp. 307-332. The 1896 edition of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* states that this meeting took place in 1886. This is evidently a misprint since the date is given correctly as 1887 in the *Nord und Süd* essay.

eine geistige Vereinigung.”³⁸ It was at this point that Marholm began to realize the extremism of Bjørnson’s position: “Ich schwieg betroffen. Diese Lehre gefiel mir nicht . . .”³⁹ When they returned to Bjørnson’s apartment, Bjørnson gave Marholm a German translation of *En hanske* and sent her on her way. Bjørnson and Marholm met each other several more times during her stay in Paris, but they never had another long talk: “Ich war doch nicht der rechte Resonanzboden für ihn.”⁴⁰

However, Marholm did meet a sympathetic spirit in the person of Jonas Lie. Marholm wrote about her impression of the Lie household to Clara Bergsøe: “Hos Lie blev jeg saa inderlig venlig modtaget og Forholdet blev rigtig varm til sidst. Jeg takker ham mange Indtryk og Paavirkninger, hans hele Væsen er Meddeling [Meddelelse?]. Hans ungdommelige Ildfuldhed og Fruens rolige fine Indsigt lukkede mig et Stykke Verden op [sic.]”⁴¹ These positive feelings were evidently mutual. Later that summer, Lie wrote to Marholm that he feels:

. . . en stærk Trang til at tage Dem i Haanden og takke Dem nu – for meget! og sige Dem, hvor høj Pris, vi sætter paa Deres Venskab. Det er, som De siger, vi fik for lidt af hinanden, det vil sige, jeg tror, vi kunde underholdt os paa den Vis – en Dag De og en Dag jeg, – ganske længe uden at komme til den slemme Ting – Gjentakelsen.⁴²

Jonas Lie took a warm, paternal interest in Marholm’s career over the next couple of years and assisted her with introductions and advice. Of all Marholm’s

³⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 144. It ought to be mentioned in this context that Bjørnson denied this conversation ever took place. When *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* appeared in 1895, Bjørnson was so enraged by Marholm’s portrayal of him that he wrote an angry letter to the editors of *Neue Freie Presse*, who had recently run a positive review of the book. In this letter, he insists “Eine Unterredung, wie die, welche Frau Marholm behauptet, mit mir im Bois du Boulogne gehabt zu haben, hat nie stattgefunden.” [*Neue Freie Presse*, 14 February 1895]. However, he also claims that he has never been accused of fanaticism and denies any connection with the Scandinavian women’s movement, and both of these objections are not, strictly speaking, true. I am willing to believe that Marholm has embellished upon the episode and that she has perhaps reedited their conversation to suit her purposes, but I do not believe that she has completely fabricated this encounter.

⁴¹ Laura Mohr to Clara Bergsøe, 27 July 1887. “At Lie’s I was received in such a heartfelt friendly manner and our relationship became quite warm toward the end. I have many impressions and influences to thank him for, his entire being is [communication?]. His youthful fieriness and his wife’s calm, fine insights opened up a piece of the world for me.”

⁴² Jonas Lie to Laura Mohr, 24 August 1887. “. . . a strong urge to take you by the hand and thank you now – for so much! and to tell you what a high value we set upon your friendship. It is, as you say, that we got too little of each other, that is to say, I believe, we could have entertained ourselves in this way – one day you and one day me – for rather a long time without coming to that dreadful thing – repetition.”

letters that have been preserved, her letters to Jonas Lie are the most candid and provide valuable insights into her true feelings about her life in Copenhagen.

Jonas Lie's house was a collecting point for most of the Scandinavian colony in Paris. There Marholm was able to meet Walther Runeberg, Kitty Kielland, Harriet Backer and, at last, Victoria Benedictsson. Lie introduced Marholm and Benedictsson at a party, and some awkward moments ensued: "Lose Sätze glitten hin und her, wie auf Rekognoszirung; wir hatten beide von einander gehört, und wir suchten beide hinter einander zu kommen. [. . .] Wir waren beide von den gemeinsamen Bekannten vor einander 'beurteilt' worden."⁴³ Benedictsson's image of Marholm had been distorted by her own suspicions and Georg Brandes' ridicule. Marholm's impressions of Benedictsson had been filtered through the jealousy of Gerda Brandes.

Perhaps out of curiosity and a shared sense of isolation in their surroundings, Marholm and Benedictsson saw each other quite often while they were in Paris. Before leaving the party at Lie's, Benedictsson gave Marholm her address and shortly thereafter, Marholm looked her up. Benedictsson confided in Marholm her hopes and fears for *Fru Marianne*, and how much she hoped to win the approval of Georg Brandes with her novel: "Ich bemerkte, wie er von dem Augenblicke, da er genannt worden, der Dritte in der Stube war."⁴⁴ Indirectly, Benedictsson tried to make Marholm understand her relationship to Brandes – that she longed desperately to affect and impress him, but, when he had propositioned her, she had refused.⁴⁵

In Marholm's account of her visits with Victoria Benedictsson, Benedictsson is the one who does all the confiding. Judging from Benedictsson's notes, however, Marholm did a good deal of talking herself. Marholm became Benedictsson's chief source of information about Gerda Brandes and the Brandes family history.⁴⁶ The occasions for these confidences were many. Benedictsson and Marholm saw some of the sights of Paris together. For example, Benedictsson notes in her almanac for May 6, "På morgonen innan jag var klädd kom fröken Mohr. Om jag blef glad! Ifrigt prat samt gemensam frukost i mitt lilla råttbo. Sedan träffades vi på Louvren." Again on May 24, "Långt morgonsnack med fröken Mohr på hennes rum."⁴⁷ Once the two of them returned to Copenhagen,

⁴³ Laura Marholm, "Eine von ihnen. Psychologische Skizze," *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 61 (1892), p. 466. A different version of this sketch appears as "Das Ungesprochene" in *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* (München: Albert Langen, 1895).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

⁴⁵ Compare Marholm's assessment of Benedictsson's relationship with Brandes with that of Fredrik Böök's in *Victoria Benedictsson och Georg Brandes* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1949). They correspond in many respects. It is true that when Benedictsson travelled to Paris, she was not yet Brandes' lover and had turned down his proposition.

⁴⁶ See Benedictsson, Vol. III, pp. 380–383.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 412n248. "This morning before I was dressed Miss Mohr came. Was I happy! Eager talk together with breakfast in my little rat's nest. Later we met at the Louvre." "Long morning chat with Miss Mohr in her room."

however, they each returned to their respective camps and did not associate as often. In response to an inquiry from Lie, Marholm explained: “Fru Benediktson har jeg ikke mødt. Vi sees nu og da paa Foredragene, men der er ikke nogen gensidig Tiltrækning imellem os, synes det [sic].”⁴⁸

Marholm’s trip to Paris turned out to be quite lucrative for her. Bjørnson recommended Marholm’s articles to Karl Bleibtreu, the editor of *Die Gesellschaft* and *Das Magazin für Litteratur*: “Fräulein Laura Mohr aus Riga kennt die Norwegische literatur sehr wohl. Sie ist garstig genug um sein lebens-zweck ungestört nachstreben zu können, u. klug genug um seine arbeit bescheiden anzusehen! [sic]”⁴⁹ Moreover both Bjørnson and Lie gave her permission to translate some of their novellas for the *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, and Marholm arranged for the publication in *St. Petersburger Zeitung* of Mary Ottesen’s translation of Lie’s *Kommandørens Døtre* before it appeared in the bookstores. She also wrote articles about Bjørnson and Lie in which she takes the opportunity to make further observations about the status of the sexes. In “Nowegische Dichter in Paris,” Marholm writes that she was particularly impressed by the marriages of both Bjørnson and Lie: “Lie’s Produktion ist ein inniges Zusammenarbeiten mit seiner Frau, ein getheilte Gedanke, Bjørnson’s Gattin ist sein Sekretär und Rechnungsführer – beide leben sie die reformatorischen Gedanken ihrer Werke.”⁵⁰ In these relationships, Marholm has seen her own ideal for cooperation between the sexes, which has not changed substantially since her portrayals of Gertrud Lindenster and Patkul’s sister.

In this same article, Marholm does not take direct issue with Bjørnson’s strict principles, but she gives her own definition of morality as follows: “Moral ist keine Askese, Moral ist die gesunde Entwicklung [sic] aller Kräfte auf der natürlichen Basis der menschlichen Solidarität. Was weder mir noch Dir, noch einem Dritten schadet, das hat ein Recht zu sein.”⁵¹ Bjørnson would hardly agree with this viewpoint. The two, however, might have been able to agree on this pronouncement:

Was fort soll, ist die gesellschaftliche Heuchelei, die das Mädchen zur tiefsten Unwissenheit, den jungen Mann zu eingeräumten Genüssen erzieht, die den Trieb für die Hälfte der Menschen wegleugnet, für die andere Hälfte nach Möglichkeit aufstacheln läßt. Was weg soll, ja, das ist der mosaische Begriff, daß für den Mann Alles da ist und daß das Weib für den Mann da ist. Mann und Weib sind keine, nicht mit einander zu vergleichenden [sic] Gegensätze, sie sind Menschen mit ähnlichen Anlagen und Fähigkeiten und unähnlicher Entwicklung [sic]. Das ist Alles.⁵²

⁴⁸ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 25 February 1888, “I have not met Mrs. Benediktson. We see each other now and then at the lectures, but there is no common attraction between the two of us, it appears.”

⁴⁹ Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson to Karl Bleibtreu, 11 June 1887.

⁵⁰ L. Marholm, “Norwegische Dichter in Paris,” *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, 7/8 May 1887.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

This final statement, that men and women are only differentiated by upbringing, is a key assumption. Later, Marholm's readings in psychophysiology will cause her to change her mind about this point. The revision of this fundamental principle will in turn result in major changes in her writing about the sexes.

On her way back from Paris, Laura Marholm stopped in Berlin where she met Theofile Zolling and made other important contacts. Marholm was beginning to feel the wind under her wings, and she boasted to Clara Bergsøe, that now she could "hviske i stedet for at raabe for at blive trykt."⁵³ Yet at the same time that professional matters were going splendidly, Marholm felt discontent with her private surroundings.

After Berlin, Marholm returned to Riga and wrote a long letter to Clara Bergsøe in which she confided her thoughts about her life at home:

De har nok Ret, ikke at vi har Retten til at arbejde, men at vi har Retten, det anerkjendte reale Ret at leve og at leve os ud, deri ligger Kvindespørgsmaalet. Gud ved om det nogensinde vil blive anerkjendt. Det er simpelthen et Magtspørgsmaal. Det er nyttigt og fordelagtigt for Mændene at Kvinderne træder i fuld Brug af alle sine Evner, derimellem Evnen at bestemme, at raade over sig selv. Jeg kommer mere at tænke over det her, hvor Formerne, især i de dannede Kredse, ere saa conventionelle at endogsaa en Spasergang i Skoven med en ung Mand ville være yderst betænkelig, ja han vilde ikke engang vove at udsætte en Dame til saadan en fordægtig Situation. I Grunden beklager jeg det, at være vendt tilbage. Det er tabt Tid – jeg føler min egen Kedsommelighed, jeg gider ikke tænke, ikke arbejde, jeg leger de selskabelige Lege, er altid med naar det gælder at løbe, springe, tage fat; [. . .] Opholdet her er som det sidste Blik i det, man har forladt. Over Menneskene her ligger en dyb Lethargie, i Kvindene er en urolig Længsel ud af de givne Forhold, de reflecterer og snakker derom indbyrdes, ikke med Mændene. De sidder meget veltilpas sammen, spiller Kort, siger ingenting, ere vittige, naar de aarker det, og tænker paa ingenting, end Deres Levebrød. Hvad ikke hører til Faget, bliver skubbet tilside: det kommer os ikke ved. Paa mig ser de med en Blanding af Velvillie og Mistillid. Jeg er dem altfor demokratisk, men jeg kan løbe omkap med dem. Og saa løber vi omkap om Aftenen og spiser vor Middagsmad i Taushed [sic].⁵⁴

⁵³ Laura Mohr to Clara Bergsøe, 27 July 1887. "whisper instead of scream in order to be published."

⁵⁴ Ibid. "You are probably right, not that we have the right to work, but that we have the right, the acknowledged genuine right to live and to live out our potential, therein lies the woman question. God knows if it will ever be acknowledged. It is simply a question of power. It is useful and advantageous for men that women assume full use of all their abilities, including the ability to decide, to have authority over themselves. I have come to think about it more here, where the forms, especially in the educated circles, are so conventional that even a walk in the forest with a young man would be extremely suspect, yes he would not even dare to subject a lady to such a suspicious situation. Basically, I am sorry to be back. It is lost time – I feel my own boredom, I don't feel like thinking or working, I play the social games, am always there when it is a matter of running, jumping, playing tag [. . .] My stay here is like the last glance at what one has left. A deep lethargy lies over the people here, in the women there is an

Marholm's experiences abroad had made her more of a misfit in Riga than she had been when she left. Although Riga was her home, Marholm realized that she could never live there happily. Yet even her return to Copenhagen in September 1887 did not dispatch her melancholy; it only served to enhance her feeling of rootlessness. She wrote to Jonas Lie shortly after her arrival:

Idag har jeg begyndt at arbeide med svagt Hjerte, og spredte Tanker. Jeg bor i en ny Pension imellem fremmede Folk og føler mig saa ensom. I et Aars løb er jeg flyttet fire Ganger, fra Hjemmet til Kjøbenhavn, saa til Paris, saa til Riga, ud paa Landet, ind paa, og hertil i den gamle, saa, da den var optaget i den nye Pension, overalt, hvor jeg slaa Rodder maatte jeg bort. Jeg har nok kjære Venner her, men jeg er ene i mit Værelse – og saa er min Moders Længsel omkring mig, som en Stemme, der raaber, Undertrykkelserne og Lidelserne i mit Fædreland har knyttet mig nærmere til Menneskenene der, meget kalder mig tilbage, Hjemmets Varme, og Forældernes Ønske – men jeg er lamslaet i samme Øieblik, jeg lever der – jeg kan ingenting, og bliver til ingenting, alt er stængt for mig, og her sidder jeg med Tankerne matte til alt, hvad er mig fjern og kan ingenting bestille [sic].⁵⁵

Marholm quickly pulled out of this paralyzing depression, and, by October, she was engaged in several new projects. For Marholm, work was always the best therapy.

Sometime between September 28 and October 1, Marholm met Henrik Ibsen. Marholm had heard that Ibsen would be in Copenhagen and had written to Jonas Lie to ask for an introduction. Of course, the writings of Ibsen had once had a major effect upon Marholm and had helped her to break away from her life in Riga. She must have had high expectations for the meeting, but was disappointed. Marholm described her encounter with Ibsen to Jonas Lie as follows:

uneasy longing out of the given circumstances, they reflect and talk about it among themselves, not with the men. They sit very contentedly together, play cards, say nothing, are witty when they can manage it, and think about nothing but their work. What does not relate to the subject, is shoved aside: it has nothing to do with us. They look upon me with a mixture of goodwill and distrust. I am too democratic for them, but I can run the race with them. And so we run the race with each other in the evenings and eat our dinner in silence.”

⁵⁵ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 17 September 1887. “Today I have begun to work with a faint heart and scattered thoughts. I live in a new pension among strange people and feel so alone. In the course of a year, I have moved four times, from home to Copenhagen, then to Paris, then to Riga, out to the country, back in again and here to the old haunts, so, because it was full in the new pension, everyplace I put down roots I must leave. Of course I have dear friends here, but I am alone in my room – and my mother's longing surrounds me like a voice calling. The oppression and suffering in my homeland have bound me closer to the people there, much calls me back, my home's warmth, and my parents' wishes – but I am paralyzed in the moment I live there – I cannot do anything, and I am not getting anywhere, everything is closed for me, and here I sit with thoughts tired of everything distant and can do nothing.”

Tusind Tak for det levende Billede, De giver mig of Forfattergløden, og for de varme Ord, De har skreven til Ibsen. Det hjalp til at jeg fik en lunken Modtagelse, som var ellers mere end jeg forhaabede. Ibsen var nok saa snild paa sin Vis, men den gamle Ræv satte sig med Ryggen til Lyset, saa at jeg i min Hædersplads paa Sophaen, med al de visne Buketter foran mig, ikke fik see noget, uden en sort Plet med stridig graa Haar omkring. Det virkede meget uheldig paa min Taleevne, thi mine Øine kunde ikke lade være at fare om paa den sorte Pletten for muligen at opdage en Spor af et Ansigt derin. Men Pletten blev, som den var, uigjennemtrængelig sort og taus, og jeg snakkede løst med inderlig Gru at alt dette, jeg sagde og dens forlorne Flothed. Først da vi stod med Døren paa Klem mellem os, blev Sagen hyggelig, men da var den slut [sic.]⁵⁶

Marholm's enthusiasm for Ibsen had already begun to wane, and this meeting did nothing to revitalize her interest.

In her letter to Clara Bergsøe, Marholm claimed that she was "too democratic" for her circle in Riga. After Victoria Benedictsson's first meeting with Marholm, she wrote to Georg Brandes: "Häromdagen, på en middag hos Lies, träffade jag sammen med fröken Mohr, som tycks drifva sina socialiststudier med en feberaktig iver."⁵⁷ It is useful to note what may be meant by "socialism" in this context. Marholm later described Arne Garborg's position in the morality debates as "socialist," since he was interested in reorganizing the economic structures of society that prevented men and women from obtaining an equal footing with each other. These issues, combined with a Grundtvigian interest in the grass roots of society, comprised Marholm's variety of socialism.

Marholm's "socialist" interests and her concern with systems of education led her to study the folk high schools of Denmark in the fall of 1887. She had discussed her intentions with Jonas Lie in Paris and, armed with an introduction from Lie, she contacted Ludvig Schröder, the director of Askov High School, about a study visit.⁵⁸ Her stay at Askov resulted in an article, "Volkshochschulen

⁵⁶ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 5 October 1887. "A thousand thanks for the living picture you gave me of an author's inspiration, and for the warm words you wrote to Ibsen. They helped to procure for me a lukewarm reception, which was otherwise more than I had hoped. Ibsen was certainly quite nice in his way, but the old fox sat with his back to the light, so that I, in my seat of honor on the sofa with all the wilted bouquets before me, could not see anything but a dark spot with wild gray hair surrounding it. That had a detrimental effect upon my powers of speech, since my eyes could not stop searching the black spot in order possibly to discover a trace of a face there. But the spot remained as it was, impenetrably black and silent and I chattered at random with inner horror at everything I said and its false glory. Only when we stood with the door ajar between us did the thing become pleasant, but then it was over."

⁵⁷ Victoria Benedictsson to Georg Brandes, 7 May 1887. Printed in Georg and Edvard Brandes, *Brevväxling med svenska och finska författare och vetenskapsmän*, vol. 2 (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1939). "The other day, at a dinner at the Lies, I met Miss Mohr, who seems to be pursuing her socialist studies with feverish zeal."

⁵⁸ Jonas Lie to Laura Mohr, 24 August 1887; Laura Mohr to Ludvig Schröder, October 1887.

in Dänemark,” which appeared in the very first issue of Friedrich Bienemann’s *Unsere Zeit*. Marholm describes the purpose of these high schools as follows: “Wenn eine Demokratie sich emporarbeitet, nach der Herrschaft strebt und Aussicht hat, sie zu erringen, wie es gegenwärtig in Dänemark der Fall ist, dann ist ihr erstes Augenmerk darauf gerichtet, die Bildung zu demokratisieren, d. h. das allgemeine Bildungsniveau so gleichmäßig wie möglich zu machen.”⁵⁹ Marholm considered equal education to be a key prerequisite for the equality of the sexes, and she expanded this principle to include equality between social classes as well. To Marholm, it was very important that Askov High School, in addition to being Denmark’s largest educational institution for “Bauern,” was also its first coeducational school of higher learning.

As Ingvar Holm has pointed out, this article received a great deal of attention both in Denmark and Germany.⁶⁰ As a result of the article, *Nationalzeitung* in Berlin recommended to the government that they send observers to Denmark, so that the high schools there might be used as models for Prussia’s own school system. Marholm wrote to Jonas Lie, “Det var jo morsom for mig at læse mig omtalt som en Skoleauktoritet . . . [sic]”⁶¹ The mouthpiece for the folk high school movement in Denmark, *Tidens Strøm*, was grateful for the publicity that Marholm’s article brought them, but registered a dissatisfaction with the tone of the article: “Det er ikke vanskeligt at mærke, at Forf. ser ned paa Bønderne.”⁶² Indeed, despite Marholm’s sincere interest in democratizing education, she evidently found it difficult to escape some of the prejudices from her upbringing in the privileged class of Riga. This article in *Tidens Strøm*, however, brought Marholm into contact with its editor, Morten Pontoppidan, brother of Henrik Pontoppidan and director of Hjørlunde Høiskole. They became good friends, and Marholm later lived at Hjørlunde Høiskole for a while in June of 1888.

During all this time, the morality debates continued to rage. In the spring, various members of the Danske Kvindesamfund had endorsed Bjørnson’s standpoint on morality. In July 1887, under a pseudonym, Georg Brandes wrote a sarcastic and vicious rebuttal to the opinions of these women. This was the beginning of what Elias Bredsdorff has called “The Three-Month War.”⁶³ The arguments and counterarguments printed in *Morgonbladet* and *Politiken* grew quite heated and on occasion stooped to personal insult. Marholm describes this

⁵⁹ Leonhard Marholm, “Volkshochschulen in Dänemark,” *Unsere Zeit*, Bd. I (1888), p. 16.

⁶⁰ Ingvar Holm, *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttitalsromantik* (Malmö: Gleerups, 1957), p. 287.

⁶¹ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 25 February 1888. “It was amusing to me to see myself referred to as a school authority.”

⁶² ***, “En tydsk Forfatter om danske Bønder og Højskoler,” *Tidens Strøm. Ugeblad for Land og By*, 4, no. 18 (3 February 1888), p. 138. “It is not difficult to tell that the author looks down upon the farmers.”

⁶³ Bredsdorff, pp. 269–323.

episode as a newspaper feud between Bjørnson and Brandes “in der die beiden berühmten Männer sich ihre Ansichten über ihren verschiedenen Sittlichkeitsbegriff und ihre gegenseitige persönliche Meinung von einander mit großer Offenheit gesagt hatten.”⁶⁴ The result of these squabbles was a definitive break between Bjørnson on the one hand and both Brandes and Lie on the other.

Politically, Marholm’s position was quite difficult, since she had friends on both sides of the battlefield. Clara Bergsøe and Alvilde Prydz stood behind Bjørnson’s position, and, shortly after Marholm’s visit to Askov Høiskole, Bjørnson began his famous lecture tour there. Both Ludvig Schrøder and Morten Pontoppidan were good friends of Bjørnson, thus providing Marholm with yet another conflict of interest. On the other hand, Marholm’s personal sympathies lay with Lie, whom she kept informed about the latest turns of events in Copenhagen. Fortunately, Marholm’s friendship with Lie did not conflict with her relationship with Brandes. Marholm’s place in the Brandes salon was still very important to her professionally, but personally, she had doubts about him which she had to conceal. In addition, Marholm was a supporter of both Arne Garborg and Kitty Kielland, who also became involved in the anti-Bjørnson side of the debates. No doubt this sort of tension caused Marholm to write to Lie: “Det er ingen Glæde mere at leve i Danmark. Der har bredt sig en grænseløs Sløvhed over Alt – man gider ikke. Ikke i Politik, ikke i Litteratur, ikke i sit eget Liv. Det ligger over Folk, som Trykket, der gaaer forud en Tordenveir. Jeg finder Forskellen bare imellem ifjor og iaar er stor – men der er ogsaa noget indeni mig, som har mistet Elasticitæten [sic].”⁶⁵ It was becoming more and more difficult not to take sides, but taking sides might possibly prove disastrous for Marholm personally.

November was an especially busy month for the morality discussions. On November 17, Marholm attended Bjørnson’s lecture “Engifte og Mangesgifte” in Copenhagen. On the same day in Christiania, Gustav af Geijerstam gave a lecture against Bjørnson’s position. The ensuing discussion awakened more interest than Geijerstam’s lecture. Dr. Oskar Nilssen, a Norwegian gynecologist, made the pronouncement that “en af de væsentligste grunde til misèren på seksualmoralens område var, at de nordiske kvinder ikke havde nogen kønsdrift.”⁶⁶ In order to discuss further the questions raised at this meeting, Arne Garborg called for another meeting to take place on November 24. Although, for the

⁶⁴ *** [Laura Marholm], “Bjørnson als Sittlichkeitsapostel,” *Die Gegenwart*, 33 (1888), p. 101.

⁶⁵ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 6 December 1887. “It is no longer a pleasure to live in Denmark. A boundless lethargy has spread itself over everything – one attempts nothing. Not in politics, not in literature, not in one’s own life. It lies over people like the tension that goes before a thunderstorm. I find that the difference just between last year and this year is great – but there is also something in me which has lost its elasticity.”

⁶⁶ Bredsdorff, p. 364. “one of the most essential reasons for the misery in the area of sexual morality was that the Nordic women did not have a sex drive.”

record, the representative of the Norsk Kvindesagsforening at Geijerstam's lecture, Ragna Nielsen, objected to Dr. Nilsson's statement, she refused to attend Garborg's event at which Dr. Nilsson's position was to be debated. In the distortions that came forth in the newspaper coverage, the women's groups supporting Bjørnson came to be caricatured as alliances of sexless beings trying to impose their own misery on others.

Marholm's response to these events was her article "Bjørnson als Sittlichkeitsapostel," which appeared anonymously in *Die Gegenwart*. This is the only time in Marholm's career that she did not sign one of her articles. In the letter in which she presents her essay to Theofile Zolling, she refers to the article as "ziemlich starken Tobak!"⁶⁷ Although Marholm is aware that some might find the subject matter of the article indelicate, that is not the reason why she requests anonymity. Marholm is simply afraid of the consequences that taking a stand on the morality issue might have on her life in Copenhagen. Considering all of Marholm's conflicting interests, this is not surprising.

In this article, Marholm describes Bjørnson's speech as the embellishment of the quaint sentiment that one should be chaste and faithful to one's spouse with elaborate but substanceless feats of rhetoric. Moreover, Marholm accuses Bjørnson: "Er findet etwas außerordentlich Versprechendes in der einträchtigen Heuchelei, mit der die gute Gesellschaft ihre Nachtseite verbirgt, er erkennt in ihr mit Befriedigung ein zartes Schamgefühl, das die Einleitung zu etwas Besserem ist."⁶⁸ Within Marholm's vocabulary, "hypocrisy" is an extremely unflattering word. Marholm has come to see that inherent in Bjørnson's platform are the same sort of societal impositions on the conscience of the free individual that she found so oppressive in her native Riga. Bjørnson's original observation that the double standard for men and women had to be abolished eventually developed into sheer moral dogmatism. Dogma which deprives the right of the individual to make his or her own moral decisions was unacceptable to Marholm.

Marholm also describes with approval Garborg's position at the meeting in Christiania:

Arne Garborg führte als Hauptursache des polygamischen Lebens der jungen Männer die Unmöglichkeit zeitiger Heirathen und die dem Mann ausschließlich zufallende Versorgung der Familie an. Die Ehe ist ein Risiko, das Viele nicht mehr Lust hätten auf sich zu nehmen, da die Annehmlichkeiten die Lasten nicht aufwögen. Es handle sich darum, daß die Frau in ihren Selbständigkeitsbestrebungen unterstützt und dem Mann ökonomisch so gleich wie möglich gestellt würde. Es handle sich darum, daß die juristischen Bande, die Mann und Weib an einander fesselten, das Eigenthumsrecht, das die Frau an den Mann, der Mann an die Frau habe, beiseitigt würden, die Ehe werde frei und die Scheidung werde frei. Keine andere Garantie und kein anderer Zwang

⁶⁷ Laura Mohr to Theofile Zolling, 6 December 1887.

⁶⁸ *** [Marholm], "Bjørnson als Sittlichkeitsapostel," p. 101.

als die Uebereinkunft von zwei unabhängigen Persönlichkeiten. So wüssten beide Theile, was sie von einander zu erwarten hätten, ohne daß ihre persönliche Initiative der Einmischung einer dritten Macht unterläge.⁶⁹

In this summary of Garborg's views, it is clear that Marholm places a high value on "personal initiative" and is suspicious of the intervention of "a third power," which in this context might be read as Bjørnsonian moral dogma. Marholm believes that given the appropriate economic and social prerequisites, men and women will naturally behave considerately – that is to say, morally – toward each other.

Marholm also gave an approving résumé of Kitty Kielland's input in the discussion: "Kitty Kielland, die Schwester des Dichters Alexander Kielland, schilderte in feinen und scharfen Zügen die Wirkung des Cölibats auf die Geistesfunctionen eines großen Bruchtheils der Damen der guten Gesellschaft . . ."⁷⁰ Marholm wrote to Lie of this statement, "Det var godt Psychologie og rask gjort [sic]."⁷¹ These sentiments indicate that Marholm had fallen prey to the caricatures of the women who supported Bjørnson. Marholm's ties with the organized women's movement had never been very strong, but the polarizations of the morality wars caused Marholm to distance herself from it entirely. Marholm came to think of the participants in the women's movement as dogmatic, strident, and frustrated women. This image of "die Emanzipierten" never left her.

Although Marholm avoided scandal by her anonymous authorship of "Bjørnson als Sittlichkeitsapostel," she ran into difficulties over another article she published that winter: "Ein Dichter des Weiberhasses." This was an article about August Strindberg occasioned by the performance of *Fadren* in Copenhagen. Marholm reads into *Fadren* a critique of bourgeois marriage: "Und die Ehe ohne Liebe? Sie ist ein langsamer, grausamer, strafloser Meuchelmord."⁷² Marholm finds the enmity between the sexes in the play to be grossly exaggerated, but it has sprung from a seed of reality: "Denn der Mann haßt in dem Weib die Begierde, die ihn peinigt, sein Urtheil unterjocht, seine Persönlichkeit einer anderen unterwirft[,] und die Frau haßt in dem Mann ihre Abhängigkeit, ihre widerwillige oder kaltsinnige Hingabe, ihre zertretene Phantasiewelt, ihre große Enttäuschung."⁷³ Marholm characterizes Strindberg's attitude toward women as follows: "Und für jede einzelne Unthat wird das ganze Geschlecht zur Rechen-schaft gezogen. Die Frau ist nicht nur naturlos, sie ist dumm, faul, die Blut-saugerin des Mannes, verlogen, zänkisch, ohne Menschenverstand und bei alledem ist sie – und das kann ihr nie vergeben werden – unentbehrlich."⁷⁴ Consi-

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 6 December 1887. "It was good psychology and well done."

⁷² L. Marholm, "Ein Dichter des Weiberhasses," *Die Gegenwart*, 33 (1888), p. 5.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

dering that critical sentiment in Sweden and Denmark was against Strindberg because of his misogyny, Marholm's review of *Fadren* is quite understanding. Marholm admires Strindberg's genius, and although she does not share Strindberg's hatred of women, she understands it. Marholm herself viewed a certain segment of women as parasitic. For Marholm, this category was chiefly populated by the women she knew back in conservative Riga.

Marholm's mistake was to pepper the article with statements such as these: "Ein Genie an der Grenze des Wahnsinns – das ist Strindberg's Physiognomie in seinem 'Vater'"; "Denn die Handlung ist von einem kranken Geist erfunden."; "Als ihren eifrigsten Gegner und schlimmsten Feind hassen sie Strindberg [. . .] und wen die Frauen hassen, der – findet keinen Verleger."⁷⁵ On January 25, 1888, the following notice appeared in *Politiken*:

Sagsanlæg mod Smædeskrivere. Forfatteren Aug. Strindberg agter ifølge "Skånes Alleh." i Lighed med, hvad Dr. G. Brandes har gjort med "Leipz. Magaz.", at anlægge Sag mod "Die Gegenwart" for Udspredding af falske Rygter om hans Stilling som Forfatter i Sverige og om hans Sindstilstand. Artiklen, som kaldes "Ein Dichter des Weiberhasses" skal, mener "Sk. Alleh.", være forfattet af en Frøken L. Mohr i Kjøbenhavn, som sandsynligvis ogsaa vil komme til at staa til Ansvar for sine Gærninger.⁷⁶

Marholm later wrote of this episode, "Strindberg hade ungefär ett år förut angripit mig med kannibalisk ifver på grund af en mycket oförarglig uppsats af mig öfver honom i "Gegenwart", och Georg Brandes hade med knapp nöd ryckt mig undan honom, innan han helt och hållet uppslukat mig."⁷⁷ According to Ola Hansson, Marholm had originally not intended to respond to the charges, but Brandes insisted. He wrote a response in Danish and had Marholm sign her name to it.⁷⁸ The very next day, "En Redegørelse" appeared in *Politiken*.

Ironically, even though Marholm was not the actual author, "En Redegørelse" is the only thing ever published under her real name: Laura Mohr. The major points of Marholm's defense are the following:

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 4; p. 4; p. 6.

⁷⁶ "Sagsanlæg mod Smædeskrivere," *Politiken*, 25 January 1888. "Legal proceedings against a libeller. According to 'Skånes Alleh.', the author August Strindberg intends, in the manner of what Dr. G. Brandes has done with 'Leipz. Magaz.', to press charges against 'Die Gegenwart' for spreading false rumors about his status as an author in Sweden and about his mental state. According to 'Sk. Alleh.', the article, which is entitled 'Ein Dichter des Weiberhasses', is said to have been written by a Miss L. Mohr in Copenhagen who most probably will be held accountable for her deeds."

⁷⁷ Laura Marholm, "Koster," unpublished manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek, "Strindberg had approximately a year earlier attacked me with cannibalistic fury on account of a quite harmless essay of mine about him in 'Gegenwart,' and Georg Brandes just barely tore me from his clutches before he completely devoured me."

⁷⁸ Ola Hansson, "August Strindbergs Breve til Mig fra Holte," *Tilskueren*, 23 (1912), Bd. II, p. 36.

Hvor lidet det har været min Hensigt at krænke Hr. Strindberg, fremgaar formentlig med tilstrækkelig Tydelighed af, at det er mig selv, der samtidigt med, at jeg tilsendte Hr. Strindberg den pseudonyme Artikel, i et Privatbrev opgav ham mit Navn, som jeg nu paa denne, lidet berettigede, Maade ser fremdraget for Offentligheden.

Hvad jeg i min Artikel vilde godtgøre, var den store Interesse, der knytter sig til den svenske Digers Produktion. Jeg hører til hans Beundrere, om end ikke til hans blinde eller ukritiske. Jeg har givet en omstændelig Analyse af *Faderen*, men om Hr. Strindbergs private Person har jeg ikke talt; det kunde ikke falde mig ind at sige et ondt Ord om den. Selv den ene Linje i Indledningen, som formodentlig er Aarsag til Hr. Strindbergs Vrede: "Et Geni paa Vanviddets Grænse – det er Strindbergs Fysiognomi i *Faderen*" indeholder intet om Strindberg som Privatmand og Intet, som ikke et Dusin danske Blade har sagt.⁷⁹

It is indeed understandable that Strindberg took Marholm's remarks about his sanity personally, and this was an issue about which he was rather sensitive. It is also true, however, that Marholm had sent Strindberg the article in good faith, believing that he would not find it offensive.

Strindberg did not press charges, but instead contented himself with frightening Marholm with the prospect. In fact, once Strindberg learned that Marholm's article helped to spread the reputation of *Fadren* in Germany, he changed his mind about the article completely. Shortly after this exchange in *Politiken*, Strindberg suggested to his publisher Hans Österling that they might publish Marholm's article in France to get publicity for *Fadren*: "Om vi hade pengar skulle vi sända Gegenwart till Le Figaros reklamagent och fråga hvad ett referat kostade. Tyska kan de numera i Le Figaro. Jag tror nästan Gegenwart skulle kunna tas in som kuriositet i sig sjelf, men det är så slemt för en författare att reklama sjelf."⁸⁰ Moreover, Strindberg decided to send a copy of Marholm's

⁷⁹ Laura Mohr, "En Redegørelse," *Politiken*, 26 January 1888. "How little it was my intention to offend Mr. Strindberg is clearly indicated by the fact that I myself, at the same time that I sent Mr. Strindberg a copy of the pseudonymous article, in a private letter, gave him my name, which I now see dragged before the public in this unjustified manner.

What I wanted to account for in my article was the great interest that is attached to the Swedish poet's production. I count myself as his admirer, although not a blind or uncritical one. I have made a detailed analysis of 'The Father,' but I have not spoken about Mr. Strindberg's private person; it would not occur to me to say an evil word about it. Even the one line in the introduction, which is apparently the source of Mr. Strindberg's anger: 'A genius on the borderline of insanity – that is Strindberg's physiognomy in "The Father"' contains nothing about Strindberg as a private individual and nothing that a dozen other Danish newspapers have not said."

⁸⁰ August Strindberg to Hans Österling, 5 February 1888, *August Strindbergs Brev*, Vol. 7, ed. Torsten Eklund (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1961), pp. 11–12. "If we had money we should send Gegenwart to Le Figaro's advertising agent and ask what a report would cost. They know German at Le Figaro these days. I think that Gegenwart could almost be taken as a curiosity in itself, but it is bad for an author to advertise himself."

article to Emile Zola, who had promised to write a foreword for the French translation of *Fadren*.⁸¹

There was much to keep Marholm occupied during the winter of 1887/88. *Politiken* reported in November: “Kjøbenhavn sidder til Halsen i Foredrag.”⁸² In addition to the lectures by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Gustaf af Geijerstam on morality issues, Herman Bang gave a series of lectures on modern Danish literature, and Georg Brandes lectured on Young Germany. Marholm seems to have attended most of these events. In February, Brandes gave lectures on Russia, in which, according to Marholm, “længe Strækninger af Kedsommelighed afvekle med Gnister af den mest geniale Evne til at karakterisere med faa slaaende Ord [sic].”⁸³ Marholm saw Victoria Benedictsson at these lectures, though they never exchanged many words, since Marholm was usually in the company of Gerda Brandes. In March, Marholm had occasion to act as “fredsmäklerska” between Georg and Gerda Brandes, and offered to accompany Mrs. Brandes on a trip to Berlin, so that she could “förströ sig lite.”⁸⁴ Marholm continued to attend dinner parties at the Brandes house, where a meeting with Christian Krohg, “bred, fed og glinsende glad,” made a particular impression on her. Still, Marholm wrote to Lie, “Her i Kjøbenhavn lever jeg meget stille. Jeg er ikke oplagt til Selskabelighed og ‘wer sich der Einsamkeit ergiebt, / Ach, der ist bald allein.’ Jeg omgaaes næsten udelukkende med nogle nærmere Venner og venter paa Foraaret.”⁸⁵

Spring brought with it a number of important events for Marholm. Firstly, there were the preparations for the Copenhagen Exhibition of 1888, which opened on May 18. The exhibition brought Marholm some extra income, since she was able to write about it for German newspapers. Marholm’s journalistic career is sprinkled with art criticism, although she did not seem to show much aptitude for it.

More significant, however, was Georg Brandes’ famous series of lectures on Nietzsche which took place between April 17 and May 8. Marholm seems to have been quite taken by Nietzsche, especially the concept of the will to power and Nietzsche’s critique of conventional morality. This series of lectures, which in effect introduced Nietzsche to Europe, was a final barrage aimed at Brandes’ opponents in the morality debates. Marholm’s essay on Jonas Lie which appeared at this time bears the mark of Brandes’ lectures.⁸⁶ Marholm means to

⁸¹ August Strindberg to Hans Österling, 7 February 1888, *August Strindbergs Brev*, Vol. 7, p. 12.

⁸² Notice in *Politiken*, 22 November 1887. “Copenhagen is up to its neck in lectures.”

⁸³ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 25 February 1888. “long stretches of boredom alternate with sparks of the most genial ability to characterize with a few striking words.”

⁸⁴ Benedictsson, p. 360. “peacekeeper” . . . “amuse herself a little.”

⁸⁵ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 25 February 1888. “broad, fat and glitteringly happy.” “Here in Copenhagen I live rather quietly. I am not in a mood to be social and ‘wer sich der Einsamkeit ergiebt, Ach, der ist bald allein.’ I socialize almost exclusively with a few close friends and wait for spring.”

⁸⁶ Leonhard Marholm, *Unsere Zeit*, Bd. I (1888), pp. 551–564.

portray Jonas Lie as “ein Übergangsmensch,” but her analysis does not betray any deep understanding of Nietzsche. Only after her acquaintance with Ola Hansson does Marholm seriously take the writings of Nietzsche to heart. Lie thanked Marholm for the article with kind words, though he did not seem entirely convinced by her approach: “Det er vel i meget en god Venindes Øje som ser; men Tanken blir da ikke mindre for det, og De raader over en baade rig og intelligent Pen med Farver paa Spidsen.”⁸⁷

On May 24, 1888, Marholm published a review of Ola Hansson’s *Sensitiva amorosa*, which Marholm described to Lie as “noget af det best lykkede, jeg har skreven i ‘Die Neue Freie Presse [sic].’”⁸⁸ Marholm calls the book, “ein seltener Bissen für psychologische Feinschmecker.” Marholm describes the crux of Hansson’s achievement as follows:

Nur ganz wenigen Schriftstellern, und diesen nur in guten Stunden, ist es gelungen, das Unaussprechliche mit den plumpen Zungen der Sprache zu fassen und für das geheimnißvolle Wesen der Liebe die schmiegsamen Worte zu finden. Wenige haben sie zu schildern vermocht, wie sie entsteht, formlos und ungefähr im Dunkel des Unbewußten, sich selber unbewußt über ihre Natur und ihr Dasein, despotisch, unberechenbar, mit ihrer Sehnsucht, wie mit Luftwurzeln um sich greifend, sich anhäkelnd bei einer zufälligen Berührung, anziehend und angezogen ohne Vernunft, von einem Schimmer im Blick, einem Rhythmus der Bewegung, einem Hauche des Athems, von jenen Freimaurerzeichen, mit denen sich das Unbewußte dem Unbewußten offenbart.⁸⁹

It is easy to understand what appealed to Marholm in Ola Hansson’s writing. Marholm had grown tired of the polemic literature of the morality debates which depicted love between the sexes “als Gesellschaftsglied und Herdfeuer” and “als das nützlichste und bestgezogene aller Haustiere.” Instead, Hansson depicts love “als das Unerklärliche, das sich nicht registriren und rubriciren läßt.” In Marholm’s earliest expressed interest in the psychology of women, it is precisely such ambiguous and as yet unclassifiable sensations which fascinated her most.

It is also apparent in this review that Marholm and Hansson have been reading some of the same books, in particular Paul Bourget. Ingvar Holm has conducted a thorough study of the intellectual influences which affected Hansson’s writing of *Sensitiva amorosa*, and one of the most important was Bourget.⁹⁰ Marholm analyzes Hansson’s novel in the light of Bourget and Stendhal’s *De l’amour*. The nature of Marholm’s psychological studies was bringing her

⁸⁷ Jonas Lie to Laura Mohr, 17 June 1888. “Much of it is seen through the eyes of a good friend; but the thought is not diminished because of that, and you command a pen both rich and intelligent with colors on its point.”

⁸⁸ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 14 June 1888. “one of the most successful things I have written for ‘Die Neue Freie Presse.’”

⁸⁹ L. Marholm, “Ein schwedischer Liebesdichter,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 24 May 1888.

⁹⁰ Holm, pp. 56–68.

closer to the determinism that was current in such writings at the time. In the fall of 1886, Marholm had expressed a belief that the strength of human will could overcome biological inheritance. Bourget, on the other hand, believed that people lacked such a stable character, and that at any time an individual was determined by an almost mystical interaction of heredity, upbringing, and the influences of the moment. Admitting such an irrational factor into human psychology now corresponded with Marholm's own psychological speculations.

At the time Marholm wrote her review, she had never met Ola Hansson and did not even know what he looked like, yet she makes it clear in her article that she feels an affinity with him: "Man hat kein Bild von ihnen [Ola Hansson's Gestalten], aber man fühlt sie sich nah, wie man im Dunklen die Anwesenheit eines Menschen fühlt, nicht sieht."⁹¹ In June, Marholm visited Morten Pontoppidan at Hjølunde Høiskole, and from there wrote to Jonas Lie about her plans to visit Norway. She wanted to meet Kitty Kielland and Harriet Backer there if possible, and she asked Lie for Arne Garborg's address. She also added, "Ola Hansson kunde jeg have Lyst personlig at lære at kende. [. . .] Men jeg gaaer vel næppe over Sverig hjem [sic]."⁹² Not many lines further in the letter, Marholm reflected over her own life:

Jeg er skabt til den friske freidige Kamp, til at yde Hjelp og modtage Venskab og jeg staaer ganske ene. Ved De en, som trænger til en stærk Haand og et stærkt Hjerte, saa henvis ham til mig. Min Kraft fordobles, naar jeg kan bære en anden oppe – man er jo Kvinde, man maa være noget for Andre, for at føle Livet helt. Men de som knytter sig til kræftige Kvinder er gjerne de elendigste Kluds og et Hospital at være er jeg for sund til [sic].⁹³

Clearly, the weather conditions were right for lightning to strike, and strike it did. Not long after Marholm wrote this letter, she was introduced to Ola Hansson at the house of Georg Brandes.

In Sweden, Ola Hansson had just suffered a number of professional setbacks. He was no longer a welcome contributor to *Aftonbladet*, as the result of a sympathetic review of Arne Garborg's "Ungdom." When *Sensitiva amorosa* appeared in December 1887, it was met with vicious critiques in his home country. Hansson's spirits had been bolstered somewhat by a positive review in *Politiken* written by Georg Brandes, and a friend tried to cheer him up by pointing out a very

⁹¹ Marholm, "Ein schwedischer Liebesdichter."

⁹² Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 14 June 1888. "I would like to meet Ola Hansson personally [. . .] But I will scarcely be passing through Sweden on my way home."

⁹³ Ibid. "I am made for vigorous and dauntless battles, for giving help and receiving friendship and I stand all alone. If you know of someone who longs for a strong hand and a strong heart, then send him to me. My strength doubles when I can bear another person up – one is, of course, a woman, one must be something for others in order to feel life completely. But those who ally themselves with strong women are often the most miserable wretches and I am too healthy to be a hospital."

friendly review in *Neue Freie Presse* written by an L. Marholm. Hansson had reason to be grateful to Marholm for being one of the few supportive voices raised in the defense of *Sensitiva amorosa*.

The invitation to dinner was delivered to Marholm personally by Gerda Brandes, who, with a glint in her eye, told Marholm that Ola Hansson would be there. Mrs. Brandes apparently had on other occasions tried to play matchmaker for Marholm. From the impression Marholm had received from Hansson's novel, she expected a slight, nervous sort of fellow, and was surprised to be introduced to a handsome, strapping young man. Marholm instantly became self-conscious about her own appearance: "Vacker är jag inte, ty jag är inte för ingen-ting en Mohr."⁹⁴ Soon, however, they discovered an even greater obstacle to their becoming acquainted, since they could not speak to one another: "[Er] sagte etwas auf Schwedisch, was ich nicht verstand, worauf ich etwas auf Dänisch sagte, was er nicht verstand. Unser beider Aussprache hatten wir Beide noch nie früher gehört."⁹⁵ Dinner conversation stumbled along haltingly, and, afterward, the men vanished into one salon, and the women retreated to another. Gerda Brandes tried to arrange for Hansson to walk Marholm home, but her machinations failed, which Marholm took as a sign that she had made a very bad impression on Hansson.

Contrary to all expectations, eight days later on the day Marholm was leaving for Norway, a letter arrived for her from Hansson. This was the beginning of their courtship by mail which would last for about a year. Although they could not understand each other's spoken accents, they could communicate via the written word. Unfortunately, all of these letters have been lost.

Accompanied by Hansson's letter, a copy of *Sensitiva amorosa*, and a German travelling companion, Marholm left for Christiania.⁹⁶ From there, she travelled through Valdresdal to Jøtunfjeld and then over to Gudbrandsdal where she paid Bjørnson a visit. In some respects, it seems odd that Marholm would seek out Bjørnson when she had already drifted quite far away from his viewpoints. On the other hand, perhaps she felt that it was unwise not to cultivate such an influential acquaintance. She found Bjørnson "i hans Hjems Omgivelse, i fuld Travlhed med at slaa Løgnen ihjel [sic]."⁹⁷ He was surrounded by "dänische,

⁹⁴ Marholm, "Koster." "I am not beautiful, for I am not a Moor for nothing." As Ingvar Holm has pointed out, the events surrounding Ola Hansson's meeting and courtship with Laura Mohr are clearly the inspiration for his novella "Havsfåglar," *Samlade skrifter*, v. 4, pp. 175–231 and the chapters "Ut" and "Hemma" in *Resan hem II, SS*, v. 7, pp. 333–401.

⁹⁵ Laura Marholm, "Die Thür geht nicht auf! Eine Erinnerung aus meinem Leben," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 25 December 1902.

⁹⁶ In all likelihood, this German travelling companion was Therese Krüger, one of Marholm's closest friends in Copenhagen.

⁹⁷ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 4/16 August 1888. "in his home environment, fully taken up with killing lies."

schwedische und finnische ‘Frauensach-Frauen [sic].’⁹⁸ Marholm had begun to find Bjørnson and his enterprise ridiculous: “Es ist etwas von der Naivetät [sic] des Naturkinds in diesem Bauernkenel und Pastorensohne, die flackernde Begeisterung für allgemeine Wahrheiten, das sprunghafte Denken, rasche Vergessen und dunkle Schaffen, aus der seine Größe als Dichter und seine Umschläge und Widersprüche als Persönlichkeit entspringen. Mehr Genie als Cultur.”⁹⁹

After this visit to Bjørnson, Marholm returned to Christiania, but since she had three days remaining before her ship departed, she decided to visit Arne Garborg in Kolbotten. As Marholm describes it, Arne Garborg and his wife Hulda lived with their child “in einem Blockhäuschen mitten in einer wilden Einöde.”¹⁰⁰ Their home was not very accessible. The journey from Christiania entailed 15 hours by steamship, several hours by train, 3 hours by wagon and 1½ hours by rowboat. In Tønset, Marholm and her companion were warned against continuing the journey: “Man deutete uns an, daß wir in irgend einem aufgeweichten Moor für ewige Zeiten festgepflanzt bleiben könnten und legte uns nahe, daß eine Person, wie Arne Garborg, ein solches Monument doch nicht werth sei.”¹⁰¹ Undaunted, the two courageously set off to meet “den modernsten Dichter Norwegens in der Verschollenheit des Hochgebirges.”¹⁰²

The two women arrived to find Hulda Garborg taking a nap with her infant son and their 13-year-old housegirl washing out dirty diapers. Garborg had rowed off to go fishing with Ivar Mortensen, a “radical theologian” who lived as a hermit in an even more remote dwelling dubbed “the North Pole.” Garborg’s young wife scraped together some refreshments for her guests. Hulda Garborg remembered later that Marholm “var da så optaget af Ola Hanssons bog ‘Sensitiva amorosa’, som netop var udkommet, at hun selv leende sa, at hun reiste omkring og snakket om Ola H. ‘til alle som vil høre på det.’”¹⁰³ The decision was reached to row across the water to where Garborg could be found. At the North Pole, Garborg cooked a fish he had just caught for the two ladies, which they were obliged to eat with penknives. This repast was enjoyed in relative silence, and shortly after their primitive supper, Marholm left her copy of *Sensitiva amorosa* with Garborg and departed. In a letter to P. M. G. Rosenkrantz Johnsen,

⁹⁸ Marholm, “Björnstjerne Bjørnson,” p. 319.

⁹⁹ Leonhard Marholm, “Norwegische Landschaften und Profile,” *Unsere Zeit*, Bd. II (1889), p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰¹ L. Marholm, “Ein Gesellschaftsreformer auf dem Hochgebirge,” *Vossische Zeitung*, Sonntag-Beilage, No.s 12 & 13, 24/31 March 1888.

¹⁰² Marholm, “Norwegische Landschaften und Profile,” p. 16.

¹⁰³ Hulda Garborg, *Dagbok 1903–1914*, eds. Karen Grude Koht and Rolv Thesen (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1962), p. 51. “was then so preoccupied with Ola Hansson’s book ‘Sensitiva amorosa’ which had just come out, that she herself said, laughing, that she was traveling around and talking about Ola H. ‘to everyone who would listen to it.’”

Garborg had this to say about the encounter: “Det var Fanden til Visit; men de morede sig, tror jeg.”¹⁰⁴ In a letter to Lie, Marholm summed up the escapade: “Arne Garborg er en Barnepige og har den nydeligste Kone. Det var kedeligt, jeg ikke kom rigtig i Snak med ham – jeg kunde bare blive en Times Tid. Men den jeg syntes best om, var Ivar Mortenson, den radikale Theolog [sic].”¹⁰⁵

Just before Marholm was to leave Christiania for Riga, she read in the papers about Victoria Benedictsson’s suicide. Sometime during the night of the 22nd of July, Benedictsson had slit her own throat with a shaving razor. Earlier in the spring, on March 27th, Benedictsson had quite unexpectedly paid Marholm a visit.¹⁰⁶ They had not actually spoken to each other since they were together in Paris, and Marholm, though surprised, was glad to see her:

Sie war mir nie so sympathisch gewesen wie jetzt. Aus ihrem Innern klang es herauf wie ein tiefer reiner Glockenton. Einsilbige Bemerkungen fielen über unser Leben während des Winters. Wir wußten beide von einander, daß wir mehr verbargen, als wir erzählten, aber das störte uns nicht. Sie hatte ihre Erlebnisse gehabt, ich die meinen – wir hatten eigentlich einfach keine Zeit für einander übrig gehabt und kein Interesse.¹⁰⁷

However, when Marholm returned her visit a few days later, she found Benedictsson in a different mood. Benedictsson allowed Marholm to read a letter in which it became clear that she had been contemplating suicide. Marholm was taken off-guard and did not know what to say or do. They were interrupted by the arrival of Georg Brandes. Marholm excused herself and left.

Benedictsson’s death made a great impact on Marholm, and she later tried several times in essays and fiction to understand it.¹⁰⁸ In part, like many friends of suicides, she may have been plagued by the thought that she might have prevented it. In addition, Benedictsson’s death was particularly disturbing to Marholm, since although Benedictsson had found the great love that Marholm had romanticized in *Gertrud Lindenstern* and *Frau Marianne*, it had killed her. Throughout the years, Marholm tried out a number of explanations for Benedictsson’s action, but the immediate reaction she described to Jonas Lie was the following:

¹⁰⁴ Arne Garborg, *Mogning og manndom. Brev*, eds. Johannes A. Dale and Rolv Thesen (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1954.), p. 199, “It was a hell of a visit; but they enjoyed themselves, I think.”

¹⁰⁵ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 4/16 August 1888. “Arne Garborg is a nanny and has the most delightful wife. It was unfortunate that I did not really get to talk to him – I could only stay for an hour. The one I liked best was Ivar Mortenson, the radical theologian.”

¹⁰⁶ Compare the entry in Benedictsson’s almanac, Benedictsson, p. 421n107 with Marholm’s account in “Eine von ihnen,” p. 486.

¹⁰⁷ Marholm, “Eine von ihnen,” p. 486.

¹⁰⁸ “Eine von ihnen,” “Das Ungesprochene” in *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse*; and the play *Karla Bühnung* all deal with Benedictsson’s suicide.

Og saa – midt op i alle disse Indtryks Mangfoldighed – læste jeg om Fru Benediktsons freidige Død. Jeg kom ikke rigtig frem med hende i Livet – det stod en Del Bagnak imellem hende og mig – hun havde søgt mig en par Gange, men jeg manglede Tillid. Nu voxede hendes Skikkelse frem med hendes Væsens kraftige Linier – alt det Smaalige forsvand – hun havde magtet at dø – en skrækkelig, lidenskabelig, en Selvødelæggelsens Død – men en modig Daad. Hun maa have følt sig ensom, haabløs, fortvivlet, og hun var for stolt at leve under andre Krav end hendes Naturs Krav. Og hendes Natur krævede et fuld Liv, som ikke er givet til Nogen [sic.]¹⁰⁹

She also confided to Lie that her impressions in Norway became too much for her, so when she returned to Riga, she undertook a “hemlig Saltekur” (secret saltwater cure).

As had become her habit, after spending the summer in Riga, Marholm returned to Copenhagen in the fall. Marholm and Hansson corresponded regularly, and, although we cannot follow their postal courtship directly, aspects of it are reflected in Marholm’s correspondence with Arne Garborg which picked up its pace dramatically after her visit to Kolbotten. During the fall and winter, every letter between Marholm and Garborg contains a reference to Ola Hansson. Of course, Garborg is unaware that they are discussing Marholm’s future husband, so his reactions are quite frank.

During the winter and spring, Marholm provided Garborg with a steady stream of reading material, much of which had been written by Hansson. Garborg always has some appreciative words to say, but it is clear that he does not share the same enthusiasm as Marholm. Of his reaction to *Sensitiva amorosa*, Garborg writes, “Den greb mig stærkt, omtrent som en god Skildring fra et Galehus.”¹¹⁰ Marholm does not quite agree with this: “Jeg tror at Ola Hansson bare har skildret sig selv og sig selv om og om igjen i disse Smaaskitser. Han mangler vist Oplevelser, og saa fylder han nok Emner han bemægtiger sig med hans eget Følelsesliv [sic].”¹¹¹ She also reports that he has written a new collection of sto-

¹⁰⁹ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 4/16 August 1888. “And so – in the midst of all of these manifold impressions – I read about Mrs. Benediktson’s brave death. I could not really relate to her in life – a good bit of gossip stood between us – she had sought me out a few times, but I lacked trust. Now her figure grew forth along the powerful lines of her being – everything trivial disappeared – she had the power to die – a frightening, passionate, self-obliterating death – but a courageous deed. She must have felt lonely, hopeless, despairing and she was too proud to live under any other demands than the demands of her own nature. And her nature demanded a full life, which is not given to anyone.”

¹¹⁰ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 3 October 1888. “It affected me deeply, somewhat like a good depiction of an insane asylum.”

¹¹¹ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 17 October 1888. “since I believe that Ola Hansson has simply depicted himself again and again in these small sketches. He is probably lacking experiences, and so he probably fills in the topics he seizes upon with his own emotional life.”

ries, *Parias*, “hvori han prøver at skildre Forbryderens Utilregnelighed. Det Lovbundne i det saakaldte Umoralske. Han har bare havt at disponere over yderst tørre og uheldige Emner, men ogsaa i dette Arbeid ere de Følelsene, som sænker sig ned i det Ubeviste, med den deterministiske Anelses Sikkerhed [sic].”¹¹² She then writes that she has promised to translate *Parias* for Hansson, but first she intends to read Cesare Lombroso’s studies of criminal psychology, so that she can steep herself in the subject.

Marholm’s reading of Lombroso’s *Der Verbrecher* had a profound effect upon her. Lombroso’s theories about criminal behavior were very closely tied to physiology. He believed that one could detect criminal tendencies from physiognomy. His theories are physiologically deterministic in the extreme. Lombroso helped Marholm to complete her 180-degree turn from the position that heredity can be overcome by will to her new belief that biology is destiny.¹¹³

Marholm had already had Garborg read Hansson’s essay on Bourget, when she asked Garborg if he would be interested in reading Lombroso’s book, and Garborg responded affirmatively, “Nervefysiologin er jo Fremtidens Psychologi, og den vil ikke blot ha Betydning for evt. religiøse (“moraliske”) Samfundsarbejder, men jeg har en uudslukkelig Overtro paa, at den vil lære os at forstaa en hel Del af det, som nu gjælder for Metafysik.”¹¹⁴ Marholm is pleased by Garborg’s interest and offers to send him *Revue de l’Hypnotisme* and works by the French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot as well. She also writes, “Jeg forventer ogsaa en Del Forklaringer over det Mystiske i Naturen fra denne Side – men dermed bliver dog det Mystiske selv ikke gennemsigtig [sic].”¹¹⁵ Despite her interest in scientific explanation, Marholm still wants to leave room for the irrational.

¹¹² Ibid. “in which he tries to portray the unpredictability of the criminal. That which is bound by laws in the so-called immoral. He has only dealt with extremely dry and unlucky subjects, but also in this work are feelings which sink down into the unconscious, with the sureness of deterministic intuition.”

¹¹³ The close association of behavior with physiology was current in the scientific community for at least the next seven years, the time in which Sigmund Freud received his medical training. In 1896, Freud wrote to his mentor Wilhelm Fleiß that he hoped to find a physiological foundation for behavior, so he could cease to explain things psychologically. As his biographer, Ernest Jones, writes, “It was a long time before Freud brought himself to dispense with the physiological principles of his youth. In a sense he never did entirely, for we shall see that a good deal of his later psychology was modelled on them.” Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud. Life and Work*, Vol. I (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 329.

¹¹⁴ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 13 November 1888. “Nerve physiology is the psychology of the future, and it will not only have importance for subsequent religious (‘moral’) social workers, but I have an unquenchable confidence that it will teach us to understand quite a lot of that which is now considered metaphysics.”

¹¹⁵ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 18 November 1888. “I also expect a lot of explanations about the mystical in nature from this front – but even so, the mystical itself will not become transparent.”

Garborg also had a strong reaction to Lombroso's *Der Verbrecher* which he describes in *Kolbotnbrev*. As Garborg reads Lombroso's description of the criminal type, to his horror, he begins to recognize himself:

. . . ich liege und lese mit Grauen und es zittert mir im Brustkasten. Vieles davon kann auf mich passen. Ich bin häßlich, ich habe wenig und dünnen Bart; es ist böses Erbteil in meinem Geschlecht; Leichtsinn und Lockerheit war auch genug da und die Art ist in mir; – ich habe einmal einen Mann um zwei Kronen betrogen, mit Bewusstsein und Absicht . . . wie ich recht mitten drin bin, merke ich, daß ich an der einen Wade fast gar kein Gefühl in der Haut habe . . . ! Entsetzen richtet sich in mir auf, das Herz bleibt stehen; ich fühle das andere Bein . . . ja, weiß Gott! . . . ich fühle beide Beine; kneife, kratze, schramme . . . ja! Entsetzen schlägt über mir zusammen wie ein grünes Meer; Zittern erfaßt mich; der Wille ist machtlos; jetzt kommt es . . . jetzt . . . Ich wälze mich aus dem Bett, werfe die Kleider über; hinaus; hinein in die Altstube; nicht länger allein sein . . . Cognac trinken.¹¹⁶

Deeply shaken, Garborg sits by the fire and has his wife read Voltaire to him until he calms down. To Marholm, Garborg simply wrote, “denne skrækkelige Lombroso vil jeg ikke tale om; læste jeg for meget ad Gangen af ham, blev jeg syg og daarlig.”¹¹⁷

Marholm's studies of Hansson's *Parias* and Lombroso's *Der Verbrecher* resulted in her article “Zwangsvorstellungen in der Dichtung,” which appeared in December 1888. This article is less about *Parias* than her new understanding of the task of literature. Marholm describes Hansson's enterprise in *Parias* as “wie ein Schiff auf hoher See, dessen Kapitän seinen Kurs auf eine unbekannte Küste zuhält, die noch Keiner aufgesegelt, aber er hat berechnet, wo sie liegen muß und sie fängt an wie ein dunkler, schwebender Streifen sich über dem Wasser abzuzeichnen.”¹¹⁸ Both the poet and a scientist like Lombroso are engaged in exploring uncharted psychological territory, but “Der erste, der von ihm Besitz ergreift, dürfte kraft seiner schöpferischen Intuition der Dichter sein.”¹¹⁹ Hansson had not read *Der Verbrecher* when he wrote *Parias* and Marholm was most impressed by the fact that Hansson the poet had reached many of the same conclusions in *Parias* that Lombroso had attained through laborious scientific research.

But Marholm does not want literature to follow this path into “eine Sackgasse des Determinismus,” as she feels has been the case with Bourget and Zola in

¹¹⁶ Arne Garborg, “Kolbotten. Ein Stück Dichterleben in Norwegen,” trans. Laura Marholm, *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 62 (1893), p. 580.

¹¹⁷ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 7 March 1889. “I do not want to talk about that dreadful Lombroso; if I read too much of him at a time, I became ill and queasy.”

¹¹⁸ L. Marholm, “Zwangsvorstellungen in der Dichtung,” *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, 15/16 December 1888.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

France. Marholm finds herself in an epoch in decay, of decadence, and looks for a means to reverse the decline of civilization. The purpose of literature should no longer be the Brandesian debate of social conditions, but rather “die Menschen mit sich selbst bekannt zu machen,” because “Die Kenntniß [sic] der Krankheitserscheinungen ist die Bedingung zur Feststellung des Wesens der Gesundheit.”¹²⁰ Marholm ends the article on a Nietzschean note and claims that the greatest and most difficult of all artistic tasks is “uns den gesunden Menschen zu schildern in seiner stolzen Lebensbejahung, in der heiteren Sicherheit noch ungedachter Lebensformen.”¹²¹

In all of these points, Marholm’s thoughts were completely in concert with Hansson’s during this same period. At about this same time, Ola Hansson began his correspondence with Strindberg, which was sparked by Strindberg’s interest in Hansson’s *Parias*. This rich correspondence is filled with speculation about psychology, Nietzsche, and the relationship between literature and science.¹²² Under the influences of both Strindberg and Marholm, Hansson submerged himself in studies of Nietzsche and psychology and began applying his conclusions to literature. The result was Hansson’s series of essays against naturalism which introduced him to Germany.¹²³

An episode that plays itself out in Marholm’s correspondence with Garborg during the winter of 1888 sheds some interesting light on Marholm’s position in the Brandes household, as well as her talents of diplomacy and her understanding of Brandes’ character. In a letter from October 21, 1888, Garborg discusses his publishing problems, and, in passing, wishes that he could have Brandes’ support. He remarks that he has not heard from Brandes in a while, and probably ought to write to him. Marholm saw this as an opportunity to use her influence in Brandes’ circle to help Garborg. In her response, she writes, “Jeg opdigtede en Hilsen af Dem til Georg Brandes, og fortalte ham at De havde i Sinde at skrive ham til. Jeg er der tidt, saa det manglede ikke paa Leilighed at tale om det [sic].”¹²⁴ She also warns Garborg that Brandes suspects him of being disloyal.

Marholm has confirmed something that Garborg was afraid of, and he explains in dismay that he did not maintain contact with Brandes since he was concerned with appearing as an insignificant figure courting the favor of a more important one. “Efter hvad De meddeler mig kommer jeg fremdeles ikke til at skrive til ham, hvor uheldigt det nu kan være for mig at savne den store Kritikers

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² See *August Strindbergs och Ola Hanssons Brevväxling 1888–1892* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1938.)

¹²³ Susan Brantly, “Creating an Alternative to Naturalism: Ola Hansson’s Assimilation of Nietzsche,” *Orbis Litterarum*, 42 (1987), pp. 44–57.

¹²⁴ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 3 November 1888. “I made up a greeting from you to Georg Brandes and I told him you intended to write him. I am there constantly, so I did not lack for opportunities to mention it.”

Bevaagenhed.”¹²⁵ Marholm considers this a sad state of affairs and devises a clever plan to reconcile the two without either one losing face. Brandes has been complaining lately that no one has bothered to review his books on Poland and Russia. Marholm suggests to Garborg that he review these books, since it would return him to Brandes’ good graces, but could not be construed by Brandes as courting favor: “Hør nu Herr Arne Garborg, sid nu ned, læs Bøgerne og skriv Anmeldelsen, saa er Sagen i Orden – De vil have Fornøielse af det og De skal ikke miste denne Mands Venkab. Husk paa at Manden sidder nu næsten uden Resonanz og at det er haardt for ham . . .”¹²⁶

Garborg thanks her for her concern and agrees to go along with her scheme: “Jeg synes ogsaa det er kjedeligt og meningsløst, at man skal gaa og være Uvenner, naar der egentlig sletikke er nogen Grund til det; det er nok af dem, man kan være Uvenner med *med Grund*.”¹²⁷ In her reply, Marholm promises to send Garborg the books: “Om De saa vil læse og anmelde dem, det bryder jeg mig ikke saa farlig om, bare at jeg har gjort til Brandes en Hentyding om at jeg vidste De havde saadant noget i Sindet. Han smilte sit søde djævelske Smil og saa saa rar ud, som en Kat, man klør i Nakkehaaret [sic].”¹²⁸ In the end, however, Marholm’s master plan came to naught because Garborg decided not to review the books, since he felt himself to be unqualified for the task.

During the spring of 1889, Strindberg’s *Fröken Julie* premièred in Copenhagen with Siri von Essen in the leading role. Marholm liked the play, but did not think much of the production, and especially Siri’s acting: “Disse Geniernes Koner, det er noget man aldrig faaer Ende paa at forbause sig over [sic].”¹²⁹ Georg Brandes was touring Sweden and Norway with lectures on Heine and Goethe. Marholm’s correspondence with Hansson still mostly dealt with intellectual rather than personal matters. In one letter, Hansson described the type of woman he could live with, and Marholm thought she saw herself in the portrait, but still the ice had not yet been broken.

¹²⁵ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 13 November 1888. “After what you have told me, I will still not write to him, no matter how detrimental it can be for me to lose the great critic’s favor.”

¹²⁶ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 18 November 1888. “Now listen, Mr. Arne Garborg, sit down, read the books and write a review, and then everything will be fine – You will enjoy it and you will not lose that man’s friendship. Remember that the man sits now almost without resonance and that it is difficult for him.”

¹²⁷ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 7 December 1888. “I also think that it is unfortunate and meaningless to go about being enemies when there is absolutely no reason for it; there are enough people one can be enemies with *with reason*.”

¹²⁸ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 19 December 1888. “Whether or not you read and review them does not worry me so terribly much, as long as I have indicated to Brandes that I know you have some such thing in mind. He smiled his sweet demonic smile and looked so friendly, like a cat being scratched on the neck.”

¹²⁹ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 15 March 1889. “One never ceases to be amazed at these wives of geniuses.”

In March, Marholm published two articles, one about Arne Garborg and one about the journals of Marie Bashkirtseff. In her article about Garborg, she characterized him as “der Dichter des gesunden Menschenverstandes und guten Herzens.”¹³⁰ Garborg was enthusiastic about Marholm’s article: “Jeg er virkelig lykkelig. De ved –: den Slags Lykke, man føler, naar man for en Gangs Skyld ser sig godt forstaaet og forklaret. [. . .] Der er to Ord, jeg aldrig skal glemme Dem: ‘Humor’ og ‘Wehmuth’. De er den første, som har sagt det – og det er dog det, jeg selv synes er det mest merkværdige ved mit Forfatterskab.”¹³¹

Along with this article, Marholm had also sent Garborg “Das Tagebuch einer Künstlerin.” This article signals a new understanding of women for Marholm which will dominate her writing for the next seven years. A revised version of this essay will appear in *Das Buch der Frauen* in 1895, the culmination of this era in her life. The article is based on the journals that were published after Marie Bashkirtseff’s death at age 23. Bashkirtseff died young, before she was able to find satisfaction in life, Marholm explains, and she blames Bashkirtseff’s upbringing for putting her on the wrong track:

Aller Stolz, alle Delicatesse, alle Keuschheit des Weibes werden von der Erziehung in den Dienst des Decorums genommen, das Decorum wird ihm zur Natur, es tritt unter die Schwelle des Bewußtseins, es wird das Unbewußte. Dadurch wird das Weib nicht objectiv perfectibel, nur subjectiv auflösbar; es bröckelt ab, es kränkelt, es hört auf, Naturwesen und damit es selbst zu sein: schlechte Künstlerinnen, schlechte Berufsdamen, eventuell schlechte Frauen und Mütter.¹³²

In other words, the interdictions of society become so ingrained in the psyches of young women that these inhibitions become integrated into their very nature, and, thereby, women become deprived of their own individual natures. For such women, self-realization becomes impossible because their true nature has been confined in a straightjacket of moral convention. Even should economic and social restrictions be set aside, these internalized prohibitions would hamper them. To speak with Freud, an anachronism which is difficult to avoid, these socially conditioned repressions result in physical illness and hysteria.

In subsequent years, Marholm will spend a great deal of effort trying to describe healthy feminine nature. In her article about *Parias*, she wrote that identifying illness is a prerequisite for defining health. In her article about Marie Bashkirtseff, as in her later psychological sketches of women, Marholm seeks to point

¹³⁰ Marholm, “Ein Gesellschaftsreformer auf dem Hochgebirge.”

¹³¹ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 17 April 1889. “I am really happy. You know – that sort of happiness one feels when for once one sees oneself well understood and explained. [. . .] There are two words, for which I will never forget you: ‘Humor’ and ‘Wehmuth.’ You are the first who has said it – and it is that which I myself consider to be the most exceptional thing about my authorship.”

¹³² L. Marholm, “Das Tagebuch einer Künstlerin,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 12 March 1889.

out the “unnatural” aspects of her life in order to point toward the “natural.” It is already too late for Marie Bashkirtseff when she meets Bastien-Lepage, the man who might have been able to help her overcome her frustrated existence: “Die Künstlerin hat ihren Meister, das Weib den Mann gefunden, dem es sich unterwirft.”¹³³ Marholm believed that it was the nature of woman to live for the sake of someone else; in almost all cases, this means a man for whom they can have respect and who will cause them to cultivate their talents and strengths. Ideal mates will complement each other erotically and intellectually. Here Marholm reverts to her old ideal of the Gertrud Lindenstern type. One should also bear in mind that at this time, Marholm suspected that, at age 34, she had found her own ideal mate.

Garborg’s response to Marholm’s essay is instructive:

Marie Baschkirtzev er noget for mig. Hennes Historie synes at stemme godt med de Formodninger, jeg har gjort mig om det erotiske Betydning i Kvindens Liv, og den har desuden givet Dem Anledning til Bemærkninger om Kvindens Perfektibilitet, som er lærerige.

Det er altfor let at gjøre Rabalder à la Strindberg over dette Spørsmaal; men den Vei fører intetsteds. Han bringer Evolutionslærens Teorier om den Stærkeres Ret paa en Maade som om han mente, at Mænd og Kvinder var to Racer; de er nu imidlertid én, og jo klarere dette fastholdes, des mere Mening kan der bli i Diskussionen. Jeg er sikker paa, at to helt udviklede Individuer – en helt og frit mandig udviklet Mand og en helt og frit kvindelig udviklet Kvinde – vil kunne forstaa hinanden lettere end to *ulige* udviklede – to, der staar paa hver sit Udviklingstrin, foruden at de altsaa ogsaa er forskjellig kønsligt bestemte –; og hvad Spørsmaalet om “Over- og Underordning” angaar, vil vel dette praktisk løse sig saaledes, at *den* i Forholdet – han eller hun –, der er den aandeligt overlegne, vil bli primus (prima) inter pares.¹³⁴

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 17 April 1889; postscript dated 19 April 1889. “Marie Baschkirtzev means something to me. Her story seems to coincide well with the assumptions I have made about the meaning of the erotic in a woman’s life, and furthermore, it has given you the occasion to make remarks about the perfectibility of women which are instructive.

It is all too easy to make a commotion à la Strindberg over this question; but that road leads nowhere. He brings in evolutionary theories about the right of the stronger as though he thought that men and women were two races; they are in the meantime one, and the more clearly that is grasped, the more point there can be in discussion. I am certain that two completely developed individuals – a completely and freely masculinely developed man and a completely and freely femininely developed woman – will be able to understand each other more easily than two dissimilarly developed individuals – two individuals, who stand upon their respective rungs of development, in addition to being differently sexually determined –; and with regard to the question of ‘domination and subordination,’ that will solve itself practically, in that the one in the relationship – he or she – who is the spiritually superior will be primus (prima) inter pares.”

Garborg has shown himself to be less traditional than Marholm in that he can envision a relationship in which the woman is the spiritual superior.

Furthermore, Garborg brings up the problem of the equality of men and women. A strong belief in physiological determinism tends to lead to the positing of immutable intellectual and psychological differences between the sexes, since such physiological differences can be empirically proven. Garborg chooses to stress the similarities, just as Marholm did two years earlier when she wrote: "Mann und Weib sind keine, nicht mit einander zu vergleichenden [sic] Gegensätze, sie sind Menschen mit ähnlichen Anlagen und Fähigkeiten und unähnlicher Entwicklung [sic]."¹³⁵ Marholm's newfound interest in psycho-physiology will lead her to emphasize the differences between the sexes, or more precisely, that which is peculiarly feminine. In this, the evolution of Marholm's thought runs parallel to that of Ellen Key. The question of "likhet" versus "egenart" has a long history, and the consequences of the elegant arguments of both Marholm and Ellen Key on behalf of "egenart" can be felt even into the present day.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Marholm would certainly agree with Garborg that a freely developed man and woman would stand a much better chance of understanding each other than the men and women who have grown up within the present system.

Sometime around May 1889, Marholm received her first love letter from Hansson. They had not seen each other since the dinner almost a year earlier at Brandes' house. Hansson suggested that they meet for a vacation on the island of Koster. Marholm wanted to bring a female friend with her, but Hansson objected, since he wanted to see her alone: "Jag var villig dertill, fastän mina föräldrar skrefve mig onda bref över min afsigt att resa dit allena."¹³⁷ When Marholm's ship arrived in Gothenburg, she had difficulty recognizing Hansson on the shore, since she had only seen him once before. Hansson was accompanied by his brother Nils, who was in a bad humor and only served to create a stifling atmosphere. Hansson and Marholm spent three weeks on Koster chaperoned by

¹³⁵ Marholm, "Norwegische Dichter in Paris."

¹³⁶ Harriet Clayhills, "'Likhet' eller 'egenart'? Ett tema i feministisk debatt i Sverige under 1900-talet," *Kvinnornas Litteraturhistoria, Del 2*, eds. Ingrid Holmqvist and Ebba Witt-Brattström (Malmö: Författarförlaget, 1983), pp. 11-33.

¹³⁷ Marholm, "Koster." "I was willing, although my parents wrote me dire letters about my intention to travel there alone." This essay was written at the beginning of 1904, and Marholm meant it to be published in *Göteborgs Handelstidning*. [See Laura Hansson to Henrik Hedlund, 19 December 1903]. One should bear in mind that Ola Hansson is responsible for the translation, so he has had an opportunity to do some editing. Judging from remarks made by Ola Hansson in "Erinnerungen an August Strindberg," *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*, Jg. 23 (1912), Bd. 4, p. 1547 and p. 1724, in conjunction with Laura Marholm's correspondence with Fritz Mauthner, Marholm wanted to bring Therese Krüger with her.

Nils. They still had not overcome their language difficulties either: “Varken hon eller jag kände oss fria och naturliga.”¹³⁸

On the night before Marholm was to leave, Hansson came to Marholm’s room and asked her what her future plans were. Marholm did not feel she had anything important ahead of her: “Företaga mig? Hvad kan ett blad, som drifves af vinden företaga sig? Det måste dansa, så länge som den drifver det, och på en gång ser man det icke mer, och ingen frågar efter hvar det blifit af.”¹³⁹ The two did not want to part, so they decided to travel to Norway together. Hansson’s brother Nils still tagged along until they decided to visit Arne Garborg. Nils did not want to associate himself with Garborg, because, ever since the morality debates, Garborg had become social poison in some circles. Thus, by threatening him with the prospect of meeting Garborg, Hansson and Marholm were able to rid themselves of their unwanted chaperon. During the long trip up to Garborg, they were finally able to get acquainted.

The result of this journey was that Hansson and Marholm decided that they wanted to stay together, though they did not yet consummate their relationship: “Jag vill icke räkna detta som min förtjenst, jeg hade den allrabästa vilja, men jeg var ju oerfaren, och Ola tycktes vilja låta mig återvände oförändrad till mina för att inhemta deras samtycke. Till hvad, det var oss mindre klart; de fria förbindelserna lågo på den tiden i luften och jag ville icke veta af något äktenskap, då jag ju var et par år äldre än han.”¹⁴⁰ At the time of their visit to Koster, Marholm was 35 and Hansson was 29. Marholm describes her return to Riga with the telling word “triumftåg” (triumphal procession). Marholm could not help feeling a sense of triumph in the face of her parents, who had believed she was too homely to ever marry. Although Marholm and Hansson had not exactly decided to marry, Marholm’s parents insisted that they do so: “Fadern hade blott en enda liten anmärkning at göra: vi skulle gifta oss – på vilket sätt vi ville. Icke kyrkligt, om vi icke tyckte om det, och icke under släktens uppsikt, om detta icke behagade oss, men en liten smula gifta skulle vi vara, annars fick hon inga pengar.”¹⁴¹ Once again, Marholm’s father used the only tool at his disposal to get his

¹³⁸ Ola Hansson, *Ur minnet och dagboken*, ed. Emy Ek (Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1926). “Neither she nor I felt free and natural.”

¹³⁹ Marholm, “Koster.” “Undertake? What can a leaf driven by the wind undertake? It must dance as long as it is driven and then suddenly one cannot see it anymore and no one asks what became of it.”

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* “I cannot take credit for that, I was quite willing, but I was inexperienced and Ola seemed to want to allow me to return unchanged to my parents in order to obtain their approval. For what, that was less clear to us; free relationships lay in the air at the time and I did not want to hear of marriage, since I was a few years older than he.”

¹⁴¹ Hansson, *Ur minnet og dagboken*, pp. 113–114. “Her father had just one little comment to make: we should get married – in any way we wanted. Not in a church, if we did not want to, and not under the relatives’ supervision, if that did not please us, but we had to be just a tiny bit married or else she would not get any money.”

way. Marholm and Hansson were married on September 17, 1889, in a civil ceremony with Viggo Pingel and Rev. Henning Jensen as witnesses.

If Marholm's marriage to Hansson signaled a new era in her life, her falling out with Brandes signified the end of the old. The circumstances surrounding Marholm's break with Brandes are well-known in the secondary literature, since their quarrel played a role in the reception of Nietzsche in Germany.¹⁴² In July, Brandes had sent Marholm his essay on Nietzsche, "Aristokratisk Radikalisme," to be translated into German. The translation of "Aristokratisk Radikalisme" was delayed, and by November, Brandes was becoming very impatient. The tone of Brandes' letters to Marholm grows more and more hostile. He becomes particularly irritated when Ola Hansson publishes an essay on Nietzsche in the November issue of *Unsere Zeit*: "Det var mig ikke kjært, at en anden Afhandling kom frem i Tyskland før min."¹⁴³ He later accused Marholm of having deliberately withheld his essay on Nietzsche, so that Ola Hansson could publish his essay first.

Of course, Marholm had a great deal on her mind during these months, but Brandes' accusation is probably justified. Marholm's first priority had become Ola Hansson's best interests. When one recalls that Marholm's feminine ideal was Gertrud Lindensstern, who sacrificed life and limb for her beloved, one can only conclude that leaving Brandes' essay unattended on her desk would have been a small matter to Marholm. Moreover, she seemed to expect Brandes to understand her position and may have explained as much to him, which prompted the protest: "Det falder mig naturligvis ikke ind at jeg skulde gaa forud for Deres Mand."¹⁴⁴ The fact of the matter was that Brandes did expect Marholm to translate his essay first and accused her of subterfuge.

The decay of their relationship is easy to follow in their correspondence. Brandes offends Marholm by correcting not only her Danish, but her German. Brandes' disposition toward Marholm is further soured by the rumor that Marholm has been making fun of him behind his back. This accusation is not at all improbable either, in the light of comments made by Marholm about Brandes in her correspondence with Garborg and Lie. Similar charges, of course, could have been brought against Brandes with respect to Marholm. By early January, the breach between Brandes and Marholm was irreparable.

¹⁴² See, for example, Harald Beyer, "Nietzsche og Norden," *Universitetet i Bergens Årbok 1958* (Bergen: A. S. John Griegs Boktrykkeri, 1958); Harald Borland, *Nietzsche's Influence on Swedish Literature with Special Reference to Strindberg, Ola Hansson, Heidenstam and Fröding* (Göteborg: Wettergren & Kerbers Förlag, 1956), p. 56; Arne Widell, *Ola Hansson i Tyskland. En studie i hans liv och diktning åren 1890-1893*. (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1979), pp. 14-16; Nolin, p. 159.

¹⁴³ Georg Brandes to Laura Hansson, 4 January 1890. "It was not pleasing to me that another essay appeared in Germany before my own." Ola Hansson's essay was "Friedrich Nietzsche," *Unsere Zeit*, 2 (1889), pp. 400-418.

¹⁴⁴ Georg Brandes to Laura Hansson, 18 November 1889. "It would never occur to me that I should have priority over your husband."

In one of her letters to Garborg, Marholm had indiscreetly hinted that Brandes spent more of his time on love affairs than academic projects, and then cautioned Garborg: “Nu skal De ikke sige at De har det fra mig, thi saa kommer Jehovas Vrede over mig, og han er ikke denne Gudhed, som glemmer, eller tilgiver, hverken Smaat eller Stort [sic].”¹⁴⁵ Marholm did indeed know Brandes well. He never forgave her for this episode and complained of it to almost anyone who would listen. Adolf Paul tells about a meeting with Brandes: “Mellan ett par förlorade ägg, som han i hast slungade i sig, tog han också, i förbifarten, död på Laura Marholm, som just då hade gjort sig saker till något slags majestätsförbrytelse emot honom.”¹⁴⁶ Brandes also wrote of her betrayal in letters to Gustaf af Geijerstam, Jonas Lie, and Ellen Key.

Eight years later, in 1897, Helga Johansen told Brandes she wanted to review one of Marholm’s books. Brandes had this to say about Marholm:

En Dag saa jeg for første Gang i mit Værelse denne skrækkelige Braksnude. I mit Hus lærte hun Ola Hansson at kjende. Hun er et aldeles uvidende Fruentimmer, for hvem Verdenshistorien begynder 1870, et nogenlunde godt Hoved, dog uden Glimt af Originalitet, i øvrigt fræk, pervers, gemen, fuld af den raaeste Hensynsløshed for at albu sig frem. Hun og hendes Mand har udviklet sig til et literært Banditpar efter Opskriften[:] Hun lever som Skribentinde paa den Opdagelse, at Kvinden er et Kjønsvæsen og paa at have gjort Spionvisitter hos berømte Mænd. Saadanne Væseners Bøger fortjener ingen Omtale eller Drøftelse. Læs de store Aanders Bøger, ikke Sligt. Det er heldigvis en 8 Aar siden jeg har set denne Megære, som jeg hader ikke ud af nogen Stemning, men med ganske koldt Blod.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Laura Mohr to Arne Garborg, 3 November 1888. “Now you must not say that you have it from me, because the wrath of Jehovah would fall upon me, and he is not a deity that forgets or forgives, neither small things nor great.”

¹⁴⁶ Adolf Paul, *Profiler. Minnen ay stora personligheter* (Stockholm: Fahlerantz & Co., 1937), pp. 117–118. “In between a few poached eggs, which he hastily devoured, he, in passing, executed Laura Marholm who had just made herself guilty of some kind of high treason against him.”

¹⁴⁷ Georg Brandes to Helga Johansen, 31 May 1897. Printed in Dahlerup, p. 90. “One day I saw in my room for the first time that horrible snub snout. In my house, she met Ola Hansson. She is a completely ignorant woman, for whom world history begins in 1870, a fairly good head, but without a trace of originality, moreover impudent, perverse, common, filled with the coarsest ruthlessness in elbowing her way forward. She and her husband have developed into a pair of literary bandits according to this recipe[:] She lives as an authoress by having made the discovery that women are sexual beings and by having made espionage visits to the homes of famous men. The books of such creatures do not deserve any reviews or discussion. Read the books of great minds, not suchlike. Happily, it has been eight years since I’ve seen that harpie, whom I hate, not out of a whim, but in rather cold blood.”

Marriage, Friedrichshagen, and Strindberg: 1890–1893

In recent scholarship, Ola Hansson's initial years in Germany have been the object of intense study.¹ However, the picture of Ola Hansson's activity in Germany is not complete without considering Marholm's participation in Hansson's development and the course her own thought followed during this period. Certainly, Ola Hansson scholars have taken this into account to some extent. The events and associations in the lives of Hansson and Marholm during these years have been well documented in the secondary literature. But, for obvious reasons, each such account has been biased toward Ola Hansson; therefore, much can be gained by a consideration of the period with an acknowledged compensating bias toward Marholm's perspective.

It has been difficult for the secondary literature about Ola Hansson to arrive at a fair assessment of his marriage, because of conflicting testimonies in contemporary sources and a general lack of knowledge about Marholm's personal history. Hansson's family and friends tended to blame her for luring Hansson away from his homeland and for causing the paranoid condition that afflicted them both. As Ingvar Holm has pointed out, "Det är sådana förmodanden som låter Laura Marholm framstå som ond genius – den direkta orsaken till ett av skeppsbrotten i svensk litteraturhistoria."² Strindberg has contributed greatly to the portrait of Marholm as a domineering, scheming, interfering woman, and modern scholarship seems to have been affected by this view. There has also been a tendency to deny Marholm any originality, since the pair was concerned with similar issues during this period. The issue of originality is very difficult to

¹ See, for example, David Raymond Hume, "The German Literary Achievements of Ola Hansson 1888–1893," Diss. University of Kentucky, 1972; Inger Månesköld-Öberg, *Att spegla tiden – eller forma den. Ola Hanssons introduktion av nordisk litteratur i Tyskland 1889–1895*. (Göteborg, 1984), and Arne Widell, *Ola Hansson i Tyskland. En studie i hans liv och diktning åren 1890–1893*, (Uppsala: Lundequistiska Bokhandeln, 1979).

² Ingvar Holm, *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttitalsromantik* (Lund: Gleerups Förlag, 1957), p. 209. "It is such assumptions which let Laura Marholm appear as an evil genius – the direct cause of one of the shipwrecks in Swedish literary history." Holm is one of the few who has taken the time to investigate Laura Marholm's character, but even his picture is incomplete.

sort out in this case, since Hansson and Marholm discussed almost everything together, and Hansson's German essays passed through the filter of Marholm's translation. Yet, it is possible to trace a development in Marholm's thought, especially about women, which is consistent with views held before her marriage, and yet distinct from the position Hansson takes in his writing.

In order to understand their marriage, it may be useful to consider the motives and needs that brought Hansson and Marholm together. Marholm's words to Jonas Lie best express her wishes: "Ved De en, som trænger til en stærk Haand og et stærkt Hjerte, saa henvis ham til mig. Min Kraft fordobles, naar jeg kan bære en anden oppe – man er jo Kvinde, man maa være noget for Andre, for at føle Livet helt."³ Since her youth, Marholm had dreamed of meeting a talented man, whom she could help to greater glory. When Marholm met Ola Hansson, his career was in need of assistance. She was already an admirer of his work and was in a position to be of immediate help to him. She reviewed and translated Hansson's works and used her publishing connections to establish him in Germany. At this time, the German literary market was a refuge for Scandinavian authors who felt themselves unappreciated at home. As Arne Garborg expressed it to Marholm, "Tyskland er – dels *er* det Europa, og dels er det for os Veien til Europa."⁴

Furthermore, Marholm had grown tired of her rootless existence in Copenhagen. Her home was in Riga, but she could not live there happily. Her life in Copenhagen lacked security, since she was greatly dependent on the uncertain favor of Georg Brandes. Marriage brought Marholm a new focal point and enabled her to escape being the grateful beneficiary of Brandes' largesse, a role which could sometimes be trying. In marrying Hansson, Marholm felt that she was marrying a purpose in life: "ett innehåll, [där?] det var ändå dittills en tomhet."⁵

For his part, Hansson had just gone through a series of professional, erotic, and personal disappointments, all described by Ingvar Holm in his study about Ola Hansson. Hansson later wrote of his initial attraction to Marholm: "Det var på det hela taget det egendomliga i mitt förhållande till henne, att jag, som hade så svårt att vänja mig vid främmande människor och av naturen var tillbakadragen och föga umgängsam, strax hade fattat tillit till henne och kände mig otvun-

³ Laura Mohr to Jonas Lie, 14 June 1888. "If you know of someone who longs for a strong hand and a strong heart, then send him to me. My strength doubles when I can bear another person up – one is, of course, a woman, one must be something for others in order to feel life completely."

⁴ Arne Garborg to Laura Mohr, 17 April 1889. "Germany is – in part it *is* Europe, and in part it is for us the route to Europe."

⁵ Marholm, "Koster," manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek. "a content, [where] there had hitherto been emptiness."

gen och naturlig. Och dock var hon i alla avseenden min motsats.”⁶ Hansson was sensitive, moody, and shy. Marholm was a naturally gregarious woman, who easily came into conversation with almost anyone.

Hansson admired Marholm’s strength, and one is tempted to believe that he was looking for a mother figure. Hansson had a strong mother, to whom he was devoted, until a family dispute in 1891 alienated Hansson from his relatives.⁷ Hansson himself provides some support for the assumption that he was attracted to Marholm as a mother figure in his autobiographical novel, *Resan hem*. In the episode based on Marholm and Hansson’s stay on Koster, when Louise Schrader leaves the island, Truls Andersson feels: “att han skulle kunnat gråta som ett barn, som mist sin mor.”⁸ Furthermore, there is, of course, the fact that Marholm was 6 years his senior. As might be expected under these circumstances, there developed a great deal of tension, and no doubt competition, between Marholm and her mother-in-law.

Through the processes of education and experience, both Marholm and Hansson had become alienated from their roots. Ola Hansson was always fervently attached to his home tract in Sweden, but circumstances made it impossible for him to live there. At the very end of *Resan hem*, Truls Andersson reflects on the hostility between his wife and an old friend from Skåne and comes to a revelation: “vore det icke sig själv han såg, i den ene såväl som i den andra, i honom och i henne, – i honom, som aldrig kommit ut ur den snäva trollkretsen av den skånska jordandens herradöme, och i henne som förkroppsligade den goda världskulturskola, som han, Truls, genomgått.”⁹ In marrying Marholm, Hansson made a commitment to a broadening of his cultural horizons. At the same time, both sought to recreate with the other a sense of “home,” which they had both lost. Indeed, in the novel *Resan hem*, the home which Truls finds is his marriage with Louise.

In the novella “Havsfåglar,” which was based, once again, on Marholm and Hansson’s stay on Koster, one of the qualities that Nils Tuveson admires most about his prospective fiancée is her ability to conduct herself in social situations. In Skurup and Friedrichshagen, Hansson benefitted greatly from Marholm’s

⁶ Ola Hansson, *Ur minnet och Dagboken*, ed. Emy Ek (Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1926), p. 110. “It was overall one of the odd things about my relationship with her, that I, who had a difficult time growing accustomed to strange people and by nature was withdrawn and scarcely sociable, immediately felt trust in her and felt unforced and natural. And yet, she was in every respect my opposite.”

⁷ See Widell, p. 56.

⁸ Ola Hansson, *Resan Hem, Samlade skrifter*, Vol. 7 (Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1920), p. 373. “that he could have wept like a child, who had lost his mother.”

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 395. “was it not himself he saw, in the one as well as the other, in him and in her, – in him, who had never escaped the narrow magic circle of the Scanian earth spirit’s dominion, and in her who incorporated the good school of world culture, which he, Truls, had gone through.”

social alacrity. Whenever the Hanssons entertained or attended a social gathering, Marholm would often take the spotlight until both Hansson and the guests felt at ease with one another. Once she noticed that Hansson was in a communicative mood, she would relinquish the floor.

Stanislaw Przybyszewski provides a good example of this in terms of his own initial meeting with the Hanssons:

Frau Laura, eine vorzügliche Psychologin, verstand und beurteilte richtig meine Schüchternheit, sie zog mich diskret ins Gespräch, langsam faßte sie mich, ich fühlte mich wohl in Hanssons Arbeitsraum [. . .] Nach etwa einer Stunde entdeckte dann auch Ola Hansson anscheinend den Menschen wieder, den er hatte kennenlernen wollen, denn er begann mich immer aufmerksamer und freundlicher zu betrachten und lauschte meinen Ausführungen mit gespanntem Interesse. Als Frau Laura dann einen Spaziergang durch den schönen Wald hinter Hanssons Häuschen vorschlug, schickte sie uns beide voraus. "Dort findet ihr euch am besten", sagte sie mit klugem Lächeln, "Herr Servaes leistet mir Gesellschaft." Wir fanden uns so gründlich, daß wir zwei Stunden zu spät zum Essen kamen.¹⁰

Similar tales have been told by other members of the Friedrichshagen group. Some interpreted Marholm's flamboyance and Hansson's unease at social gatherings as a sign that Hansson was completely dominated by Marholm. This, however, was not the case. Marholm's control of social situations was meant to relieve Hansson of what was an extraordinary burden to him, so that he was able to make contact with important people on the German literary scene at his own pace. One must also recall that Hansson's German was not very good at this point. It is safe to say that without Marholm as his impresaria, Hansson would not have established himself in Germany as rapidly as he did, and these enormously productive years of his life would have turned out quite differently.

Julius Hart provides a particularly noteworthy assessment of the Hansson marriage:

In Friedrichshagen hatten sich noch Ola Hansson und seine lebenskluge und gescheite Gattin Laura Marholm niedergelassen, die mehr das männliche Prinzip in der Ehe verkörperte, ebenso wie er das weibliche Element darzustellen hatte. Er war von feiner, zarter, geistreicher Gestalt – sensitiv und nervös, und auch etwas dunstig, wie seine weichen und stillen Novellen [. . .] Ola dichtete, Laura dachte – er war Gefühl, sie Kopf und Verstand. Sie schrieb Essays, gelehrte Abhandlungen und kämpfte als streitbare Amazone für die neuen Rechte der neuen Frau, verwaltete mit klugen geschäftlichen Sinnen die gemeinsamen literarischen Familienangelegenheiten. Höchst ehrgeizig stand sie puffend und in die Rippen stoßend hinter dem Gatten und war wohl nach Friedrichshagen zur "Kolonie" gekommen, um uns alle zu verpflichten und in Eid und Dienst zu nehmen, daß wir die Ruhmesleiter zimmerten, auf der der

¹⁰ Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (München: Winkler-Verlag, 1965), p. 109.

Gatte endlich zu dem Himmel aufsteigen konnte, wo einstweilen noch die Björnson, Ibsen thronten.¹¹

Despite the irony in the above statement, it probably offers a fairly accurate description of Hansson and Marholm's relationship, certainly as it appeared to their acquaintances in Friedrichshagen. Marholm's ambitions on behalf of her husband were transparent. In a community where women rarely took part in the intellectual discussions, many found Marholm to be too aggressive.

Przybyszewski, a warm admirer of Marholm, looked more kindly upon her intervention in Hansson's career:

“Olinka [Ola] war völlig hilflos im Leben – nichts ängstigte ihn so wie der Gedanke, er werde ein Honorar annehmen, sich mit einem Verleger treffen und mit ihm sprechen, überhaupt in irgendeiner Weise mit der Wirklichkeit zusammenstoßen müssen. Ohne Frau Laura wäre vielleicht schon damals eingetreten, was Hansson von Edgar Allan Poe erzählte – er wäre nicht in der Lage gewesen, ein Manuskript in eine Redaktion zu bringen, weil es ihm an anständiger Kleidung gefehlt hätte.”¹²

Hansson allowed all the troublesome details of his daily life to be taken care of by Marholm. For her part, Marholm enjoyed Hansson's dependence upon her. However, it is a mistake to assume that Hansson was a henpecked husband.

Within their private sphere, Hansson ruled by his moods. Interestingly enough, Marholm's mother had used this same tactic at home in Riga; therefore, Marholm had considerable experience in dealing with such behavior. Hansson had quite particular demands as regarded food, drink, and a serene atmosphere for work, and Marholm did her best to accommodate him, despite a limited budget and the fact that she herself was overworked. The guiding principle at home was that Hansson should be contented. Marholm's later autobiographical novellas bear witness to this as do the writings of their son, Ola Hansson, Jr.¹³

Certainly, Hansson left his homeland because of Marholm's influence. In terms of his career as an author, this was probably the best decision he could have made, but he would never have made it without Marholm's support. The reasons why they remained abroad in relative exile for the rest of their lives are more complicated and will be addressed as they arise. However, it was mostly Hansson's restlessness that caused the family to shift location so often. Marholm hated to move, and yet she changed addresses over 20 times during her 36-year marriage to Hansson, one of the many sacrifices she was prepared to make for him.

¹¹ Julius Hart, “Friedrichshagen,” *Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte*, 33, no. 6 (February 1919), p. 655.

¹² Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin*, p. 109.

¹³ See Laura Marholm, *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* (Berlin: Carl Duncker, 1897), especially the novella “Eheliche Liebe.” Also, Ola Hansson, Jr., “Några drag ur min fars liv,” *Svensk litteraturtidning*, 5 (1942), pp. 49–59 and “Ola Hanssons sjukdom och död,” manuscript in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek.

Yet despite all talk of manipulation, sacrifice, and mutual advantage, there is every indication that Marholm and Hansson were genuinely devoted to one another. At the end of “Havsfåglar,” Nils confesses to Fröken Berg that he has no money, and she answers: “Det vore heller icke bra annorledes [. . .]. Fria som havsfåglar och fattiga som havsfåglar och stolta som havsfåglar – så vilja vi leva, så länge den skatt räcker, som vi funnit.”¹⁴ The hardships of subsequent years would prove that Hansson and Marholm had indeed taken each other for better or for worse.

Hansson and Marholm spent the first months of their marriage living in a small apartment in Holte, not far from Copenhagen. As she wrote to Garborg, “Vi sidder her stille og tilregnet som nygifte Egtefolk i en næved Kolbotten’sk Ensomhed paa Landet. Det er for Byflikkan en ganske aparte Nydelse [sic].”¹⁵ Their idyll, of course, was soon troubled by the brewing storm with Brandes. Notes in the Lund and Copenhagen libraries, dating presumably from the first month of the Hansson marriage, bear witness to misunderstood and missed appointments to see Georg and Gerda Brandes. Such mistakes no doubt contributed to the growing ill-will between the parties.

The newly-wed couple did not allow matrimonial bliss to hinder their work. If anything, their diligence increased. Marholm’s stock seems to have been particularly high in Germany at this point. *Frankfurter Zeitung* asked her to supply them with works by Scandinavian authors, and during the summer, Marholm had also been invited by Fritz Mauthner to contribute to his new weekly publication, *Deutschland. Wochenschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Wissenschaft und sociales Leben*, which later merged with *Das Magazin für Litteratur* in 1891.¹⁶ Marholm responded to Mauthner’s request by sending him translations of *Ung-Ofegs Visor*, and she took the time on her very wedding day to acknowledge the receipt of the galleys. Mauthner had asked her to arrange contacts with “dem jungen Skandinavien,” but he primarily received a barrage of Ola Hansson’s works. In November, she sent Mauthner an article by Hansson about Strindberg and claimed: “Ich habe die Blätter übersetzt, noch ehe sie trocken waren.”¹⁷ Ola Hansson contributed prodigiously to *Deutschland* and *Das Magazin*, and Marholm did her best to translate his contributions to German promptly. She even

¹⁴ Ola Hansson, “Havsfåglar,” *Samlade skrifter*, Vol. 4, p. 231. “It would not have been good otherwise, she answered. As free as seabirds and as poor as seabirds and as proud as seabirds – thus do we want to live, as long as the treasure which we have found lasts.”

¹⁵ Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 2 October 1889. “We sit here quietly and just like newly-weds in a virtually Kolbotten-like isolation in the country. For a city girl it is quite a peculiar pleasure.”

¹⁶ See Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 2 October 1889 and Laura Mohr to Fritz Mauthner, 14 August 1889.

¹⁷ Laura Hansson to Fritz Mauthner, 14 November 1889.

found some time to work on other translations and promised Mauthner forthcoming novellas from Arne Garborg and August Strindberg as well as some essays from Georg Brandes.¹⁸

Much later, Hansson remarked about Marholm's activities at this time, "Als Übersetzerin an und für sich engagierte sie sich überhaupt nicht, – ebenso wenig wie sie je Berufsschriftstellerin werden wollte. Damals hatte sie genug zu tun, selbst zu schreiben und mich zu übersetzen."¹⁹ Indeed, Marholm did not seek to make a name for herself as a translator, as, for example, Marie Herzfeld and Ernst Brausewetter had done. After her marriage to Hansson, she became his private translator, translating for others only as a personal favor. Marholm never took credit for the translation of any of Hansson's works, as little as Hansson took credit for translating her books to Swedish in subsequent years. Her own ambitions as an author were clearly subordinated to Hansson's interests during the first years of her marriage, something they evidently both took for granted. Hansson was supportive of Marholm's critical activities, but they did not take precedence over conducting family business, translating his work, and keeping the household.

Just before his marriage to Marholm, Hansson had begun to formulate ideas for a new work which would become *Tidens kvinnor*. Hansson worked on the project throughout the first year of his marriage, and it is a prime illustration of the difficulty involved in the issue of originality in the Hansson partnership. As Arne Widell noticed in his examination of the work, "Till Tidens kvinnor har Laura Marholm utan tvivel bidragit med en god del av stoffet."²⁰ According to Widell, the novellas "Tre rosor," "Ett liv," "Urspårad," and "Mater dolorosa" are based respectively on Marholm's observations about Gerda Brandes, Clara Bergsøe, Therese Krüger and an unidentified acquaintance.²¹ In addition to

¹⁸ The novellas Marholm translated for Strindberg were: "Herbst," *Deutschland* 1 (1890), pp. 593–597, and "Liebe und Kornpreise," *Deutschland* 1 (1890), pp. 165–168; 183–184. For Garborg, she translated "Kolbotten: Ein Stück Dichterleben in Norwegen," which appeared in *Das Magazin* after a considerable delay. For obvious reasons, the Brandes translations never came about. She also translated for Hansson's friend Peter Nansen "Aus dem Tagebuch eines Verliebten," *Das Magazin* 60 (1891), pp. 383–384.

¹⁹ Ola Hansson, "Erinnerungen an August Strindberg," *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*, 23 (1912), Bd. 4, p. 1549.

²⁰ Widell, p. 55. "Laura Marholm has without doubt contributed a good deal of the material for *Tidens kvinnor*."

²¹ I would like to make a few observations about Widell's study of *Tidens kvinnor* and other novellas from this period, pp. 50–69. In "Tre rosor," the scene in which the wife comes upon her husband in the embrace of another woman is probably based on an episode discussed by Georg Brandes and Victoria Benedictsson in their correspondence. Brandes had accused Benedictsson of confiding too much in Laura Mohr, and Benedictsson responds with the version of the episode she told Marholm: "Jag tror icke att frk. Mohr med afsigt beljugit mig, men hon har kunnat tala om hvad jag sagt, och resten – ja, hvad vet jag." ("I don't believe that Miss Mohr has intentionally lied about me, but she could have related what I said, and as for the rest – what do I

supplying Hansson with factual information about these women, Marholm surely did not keep her own opinions about the psychology of women to herself. Particularly in “Ett liv” one can perceive the theory that Marholm had developed in conjunction with Marie Bashkirtseff: Conventional upbringings cripple the natural instincts of women, so that they are never able to find fulfillment. Prior to their marriage both Hansson and Marholm shared an interest in “Liebespsychologie,” so one can scarcely give Marholm credit for causing a dramatic change of focus in Ola Hansson’s work. Nevertheless, Hansson’s marriage to a woman who was willing to speculate at length about the intimate erotic life of women provided a strong impetus to the writing of *Tidens kvinnor*.

Sometime in January of 1890, Marholm received an invitation to contribute to the new periodical, *Freie Bühne*.²² This seems natural since the founding members included Fritz Mauthner and Paul Schlenker, the editor of the Sunday literary supplements for *Vossische Zeitung*, to which both Marholm and Hansson were already contributors. As a result of this offer, Marholm and Hansson decided to stop in Berlin on their way to Paris. Their visit lasted for approximately four months.

Marholm and Hansson left Denmark on February 7th. Upon their arrival in Berlin, they moved into a small apartment at Kurfürstenstraße 46, which cost them 70 marks per month.²³ The couple was soon joined by Marholm’s friend, Therese Krüger.²⁴ During this stay, the Hanssons made a number of valuable contacts. In addition to meeting the principle founders of *Freie Bühne*, including Otto Brahm, Samuel Fischer, Fritz Mauthner, and Paul Schlenker, they also associated with Gerhart Hauptmann, Hermann Bahr, Arno Holz, Franz Servaes, Hermann Sudermann and Ludvig Fulda.²⁵ Franz Servaes became a good friend of the Hanssons and later had a hand in convincing them to return to Berlin. Similarly, Gerhart Hauptmann and Hermann Bahr took a personal interest in the Hanssons.

know.”) [Georg and Edvard Brandes, *Brevväxling med svenska och finska författare och vetenskapsmän*, v. 1 (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1939), p. 271]. The remarkable disparities between Benedictsson’s version and the one in “Tre rosor” are due, I think, to the insane jealousy of Gerda Brandes who greatly embellished the version she told Laura Mohr. As an additional point, there may not be anything particularly ominous about the fact that Therese Krüger abruptly disappears from the lives of Hansson and Marholm after her visit to Paris. Marholm stopped communicating with all of the female friends she had had before her marriage to Hansson.

²² Ola Hansson to Marie Herzfeld, 18 January 1890.

²³ Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 30 September 1890.

²⁴ Not much biographical information is available about Therese Krüger. Initially, Krüger and Marholm had a good deal in common: They were both single native German-speakers, who translated the works of Scandinavian authors. Krüger does not seem to have engaged in much critical activity, but she seems to have taken an active part in the Copenhagen social scene.

²⁵ Widell, p. 23.

After their first meeting, Hauptmann made the following notes about the Hanssons:

Heut war Hansson und Frau (Marholm) bei uns. Sie spricht fließend und lebhaft. "Differenziert" und "nuanciert" waren ihre Lieblingsausdrücke. "Gleiten". Brandes gleite, die skandinavischen Frauen "gleiten".

Hansson schreibt "Frauenstudien". "Das Harren auf das große Erlebnis. Das Erotische das Zentrale.["]

Charakteristisch war die Art, wie sie in der Person, von der sie sprach, zu leben schien. Sie war gleichsam selbst diese Person.²⁶

Hauptmann was clearly struck by Marholm's conversational talents. Her knack for conjuring forth the people about whom she spoke has been attested to elsewhere, but always in sources dating after her marriage. Marholm had not been able to make full use of these talents while she lived in Georg Brandes' shadow, since he commanded the spotlight in his own salon.

Hauptmann also took an interest in Hansson's and Marholm's writing, something substantiated by evidence from his notebook and library. He read Hansson's *Alltagsfrauen*, saved clippings of some essays by Marholm and Hansson from *Vossische Zeitung*, and evidently followed the polemic in the *Freie Bühne* launched by Marholm's series of articles on women. The interest was mutual, since both Hansson and Marholm considered Hauptmann to be the most promising figure on the German literary scene. The Hanssons and the Hauptmanns saw each other socially during these four months. There is yet another entry in Hauptmann's notebook describing an evening with the Hanssons, Otto Brahm, and Therese Krüger, where once again Hauptmann makes a dramatist's notes about Marholm's patterns of speech.²⁷ Marholm also tried to arrange a meeting between Hauptmann and the Hungarian critic Josef Diner.²⁸

Hermann Bahr became a good friend of the Hanssons and was an enthusiastic supporter of Hansson's writings against naturalism. This particular connection between Ola Hansson and Hermann Bahr was quite fruitful and has been dealt with elsewhere.²⁹ Marholm was also an admirer of Bahr, particularly of his novella, "Die Funktion des Dritten": "Det er dyb Kønspychologie og et nyskabt Tysk, hvori der er Hvirvelvind, hvad man ikke skulle tro at det sindige Tysk lod sig drive ud paa."³⁰ This is actually a point about which Marholm and Hansson

²⁶ Gerhart Hauptmann, *Notiz-Kalender 1889 bis 1891*, Hg. Martin Machatzke (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1982), p. 223.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

²⁹ See Widell or Susan Brantly, "Creating an Alternative to Naturalism: Ola Hansson's Assimilation of Nietzsche," *Orbis Litterarum*, 42 (1987), pp. 44-57.

³⁰ Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 30 September 1890. "It is profound sexual psychology and a newly created German, in which there is a whirlwind of which one would not believe the sober German language capable." "Die Funktion des Dritten" can be found in: Hermann Bahr, *Fin de siècle* (Berlin: Zoberbier, 1891).

had different opinions, since Hansson had difficulty appreciating Bahr's literary efforts, even though he admired his critical works. Bahr also took part in the aforementioned polemic sparked by Marholm's articles in the first volume of *Freie Bühne*.

The series of articles which set off this debate appeared under the title "Die Frauen in der skandinavischen Dichtung." The principal argument behind the series is that in Scandinavia, "die Litteratur hatte in's Leben zurückgewirkt und praktische Folgen gehabt."³¹ Marholm believed that the Scandinavian women's movement of the previous ten years had been generated by suggestions put forth by Ibsen and Bjørnson.

Marholm argues that everything started with Ibsen's creation of Nora in *Et dukkehjem* in 1879. In that play, Nora evolves from a bird in a gilded cage to "eine schwedische Entrüstungsdame," who lives by the postulate: "Das Weib müsse erst Mensch und dann Weib sein."³² Marholm explains further:

Die Genialität in diesem Ibsen'schen Stück beruht für mich nicht auf dem moralischen Rigorismus, und nicht auf den beißenden Hieben des Dialogs, und nicht auf der erlesenen dramatischen Technik, – sondern auf der seltenen Feinhörigkeit, mit der er das volkpsychologische Moment und das Standesgepräge erfaßte, vor Allem aber auf der Sicherheit, mit der er das Programm der Emancipationsdamen formulirte, ehe sie selbst es stammeln konnten.³³

Marholm believes that women are accustomed to following a male lead, and so Ibsen provided a rallying point for the emancipationists with his characterization of Nora.

Marholm's attitude toward Ibsen has changed somewhat since the days in which she had Ibsen to thank for her own spiritual awakening.³⁴ Of course, even back then, she had preferred Dr. Stockmann of *En folkefiende* as an emancipatory figure, rather than Nora. In the intervening years, Ibsen had become too closely identified with the women's movement for Marholm to be able to endorse him completely. As a result, Marholm allows herself some jabs at "Papa Ibsen" in her article, but overall she still respects him as an artist. Despite her

³¹ Laura Marholm, "Die Frauen in der skandinavischen Dichtung. Strindberg's Lauratypus," *Freie Bühne*, 1 (30 April 1890), p. 364. The series was also published without Marholm's consent in Danish as "Om kvindesagen," *Samtiden*, 1 (1890), pp. 353–367; pp. 396–401.

³² Laura Marholm, "Die Frauen in der skandinavischen Dichtung. Der Noratypus," *Freie Bühne*, 1 (12 March 1890), p. 171.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Barbara Gentikow considers the change between this collection of essays and Marholm's first Ibsen essay to be dramatic. For her discussion of these articles, see Barbara Gentikow, *Skandinavien als präkapitalistische Idylle* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1978), pp. 137–141.

reservations, Marholm was nonetheless more positively disposed toward Ibsen than Hansson, who was rather vocal in his opposition to Ibsen at this time.³⁵

Marholm goes on to argue that Nora of Ibsen's third act evolved into an even more extreme type: Bjørnson's Svava. Marholm writes about this type:

Als moderner Damentypus ist gegen Svava nichts einzuwenden. Sie ist echt. Sie ist das moralisierende Bourgeoisiefräulein mit den "ernsten" Interessen. Sie hat die mittelmäßige Intelligenz des sogenannten "begabten Mädchens", das immer "die besten Schulzeugnisse bekommen." Sie ist ein gewöhnliches Mädchenenerziehungsproduct, etwas dürr, etwas unbefriedigt, etwas altjungfräulich. Nichts an ihr ist frisch, unmittelbar, strömend, individuell, eine lange Jugend versprechend.³⁶

This description stems from her experiences during the morality debates in Copenhagen, with its attendant caricatures of frustrated women. Above all, Marholm blames Bjørnson, and through him the "Svavatypus," of degrading the erotic by viewing it as an animal act and ethical moment: "Für den unendlichen Reichtum an Nuancen, für die warme, tiefe Fülle, die Kräfteerhöhung und den Seeleninhalt, mit dem das centrale Moment des Lebens den normal angelegten und glücklich entwickelten Menschen durchströmt, für die Vertiefung und Verfeinerung der Persönlichkeit, die die Erotik mit sich bringt, hat er nie ein zu Bewußtsein gewordenes Gefühl gehabt."³⁷ For Marholm, sex was a central, positive facet of human existence which Bjørnson sought to repress and deny.

In this article, Marholm is much harder on Bjørnson personally than she was in the article she had published anonymously in *Die Gegenwart* two years earlier. Her marriage to Hansson brought about greater outspokenness in her writing. In fact, at this time, the writings of both Hansson and Marholm display a tendency toward arrogance, something which would not serve them well in the long run.

The final essay of the series is about Strindberg: "Die Frauenbewegung in Skandinavien hat in Strindberg einen Damm gefunden, über den sie nicht hinausschwellen wird."³⁸ Marholm describes Strindberg's portrayal of women as follows:

Sie steht da in seine Büchern als eine neue Eva, die noch von keinem Dichter geschminkt, von keinen Moral-, oder Religions-, oder Schicklichkeitsrücksichten mit einem Blätterschurz bekleidet worden, steht da in ihrer physiologischen Nacktheit in allen Altersstufen, *das entkleidete Culturweib, mit allen*

³⁵ See, for example, Ola Hansson, "Friedrich Nietzsche und der Naturalismus," *Die Gegenwart*, 39 (1891), pp. 275-278; 296-299. Among other things, Hansson calls Ibsen a moral philistine.

³⁶ Laura Marholm, "Die Frauen in der skandinavischen Dichtung. Der Svavatypus," *Freie Bühne*, 1 (2 April 1890), p. 263.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

³⁸ Marholm, "Strindberg's Lauratypus," p. 368.

*Mißbildungen der Cultur und des Conventionalismus an ihrem Leibe und ihrer Seele, nicht schön, aber mächtig, wie früher.*³⁹ [Italics mine.]

In the italicized portion of this interpretation, one can find the crucial difference between Laura Marholm's attitude toward women and Strindberg's. Marholm's image of the "natural" woman was quite positive. Women by nature were loving and giving. The conventional mores of society are responsible for making women "social verkrüppelt." Laura in *Fadren* behaves as she does, not because she is inherently evil, but because she reacts to the social situation which has been imposed upon her: a loveless marriage. In all likelihood, Strindberg would not have agreed with this apology for his character, since he believed that women are born weak, deceitful, and, often, evil. Laura Marholm seems to have willfully misunderstood Strindberg on this point.

The distinction between her and Strindberg was played down by Marholm and, hence, was not perceived by Marholm's contemporaries, except perhaps by Strindberg himself, who suspected her of being in league with a conspiracy of women to discredit him.⁴⁰ Franz Servaes wrote of Marholm that she so admired Strindberg, "daß sie selbst seine Weiberverachtung mitmachte."⁴¹ Marholm is guilty of such sentiments as, "Das Weib im Ganzen formt sich immer nach den Intentionen des Mannes und empfängt alle seine Impulse vom Mann," which from a modern perspective sounds indeed like "Weiberverachtung." However, Marholm does not despise women for this dependence on men. Men are also dependent on the opposite sex because of the special qualities of women, and that, Marholm believes, is as it should be.

With respect to the issue of feminine nature, another essential difference between Marholm's and Hansson's views on women comes to the fore. If anyone can be accused of imitating Strindberg's hatred of women in the early 1890's, it is Hansson. The difference of opinion between the Hanssons can be seen clearly in a comparison of Marholm's analysis of *Fadren* with a directly contemporary interpretation of the same play by Hansson. Hansson describes the Captain's wife as "der Dämon des schwachen Geschlechts, erschaffen, um an ihrem eigenen Mann dieses ganze schwache Geschlecht am andern Geschlecht zu rächen."⁴² Enmity is the natural relation between the sexes, and the aggression and deception of Laura in *Fadren* are attributes inherent in the female of the species, the weaker sex. From Laura Marholm's perspective, men and women are

³⁹ Ibid., p. 367.

⁴⁰ Adolf Paul, *Min Strindbergsbok* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1930), p. 45.

⁴¹ Franz Servaes, "Strindberg in Berlin. Nach eigenen und fremden Erinnerungen," *Westermanns Monatshefte*, September 1915, p. 56. Servaes even went so far as to describe Marholm as the medium through which Strindberg's "Weibpsychologie" spread throughout "die jung-berlinische Schule." [Franz Servaes, "Jung-Berlin," *Die Zeit*, nr. 114 (5 December 1896), p. 155.]

⁴² Ola Hansson, "August Strindberg," *Vossische Zeitung*, Sonntagsbeilage Nr. 15, 13 April 1890.

meant to complement, not antagonize one another. The antagonism is a product of social interference.

The first response to “Die Frauen in der skandinavischen Dichtung” was an article by Paul Ernst entitled “Frauenfrage und sociale Frage.” In essence, he proposes three major objections to Marholm’s enterprise. To begin with, Ernst questions the value of addressing social issues through literature: “Was man aus der Litteratur lernen kann, das sind doch immer nur die eigenen Gedanken, die man schon vorher gehabt hat, und die der Dichter einem nur in etwas anderer Zubereitung vorsetzt.”⁴³ The bourgeoisie does not change itself through literature, but instead sustains itself.

Beyond questioning the basic premise of her exercise, Ernst is especially disturbed by the emphasis on “nature” by both Marholm and Strindberg in their discussions of women: “Es ist ein Fehler, den die bürgerliche Philosophie von Anfang an begangen hat: den Menschen immer nur als Naturproduct zu betrachten.”⁴⁴ In this same context, Ernst takes the time to criticize Lombroso who has sought to establish the criminal as a physiological, not social type. In Marholm’s case, he points out: “Sie sagt hier direkt, daß die ‘Natur’ das Produkt von Erziehung, Abrichtung und Verbildung ist – also doch von socialen Momenten.”⁴⁵ He then accuses her, falsely, of not having come upon the idea that this ‘Natur’ would change with the transformation of social structures. The difficulty here is that for Marholm “natural woman” is woman before society has had a chance to deform her, not a product of this deformation as Ernst suggests. Ernst has misunderstood Marholm’s definition of “nature.” Marholm believes that social change is a prerequisite for stopping the process of deformation. In Strindberg’s case, however, feminine nature, regardless of social circumstances, is basically unchangeable.

Ernst’s third major objection to Marholm’s articles is that she has only considered “die spießbürgerliche Emancipation.” Ernst argues that the laziness and boredom of this spoiled class of women has caused them to become fixated upon sex. Sexual issues are not of great importance among the proletariat, whose first priority is earning a living. Whether or not Ernst’s assertion is valid, he has pointed out a genuine weakness in Marholm’s works: she is not very adept at writing about classes other than her own. This same difficulty had been evident in the article she wrote about the Danish folk high schools two years earlier.

The next participant in this discussion was Hermann Bahr, who chose to address his criticisms to Paul Ernst. Bahr is primarily interested in the “nature versus nurture” issue and accuses Ernst of overemphasizing socially determining factors. Bahr argues that there is a common feminine nature that transcends even class differences. If one removes the outer shell from woman, which has

⁴³ Paul Ernst, “Frauenfrage und sociale Frage,” *Freie Bühne*, 1 (14 May 1890), p. 426.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

been determined by milieu, and then the second layer, which is determined by a historical heritage, one has “ein drittes Weib – dieses dritte Weib ist aus dem Fleische, die Wirkung aus der Besonderheit des Geschlechtes. Und dieses dritte Weib ist erst ‘die Frau’, die Frau an sich, welche bleibt in allen Wechseln der ungeduldigen, neuerungstollen Geschichte.”⁴⁶ Like both Marholm and Strindberg, Bahr believes in a biologically determined basic feminine nature. The difference of opinion now lies in what this nature consists of. On this issue, Bahr resembles Strindberg. Bahr characterizes this nature as:

Die Sklavennatur [. . .]: sie erklärt das Betrügerische an der Frau, daß keine ein Wort hat, die Freude an verschmitzten Listen, die Wollust in der Lüge als ihrem heimathlichen Element, außer welchem sie sich unsicher und krank fühlt; sie erklärt ihre Demuth vor dem Brutalen und ihre Hingebung an das Rohe, das einzige Gesetz, welches sie anerkennt; sie erklärt ihre Beschränktheit im Persönlichen, aus welchem sie die scheue Angst der täglichen Gefahr niemals zu allgemeinen herausläßt, und die Unfähigkeit, selbst im wüthigsten Taumel der durchstürmten Sinne auch nur einen einzigen Augenblick jemals den Egoismus zu verlassen.⁴⁷

Marholm would not advocate such a negative view of feminine nature; however, since she was considered a supporter of both Bahr and Strindberg, it is perhaps understandable how similar views came to be attributed to her.

The third contribution to the debate was made by Josepha Krzyzanowska. She considers a major fault of the discussion to be: “Erstens betrachtet Jeder seine subjectiven Erfahrungen als allgemeingeltend und bringt sie als solche in die Polemik hinein.”⁴⁸ Krzyzanowska is upset by Bahr’s characterization of feminine nature and argues that such misperceptions result from the fact that, because of current social conditions, men and women only get to know each other in sexual contexts. There are no opportunities for relaxed social contact uncharged by sexual tension. She agrees that there are biologically determined psychological differences between the sexes, but enmity is not a natural state as suggested by Bahr. Although Krzyzanowska chastises Marholm for scoffing at the women’s movement, their essential positions do not differ greatly.

Paul Ernst was so upset by Bahr’s rebuttal of his article that he wrote to Friedrich Engels, asking him to become involved in the debate. Ernst wanted Engels’ help in refuting Bahr, firstly because he considered Bahr’s position counterproductive and “zweitens, weil mich Bahr [. . .] ganz unglaublich unverschämt behandelt.”⁴⁹ Engels declined to become engaged in a public debate, but answered Ernst in a private letter dated June 5th. Despite his wishes, Engels’ “Antwort an Herrn Paul Ernst” was published in *Berliner Volksblatt* on October 5, 1890. Engels refrains from commenting on Marholm’s thesis that Ibsen was

⁴⁶ Hermann Bahr, “Die Epigonen des Marxismus,” *Freie Bühne*, 1 (28 May 1890), p. 470.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 471.

⁴⁸ Josepha Krzyzanowska, “Zur Frauenfrage,” *Freie Bühne*, 1 (18 June 1890), p. 541.

⁴⁹ Paul Ernst to Friedrich Engels, 21 May 1890.

responsible for calling forth the women's movement in Scandinavia, since he does not feel he possesses requisite knowledge about the issue. He does, however, caution Ernst not to underestimate the achievements of Scandinavian literature: "Norwegen [hat] in den letzten 20 Jahren eines literarischen Aufschwung erlebt, wie ihn außer Rußland kein anderes Land gleichzeitig aufweisen kann. Spießbürger oder nicht, die Leute leisten weit mehr als die andern und prägen ihren Stempel auch andern Literaturen auf, nicht zum mindesten der deutschen."⁵⁰ Engels also tells Ernst that he ought not apply generalizations to Norway that pertain to Germany because of their different national histories.

At the end of his letter, Engels makes fun of Bahr's "natural woman": "Was bleibt denn also, wenn Sie das geschichtlich Gewordene mit Haut und Haar abgeschieden haben und 'die Frau selber zum Vorschein kam', was zeigt sich? Einfach die Äffin, anthropopithecä, und die mag Herr Bahr zu sich ins Bett nehmen, 'rein handgreiflich und durchschaulich', mitsamt ihren 'natürlichen Trieben.'⁵¹ Engels found the concept of woman with her social history surgically removed to be ridiculous.

Upon the receipt of this letter, Paul Ernst briefly entered the fray again with "Frauenfrage und Geschlechtsfrage." In this short article, Ernst alludes to the support he has received from Engels in refuting Bahr's characterization of Marxism. Further, he maintains that Bahr has addressed the sex question, whereas he meant to discuss the woman question, and "Die Geschlechtsfrage hat aber in Wirklichkeit mit der Sache nichts zu thun."⁵²

Laura Marholm was allowed the last word in "Die beiden Seiten der Medaille," which she wrote in Paris. She does not agree with Ernst's latest assertion in the debate that sex issues have nothing to do with social issues. She defends her initial undertaking, in which she attempted "die Darlegung eines Lebensprozesses, und das Leben hält die Dinge nicht so reinlich auseinander, wie die Schubfächer der Systeme."⁵³ She concludes her article by once more holding Strindberg up as the epitome of an artist who is able to depict the dynamics of life: "Aber auf dem Weg, den er gegangen, liegen die Aufgaben der kommenden Litteratur, die in einem ihrer Zweige eine psychophysiologische werden muß. Und diese Litteratur wird die Menschen formen, die die Frauenfrage behandeln werden."⁵⁴ Literature is able to explicate and anticipate the course that life will take, and thereby guides its development.

Parallel to this extended debate about the question of women, Laura Marholm and Paul Ernst exchanged opinions within the pages of *Freie Bühne* about the interaction of author, literature, and society in conjunction with Arne Gar-

⁵⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Über Kunst und Literatur. Eine Sammlung aus ihren Schriften*, ed. Michail Lifschitz (Berlin: Bruno Henschel & Sohn, 1949), p. 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵² Paul Ernst, "Frauenfrage und Geschlechtsfrage," *Freie Bühne*, 1 (25 June 1890), p. 570.

⁵³ Laura Marholm, "Die beiden Seiten der Medaille," *Freie Bühne*, 1 (2 July 1890), p. 586.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 589.

borg's *Mannfolk*.⁵⁵ Ernst argues that literature is a marketable good and therefore is shaped by the desires of the buying public, and Garborg's book, although well-written, is no exception. Marholm counters this assertion by pointing out that persecution was suffered not only by Garborg, but also by Christian Krohg and Hans Jäger because of their work. A genius, she argues, is undaunted by public sentiment:

Und wenn die produktive Persönlichkeit in dem Schöpfungsact sich sammelt und ihr Ich, ihre Erkenntniß, ihren Blick auf die Dinge in Gestalten prägt – den neuen Blick, der neuschafft – so sind solche Bücher in ihrer brutalen Gegenständlichkeit, in der ungedämpften Echtheit ihrer Farben ungeschliffen und beleidigend wie ein Aufschrei bei einem Galadiner, und keine Bourgeoisie der Welt wird ihnen andere, als tiefentrüstete Gesichter zeigen. Das große und echte Talent ist immer ein Wildling, ein Einsamer, ein Mißverständener, und keine "gute" Gesellschaft wird sich zu ihm bekennen, ehe es, von Alter bemoost, in eine neue Generation hineingewachsen – oder, nach seiner Blüthe, geworden ist wie die Gesellschaft: trivial und geblättert.⁵⁶

Similar sentiments had lain behind Marholm's unsuccessful attempts to bring about an intellectual revolution in her hometown of Riga in the early 1880's. From her point of view, a deeply offended Riga found her truths too painful and drove her to Copenhagen. At this time, Marholm's belief in the clear-sighted critic who can lay bare society's flaws was greatly supported by her husband's theories. The Nietzschean aesthetic that Hansson sought to develop during these years was based on a cult of genius, in which the genius is able to transcend the determining factors of his age and look upon history from a bird's-eye view.

Furthermore, one must see behind Marholm's statement a defense of her husband in the light of his unpopularity in Sweden. Sweden cannot tolerate Hansson because he is a genius. Unfortunately, Marholm makes public outrage a gauge for the extent of success. The greater the outrage the genius elicits, the greater his genius. Hansson and Marholm's disregard for public opinion, which resulted from such reasoning, would largely contribute to their eventual fall from grace within the German literary scene.

In May, before the Hanssons were to depart for Paris, Hulda and Arne Garborg passed through Berlin on their way back to Norway from Munich. The Garborgs had exhausted their funds and the Hanssons felt they should be helped. Hansson described the episode to Strindberg as follows:

Han [Garborg] kom hit på genomresa från München hem i ett ytterst medtaget tillstånd, till kropp och själ, och utan alltför många resurser. Han kom samman en afton med vår krets här, d.v.s. medlemmarna af "Freie Bühnes" tiomannaråd; och det nedslående intryck, som han gjorde, var så gripande starkt, att det i

⁵⁵ For a further discussion of this exchange, see Walter Baumgartner, *Triumph des Irrationalismus. Rezeption skandinavischer Literatur im ästhetischen Kontext Deutschlands 1860–1900*, (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1979), pp. 213–217.

⁵⁶ Laura Marholm, "Der Erdboden des Talents," *Freie Bühne*, 1 (19 March 1890), p. 203.

flygande fart bestämdes, att skaffa honom pengar, hvilket skedde under den form, att dessa män – naturligtvis såsom privatpersoner – inköpte öfversättningen af “Hos Mama” för ett “Ehrenhonorar” af 2000 Mark. Boken utkommer hos Fischer. Garborg for härifrån som en annan människa, än han var, när han kom hit. Jag bekänner, att jag från den stunden älskar Berlinarna. Så mottager Tyskland en främmande förf., hvilken hans eget hemland sparkat bort. Men han var ju icke den förste och blir måhända icke heller den siste.⁵⁷

This episode played a great role in the course of events surrounding Strindberg's own arrival in Berlin two years later.

There has been some dispute about the amount of the sum in question, whether it was 1000 or 2000 marks.⁵⁸ Curiously, Hansson has omitted to say that the gift was the result of some active lobbying by Marholm. Hulda Garborg commented later, “Fru Hansson [. . .] gjorde vist ikke lidet til at G. fik de 1000 mark dengang.”⁵⁹ Przybyszewski, as usual, puts things more dramatically: “Als er [Garborg] aus München in Berlin angekommen war, hatte er keinen roten Heller mehr besessen, und ohne Laura Marholms Bemühungen und ihr Herumlaufen hätte er nicht weiterreisen können (Sam. Fischer, der berühmte Verleger skandinavischer Schriftsteller, ist gewiß bis heute wütend, daß er sich von Frau Laura 600 Mark hat abschwatzen lassen).”⁶⁰ The unexpected success of these efforts gave the Hanssons an exaggerated sense of their own status and influence in Germany, as well as a distorted idea of how financial problems should be resolved for struggling literary figures. Similar efforts on behalf of Strindberg succeeded, although the Hanssons' good intentions backfired on them. Attempts by the Hanssons in later years to raise money by subscription on their own behalf failed dismally.

At the beginning of June, when Marholm was six months pregnant with their son, the Hanssons and Therese Krüger left Berlin for Paris. Marholm was in no condition for hectic socializing and staying in a Parisian hotel was expensive,

⁵⁷ *August Strindbergs och Ola Hanssons Brevväxling 1888–1892* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1938), p. 85. “He [Garborg] came through here on his way home from Munich in an extremely exhausted state, both bodily and spiritually, and without too many resources. One evening, he joined our circle here, that is to say, the members of ‘Freie Bühne’s’ ten-man council; and the devastating impression that he made was so gripingly strong, that in a flying haste it was decided to procure him some money, which happened in this way: these men – naturally as private individuals – purchased the translation of ‘Hos Mama’ for an ‘honorarium’ of 2000 marks. The book is coming out through Fischer. Garborg left here as a different person than the one he was when he arrived. I admit that from that moment I love the Berliners. Thus does Germany receive a foreign author whom his own homeland has kicked out. But he was, of course, not the first and will perhaps not be the last either.”

⁵⁸ Johannes A. Dale, *Garborg-studier* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1969), p. 113.

⁵⁹ Hulda Garborg, *Dagbok 1903–1914*, eds. Karen Grude Koht and Rolv Thesen (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1962), p. 52. “Mrs. Hansson [. . .] certainly helped not a little to get G. the 1000 marks that time.”

⁶⁰ Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin*, p. 242.

so, after eight days, they moved out to the country. This is the point at which Therese Krüger finally left them, never to appear again in their saga. Hansson indicated that it was because she did not want to be isolated out in the countryside.⁶¹ Marholm explained to Mauthner that Miss Krüger “sich ‘zu norddeutsch’ fühlte.”⁶²

“Da ich aber grad an meinen ‘Alltagsfrauen’ schrieb, kam ich selten nach Paris, und meine Frau hatte genug zu tun, um mit mir im Übersetzen Schritt zu halten,” described Hansson much later.⁶³ The Hanssons were not as entirely isolated as Hansson seems to recall. Hansson paid a disappointing visit to Max Nordau, and they may have even looked up a few French authors.⁶⁴ Toward the end of their stay, they found time to meet with the remnants of the Scandinavian colony in Paris: Jonas Lie, Knut Wicksell, and Axel Lundegård.⁶⁵

Marholm wrote one article during her Parisian visit: “Gesehenes und Gedachtes aus Paris,” (which incidentally may still be found among Gerhart Hauptmann’s papers). It seems that Marholm took Paul Ernst’s comments about the self-sustaining nature of the bourgeois literary market to heart. She accuses most of the modern French authors of catering to a jaded, bourgeois public. The exception is Joris Karl Huysmans, who, like Nietzsche, has sought isolation and shuns the tastes of the masses. This is the same notion of the cult of genius which she expounded in “Der Erdboden des Talents.”

At the beginning of August, Hansson and Marholm found themselves in St. Léger sur Vevey in order to conserve their finances and await the birth of their son. Ola Hansson, Jr. was born on September 8, 1890. The Hanssons hired a French-Swiss woman by the name of Louise to cook and to help look after the newborn. Marholm felt altogether helpless when confronted by a screaming infant and depended on Louise to decipher the child’s needs. When it was time for the Hanssons to leave St. Léger in the spring, she wrote to her mother-in-law, “Louise som forstaaer at omgaaes Barnet maatte vi jo nok tage med.”⁶⁶ Marholm later made fun of her own incompetence in the novella “Bubselchens Weihnachten” in *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*.

Both Hansson and Marholm continued to work steadily, as witnessed by their correspondence with Garborg and Mauthner. In fact, Garborg remarked in a let-

⁶¹ Hansson, “Erinnerungen an August Strindberg,” p. 1724.

⁶² Laura Hansson to Fritz Mauthner, 3 June 1890.

⁶³ Hansson, “Erinnerungen an August Strindberg,” p. 1725.

⁶⁴ The meeting with Nordau is mentioned by Widell, p. 26. According to Przybyszewski, Marholm was able to imitate Emile Zola and wife, Guy de Maupassant, and Joris Karl Huysmans, which would have been odd, had she never met them. [*Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin*, p. 118].

⁶⁵ Georg and Edvard Brandes, *Brevveksling med nordiske Forfattere og Videnskabsmænd*, Vol. 5 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1941), p. 309.

⁶⁶ Laura Hansson to Karna Nilsson, 9 February 1891. “Louise, who understands how to deal with the child, we must of course take with us.”

ter from October 5th, “Det kalder jeg tappert – allerede i fuldt Arbeide igjen!”⁶⁷ Hansson was a regular reviewer of Scandinavian literature for *Das Magazin für Litteratur* and was trying to publish both *Tidens kvinnor* and his brochure on Nietzsche in Scandinavia. Marholm was busy straightening out difficulties with the publication of Garborg’s *Kolbotten: Ein Stück Dichterleben in Norwegen*. Strindberg wrote that he wanted Marholm to translate *I havsbandet*, but she declined, since her reserves of energy simply were not up to the task.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, in January, Strindberg boasted to his brother Oskar that the foremost German publishers had offered to take all of his works, “genom Ola Hansson som är min agent och hvars Fru, en Tyska är min öfversättare.”⁶⁹

The Garborgs had moved to Berlin in September and Marholm sent them a letter full of practical advice, including admonishments to look up Gerhart Hauptmann (“som interesserer sig meget for Dem”), Hermann Bahr and a Frau von Borch, who could serve as his translator.⁷⁰ Garborg was grateful for the advice and thanked Marholm particularly for the introduction to Frau von Borch. The Garborgs and the Hauptmanns later became fast friends, and the latter arranged for Arne and Hulda Garborg to join them out in Erkner. In 1900, Hauptmann even named one of his sons after Arne Garborg.⁷¹

Hansson and Marholm stayed in St. Légiér through the winter since their son was too young to travel. However, as early as December, they were already making plans to leave. Marholm wrote to her mother-in-law that they wished to move to Skurup: “Derfra er det nær til Berlin og nær til Stockholm [sic].”⁷² Marholm gave her mother-in-law to understand that they intended to choose Skurup as their permanent base of operations. Hansson wanted to make another attempt at establishing himself in Sweden.

In January, Garborg intimated that he was considering moving to Jylland, and Marholm encouraged him to try southern Sweden instead: “Der sidder Strindberg i Stockholm og fortvivler, og Garborg sidder i Kolbotn eller Jylland og holder paa at blive tungsindig, og Ola Hansson trasker runt i St. Légiér og keder sig. Synes de ikke at de, som havde fælles Maal, de fælles Interesser og de fælles Fjender skulle trække sig litegran nærmere til hinanden, for at drikke Toddy sammen og se til at blive frugtbare ved Menigsskifte.”⁷³ Hansson was suffering

⁶⁷ Arne Garborg to Laura Hansson, 5 October 1890. “I call that courageous – already working full steam again!”

⁶⁸ Holm, p. 262.

⁶⁹ August Strindberg, *August Strindbergs Brev*, Vol. 8, ed. Torsten Eklund (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1964), p. 161. “through Ola Hansson, who is my agent and whose wife, a German, is my translator.”

⁷⁰ Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 30 September 1890. “who is very interested in you.”

⁷¹ Dale, *Garborg-studier*, p. 117.

⁷² Laura Hansson to Karna Nilsson, 4 December 1890. “From there it is near to Berlin and near to Stockholm.”

⁷³ Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 9 January 1891. “There sits Strindberg in Stockholm and despairs and Garborg sits in Kolbotten or Jylland and insists on getting melan-

from severe homesickness, and Marholm tried to imagine an acceptable existence for the two of them in Sweden. She dreamed of establishing a literary coterie in Skåne, thereby achieving the reacceptance of her husband in the Swedish literary market.

Hansson and Marholm left St. L egier at the beginning of March. Hansson stopped off in Berlin, and Marholm continued to Skurup with her son and his French-Swiss nanny, Louise. This would have been the first time that Marholm actually met Hansson's mother, since the one chance they had had to meet before the wedding happened to coincide with the death of Hansson's brother. Marholm left Ola, Jr. and Louise with her mother-in-law and returned to Berlin: "Die Mama mu te wieder zur ck zum Papa nach Berlin, da es f ur den Papa noch seine Schwierigkeiten hatte, sich gel ufig deutsch auszudr ucken und solches seine Schattenseiten haben kann im Verkehr mit Verlegern und Zeitungsredakteuren."⁷⁴ This stay in Berlin was very short, but the Hanssons found time to visit the Garborgs and the Hauptmanns out at Erkner. Hulda Garborg later recalled:

Fru Marholm kom derud en dag i forretnings-anliggende, og fortalte om reisen, guttens f dsel, den dyre dumme franske barnepige de havde bragt med o.s.v. Hanssons var endnu velst ende dengang. Fruen havde jo nogen formue hjemmefra, og de var begge meget produktive. Hun var sv er og meget elegant samt meget og h it talende og fyldte ganske vore sm  stuer. Jeg f lte mig altid som d vstum og usynlig n r hun var tilstede, sk ont hun jo anstrengte sig meget for   se mig og snakke lidt med mig af og til. Men som regel sad fru Hauptmann og jeg i en krog og spiste syltet i n r Hanssons og vore m end og de andre "Berlinerliterater" [sic] dr ftede alle sine litter re anliggender p  cafeer eller hjemme i husene. Jeg var jo det rene sp dbarn, og fru H. ikke meget  ldre og visere, hun heller. Men vi mored os p  vor m de og s  mer end en komisk scene. Fru Marholm tog stor plads ved bordet og f rte oftest ordet. Bag hende sad Ola Hansson, liden og sp d, og hun vendte sig af og til om til ham, n r hun pludselig husket han var der og sa: Igge sandt  la! Og " la" syntes n sten altid det var sandt.⁷⁵

choly and Ola Hansson traipses around St. L egier and is bored. Do you not think that you, who have the same language, the same interests, and the same enemies, should move a little closer to each other, in order to drink toddy together and become more productive by exchanging views?"

⁷⁴ Laura Marholm, *Buch der Toten* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1900), p. 120.

⁷⁵ Hulda Garborg, *Dagbok 1903–1914*, p. 52. "Mrs. Marholm came out there one day about business matters and told of their journey, the boy's birth, the expensive stupid French nanny they had brought with them, etc. The Hanssons were still well-off at that time. The Mrs. had some sort of money from home, and they were both very productive. She was stout and very elegant and spoke much and loudly, and rather filled up our small rooms. I always felt deaf, dumb and invisible when she was present, even though she made an effort to see me and talk a little with me now and then. But as a rule, Mrs. Hauptmann and I sat in a corner and ate jam when the Hanssons and our husbands and the other "Berlin literati" discussed their literary concerns in cafes or at home in the houses. I was, of course, just an infant, and Mrs. H. was not much older

Wives rarely took part in the Berlin symposiums, and Marholm was a notable exception to this rule. It is interesting that Marholm left the impression of being well-to-do, since this was anything but the case. Marholm and Hansson had been forced to borrow money from both their families to pay for their move back to Sweden.

Marholm's abrupt appearance in and disappearance from Skurup was perhaps not the best first impression to make on Hansson's mother, and one cannot help but feel sorry for Louise, who did not understand a word of Swedish. After only a few days, Hansson and Marholm received a telegram in Berlin saying that Ola, Jr. was ill, and so they both returned to Skurup. As it happened, the illness was nothing serious, but both the Hanssons were back in Skurup and had to start making a life for themselves there.

Marholm was disappointed to discover that the house she had asked her mother-in-law to arrange for them was not yet finished. Despite a sincere wish to accommodate her husband's desire for a homecoming, Marholm was not at all happy in her new surroundings: "Nun kamen schwere Tage. Eine Köchin war nicht aufzutreiben, die Wärterin wollte nicht kochen, Besuch fand sich von allen Seiten ein und Mama sollte doch schreiben, Papa übersetzen, dem Hausstand vorstehen, die Gäste gewinnen und vor den strengen Augen der Großmutter Gnade zu finden suchen."⁷⁶ Louise wanted to return to Switzerland, but Marholm could not find a suitable replacement. Marholm had written to her mother-in-law, "Jeg kan ikke uden Pige. Der er saa meget med Litteraturen og blir saa meget dermed at bestille at jeg ikke kan have den Lille ret meget paa Armen [sic]."⁷⁷

Marholm felt it was a great personal inadequacy that she could not cook, and in a later reminiscence bluntly admitted to a rivalry with her mother-in-law on this point: "Ich konnte auch nicht kochen. Und meines Mannes Mutter legte so viel Wert auf eine gute Küche. Mir war schon recht bange, daß die von mir gekochten Gerichte die eheliche Liebe lockern könnten."⁷⁸ If one is to believe Marholm's account, during this trial residency in Skurup, she did not pass her mother-in-law's muster: "Auf mich sah Mutter nun ein für allemal herab."⁷⁹

One of the visitors who descended upon them was August Strindberg, who had come at the Hanssons' invitation. Hansson went to pick him up at the

and wiser either. But we amused ourselves in our way and saw more than one comic scene. Mrs. Marholm took up a lot of room at the table and often led the discussions. In back of her sat Ola Hansson, small and frail, and she would turn to him now and then, when she suddenly remembered he was there and said: Isn't that true Åla! And "Åla" almost always thought it was true."

⁷⁶ Marholm, *Buch der Toten*, p. 121.

⁷⁷ Laura Hansson to Karna Nilsson, 9 February 1891, "I cannot get along without a maid. There is so much involved in literature and there is so much to do with it, that I cannot have the little one in my arms very much."

⁷⁸ Laura Marholm, "Die Erste," *Nord und Süd*, 107 (1903), p. 364.

⁷⁹ Marholm, *Buch der Toten*, p. 123.

station and Marholm waited for them back at the house: “Ich war von meinem Gatten zur größten Ehrfurcht gegen Strindberg angehalten worden, und ich sollte Schwedens ‘größten Dichter’ heute mit Augen sehen. Seine indirecte Bekanntschaft hatte ich allerdings schon zwei oder drei Jahre früher und nicht auf eine ganz aufmunternde Weise gemacht.”⁸⁰ Marholm is, of course, alluding to the libel suit with which Strindberg had threatened her in conjunction with “Ein Dichter des Weiberhasses.” Interestingly enough, Strindberg brought along his manuscript of *Le plaidoyer d’un fou*, which he gave Marholm twenty-four hours to read, but Hansson was not allowed to look at it.⁸¹ Considering the title of Strindberg’s book, one wonders whether he had Marholm’s characterization of him as “ein Genie an der Grenze des Wahnsinns” in mind when he chose it. Strindberg may have wanted to sound out Marholm’s sympathy for his position on women, but she failed his test by not agreeing to translate the book. Although Marholm had once made some unkind remarks about Siri von Essen’s performance in *Fröken Julie*, she did not approve of Strindberg turning on his own wife in *Le plaidoyer d’un fou*.

On the surface, however, all tensions between Strindberg and Marholm seemed to have been put aside. Strindberg was accompanied by his friend Birger Mörner, who writes, “Jag hade varit rätt nyfiken på att se Strindberg i damsällskap. Laura Marholm, Ola Hanssons fru, var den första dam, i vars sällskap jag sett Strindberg på flera år. Men det gick utmärkt, ehuru Strindberg i hennes närvaro var ganska fåmält och smått generad. Men hon utfyllde konversationen själv.”⁸² Marholm, as usual, tried to see to it that her guests were comfortable. Lars Nilsson, an old school friend of Hansson’s, was also a part of the company and recalls being commanded to produce a guitar for Strindberg, who wanted to entertain the group with song.⁸³

Not long after Strindberg’s arrival, Karl August Tavaststjerna appeared on the scene. Lars Nilsson remembers his entrance in particular:

Hos mig hade vi just ätit middag då det ringde i telefonen från järnvägshotellet att där var en herre som frågade efter Ola Hansson. Jag frågade vem mannen var. Restauratören svarade, att han inte ville uppgiva sitt namn. Jag frågade då: hur ser han ut? Svaret blev: han är gul. – Gul, sade jag, vad menar restauratören med det. Jo sade han, han har gult hår, gula mustascher och gul hy, gul mössa, gula kläder och gula skor. Då jag upprepade denna personbeskrivning för mina gäster, ropade alla med en mun: det är Tavaststjerna, se att få hit

⁸⁰ Laura Marholm, “August Strindberg,” *Nord und Süd*, 66 (1893), p. 23.

⁸¹ Hansson, “Erinnerungen an Strindberg,” p. 1731.

⁸² Birger Mörner, *Den Strindberg jag känt* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1924), p. 70. “I had been quite curious to see Strindberg in the company of a lady. Laura Marholm, Ola Hansson’s wife, was the first lady in whose company I had seen Strindberg in many years. But it went excellently, although Strindberg in her presence was rather quiet and slightly embarrassed. But she filled out the conversation herself.”

⁸³ Lars Nilsson, “Minnen och reflexioner,” *Skåne Årsbok*, 1928, p. 122.

honom! Tavaststjerna ankom, mottogs med öppna armar och var snart en intressant medlem av det glada sällskapet.⁸⁴

Both Tavaststjerna and Strindberg stayed in Skurup for several days. Strindberg lived in a hotel, but Tavaststjerna made himself a fixture in the Hansson abode. Marholm later remembered him as an endearing, albeit idiosyncratic figure. At one time during his stay, he tried to liven up a dull party by singing ribald French ditties, which were not entirely appreciated by some of the dour matrons present. Marholm also recalled how Tavaststjerna seated himself upon a fragile folding chair which promptly collapsed under his considerable weight. Tavaststjerna refused to exchange the chair for another and was therefore spilled upon the floor at regular intervals.⁸⁵

Although Marholm and Hansson had intended to establish a literary clique of sorts in Skurup, the current arrangement was not to their liking, and after approximately a week, Hansson hinted to Tavaststjerna that perhaps he should leave.⁸⁶ Tavaststjerna accommodated him and Strindberg followed suit. Tavaststjerna was, however, still a friend of the family and one of the few authors for whom Marholm translated as a personal favor.⁸⁷ The only other author who visited the Hanssons in Skurup during this time was Holger Drachmann, whom they would encounter again in Berlin.⁸⁸

The Hanssons' return to Sweden was not as successful as they had hoped it would be. The prospects that had been held out to Hansson of editing a journal and having a market for his writing evaporated. Marholm grew very uncomfortable under the scrutiny of Hansson's family and could not see why Hansson would want to live in a country that did not appreciate him, when he had gained a respected name in Germany. Hansson was not happy with his reception either, and his pen was inactive during this spring. Marholm wrote later, "Jedes Mal, wenn meines Gatten Sehnsucht nach der Heimat ihn zurückführte, befanden wir uns dort wie in einem Raum, aus dem die Luft sorgfältig ausgepumpt worden, so daß der geistige und leibliche Erstickungstod als nahe bevorstehend und

⁸⁴ Ibid. "At my house, we had just eaten lunch when the railway hotel telephoned that there was a man who was asking about Ola Hansson. I asked who the man was. The restaurant owner answered that he did not want to give his name. I asked then: What does he look like? The answer was: He is yellow. – Yellow, I said, what do you mean by yellow? Well, he said, he has yellow hair, a yellow moustache and yellow skin, a yellow hat, yellow clothes and yellow shoes. When I repeated this description to my guests they all cried at once: It is Tavaststjerna, see to it that he gets over here! Tavaststjerna arrived, was received with open arms and was soon an interesting member of the happy company."

⁸⁵ Laura Marholm, "Erinnerungen an Karl A. Tavaststjerna," *Wiener Rundschau*, 4 (1898), p. 732.

⁸⁶ Hansson, "Erinnerungen an August Strindberg," p. 1732.

⁸⁷ Laura translated Tavaststjerna's "I slutet av smekmånaden" for *Aus fremden Zungen* (1893) and also *Lille Karl* in 1897/98.

⁸⁸ Holger Drachmann to Laura Hansson, 20 June 1891.

unvermeidlich zu betrachten war.”⁸⁹ Subsequently, the Hanssons made other attempts at settling in Skurup, but always with the same results.

Oddly enough, at the same time that Marholm was suffering such discontent in her bucolic surroundings, she published an article entitled “Der Bauer in der Literatur,” in which she hails the farmer as the great hope of Northern European letters. The proletariat and the bourgeoisie suffer from too much uniformity to produce a truly creative literature, she claims. Farmers, on the other hand, have closer ties to the earth and therefore are directly linked with the national character. In this article, one can detect the influence of Julius Langbehn’s *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, perhaps as filtered through her husband. Although Marholm had shown an interest in the farmers’ class previously in her article on folk high schools, it is difficult to view this article as anything but propaganda for her husband, although his name is never mentioned. This romantic view of the farmer will return again when the couple is living in Bavaria. The timing of the article, however, seems unusual since she felt that she was living in an intellectual vacuum amidst the landed farmers of southern Sweden. Perhaps the article was meant to please Hansson and to convince herself of the nobility of her environment.

The Hanssons decided to travel to Riga in July, so that Marholm’s parents could meet their son-in-law and their only grandchild. Before their departure, Marholm had finally located a cook, a young Swedish girl by the name of Ingrid. Ingrid’s father would not allow her travel to Riga, and so the long-suffering Louise postponed her return to Switzerland for another two months. Neither of the Hanssons has ever said much about the visit, but Hansson was able to begin writing again. Their stay in Riga lasted through the end of August.

After the visit to Riga, the Hanssons returned to Copenhagen and did not venture across the waters to Skurup more than was necessary. They were in the midst of a quarrel over an inheritance and it was clear to them that a lengthier stay in Skurup was impossible.⁹⁰ At this point, Franz Servaes travelled up from Berlin to convince the Hanssons “ganz zu uns herüberzukommen.”⁹¹ Such a

⁸⁹ Marholm, “Die Erste,” p. 367.

⁹⁰ Widell describes this dispute as follows: “En släkting hade dött och modern delade ut en viss summa av arvet åt vart och ett av barnen. Ola som alltid behövde pengar, ville ha ut hela den arvslott som en gång skulle tilfalla honom. Modern gick inte med på detta.” (“A relative had died and their mother had distributed a certain portion of the inheritance to each of the children. Ola who always needed money wanted to have the entire portion of the inheritance that would one day come to him. His mother would not go along with that.”) [p. 160n94]. It is perhaps noteworthy that in *Buch der Toten*, Marholm describes her meeting with this relative before his death and seems to feel responsible for the fact that Hansson did not inherit more money, because she refused to try to charm the old man despite the exhortations of her mother-in-law. [*Buch der Toten*, pp. 127–132.]

⁹¹ Servaes, “Strindberg in Berlin,” p. 56.

friendly invitation was not to be ignored, and the Hanssons, accompanied by their Swedish cook, Ingrid, moved to Berlin without delay.

The Hanssons were warmly welcomed into the bohemian literary group that had its focal point in Friedrichshagen. The roster of the circle which enveloped the Hanssons changes according to the author of the memoir one is reading; however, the basic group seems to have included – along with Heinrich and Julius Hart, Bruno Wille, and Wilhelm Bölsche, who are considered to have been the backbone of the *Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis*, – Adolf Paul, Dr. Carl Schleich, Franz Servaes, Stanislaw Przybyszewski and Richard Dehmel.⁹² It was the habit of this group to gather in cafés, restaurants, and at each other's homes to discuss literary and social topics. During the following year, many other personalities from Scandinavia and Germany would attend these gatherings.

In *Das Buch der Frauen*, Marholm poses the rhetorical question: “Wo sind jene Frauen, deren Salons Sammelpunkte der feurigsten Geister und bedeutendsten Männer ihrer Zeit waren?”⁹³ This was the ideal that Marholm sought to attain in Friedrichshagen. She was obviously relieved to be far from Skåne and in a place seething with intellectual activity, where her gregarious nature could come to the fore. Bruno Wille gently parodies the generous Hansson hospitality in his book *Das Gefängnis zum Preußischen Adler*. Wilhelm Bölsche describes the abundant flow of toddy, a mixture of cognac and hot water, in the Hansson dwelling: “In diesen engen Zellen hörte der Toddy nimmer auf, aber auch der Geist ließ nicht ab. Hansson las seine Lyrik vor, Frau Marholm ließ die tollen Raketen ihres Witzes knattern – ihr verwegenes Lachen klingt mir heute noch im Ohr.”⁹⁴ Stanislaw Przybyszewski attended many toddy-evenings at the Hanssons' and recalled one in particular:

Aber ich weiß nicht, was plötzlich geschah – alle schwiegen allmählich und lauschten der Erzählung der Hausfrau Laura Marholm.

Einer so ungeheuren, bis zu den genialen Grenzen der Virtuosität gebrachten Gabe des Erzählens sollte ich weder vorher noch nachher jemals begegnen.

⁹² Compare Adolf Paul, *Profiler, Minnen av stora personligheter* (Stockholm: Fahlcrantz & Co., 1937), p. 126 with Servaes, “Strindberg in Berlin,” p. 56. Arne Widell has pointed out that accounts which place the Hanssons as members of the *Zum schwarzen Ferkel* group, which formed after Strindberg's break with the Hanssons in the fall of 1892, must be incorrect, since Strindberg and the Hanssons did not see each other again after that. [Widell, p. 162, n49.] I must agree with Widell, and would like to point out that this misconception probably stems from Carl Schleich's memoir, where he has placed the Hanssons in *Zum schwarzen Ferkel*. [Schleich, *Besonnte Vergangenheit* (Berlin, 1921), p. 253]. In his memory, Schleich has merged the initial coterie around the Hanssons with the *Zum schwarzen Ferkel* group. It may have seemed natural to him to include the Hanssons, since they introduced Schleich to Strindberg.

⁹³ Laura Marholm, *Das Buch der Frauen* (München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 38.

⁹⁴ Wilhelm Bölsche, “Friedrichshagen in der Literatur,” *Auf dem Menschenstern* (Dresden, 1909), p. 256.

Sie war häßlich, sogar sehr häßlich, so schien es beim ersten Blick, aber wenn sie zu sprechen, zu erzählen begann, wenn sie mit subtilen, aber ausdrucksvollen Gesten ihrer Erzählung Plastizität verlieh, wenn sie sie färbte mit der reichen Skala der Schattierungen ihrer Stimme, wurde ihr Gesicht immer schöner, immer edler, und dann sah man die körperliche Häßlichkeit nicht mehr: Laura Marholm-Hansson wurde schön.⁹⁵

Adolf Paul voices similar sentiments about her: “Man hade sagt mig att hon var ful som stryk. Men hur ofta jag än var samman med henne hann jag aldrig se efter, så sprudlande munter och spirituellt var hon i sin konversation.”⁹⁶

Marholm would certainly not have had time to entertain as lavishly as she did in Friedrichshagen, were it not for the cook, Ingrid. Ingrid became something of a Friedrichshagen personality herself. Marholm was afraid that Ingrid might get bored in Germany and wish to return home, and so: “Mein Gatte und ich strengten uns nach Vermögen an, sie zu unterhalten, die Schriftstellerfrauen vom Müggelsee behandelten sie als eine der ihrigen . . .”⁹⁷ Indeed, Max Dauthendey observed that she was “mehr Schwester als Dienstmädchen bei der Marholm.”⁹⁸ She participated in Friedrichshagen festivities and intrigued with Strindberg during his stay to protect him from visitors. Ingrid was a pretty girl, and according to Marholm, she devoted a good deal of energy to angling for a husband among the Friedrichshagen literati, but to no avail.

In the tiny suburb, three special interests permeated the air, which no doubt had their effect on the Hanssons: Socialism, the interrelatedness of science and literature, and the relationship between the sexes.

All of the members of the *Friedrichshagener Kreis* were interested in social issues, although Bruno Wille, one of the Hanssons’ closest friends, was perhaps the most active. On June 29, 1890, with the help of his cronies, Wille founded the *Freie Volksbühne*, since he felt that *Freie Bühne* had become mired in capitalism and police censorship.⁹⁹ Wille came into conflict with the party leadership of the Social Democratic Party, led by August Bebel, and at the party meeting of 1891 was “relieved” of the control of the *Freie Volksbühne*, which he had founded. This turn of events poisoned the group toward organized party socialism, and their tastes grew much more oriented toward individual freedoms.

In the spring of 1892, Gerhard Gran, a Norwegian critic and editor of *Samtiden*, came to visit the Hanssons in order to investigate trends in the Social

⁹⁵ Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin*, p. 118.

⁹⁶ Paul, *Profiler*, p. 126. “I had been told that she was ugly as sin. But however often I was together with her I never managed to notice, since she was so sparkingly cheerful and witty in her conversation.”

⁹⁷ Marholm, “Die Erste,” p. 369.

⁹⁸ Dauthendey, *Herz im Lärm der Welt*, p. 78.

⁹⁹ William Richard Cantwell, “The Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis. A Study of Change and Continuity in the German Literature of the Jahrhundertwende,” Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1967, p. 66.

Democratic Party in Germany. In a pub, he met with Bruno Wille, Wilhelm Bölsche, Julius Hart, and Paul and Bernhard Kampfmeyer. He was shocked at the disdainful tone in which Bebel and Liebknecht were discussed and was amazed at the variety of positions presented to him: "De kaldte sig de 'uafhængige socialister,' og de var i den grad ogsaa indbyrdes uafhængige, at der, saavidt jeg kunde skjønne, ikke var to af dem, som kunde enes om et eneste spørgsmaal."¹⁰⁰ Gran recalls that Marholm leaned over and smilingly whispered into his ear, "Det merkeligste ved Friedrichshagensocialisterne er, at her betegner hver mand én strømning."¹⁰¹

In 1893, Wille came to advocate what he dubbed "Sozial-Aristokratie," a program which held "that the elimination of economic misery would lead to a situation in which character, talent and intellect could develop freely without regard to social background or financial status."¹⁰² No doubt, such a platform found Marholm's support, since she had always placed such a high value on individual initiative over group dogma. Heinrich Hart described the shifting course of the Friedrichshagen inclinations as follows: "Sie war im Beginn materialistisch und sozialrevolutionär, später wog das Individualistische, Aristokratische vor, das rein Ästhetische drängte das Sozialethische in den Hintergrund, der Ästhet den Kämpfer."¹⁰³ Perhaps influenced by these trends, Marholm lost interest in larger economic questions and focused instead on the rights of the individual. She came to perceive the women's movement as analogous to the Social Democratic Party, that is to say, as a large, dogmatic body that had failed to perceive the true needs of the individual.

As for the second main interest in Friedrichshagen, the boundary between science and the humanities was indistinct. Wilhelm Bölsche is perhaps best known as a popularizer of scientific theory, especially Darwinism, which clearly had a substantial effect on his literary efforts. Carl Schleich was a brilliant physician who enjoyed literary discussions and was a painter in his spare time. Stanislaw Przybyszewski had studied medicine before turning to letters. One may, in fact, point to one clear instance where this fraternization of the sciences with the humanities proved to be of lasting benefit to mankind. Carl Schleich remembers visiting Przybyszewski, who was famous for his Chopin interpretations, and as he was glancing through some of Przybyszewski's old diagrams of nerve structure from his medical school days, inspiration struck: "'Stanislaus!' rief ich.

¹⁰⁰ Gerhard Gran, "Strømninger inden det tyske socialdemokrati," *Samtiden*, 5 (1894), p. 452. "They called themselves the 'independent socialists,' and they were also independent among themselves, so that, as far as I could tell, there were not two of them who could agree on a single question."

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* "The most unusual thing about the Friedrichshagen socialists is that here each man constitutes his own school of thought."

¹⁰² Cantwell, p. 68.

¹⁰³ Heinrich Hart, "Literarische Erinnerungen," *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 3 (Berlin, 1904), p. 8.

‘Mensch! die Neuroglia ist ein Klaviersaitendämpfer! Ein elektrisches Sordino, ein Registerschaltapparat, ein Hemmungsregulator!’¹⁰⁴ Schleich rushed to his laboratory, where he discovered the principles of local anesthesia.

Of course, the Hanssons had brought with them their own ideas about the roles of literature and science. The literary genius could anticipate the results of science, and both science and literature contributed to an understanding of mankind. However, disenchantment with naturalism had made the association of science and literature suspect. Ola Hansson sought to resolve this problem in “Der Materialismus in der Litteratur,” in which he proclaims: “Aus dem naturwissenschaftlichen Materialismus hat sich ja bekanntlich eine psycho-physiologische Mystik den Weg gesprengt.”¹⁰⁵ Psychology became the new science of preference, and Hansson invited literature to imitate the shift. Psychology allowed mystery and symbolism to return to literature under a scientific guise. Through the influence of Max Dessoir and Przybyszewski, an interest in hypnotism and the power of suggestion became popular in Friedrichshagen.

Marholm was an avid amateur psychologist, and by many accounts, a very perceptive one. In the years to follow, the marriage between psychology and literature would produce in her writing a hybrid genre, neither fish nor fowl. The clearest example of this is “Eine von ihnen. Psychologische Skizze” which Marholm published in *Das Magazin für Litteratur* in 1892. The piece is based on Marholm’s acquaintance with Victoria Benedictsson, and she calls it – as the subtitle indicates – a psychological sketch. The names have been changed for the sake of discretion, and, in terms of genre, one might compare it to Sigmund Freud’s “Dora” in *Studien über Hysterie* from 1895. However, three years later, Marholm gave the same sketch a narrative frame, changed the names once again, and created the novella, “Das Ungesprochene.” Although Marholm was well-read, she held no degrees and, as a woman, was never considered a legitimate psychologist. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the next chapter, her writings were taken seriously by psychologists. Some of her fiction was treated as scientific evidence.

The third sphere of interest in which Marholm no doubt gathered ideas as well as generated them concerned the relationship between the sexes. Marilyn Scott-Jones has perceived a similarity between Marholm’s thinking on this issue and that of Richard Dehmel, Max Dauthendey, and Otto Julius Bierbaum.¹⁰⁶ In

¹⁰⁴ Schleich, *Besonnte Vergangenheit*, p. 233.

¹⁰⁵ Ola Hansson, “Der Materialismus in der Litteratur,” *Gegen den Materialismus. Gemeinfaßliche Flugschriften*, ed. Hans Schmidkunz (Stuttgart: Carl Krabbe, 1892), p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Marilyn Scott-Jones, “Laura Marholm and the Question of Female Nature,” *Beyond the Eternal Feminine. Critical Essays on Women and German Literature*, eds. Susan L. Cocalis and Kay Goodman (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), p. 215. Scott-Jones’ article provides some useful perspectives on Laura Marholm’s articles; however, she has been somewhat careless with chronology. Laura Marholm is placed in the *Zum schwarzen Ferkel* coterie and hence in close association

particular, she emphasizes Dehmel: "In Dehmel's view, personal growth and fulfillment, whether for man or woman, cannot take place without a partner. The sexes are distinct but equal parts of a sexual *unio mystica*. [. . .] The sexual instinct is not a curse of nature but rather a gift, a cosmic urge, which can effect the absolute link between the individual and the outer world."¹⁰⁷ A similar elevation of the sexual instinct became an integral part of Marholm's writing about women.

Despite certain reservations, Marholm also must have taken some cues from Przybyszewski, who believed that his personality would only truly unfold in relation to woman: "Ich liebe in dem Weibe mich, mein auf das Höchste gesteigerte Ich."¹⁰⁸ Although Przybyszewski was rather extreme in his solipsism, the principle of full realization of self through another certainly appealed to Marholm. Another influence was doubtless Wilhelm Bölsche, who six years later published the first volume of *Das Liebesleben in der Natur*. In that work, "the concept of evolution is joined with eroticism, resulting in an idea of development impelled by the sex act. Beginning with the lowest forms of life, Bölsche traces the act of love through its progressively higher manifestations and succeeding sublimations until he reaches a point at which all creation and every aspect of its activity are shown to proceed from a primal erotic feeling."¹⁰⁹ Although Bölsche's ideas may not have been fully developed in 1892, the idea of the sexual urge as a universal motivating factor was in the air. Significantly, one of Bölsche's readers was Sigmund Freud.

In terms of this idolization of the feminine as the true complement of the masculine, there was a considerable gap between theory and practice in Friedrichshagen. As mentioned earlier, women did not ordinarily take part in intellectual discussions and kept mostly in the background. Frida Strindberg made an interesting observation about Marholm's role in this company and her habit of darning socks: "Sie war eine ganz ungewöhnlich begabte Frau und lebte in einem Kreise, der nur weibliche Frauen gelten lassen wollte und keinerlei 'Emanzipation'. Strümpfestopfen aber wurde 1893 als weiblich angesehen, und mancher verzieh ihr ob der Socken sicherlich den Verstand."¹¹⁰ This combination obviously struck Max Dauthenday as well: "Aber die Marholm ist doch eine zu eigenartige Frau. Alles ist rasch, flink, energisch an ihr. Sie besorgte das

with some people she did not know well at all. Although the Hanssons were very close to Przybyszewski, their contact with Dehmel, for example, seems to have been limited.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Zur Psychologie des Individuums* (Berlin: F. Fontane & Co., 1892), p. 40.

¹⁰⁹ Cantwell, p. 110.

¹¹⁰ Frida Strindberg, *Lieb, Leid und Zeit. Eine unvergeßliche Ehe* (Hamburg: H. Goverts Verlag, 1936), p. 38. One should point out here, however, that it is unlikely that Frida Strindberg and Marholm ever met, so this observation is derived from hearsay, but does not lack interest for that.

Abendbrot und stopfte Strümpfe, und dabei sprach sie über Psychologie und Böcklin. Aber alles ist überlegt, scharf und doch warm und leidenschaftlich, und neben der vorurteilsfreiesten, emanzipiertesten Denkweise geht die behäbige Art der bemutternden, befriedigten, behaglichen Hausfrau.”¹¹¹

As is obvious in comparing these two quotes, only the men in the Friedrichshagen circle considered Marholm’s ideas about women to be progressive. Encouraging women to cultivate their erotic natures possessed a degree of novelty, but it was not a position that would result in any real social improvements for women. Because of their lack of participation, there is relatively little written by women about the Friedrichshagen phenomenon.¹¹² Gabriele Reuter passed through Friedrichshagen and characterized Laura Marholm as “die merkwürdige Skandinavierin, die so hart gegen die sich regende Frauenbewegung ankämpfte, trotzdem sie sich in der eignen Bewegungsfreiheit wahrhaftig weder von Gesetz noch Herkommen hätte kommandieren lassen,”¹¹³ thus putting her finger on what was apparently the most obvious contradiction in Marholm’s lifestyle.

Marholm simply did not perceive this contradiction. From her perspective, the women’s movement represented frustration and restrictiveness, whereas she felt her marriage to Hansson had brought her fulfillment and freedom. Servaes wrote of Marholm that she believed, “daß das Weib seine geistige Existenz nur von Mannes Gnaden genösse und weniger durch Schule und Unterricht als durch die Offenbarungen der Liebe empfinde. Sie verstand dann beredt ihrem schweigsamen Ola zuzuzwinkern und scheute vor keiner ziemlich handgreiflichen Andeutung zurück, welcherart ihre eigenen Erfahrungen in diesem Punkt wären.”¹¹⁴ Marholm had contracted a love-match and, showing a remarkable blindness to social practicalities and individual variation, prescribed it as a panacea for all women during the following four years. She would never have denied any woman the professional success she herself had achieved, but intellectual activity in itself cannot be fulfilling, she would have argued. A woman’s first priority is a loving relationship to a man. Her own style of life was always the measure for success that Marholm tried to impose on other women.

¹¹¹ Max Dauthendey, *Ein Herz im Lärm der Welt. Briefe an Freunde* (München: Albert Langen, 1933), p. 74.

¹¹² One might mention in this context that Lou Andreas-Salomé and her husband were also residents of Friedrichshagen at this time. Although Marholm and Andreas-Salomé published articles which appeared side by side in *Freie Bühne*, and later, their names came to be connected on women’s issues, Marholm never once mentions Lou Andreas-Salomé in any of her writings, public or private. Frau Lou, however, did not ignore Marholm and mentions her in her journal and wrote about her in an article: Lou Andreas-Salomé, “Mißbrauchte Frauenkraft,” *Die Frau*, 5 (1898), pp. 513–516.

¹¹³ Gabriele Reuter, *Vom Kind zum Menschen. Die Geschichte meiner Jugend* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1921), p. 466.

¹¹⁴ Servaes, “Strindberg in Berlin,” p. 56.

Eroticism had always been central to Marholm's understanding of the psychology of women; however, in the atmosphere of Friedrichshagen, Marholm seems to have lost all sense of moderation. From the time of her arrival in Friedrichshagen in November 1891, until her departure in April 1893, Marholm's pen was extremely active. During this time, she wrote most of the essays that would comprise *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* and a number of studies which prefigure *Das Buch der Frauen*. She also became a regular theater critic for *Freie Bühne*. Throughout most of her writing, it is evident that eroticism has been elevated to the overwhelmingly dominant force in a woman's life. For example, in her studies about Gottfried Keller, she praises the women in his tales who represent "ufordærvet sanselighed."¹¹⁵ Furthermore, she approves of women who submit themselves wholly to their instincts and their passions and subordinate themselves to the men they love. Using a characteristically presumptive rhetoric, Marholm maintains, "daß der weibliche Trieb stärker ist, als das weibliche Denkvermögen, was außer Björnson und den Frauenrechtlern nie Jemand bezweifelt hat."¹¹⁶ The influences of Friedrichshagen did not change her basic views about women, but they certainly affected the confidence with which she expressed them. Her receptive audience encouraged her to become more outspoken on the subject of eroticism than she might otherwise have been. The tendencies Marholm acquired in Friedrichshagen left their mark on the most influential of Marholm's writings.

The most famous episode of the Hanssons' stay in Friedrichshagen is the interval involving Strindberg. Strindberg had written Hansson a number of letters complaining of his financial straits and his discontent in Sweden. Inspired by the success of their efforts on behalf of Arne Garborg, the Hanssons decided to raise money for Strindberg. According to Adolf Paul, it was Marholm's idea to publish one of Strindberg's most desperate letters in Maximilian Harden's new journal, *Die Zukunft*, and although Hansson wrote the accompanying article, she is said to have given the finished product in her translation "näbbar och klor."¹¹⁷ The "tooth and nail" of the article consists of a harsh castigation of Sweden and its publishing houses for the treatment of Sweden's greatest author. Allusions are also made to the similar fate that Ola Hansson has suffered.¹¹⁸ Przybyszweski voices a generally held suspicion: "An dieser Rettungsaktion nahm Laura Marholm lebhaften Anteil, und ich habe den Verdacht, daß sie es weniger aus Liebe

¹¹⁵ Laura Marholm, "Gottfried Kellers kvindeskikkelser," *Samtiden*, 3 (1892), p. 338. "unspoiled sensuality."

¹¹⁶ Laura Marholm, "Symptomatische Stücke," *Freie Bühne*, 3 (1892), p. 432.

¹¹⁷ Paul, *Min Strindbergsbok*, p. 34. Frida Strindberg relates a similar version in the Swedish book about her marriage to Strindberg, *Strindbergs andra hustru. Före äktenskapet*, trans. Karin Boye (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1933), pp. 32–33. Curiously, the episode is absent from the German, *Lieb, Leid und Zeit. Eine unvergeßliche Ehe*.

¹¹⁸ Ola Hansson, "Ein Brief von August Strindberg," *Die Zukunft*, 1 (1 October 1892), pp. 41–42.

zu Strindberg tat als hauptsächlich um ihren Mann zu rächen, mit dem Schweden so schändlich umgesprungen war.”¹¹⁹ The appearance of the letter in *Die Zukunft* coincided exactly with Strindberg’s arrival in Berlin on the first of October. The call for funds was successful, but the Hanssons’ strategy may have done more damage than good. Although the publication of the letter was well-intended, Strindberg was humiliated to have his unstable finances made public. Swedish publishers were deeply offended by the appearance of the letter, and Hansson’s prospects for publication in Sweden grew even fainter.

It does seem that Marholm agreed to invite Strindberg to Friedrichshagen primarily for the sake of her husband, since Strindberg had not done anything to endear himself to her. Przybyszewski points out the practical impact of the invitation: “Er [Ola] wußte nie, womit er rechnen konnte, denn Frau Laura wollte ihm nicht mit materiellen Sorgen den Kopf beschweren, und Ola wußte nicht, daß Laura sich nächtelang quälte und plagte, wie sie mit zweihundert Mark einen ganzen Monat lang auskommen sollte – und nun lud Ola mit allem Nachdruck Strindberg ein.”¹²⁰ Strindberg moved into quarters adjoining the Hanssons’ apartment at Lindenallee 2 and took most of his meals with Hansson and Marholm. Playing host to Strindberg proved to be an emotional and financial strain for the Hanssons, especially for Marholm. According to Hansson, they charged Strindberg 50–60 marks for board, but there were also hidden costs involved. Strindberg received a steady stream of visitors, and often he would conceal himself from them, forcing the Hanssons to receive the unwelcome guests.¹²¹

Strindberg’s behavior obviously irritated Marholm, and he may have even tried to provoke her. As a favor, she translated three one-act plays for him without remuneration, but Strindberg barely acknowledged her existence. He would come into the room where Marholm was sitting and rummage through the bookshelves, pretending that Marholm was not even there.¹²² Max Dauthen-dey relates an anecdote that evokes something of the tension between Marholm and Strindberg:

Später im Gespräch sagte Frau Laura Marholm zu mir: “Wissen Sie schon, daß Strindberg bei uns wohnt? Er ist seit ein paar Tagen in Berlin.” “Ja,” sagte ich, “ich glaube, ich habe ihn eben am Gartengitter gesehen. Der Briefträger brachte ihm die Post.” Einen Augenblick war Frau Marholm ganz verblüfft. Dann wurde sie zornrot und sagte, sich zum Lachen zwingend, zu ihrem Mann: “Da siehst du, was ich dir sagte, Strindberg ist auf jedermann argwöh-

¹¹⁹ Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin*, p. 179.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹²¹ Hansson, “Erinnerungen an August Strindberg,” p. 1736.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 1736. One of these plays was *Das Band* (Bibliographisches Bureau, 1894), and another seems to have been *Die Gläubiger*. David Raymond Hume writes that she arranged for and supervised the translations of *Debet och kredit*, *Leka med elden*, *Tschandala*, and *Hemsöborna* [p. 61].

nisch! Er will seine Post selbst in Empfang nehmen. Er traut nicht seinen besten Freunden.¹²³

The peaceful coexistence of Marholm and Strindberg had been doomed from the start. One of Marholm's mottoes in life could well have been this line spoken by one of her characters: "Sie werden sehr geliebt werden, denn Sie können sehr viel geben."¹²⁴ She believed in winning friends by doing favors for them. Strindberg, on the other hand, detested all feelings of indebtedness, and a sense of gratitude often turned to hatred.

Marholm's active intervention in his affairs was meant to win Strindberg's good will; however, Strindberg perceived Marholm's dominating personality as a threat: "Freilich stieß ihn Frau Marholms laute Art an sich schon zurück. Er erblickte darin Herrschsucht und währnte dahinter den verkappten Versuch, sich seiner gesamten Persönlichkeit zu egoistischen Zwecken zu bemächtigen. Er umgab sie mit phantastischen Vorstellungen und taufte sie mit infernalischem Witz 'Frau Blaubart.'"¹²⁵ According to Adolf Paul, Strindberg claimed about Marholm:

Hon vill till och med ha mig samman med andra fruntimmer, för att få mig under oket igen, och prisar än den enas än den andras, till och med sin pigas företräden för mig! Hon vill tillintetgöra mig för att kunna framställa hela min kvinnofilosofi som fantasifoster av en monoman sjukling, på vansinnets rand! Hon vill hindra världen från att själv se och bedöma, och inbilla envar, att jag är förryckt, och så småningom bogsera in mig på dårhus!¹²⁶

The allusion to the phrase, "ein Genie an der Grenze des Wahnsinns," is telling, since it illustrates that Strindberg had never overcome his first impression of Marholm, gained from the dispute over the *Die Gegenwart* article. However, although Marholm may not have liked Strindberg, his suspicions of her were unfounded.

As Hansson recalled many years later, Strindberg gradually came less and less to their apartment. One evening, he appeared suddenly, entertained them with his guitar, and presented them with two of his paintings. The next day, he had vanished, leaving only a note behind, informing them that he had moved in with Adolf Paul and would send for his things later. The Hanssons returned the two paintings with the rest of his things. Hansson wrote later, "So schieden wir

¹²³ Max Dauthendey, *Gedankengut aus meinen Wanderjahren* (München: Albert Langen, 1913), pp. 249–250.

¹²⁴ Laura Marholm, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* (München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 131.

¹²⁵ Servaes, "Strindberg in Berlin," p. 57.

¹²⁶ Paul, *Min Strindbergsbok*, p. 45. "She even wants to put me together with other women in order to get me under the yoke again and praises the virtues of first one and then another, even of her maid! She wants to destroy me in order to present my entire philosophy of women as figments of the imagination of a monomaniacal invalid on the edge of insanity! She wants to prevent the world from seeing and judging for itself and convince everyone that I am crazy and, eventually, drag me into a madhouse!"

auch sehr friedlich voneinander, was ich hiermit besonders betone.”¹²⁷ In subsequent years, Strindberg did not seem to harbor any ill-will against Hansson, but with Marholm it was another matter. When Strindberg learned that Hansson had parodied him in the painter Ödmann in *Fru Ester Bruce*, he saw Marholm’s influence behind it. He vented his wrath in a letter to Adolf Paul: “Med fru Mara kábblar man ej, man flår henne lefvande från fotsulan opp till örmandlarne och stoppar huden i halsen så hon qväfs – vid gynnsamt tillfälle.”¹²⁸ Yet with his usual capriciousness, when Gustaf Fröding inquired about Strindberg’s work in 1893, Strindberg sent him two essays written by Marholm.¹²⁹

If Strindberg had his outlandish suspicions of Marholm, she later blamed him for driving her and her husband from Berlin:

Zu diesem Entschluß hatte ein berühmter Landsmann meines Gatten nicht unwesentlich beigetragen. Er fuhr in die Idylle am Müggelsee herab wie ein Habicht unter die Kuchlein. Er kam als Hilfesuchender, zog zu uns ein, gab sich bei uns in Pension, bestellte sich bei unserer Köchin die Gerichte, die er essen, und diejenigen unserer Postsendungen, die er vor uns lesen wollte, beschäftigte uns ganz mit der Angelegenheit seines Vorwärtkommens und verschwand schließlich mit unseren sämtlichen [sic] bisherigen Hausfreunden nach Berlin, wo er nach seiner Weise das Gerücht verbreitete, daß wir gegen ihn intriguirten. Da er ein Zugvogel war, dessen Sitten wir schon kannten, so meinten wir, es sei am besten, das vorläufig von ihm beschlagnahmte Terrain zu verlassen.¹³⁰

Marholm’s complaints, however, were not entirely without basis, and have been substantiated by other witnesses. Adolf Paul uses similarly martial metaphors to describe the falling-out with Strindberg: “Några förblevo Hanssons trogna, de flesta vände dem ryggen. Själva avstodo de från all kamp, uppgåvo inom kort sin ännu ej befästa position i Berlin och avflyttade från orten under loppet av följande år.”¹³¹ Hansson himself indicates that the newly-formed *Zum schwarzen Ferkel* group invited him to join their festivities, but they did not want Hansson to bring Marholm with him. Hansson refused to attend without his wife, with the result that many of the Hanssons’ former guests abandoned them.¹³²

¹²⁷ Hansson, “Erinnerungen an August Strindberg,” p. 1736.

¹²⁸ Strindberg, *August Strindbergs brev*, Vol. 10, p. 83. “One does not bicker with Madame Nightmare [this nickname alludes to both “nightmare” (mardröm) and “bitch” (sattmara)] one flays her alive from the soles of her feet to her earlobes and stuffs the skin into her throat so she chokes – at the best opportunity.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 289 and 290n3. The two essays are likely to have been “August Strindberg,” *Nord und Süd*, 66 (1893), pp. 23–50 and “Meister vom Norden,” *Moderne Kunst*, 1893.

¹³⁰ Marholm, “Die Erste,” p. 374.

¹³¹ Paul, *Min Strindbergsbok*, p. 46. “Some remained faithful to the Hanssons, most turned their backs. They themselves ceded the battle, shortly gave up their not yet fortified position in Berlin and moved from town during the course of the following year.”

¹³² Ola Hansson, “Rustgården II,” galley proof in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek, p. 157.

Strindberg's stay with the Hanssons lasted only one month. He left in the beginning of November, but the Hanssons did not leave Friedrichshagen until five months later. The winter proved, in fact, to be quite active. The young Max Dauthendey had read *Sensitiva amorosa*, so that, when he came to Berlin in October, Ola Hansson was the first person he sought.¹³³ He became a frequent guest in the Hansson household, and his letters and memoirs are filled with glimpses into their daily life. Hansson and Marholm provided him with encouragement, support, and active help in finding publishers and making contacts. Dauthendey tells of a Christmas Eve spent with the Hanssons and Bruno Wille and his wife, who had brought along the latter's "baby," Snowball, "ein zartweißer kleiner Pudel mit rosa Schnauze."¹³⁴ Dauthendey describes the conversation that evening: "Wieder war die Duse dann das Hauptgespräch, und dann das neue 'Blätter für die Kunst.' [. . .] Und nun wurde über Farben, über Stimmungen, über Lyrik gesprochen."¹³⁵ According to Dauthendey, the Hanssons did not miss one of Eleonore Duse's performances, and both eventually wrote essays about her.

As long as they remained in Berlin, Marholm and Hansson were anything but isolated. The Hanssons invited Edvard Munch and Dagny Juel to spend New Year's Eve with them, but the pair sent their regrets because of illness.¹³⁶ That winter, Strindberg, Gunnar Heiberg, Gabriele Finne, Knut Hamsun, and Holger Drachmann all held lectures at the Singakademie, which the Hanssons no doubt attended. Also, Fräulein Némenthy, the mistress of Barbey d'Aurevilly, passed through Berlin, and she inspired one of the essays in *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*. The Hanssons still received visitors, and Servaes and Przybyszewski were, as always, faithful houseguests. In the spring, Dauthendey met the Swedish author Gustaf Uddgren at the Hanssons' home. Uddgren was responsible for persuading Dauthendey to visit Sweden, where the two entered into a literary collaboration. All of this would seem to argue against the thesis that the Hanssons became social outcasts after Strindberg's departure.

Still, all was not right with the pair. Dauthendey wrote to a friend of a particular scene on the 10th of January:

Die Marholm saß am Schreibtisch und las Korrekturen, Ola Hansson kam etwas verstimmt. Er habe seinen "Spleen", sagte er. Die Marholm meinte, es

¹³³ For an account of the influence of Ola Hansson's writing on Dauthendey's own style, see: Kjell Espmark, "Dauthendey und die schwedische Literatur – Hin und Zurück," *Nicht nur Strindberg* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1979), p. 377.

¹³⁴ Dauthendey, *Ein Herz im Lärm der Welt*, p. 85.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86.

¹³⁶ Carla Lathe, "Edvard Munch and Modernism in the Berlin Art World 1892–1903," *Facets of European Modernism*, ed. Janet Garton (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1985), p. 105. Lathe considers Ola Hansson to have exerted a considerable effect on Edvard Munch, both directly and indirectly. Hansson was indeed interested in Munch's art, but this interest does not seem to have been shared by Marholm. She never once mentions Munch in either her public or private writings.

käme aus dem Magen. Er: es käme vom eingetretenen Tauwetter, von der Witterungsstimmung. Aber sie belügen sich wohl beide. Es ist die Sehnsucht, nach Freiheit, man empfindet es aus all den unhörbaren Seufzern in seinen Worten. Weib und Kind hängen an ihm. Und er möchte so fern fort und Neues erleben und genießen.¹³⁷

It is difficult to know what to make of this account, since it is the only contemporary testimony that hints at discontent in the Hansson marriage. One must bear in mind that Dauthendey's speculations are those of an unattached young man with nomadic tendencies. The source of Hansson's "spleen" could well have been other difficulties besetting the couple at the time.

As a direct result of the Strindberg letter in *Die Zukunft*, Albert Bonnier returned Hansson's manuscripts of *Resan hem* and *Fru Ester Bruce*. "Det er et helt Aars Arbeide, som ligger død [sic]," writes Marholm to Garborg.¹³⁸ Marholm was having her own problems with publishers. She had arranged with Samuel Fischer to publish a book entitled *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, composed of her writings about women in *Freie Bühne*. According to Marholm, Fischer wanted to wield too much editorial power and rewrite important parts of her work. Marholm refused to honor their agreement and was afraid that a legal case might ensue.¹³⁹ Although they were never taken to court, the quarrel effectively prevented the Hanssons from any further participation in the journal *Freie Bühne*.

When their lease expired on April 1st, the Hanssons moved to Schliersee. Originally, they had intended to return to Friedrichshagen in the autumn, but they decided instead to remain in Bavaria. Bruno Wille sold their Friedrichshagen furniture for them and sent along the items they wished to keep.

In June, Marholm wrote a long and revealing letter to Arne Garborg about their departure from Friedrichshagen. She blames Strindberg for most of the misfortunes that have befallen them:

Vi ere begge to overanstrengte med Smaaslid og kan bogstavelig taget ikke unde os 2 Dager Hvile. Jeg er helt opriven og deler Tiden med at ligge paa Sengen og græde og sidde ved Skrivebordet og skrive. [. . .] Jeg er i den overnervøse Tilstanden siden den Tid Strindberg boede hos os – en hel Maaned – da jeg lod alt ligge for at oversætte hans nye Stykker gratis og han saa trakasserede en med sine Fordringer til Mad og Drikke at det var at blive gal [sic].¹⁴⁰

Ingvar Holm has seen in this letter the beginning of the mental distress and paranoia that would affect Marholm later in life, although Arne Widell argues con-

¹³⁷ Dauthendey, *Ein Herz im Lärm der Welt*, p. 90.

¹³⁸ Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 11 June 1893. "It is an entire year's work that lies dead."

¹³⁹ Ibid. Also Laura Hansson to Hermann Bahr, 25 June 1893.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. "We are both overworked with petty drudgery and can literally not allow ourselves two days of rest. I am completely torn up and divide my time between lying on the bed and crying and sitting at the desk and writing. [. . .] I have been in a hypernervous state since the time Strindberg lived with us – an entire month – when I let everything drop in order to translate his new plays for free and he so pestered me with his demands for food and drink that I almost went mad."

vincingly that this is merely a natural reaction to the stress she had undergone in Friedrichshagen.¹⁴¹ Both Holm and Widell allude to a “manic temperament,” allegedly evident in Marholm’s correspondence, but such a judgment is not supported by the evidence. The few times that Marholm expresses depression in her letters, there is always good reason for it. Furthermore, her letters are written too far apart to indicate any drastic mood swings, which are characteristic of a manic-depressive. Hansson was certainly the more moody of the pair. Marholm was an emotionally strong person whose psychic well-being was slowly eroded by a lifetime of stress and misfortune.

What is interesting about this letter to Garborg are the parallels which Marholm perceives between their exclusion from Copenhagen and their departure from Friedrichshagen. She compares Strindberg to Brandes: “Han har i sit daglige Væsen en ganske paafallende Lighed med Brandes, densamme grænse-løse Sjelvkændhed, Sladdersyge og Intriglust [sic].”¹⁴² Strindberg is responsible for Hansson’s refusals from Swedish publishing houses and “Foran Gyldendals og Philipsens Dør staaer Sankt Georg og han [Ola Hansson] gaaer ikke did for at banke paa.”¹⁴³ On Strindberg’s behalf, however, one must note that he did not actively seek to sabotage Hansson’s publishing prospects; the Hanssons did this themselves by means of the letter in *Die Zukunft*. Nevertheless, the pattern is in fact striking. In both cases, after a long acquaintance, Marholm runs afoul of a strong personality because of her own assertiveness, and because of her pride, she is unable to make any conciliatory gestures. As a result, important connections are lost and bridges are burned. Unfortunately, Marholm did not seem to learn from these experiences, since she would repeat the same mistake with Bjørnson: she had an unfortunate knack for making enemies of influential men.

Another notable trait in the letter is a strong strain of anti-semitism. For Marholm this attitude is inspired by her problems with Brandes and Fischer, though she even remarks that Strindberg has married “en Halvjødinde.”¹⁴⁴ The theoretical source seems to be *Rembrandt als Erzieher*. Marholm writes about Hansson, “Han og Jøderne, det gaaer heller ikke her sammen, og han føler sig let og dobbelt produktiv, siden han ved det [sic].”¹⁴⁵ Characteristically, both Marholm and Hansson take solace in the notion that they have been mistreated and misunderstood by a particular group, and therefore, their failures are not their own fault. The genius is a scorned renegade. A similar train of thought would attain pathological dimensions around the year 1900, but this was still eight years away.

¹⁴¹ Compare Holm, p. 206f. with Widell, p. 41 and p.162n57.

¹⁴² Laura Hansson to Arne Garborg, 11 June 1892. “In his everyday personality, he bears a rather striking resemblance to Brandes, the same boundless self-aggrandizement, gossip-mongering and penchant for intrigue.”

¹⁴³ Ibid. “Before the doors of Gyldendal and Philipsen stands Saint George and he [Ola Hansson] does not go there to knock.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. “a half-Jewess.”

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. “He and the Jews, they just do not go together, and he feels doubly productive now that he knows it.”

Productive Years in Schliersee: 1894–1897

Upon their departure from Friedrichshagen, the Hanssons' most pressing task was to find a new publisher. Hansson had two manuscripts, *Resan hem* and *Fru Ester Bruce*, as yet not placed with a publisher, and Marholm had plans for two books of her own. Always a woman of high ambition, in May of 1893, Marholm offered her and her husband's works to the J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, famous as the publisher of both Goethe and Schiller. In her letter to the director of the publishing company, Marholm provides detailed outlines of both *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* and *Das Buch der Frauen*. Unfortunately for the Hansson family finances, they were refused, and in fact, an entire year would pass before the Hanssons would each find a publisher.

In the interim, Marholm and Hansson were able to make a living from the book reviews and feuilletons they placed in newspapers and journals. They lived an isolated life in the country, and Hansson explained to Paul Heyse: "Ich bin eigentlich immer ein Einsiedler gewesen, meiner Veranlagung nach; das Schlimme ist aber, dass meine Frau, die sonst gar nicht einsiedlerisch veranlagt ist, mir darin zu gleichen anfängt."¹ After the hectic socializing in Friedrichshagen, both Hanssons enjoyed the calm of Schliersee. Financial necessity required that they work constantly, but despite this pressure, Marholm later referred to this time in Schliersee as "anscheinend friedliche Jahre voll reger Thätigkeit."²

Times were hard and the two travelled to Munich only when there was a chance of collecting material for the many articles they wrote during this period. For example, Hansson went to the Glaßpalast to study the paintings of Arnold Böcklin, who became one of his favorite journalistic subjects. Marholm was asked by Maximilian Harden to interview some political figures in Munich for *Die Zukunft*. She drew upon her old acquaintance with Georg von Vollmar for one article and interviewed Dr. Sigl, the leader of the "Bauernbewegung," for another.³ Harden proved to be a valuable supporter of the Hanssons during this period. Harden had also had a falling out with the *Freie Bühne* circle some years

¹ Ola Hansson to Paul Heyse, 5 February 1894.

² Laura Marholm, *Das Buch der Toten* (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim, 1900), p. 132.

³ Laura Marholm, "Der Abgeordnete von Vollmar," *Die Zukunft*, 4 (August 12, 1893), pp. 316–321 and "Beim Dr. Sigl," *Die Zukunft*, 4 (July 15, 1893), pp. 132–139.

earlier and proved willing to publish almost anything the Hanssons submitted to *Die Zukunft*.

In August, the Hanssons made another important acquaintance, Paul Heyse. Heyse had been one of Marholm's favorite authors in her youth, and before leaving Berlin she had submitted "Paul Heyse als Liebesschilderer" to the *Vossische Zeitung*. When the article appeared, Marholm sent Heyse a copy and then paid him a visit. Much to her own discomfort, Marholm was forced to listen to Heyse sing the praises of his good friend Georg Brandes. Marholm quotes Heyse as saying, "Wenn ich das Schicksal hätte, auf eine einsame Insel verbannt zu sein [. . .] und mir nur ein Wunsch gewährt würde für mein ganzes weiteres Dasein, ich würde sagen: 'Lasst mich meine Einsamkeit mit Georg Brandes teilen und ich begehre nichts weiter.'"⁴ Obviously, Marholm did not share these sentiments, but managed to keep her opinions to herself.

Marholm wanted to enlist Paul Heyse's help in finding a publisher for her and Hansson. Heyse was favorably impressed with Hansson's writings, although he hated Marholm's *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*. Overall, Hansson had better luck dealing with Heyse, whom he flatteringly referred to as "verehrter Meister."⁵ Heyse enjoyed *Fru Ester Bruce*, which he read in manuscript and was sent a copy of *Sensitiva amorosa*. Although he was willing to make suggestions about publishers, Heyse was not moved to solicit publishers on the Hanssons' behalf. Their acquaintance with Heyse ended abruptly in May of 1894. Hansson had sent Heyse a copy of *Resan hem* in manuscript, but the novel was not well received.⁶ Hansson responded to Heyse's criticism with a cool, but polite letter of farewell.

The continuing stream of rejections from publishers must have discouraged Marholm, but she addressed the issue with good humor in a satirical article entitled "Die Weisheit der Verleger." Marholm boasts of her considerable collection of rejection letters, most of which explain that her books are simply too good for the German public and therefore cannot be published. Marholm reaches the conclusion that the best way for an author to obtain a publisher in Germany is to slit his throat, thereby ushering himself into the company of the classics. German publishers love issuing classic editions, she claims. Some further good may come from the author's suicide: "Er versorgt [. . .] einige mehr oder weniger gelehrte Literaturwissenschaftler, die selbst nicht schaffen können, während ihrer langwierigen Ausgrabungsarbeiten mit einem anständigen Stück Brot."⁷

⁴ Laura Marholm, "Erinnerungen an Paul Heyse," *Die Kultur*, I (1900), no. 5, p. 358.

⁵ Ola Hansson to Paul Heyse, 3 August 1893.

⁶ Heyse had learned Danish because of his friendship with Brandes. See Bengt Algot Sørensen, "Georg Brandes als 'deutscher' Schriftsteller," *The Activist Critic* (Copenhagen, 1980), p. 136.

⁷ Laura Marholm, "Die Weisheit der Verleger," *Die Zukunft*, 7 (30 June 1894), pp. 613-614.

Since German publishing houses had closed their doors to them, the Hanssons decided to make a trip to Scandinavia in order to discover what possibilities might exist there. In June of 1894, they settled in Stege on the Danish island of Møn. Aschehoug & Co. in Christiania had agreed to publish *Fru Ester Bruce* and had expressed an interest in Marholm's work as well. Hansson travelled to Norway to see to the arrangements. During their stay in Stege, Marholm finally found a German publisher. Through Maximilian Harden, Marholm was put into contact with Albert Langen.⁸ Thus far, Langen had only published one book, Knut Hamsun's *Mysterien*. Given her year of frustrations, however, Marholm was in no position to quibble about the lack of tradition behind Langen's company, and the two agreed that Langen would publish *Das Buch der Frauen*.

Marholm hastened to finish what would be her most famous work. In the proposal she had sent to the Cotta'sche Buchhandlung in May 1893, Marholm had planned to include articles on Marie Bashkirtseff, Sonja Kovalevsky, Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, Eleonora Duse, the wife of Thomas Carlyle and "eine deutsche Socialistin."⁹ The last two essays were never written. In June of 1893, Marholm mentioned to Garborg that she was working on "en hel Del Character-tegninger af Kvinder" and promised to include a study of Hulda Garborg's *Et frit Forhold*, but this essay also never came to be.¹⁰ The final product contained essays about Marie Bashkirtseff, Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, Eleonora Duse, George Egerton, Amalie Skram and Sonja Kovalevsky.

Marholm described her central theme in the book as follows:

Was ich in ihnen suche und in diesen sechs Typen des modernen Weibes festhalten möchte, das sind die Manifestationen ihres Weibempfindens, wie es durchbricht trotz allem; trotz der Theorien, auf denen sie ihr Leben aufbauten, trotz der Ideen, deren Vorkämpferinnen sie waren, trotz ihrer Erfolge, die sie in stärkere Fesseln schlugen, als es die Unbemercktheit gethan hätte. Sie alle waren krank an einer inneren Spaltung, die erst mit der Frauenfrage in die Welt gekommen ist, an einer Spaltung zwischen ihrer Verstandesrichtung und der dunklen Basis ihrer Weibnatur.¹¹

The woman who tries to live her life alone in the pursuit of intellectual goals is decadent. Marholm believes: "Die ihrer Familien-, Liebe- und Mutterinstinkte dauernd entrathen können, sind keine Genies. Das Weib, dessen Empfinden steril wird, ist eine Absterbeform."¹² Marholm blames the modern women's movement for pushing women into masculine careers, so that they lose their special feminine qualities, which are essential for life itself. The woman who

⁸ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 19 July 1903.

⁹ Laura Marholm to Cotta, 6 May 1893.

¹⁰ Laura Marholm to Arne Garborg, 11 June 1893. "quite a few character sketches of women."

¹¹ Laura Marholm, *Das Buch der Frauen* (Leipzig: Albert Langen, 1895), pp. i–ii.

¹² Laura Marholm, "Das Buch der Frauen, etc.," *Die Zukunft*, 16 (1896), p. 461.

stifles her feminine instincts becomes crippled and dies. Marholm concludes, "Darum brauchen die Frauen unserer Zeit nicht Rechte, sondern Schutz."¹³

But what is the centerpoint of these special feminine qualities? Marholm's answer to this question became the most controversial passage in the book:

Eins aber ist es, wozu das Weib geschaffen ist, wenn es normal geschaffen ist, und das ist zur Liebe. Im Mann beginnt das Leben des Weibes, und im Mann beschließt es sich. Denn der Mann macht das Weib zum Weib. Der Mann giebt ihm die große Gesundung und die große Selbstachtung durch die Mutter-schaft, der Mann giebt ihm die kosenden Händchen und die frisch duftende Blüte seiner Kinder; je höher des Weibes Leib und Geist und Seele entwickelt ist, desto weniger kann es des Mannes entraten, der ihr großes Glück ist oder ihr großes Unglück, aber in allen Fällen der einzige Sinn ihres Lebens. Denn des Weibes Inhalt ist der Mann.¹⁴

For Marholm, the erotic is of overwhelming import to a woman's existence. Without erotic fulfillment a woman withers and dies. One must note, however, that it is not merely the erotic, as such, that is essential, but the entire complex of "Liebe." Marholm's concept of love is composed of a strong strain of the erotic, combined with psychological and spiritual submission. Therefore, women in "loveless" marriages are as unfulfilled as single women. For this reason, Marholm writes of Kovalevsky: "Mutter wurde sie ja und Gattin auch, – aber Geliebte nicht."¹⁵

The essays in *Das Buch der Frauen* fall into two groups. Three of the women, Eleonora Duse, George Egerton, and Amalie Skram, do not fall into the category of spiritual cripples. Instead, they are women who have found forms of artistic expression that do not conflict with their womanliness, but rather, make good use of their feminine resources. Eleonore Duse utilizes her "Weibinstinkt" to interpret her roles on stage.¹⁶ These instincts make Eleonore Duse a natural psychologist, and all of her roles possess an immediacy and authenticity of feeling. George Egerton employs this same sort of immediacy in her writing: "Alles, worauf es ihr ankommt, ist eine Empfindung, eine Seelenschwingung, die sie überwältigt, ein Geheimnis ihrer Natur als Weib, das nach oben drängt, zum Ausdruck zu bringen."¹⁷ Similarly, Amalie Skram does not think, moralize, or judge; she observes and records: "Ihre Seele war unverbildet, ihre Resonanz-fähigkeit unmittelbar genug, um das Allereinfachste in dem stummen Beben seiner Herzfibern wiedergeben zu können."¹⁸ A woman's genius lies in her instinctive emotional sensitivity, not in her analytical faculties.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Marholm, *Das Buch der Frauen*, p. 44.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

The other three women, Marie Bashkirtseff, Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, and Sonja Kovalevsky, belong to Marholm's category of spiritually crippled women. These three essays account for more than half of the book, and the weight of Marholm's arguments lies here. The case of Marie Bashkirtseff has been discussed earlier. She was a talented woman who died young without finding fulfillment in love. Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler spent her literary career fighting for the cause of women, until she found love and happiness late in life with the Italian Duke of Cajanello. Sonja Kovalevsky, Marholm argues, was a woman who undermined her physical health by too much brainwork. Since she never had the opportunity to experience love, she died frustrated and unfulfilled.

George Egerton is the pseudonym of Australian-born Chavelita Dunne, an author whose colorful life included a brief romance with Knut Hamsun in 1890.¹⁹ Egerton and the Hanssons were brought into contact with each other in March 1894, when Egerton offered her services as translator of Hansson's *Tolk-are och siare*.²⁰ Both Hansson and Marholm were quite taken with Egerton's writing. Marholm's letters to Egerton contain a degree of feminine intimacy unparalleled in Marholm's correspondence. The letters take up the subjects of households, husbands, pregnancy, and postpartum depression. Most of Marholm's correspondence consists of business letters to men and even her letters to women are characterized by business-like distance. Egerton's letters, which have been lost, must have been quite candid. Marholm expresses in one letter a sense of regret that she cannot return the same level of intimacy: "Jeg kan ikke give mig hen i Breve; jeg lider derunder, thi jeg vil saa gjerne gjøre Gengæld – men jeg kan ikke. Jeg nyder deres Breve; der er saa stærk Resonanz i mig for deres smidige stærke Individualität, det maa de tro mig! [sic]"²¹

Marholm's attention had been drawn to the cases of Kovalevsky and Leffler by Ellen Key, who had sent the Hanssons a copy of her Leffler biography in May of 1893.²² In fact, during the summer of 1894, Ellen Key paid a visit to the Hanssons in Stege. Key and Marholm found that they had much in common in terms of their views about women. During the next few years, they would exert a great deal of influence on each other. The Kovalevsky essay was the last to be written, and in October, Marholm gave Key a progress report: "Jeg holder nu paa med min Studie om Sonja K. Jeg bliver uafsluttelig afbrudt, da Folk her ere vante at springe ud og ind ad dørene. Til trods for det synes jeg tidt, hun er i værelset, jeg

¹⁹ For information about George Egerton see: Margaret Stetz, "George Egerton: Woman and Writer of the Eighteen-Nineties," Diss. Harvard University, 1982.

²⁰ Ola Hansson to Chavelita Dunne, 18 March 1894.

²¹ Laura Hansson to Chavelita Dunne, 18 May 1894. "I can not let myself go in letters; I suffer from it, because I would very much like to reciprocate – but I cannot. I enjoy your letters; there is such a strong resonance in me for your supple, strong individuality, you must believe me!"

²² Ola Hansson to Ellen Key, 6 May 1893.

fornemmer hvor hun sidder og naar hun gaaer. Det har jeg aldrig havt før – en saadan Virkning af et Væsens Intensitæt [sic].”²³ A lack of peace and quiet for her own writing was typical at the time; she later referred to *Das Buch der Frauen* as “zwischen Reisen, Haushalten, Kinderwarten, Nähen und Schneidern geschrieben.”²⁴

Although *Das Buch der Frauen* bears 1895 as its date of publication, it appeared just before Christmas in 1894, and its popularity soon exceeded all expectations. The book became Langen’s first financial success. It was translated into Swedish, English, Norwegian, Russian, Polish, Dutch, Czech and Italian. For mysterious reasons, Langen refused to have the book translated into French, even though a provision for such a translation stood in their contract. Langen’s biographer, Ernestine Koch, is at a loss to explain the episode. Marholm took the matter to court and won, causing Langen to pay a fine, but nonetheless, the book was never translated into French.²⁵ The Swedish translation was published by Adolf Bonnier, Albert Bonnier’s uncle, without Marholm’s permission.²⁶

As to the German-speaking countries, it was noted that the book “har för övrigt i Tyskland, Österrike och Schweiz haft en succes [sic], som icke på många år kommit en dylik rent litterär publikation till del.”²⁷ The popularity of *Das Buch der Frauen* created a market in Germany for the writings of Amalie Skram and Ellen Key.²⁸ Both Langen and Marholm worked hard for the success of *Das Buch der Frauen*. They both had a shrewd understanding of marketing tactics and saw

²³ Laura Marholm to Ellen Key, 6 October 1894. “I am now working on my study of Sonja K. I am constantly being interrupted, since people here are used to running in and out of doors. Despite this, I constantly feel that she is in the room, I sense where she sits and when she walks. I have never felt this before – such an impact from a being’s intensity.”

²⁴ Marholm, *Buch der Toten*, p. 132.

²⁵ Ernestine Koch, *Albert Langen. Ein Verleger in München* (München: Langen-Müller, 1969.), p. 74. Marholm does mention that Langen prevented *Das Buch der Frauen* from being translated into French, but she never says anything about having successfully conducted a court case against Langen. Koch’s source seems to be Hanns Floerke, who had access to material no longer available, and therefore, it is impossible to assess his interpretation of the evidence. The court case over the French translation of *Das Buch der Frauen* seems so unmotivated and out of line with the rest of Langen’s behavior, I am inclined to doubt that it took place. Regretfully, I have no concrete evidence with which to contradict Floerke’s assertion. [Hanns Floerke, “Der Albert Langen-Verlag,” manuscript in the Gustav Pezold Nachlaß, Schiller-Nationalmuseum Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar.]

²⁶ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 11 October 1895.

²⁷ Editorial note to Karl A. Tavaststjerna, “Tvänne böcker för kvinnor och om kvinnor,” *Nordisk Revy*, 1 (1895), p. 193. “has moreover experienced a success in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland which has not been accorded a similar purely literary work for many years.”

²⁸ Axel Lindqvist, “A. Langen. De stora nordiska diktarnas förläggare,” *Nordisk Tidskrift*, 30 (1954), no. 2, p. 103.

to it that review copies were sent to influential newspapers. Marholm was pleased with Langen's efforts on her behalf: "Ich freue mich über die Energie, die Sie entfalten. Ich sehe darin eine Bürgschaft weiteren guten Zusammenarbeitens."²⁹ Marholm even wanted to make Langen her exclusive publisher.

Wherever *Das Buch der Frauen* appeared, it stirred up controversy, and the press debate was considerable. Overall, one could say that reviews were mixed. Concise assessments of the book include: "ein gefährliches Buch," "inhållsrik och fångslande," "an absurd book," "ein ehrliches und starkes Buch," and "dålig litteratur."³⁰ The majority of her critics, whether or not they are negatively disposed to *Das Buch der Frauen*, allow themselves to remark that the book is "ausgezeichnet geschrieben"³¹ and that its author "beobachtet scharf und unnachtsichtig."³² In the light of this sometimes grudging praise, Charlotte Broicher points out a contradiction within much of the criticism about Marholm: "Wir fühlen, daß Seelenschwingungen, die bisher stumm waren, hier Laute gefunden haben. Und doch sind ihre Ausführungen und 'Offenbarungen des Weibseins' von der Frauenwelt fast durchgehend als Beleidigung empfunden worden. Woher dieser Widerspruch?"³³

One reason for this effect might be a rhetoric which is both seductive and contradictory. In attempting to describe Marholm's style, a number of her critics invoke the aid of metaphor. Hedwig Dohm writes of "die aalhaft gewundene, sich schlängelnde Argumentationsart [sic] der Frau Laura Marholm. Will man sie bei einem recht handgreiflichen Irrthum packen, – schnell entschlüpft sie und beweist, daß der Biß eine Liebkosung war."³⁴ Charlotte Broicher finds her rhetoric a bit too dazzling: "Ihre Sprache schillert und blendet. Sie schluchzt, zittert, wimmert, jauchzt und stöhnt. Ein glänzendes, prasselndes Feuerwerk."³⁵ Unimpressed by such rhetorical pyrotechnics, Adine Gemberg remarks, "Es ist immer dasselbe, man dreht sich auf einem Karoussel um eine Axe, es dröhnt und klingelt von gewaltigen Worten, und man kommt nicht von der Stelle."³⁶

²⁹ Laura Marholm to Albert Langen, 30 December 1894. Cited in Floerke, p. 17.

³⁰ Elisabeth Meißner, "Vereins-Nachrichten. Verein Frauenwohl Berlin," *Die Frauenbewegung*, I (1895), p. 110; [Anonymous], review of *Kvinnor*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 21 May 1895, p. 3: "rich in content and captivating"; Annie Macdonell, "Six Modern Women," *The Bookman* (London), 9 (March 1896), p. 162; Leo Berg, *Der Übermensch in der modernen Litteratur* (München: Albert Langen, 1897); Carl af Wirsén, "Litteratur: Qvinnor," *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*, 28 March 1896, A-edition, p. 3: "bad literature."

³¹ E. A., "Laura Marholm, *Das Buch der Frauen*," *Die Neue Zeit*, Jg. 13, Bd. 1 (1894–95), p. 567.

³² Charlotte Broicher, "Sonia Kovalevsky in Beziehung zur Frauenfrage," *Preußische Jahrbücher*, 84 (1896), p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁴ Hedwig Dohm, "Reaktion in der Frauenbewegung," *Die Zukunft*, 29 (18 November 1899), p. 279.

³⁵ Broicher, p. 3.

³⁶ Adine Gemberg, "Eine Profetin der Hysterie," *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 64 (1895), p. 169.

Marholm's book was especially provocative because it presented problematic ideas persuasively. For exactly this reason, a number of critics considered the book to be dangerous.

The most common bone of contention for the critics, whether or not they were pro or con, was Marholm's treatment of female sexuality. Some felt that she had crossed the boundary of good taste and decency, a criticism which would recur in conjunction with her subsequent writings as well. Many objected to the overwhelming importance she assigned to the sex drive, and some did not balk at remarking that the author herself must suffer from "sjuklig erotomani."³⁷ Marholm's advocacy of the feminine sex drive was shocking at a time when the scientific community held that women barely had one at all.³⁸ Adine Gemberg claims with offended dignity, "Das zentrale Weibempfinden' [. . .] ist bei der gesunden deutschen Jugend vor der Ehe nicht vorhanden."³⁹ Marholm's taking the part of feminine sexuality ought also to be viewed in the context of the doctrine of celibacy for both men and women that was advocated by Bjørnson during her years in Copenhagen. To Marholm, enforced celibacy was a crime against nature, and her Friedrichshagen acquaintances had supported her in this belief. These experiences led her to the strong emphasis in her writing upon the erotic side of woman's nature.

Yet, even those with less delicate sensibilities felt that Marholm placed too strong an emphasis on the physiological needs of women and pointedly disregarded their spiritual needs: "Etwas Tierisches liegt ganz gewiß in allem, was diese Schriftstellerin in das Empfinden der Frauen, die sie schildert, hineinlegt."⁴⁰ Charlotte Broicher provides an astute assessment of the situation: "Sie beruht mit ihren Anschauungen auf dem Boden des Naturalismus, der Leben und Menschen so unendlich vereinfacht, so völlig auf das Instinktleben reduziert hat, daß ihm der Vollmensch darüber verloren gegangen ist."⁴¹ Indeed, Marholm's obsession with physiology is evident: a woman's biology is her destiny. Fritz Mauthner also feels that Marholm has missed the full complexity of human character: "Ihr Ideal ist eine Venus, der außer den Armen und Beinen auch noch Kopf und Herzgegend abgeschlagen worden ist. Der Torso scheint

³⁷ Jacobine Ring [Jaqueline], "Qvinnor," *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 10 June 1895, p. 3. "sickly erotomania."

³⁸ See for example, Elias Bredsdorff, *Den store nordiske krig om seksualmoralen* (København: Gyldendal, 1973), p. 364; Pil Dahlerup, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (København: Gyldendal, 1983), pp. 30-35; or Cesare Lombroso and G. Ferrero, *Das Weib als Verbrecherin und Prostituirte* (Hamburg, 1894). Freud also thought that women had less of a sex drive than men.

³⁹ Adine Gemberg, "Im Namen der weiblichen Jugend," *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 65 (1896), p. 1165.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1168.

⁴¹ Broicher, p. 5.

ihr anbetungswürdig.”⁴² The word that appears most frequently in the Swedish Marholm criticism is: “ensidighet.”⁴³

Not surprisingly, the most hostile reactions to *Das Buch der Frauen* came from the women’s movement. At a meeting of the *Verein Frauenwohl* in Berlin held June 6, 1895, *Das Buch der Frauen* was one of the main items on the agenda. The secretary records that at that meeting, Minna Cauer “betonte, daß es größere Gegensätze als das Ideal der Frauenbewegung und Laura Marholm nicht gäbe.”⁴⁴ Cauer’s speech against the writings of Marholm was enthusiastically received and “Herzlicher Beifall lohnte der Sprecherin.”⁴⁵ A women’s congress held in Berlin in 1896 dubbed Laura Marholm “Die Feindin der Frauenbewegung.”⁴⁶

In a lecture she delivered on the intellectual differences between men and women, Helene Lange also had some strong words for Laura Marholm. Lange argues that when comparing the sexes, the feminine capacity for motherhood is the most noteworthy difference between the two, and this obvious distinction has led some to the false conclusion that motherhood is therefore the one and only *raison d’être* in a woman’s life. Laura Marholm has taken this false logic even further when she maintains that it is not motherhood, but physical fulfillment with her husband that is a woman’s main source of contentment. Lange explains:

Einer Frau ist es vorbehalten gewesen, in unbegreiflicher Selbstschmähung die letzte Konsequenz dieser Auffassung zu ziehen und im Weibe das hysterische Geschlechtswesen zu zeichnen. In der jubelnden Zustimmung, die die Auffassung Laura Marholms bei vielen Männern und leider auch bei manchen Frauen erregt hat, kennzeichnet sich jene Verrantheit in Extreme, jene Perversität, die einem Umschlag der Stimmung vorauszugehen pflegt.⁴⁷

Minna Cauer felt that the book should be renamed “Das Buch der Frau für die Männer.”⁴⁸

Lange’s fears about the misuses of Marholm’s book were not at all unfounded. Members of the literary world felt that *Das Buch der Frauen* was a valuable

⁴² Fritz Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 11 December 1895.

⁴³ “Ensidighet” (“one-sidedness”) is a popular word even in the criticism of Marholm’s other works. One might wish to compare this fact with Karin Palmkvist’s observation that the words most frequently used by Swedish critics in negative evaluations of realistic literature in the 1880’s were: “ensidighet,” “osmaklighet” and “råhet.” (“one-sidedness,” “tastelessness,” and “coarseness.”) [Karin Palmkvist, “Hur ‘skrivande damer’ bedömdes,” *Tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap*, 10 (1981), no. 2, p. 19.] Marholm was often accused of “osmaklighet” and “råhet” as well.

⁴⁴ Meißner, p. 111.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ H. G., “Der Frauencongreß,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 29 September 1896, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Helene Lange, *Kampfzeiten. Aufsätze und Reden aus vier Jahrzehnten* (Berlin: F. U. Herbig Verlag, 1928), pp. 204–205.

⁴⁸ Meißner, p. 111.

psychological sourcebook for male authors. The Norwegian critic Nils Kjær laments that it was not written years earlier: "Af uberegnelig Nytte for vor realistiske Litteraturs Sandfærdighed vilde den have kunnet blive, om den var fremkommen for saa mange Aar siden, at vore større og mindre Digtere havde kunnet tage den med paa Raad, naar de frembragte deres verdensbergtede Kvindeskikkelser . . ." ⁴⁹ Karl August Tavaststjerna hails it as "en af de ytterst få ärliga böcker som en kvinna skrivit om sitt kön." ⁵⁰ Hermann Bahr seconds Tavaststjerna's thought: "Es redet endlich eine Frau von den Frauen und so, daß man es für wahr halten kann." ⁵¹ Felix Dörmann is more enthusiastic than anyone: "Man muß die Bücher der Frau Laura Marholm gelesen haben, sonst kennt man weder Literatur noch Leben." ⁵²

However, potentially more damaging to the women's movement than the acceptance of Marholm's depiction of women by certain of the literati was the approval of her theories by the scientific community. Dr. Max Runge, Professor of Gynecology at Göttingen, used *Das Buch der Frauen* as scientific evidence to support his theories about the sexually determined differences between men and women. After recounting Marholm's version of the life and death of Sonja Kovalevsky, he concludes: "So ist auch das Weib gebunden an ewige Gesetze, denen sie sich nicht entziehen kann." ⁵³ Marholm's chapter on Sonja Kovalevsky generally attracted a good deal of attention, since Kovalevsky was, and still is, a symbol for the women's movement. She was a woman who was able to succeed in a typically male profession. Her existence disproved the generalization that women were not capable of abstract thought. Marholm's interpretation of Kovalevsky's fate, that she died because she had denied the feminine aspects of her nature, was seen as a frontal attack on the women's movement, and Max Runge goes on to use it as such. On the basis of the case of Kovalevsky, he maintains, "Im Interesse des Weibes müssen wir Männer daher die Emancipation energisch bekämpfen." ⁵⁴ It is typical of the scientific reception of Marholm's work that her one book is awarded much more credence than the multitude of voices raised in protest against it.

⁴⁹ Nils Kjær, *Essays. Fremmede Forfattere* (Kristiania: Bertrand Jensens Forlag, 1895), p. 167. "It would have been of incalculable benefit for our realistic literature's veracity if it had come out many years ago, so that our greater and lesser poets could have consulted it for advice when they created their world-famous female characters."

⁵⁰ Karl. A. Tavaststjerna, "Tvänne böcker för kvinnor och om kvinnor," *Nordisk Revy*, 1 (1895), p. 193. "One of the very few honest books that a woman has written about her sex."

⁵¹ Hermann Bahr, "Das Buch der Frauen," *Renaissance* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1897), p. 95.

⁵² Felix Dörmann, "Das Buch der Frauen," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 10 February 1895.

⁵³ Max Runge, *Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität* (Berlin: Verlag Julius Springer, 1896), p. 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Max Runge was not the only scientist to receive *Das Buch der Frauen* with open arms. Two of her earliest admirers included Dr. Hans Kurella, Cesare Lombroso's German translator, and Dr. Heinrich Kraft, director of the Women's Clinic in Straßburg. Dr. Kraft was impressed by the similarities he perceived between Marholm's portrayal of women and Havelock Ellis' book *Man and Woman*. Kurella and Kraft encouraged Marholm to send copies of *Das Buch der Frauen* to Arthur Schnitzler and Havelock Ellis. Never one to overlook the chance of making powerful connections, Marholm wrote to both Schnitzler and Ellis in the spring of 1895.

In both letters, Marholm emphasizes, "Ich bin keine gelehrte Frau."⁵⁵ This is a mild misrepresentation, since although she had no formal training, Marholm was very well-read, especially in the area of psychology. Marholm chooses to emphasize the fact that she is writing out of her own experience: "Ich habe das Leben mitgelebt und einen Mann gefunden, der alle meine Möglichkeiten als Weib frei macht und zur Entwicklung treibt."⁵⁶ Marholm encourages Schnitzler and Ellis to accept her book as the raw material of life, "eine Äusserung einer Frau über ihr Geschlecht."⁵⁷ From this, it is clear that Marholm herself was greatly responsible for the scientific community's acceptance of her work as scientific evidence, unclouded by opinion. Schnitzler was intrigued by Marholm's book and responded with questions and copies of some of his own works.⁵⁸ Ellis was also interested, and there is evidence in his writing that he continued to follow Laura Marholm's career.⁵⁹

One of Laura Marholm's most thoughtful opponents within the women's movement was Hedwig Dohm. Dohm argued against *Das Buch der Frauen* in two different articles. Dohm points out that Marholm makes generalizations about womanhood based on her individual experience and does not allow for diversity among women: "Nein, die Frauen in ihrer Gesammtheit [sic] lassen sich nicht unter einen Hut bringen."⁶⁰ As a result, Marholm has not considered the plight of single women who for various reasons cannot marry. Both Marholm and Dohm share the wish that women should be able to develop according to

⁵⁵ Laura Marholm to Havelock Ellis, 3 May 1895.

⁵⁶ Laura Marholm to Arthur Schnitzler, 16 April 1895.

⁵⁷ Laura Marholm to Havelock Ellis, 3 May 1895.

⁵⁸ Laura Marholm to Arthur Schnitzler, 15 May 1895. Schnitzler's actual response to Marholm has been lost.

⁵⁹ See Havelock Ellis' *Studies in the Psychologie of Sex* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1906 & 1910), Vol. 3, p. 169, and Vol. 6, p. 524. In a letter from 13 January 1896 to Chavelita Dunne, Marholm mentions that Ellis has written "an admiring letter" about *Karla Bührung*. Another scientist who eventually became interested in Marholm's work was Iwan Bloch, who writes about her in: Iwan Bloch, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathis sexualis* (Dresden: Verlag von H. R. Dohrn, 1902), and *Das Sexuelleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (Berlin: Louis Marus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907).

⁶⁰ Dohm, "Reaktion in der Frauenbewegung," p. 282.

their own natures, but Dohm argues that Marholm is wrong to insist that it is the nature of every woman to wish to become a wife and mother. Dohm maintains that diversity among women is much greater than Marholm allows, and that every woman should be given the opportunity to develop her own individuality, “des Glaubens baar [sic], daß sie zum Dienst oder Zweck Anderer geboren ist.”⁶¹ Furthermore, Dohm objects to the caricature that Marholm has made of “die Emanzipierten.” Marholm adopts the posture of being persecuted by the women’s movement for choosing the roles of mother and wife, but: “Wer hat je ihrer Lust, ein Dutzend Kinder zu gebären, Schranken gesetzt?”⁶²

Dohm takes special exception to Marholm’s belief that women are intellectually inferior to men and, furthermore, that the cultivation of a woman’s intellect interferes with her sexual life and her ability to become a fit mother. Dohm poses a number of witty objections: First, if women are intellectually inferior, why should the reader have any faith at all in Marholm’s ideas? Second, if intellectual activity makes women less attractive, then why is the humble housewife so often forsaken by her husband for the artist or authoress? Third, if intellectual activity dampens erotic impulses, then why do men have a more active libido? Dohm does not fall into the trap of indignantly denying feminine sexuality, as did Adine Gemberg, for example. Instead, Dohm is able to turn Marholm’s own arguments against her.

Finally, Dohm points out that Marholm has ignored some social and political realities. The ideal portrait of a woman finding her fulfillment in a man loses some of its rosy glow when the dimension of financial dependency is added. Delivering one’s destiny into the care of a husband is a way of avoiding moral and intellectual responsibility. Marholm is being unrealistic and dishonest when she suggests that women should be able to shape public policy through the boudoir: “Kein Stimmrecht – kein Recht zu lieben!”⁶³

Another important reader of *Das Buch der Frauen* was, of course, Ellen Key. The following year Key published her monographs, *Missbrukad kvinnokraft* and *Kvinnopsykologi*, in which Marholm is mentioned quite favorably. In the furor that Ellen Key’s works created in Sweden, Marholm and Key were seen as allies. Thoughts that they share in common include the belief that intellectual work will damage the reproductive organs of women: “Läkare ha visat huru vissa arbeten eller överdrifter i studier ha skadat kvinnornas förmåga för normalt moderskap.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, both consider men to be the creators of culture, whereas women are emotional geniuses: “Följdsatsen blir då: att kvinnan med

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 290.

⁶² Ibid., p. 288.

⁶³ Hedwig Dohm, “Laura Marholms *Buch der Frauen*,” *Die Frauenbewegung*, I (1895), p. 94.

⁶⁴ Ellen Key, *Missbrukad kvinnokraft. Kvinnopsykologi* (Stockholm: Logos, 1891), p. 9. “Doctors have shown how certain jobs or excesses in studies have damaged women’s capacity for normal motherhood.”

sina snilleverk ej kommer att nå mannens högsta höjd, och att mannen i sitt känsloliv icke kommer att nå kvinnans djupaste djup.”⁶⁵ However, the point that Key liked the most in Marholm’s writing is to be found in *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*:

En kvinna har yttrat ett gränslöst djupt ord: Nämligen att det betecknande för den bästa som den sämsta kvinnonaturen är dess vildhet, denna med själva urnaturen djupt förbundna väsensart, som hos de yppersta kvinnorna når sin höjd i den stora hängivenheten och hos de sämsta i brottet, men hos båda yttrar sig som oförmåga att antaga den givna kulturens resultat såsom för sig förbindande.⁶⁶

Here, Key’s reading of Marholm has resulted in a slight distortion. The women that Marholm writes about are not quite the mavericks that emerge in this description of feminine “vildhet.” In fact, one of the central points in *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* is that women allow themselves to be shaped by the cultural norms created by men. Key also feels that Marholm has overemphasized feminine sexuality, but “hur mycket hon än överbetonat kvinnans egenskap av könsvarelse, så innehåller hennes överdrift flera för framtiden fruktbarande synpunkter på kvinnonaturen, än kvinnosakskvinnornas överdrift åt andra hållet.”⁶⁷

These monographs by Ellen Key were hotly debated in Sweden, and so, Laura Marholm’s name was also bandied about, particularly in the context of feminine “vildhet.”⁶⁸ Obviously a mutual exchange of ideas had taken place between Ellen Key and Laura Marholm; however, in the 1913 edition of these two monographs, Key felt compelled to add in a footnote: “Och när Laura Marholm med genial ensidighet gjort sina uttalanden, ha de icke lärt mig något nytt: det väsentliga i

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 87. “The consequence is then: that women in their works of genius will not reach the heights of men, and men in their emotional lives will not reach the deepest depths of women.”

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 52–53. “A woman has uttered an infinitely profound word: Namely, typical of the best as well as the worst within women’s nature is its wildness, that quality deeply bound with her primeval nature itself, which among the finest of women reaches its peak in great devotion, among the worst of women in crime, but in the case of both, it expresses itself as an inability to accept the given results of culture as binding upon itself.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 113. “however much she has overemphasized the aspect of woman as a sexual being, her exaggeration contains more potentially fruitful viewpoints on women’s nature than the exaggerations of the emancipationists in the other direction.”

⁶⁸ In addition to numerous newspaper articles, the following pamphlets appeared: Alma Cleve, *En protest med anledning af Ellen Keys föredrag i kvinnofrågan* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1896); Ellen Idström, *Några ord med anledning af fröken Ellen Keys föredrag öfver “missbrukad kvinnokraft”* (Stockholm, 1896); Ina Rogberg, *Kärlek och moderlighet* (Stockholm: Lars Hökerberg, 1896); Mathilda Roos, *Ett ord til fröken Ellen Key* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1896); Anna Sandström, *Kvinnorarbete och kvinnolycka* (Stockholm: Aftonbladets Aktiebolagets tryckeri, 1896).

hennes tankegång var sedan länge min egen.”⁶⁹ Certainly, Marholm had taken inspiration from Key’s monograph about Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, but it is perhaps not entirely fair for Key to claim that she, in turn, learned nothing from Marholm’s novel formulations about women’s nature. When Laura Marholm’s star eventually sank beneath the horizon, it did so in a manner that made claiming acquaintance with her an embarrassment. Comments like the one above by Ellen Key helped to bring about Laura Marholm’s eventual obscurity.

Yet obviously, *Das Buch der Frauen* struck a nerve in the time and place in which it appeared. What might account for the book’s extraordinary popularity? For one thing, an interest in abnormal feminine psychology was in the air. The year before, Cesare Lombroso’s *Das Weib als Verbrecherin und Prostituirte* had appeared in Germany, and that same year, Sigmund Freud’s *Studien über Hysterie* was published. In general, “hysteria” was a popular term and was used frequently in the Marholm criticism. Adine Gemberg calls Marholm “eine Profetin der Hysterie” and Fritz Mauthner writes, “Sie hat so lange in der Frauenfrage überall nur die hysterischen Seiten aufgesucht, bis das hysterische Weib ihr als Weib überhaupt erschien.”⁷⁰ At a time when the science of psychology was in its infancy, *Das Buch der Frauen* had a widespread impact on the understanding of feminine psychology.

Furthermore, the book was written in Germany as a reaction against Marholm’s experiences in Scandinavia. Regarding sex roles, Germany was generally more conservative than Scandinavia. For example, by 1873 women in Sweden were allowed to study most subjects, whereas this right was not achieved by German women until 1905.⁷¹ A greater German conservatism may also be seen in the German reception of Henrik Ibsen’s *Et dukkehjem*. In order for the play to be performed in Germany, Ibsen was forced to write an alternative ending for the German translation. Ibsen was told that a German public could never accept a heroine who deserts her family and so, in the alternative version, Nora does not leave her children.⁷² The conservative factions in Germany, which had felt threatened by the Scandinavian wave of women’s emancipation from the 1880’s, welcomed Marholm’s polemic against the women’s movement. Women who felt that their positions as wives and mothers were assailed by emancipatory trends found comfort in *Das Buch der Frauen*. Men who felt threatened by the encroachment of women upon traditionally male territory found in *Das Buch der Frauen* an argument for relegating women to the home.

⁶⁹ Key, *Missbrukad kvinnokraft. Kvinnopsykologi*, p. 175. “and when Laura Marholm with her brilliant one-sidedness made her statements, they did not teach me anything new: the essence of her thought had been my own for a long time.”

⁷⁰ Gemberg, “Eine Profetin der Hysterie” and Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

⁷¹ Barbara Gentikow, *Skandinavien als präkapitalistische Idylle. Rezeption gesellschaftskritischer Literatur in deutschen Zeitschriften 1870 bis 1914* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholz Verlag, 1978), p. 94.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 104–107.

Not long after the appearance of *Das Buch der Frauen, Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* was published by the Verlag der Wiener Mode, which Marholm later characterized as a “daarlig Udgiver.”⁷³ The first edition contains essays about Gottfried Keller, Paul Heyse, Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Tolstoy, August Strindberg and Guy de Maupassant.⁷⁴ The book did not reach a larger audience until it was reissued by Carl Duncker Verlag in 1896 in an expanded version, which contains an additional essay about Barbey d’Aurevilly. Albert Langen was not interested in publishing the book, most likely because, at the time he had recruited Marholm into his author’s stable, he had also gained Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson as a client. He was prudent enough to realize that Bjørnson would probably take offense at Marholm’s chapter about him. To a great extent, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* rode on the coattails of *Das Buch der Frauen*. Her boast to Albert Bonnier, “Das Buch schlug deutsch und norwegisch sehr an,” is a slight exaggeration.⁷⁵

Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter had been more or less completed long before *Das Buch der Frauen*. Her central thesis is basically derived from the essays she wrote about feminine types in Scandinavian literature for *Freie Bühne*: Women have shaped themselves after the female images presented to them in masculine literature: “Es ist des Weibes Natur, sich in eine Form zu prägen und nach einer Form zu verlangen, in die es sich prägen könne. Wohlgemerkt, in der Art sich zu geben, zu reden, zu denken, zu reagiren, zu fordern ist und bleibt immer nur eine Oberflächenprägung.”⁷⁶ With this as her basic premise, Marholm discusses the selected authorships in terms of the images of women they present. When Marholm has completed her catalogue, she admonishes her feminine readers not to seek their own “Weibwesen” in the writings of these “Dichter, Denker und Propheten,” but to rely instead on their own instincts.⁷⁷ The result of this introspection will be: “Und mir scheint, es zeigen sich die ersten Zeichen, daß das Weib sich wieder bewußt wird nichts Anderes zu sein, aber auch nichts Kleineres zu sein als: Die Auferbauerin der künftigen Geschlechter.”⁷⁸ This line of reasoning loosely ties together articles which she had written for *Vossische Zeitung* and *Nord und Süd* during the previous four years.

Even though *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* was not as popular as *Das Buch der Frauen*, it did receive some critical attention. One German critic remarked, “Das

⁷³ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 22 February 1896. “a bad publisher.”

⁷⁴ In Marholm’s proposal to the Cotta’sche Buchhandlung in May of 1893, she had planned to include articles on Paul Heyse, Gottfried Keller, Tolstoy, Paul Bourget, August Strindberg, J. P. Jacobsen, Arne Dybfest and “die deutsche socialistische Literatur des Frauenschilderers.” (Laura Marholm to Cotta, 27 May 1893.)

⁷⁵ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 29 July 1898.

⁷⁶ Laura Marholm, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* (Berlin: Verlag Carl Duncker, 1896), pp. 131–132.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Programm ist reichhaltig, die Ausführung geradezu erstaunlich!”⁷⁹ The chapter on Gottfried Keller bothered C. D. af Wirsén, conservative critic and member of the Swedish Academy, who saw in Marholm’s praise of Keller’s “natural” women a neglect of the spiritual side of women. Wirsén notes: “Författarinnan prisar Keller därför att hans qvinnor *blott* äro naturväsanden, dette är, i grunden, att ställa qvinnan bra lågt [. . .] hon felar, då hon med hänsynslös energi ensidigt framhåller den instinktiva sidan hos qvinnan och nästan förnekar dennas högre sjäsegenskapet. [original italics]”⁸⁰ This criticism is familiar, since Marholm’s neglect of the spiritual side of woman’s nature was a major argument against *Das Buch der Frauen*. Furthermore, Wirsén formulates the following objection to the chapter on Paul Heyse: “Det ser mellanåt ut, som om författarinnan trodde, att först i våra dagar och hufvudsakligen genom Paul Heyse qvinnan blifvit tecknad som en fri och själfständig varelse med myndighetskänsla. Det är märkvärdigt hvad man kan öfverdriva.”⁸¹ Heyse himself might well have agreed. Marholm describes Heyse’s reaction to *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* thus: “Paul Heyse schickte das Manuscript alsbald halb gelesen zurück; er verdürbe sich die Augen daran, es verstimme ihn, er fände es langweilig, er empfehle es zum Verlag an Costenoble, falls der es haben wolle.”⁸²

In the chapter on Ibsen, Marholm’s interpretation of *Hedda Gabler* received the most attention from the critics. Wirsén remarks, “Hennes teckning af den äfven för anmeldaren djupt vidriga ‘Hedda Gabler’ är knappast psykologiskt riktig.”⁸³ Marholm characterizes Hedda Gabler as “ein geschlechtsloses Nichts, das sich dumm verkauft, das die Frucht in ihrem Schooße verabscheut und von der Weibnatur nichts mehr, als die ohnmächtige lüsterne Neugier übrig hat.”⁸⁴ On the other hand, Karl August Tavaststjerna disagrees with Wirsén: “Hennes dom speciellt öfver Hedda Gabler är bland det allra bästa, som blifvit skrifvet om denna vid sitt framträdande så djupt missuppfattade och längre fram så mycket omdiskuterade typ.”⁸⁵

⁷⁹ B. L., “Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter,” *Deutsche Rundschau*, 85 (1895), p. 315.

⁸⁰ C. D. af Wirsén, review of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, *Vårt Land*, 17 July 1896, p. 2. “The author praises Keller because his women are *only* natural beings, that is in essence, to place women quite low [. . .] she is wrong when she with ruthless energy emphasizes the instinctive side of woman and almost denies her higher spiritual qualities.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.* “It occasionally seems as if the author believed that only in our day and chiefly through Paul Heyse, woman has been depicted as a free and independent being with a sense of autonomy. It is remarkable how much one can exaggerate.”

⁸² Marholm, “Erinnerungen an Paul Heyse,” p. 358.

⁸³ Wirsén, review of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, “Her depiction of Hedda Gabler, who is deeply repulsive even to this reviewer, is scarcely psychologically correct.”

⁸⁴ Marholm, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, p. 157.

⁸⁵ Tavaststjerna, p. 200. “Her judgment, particularly about Hedda Gabler, is among the very best which has been written about that figure, which at its debut was so deeply misunderstood and subsequently so greatly debated.”

The two most controversial chapters were those on Bjørnson and Strindberg. As far as the women's movement was concerned, Marholm's negative treatment of Bjørnson combined with her sympathetic attitude toward Strindberg clearly put her on the side of "the enemy." In commenting that both *Das Buch der Frauen* and *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* are illustrated with portraits, Adine Gemberg remarks venomously, "Übrigens ist das auch bei den sieben Dichtern oder sechs Dichtern der Fall – oder ist August Strindberg auch ein Dichter?"⁸⁶ Despite Marholm's personal mistrust and dislike of Strindberg, she still viewed him as a literary genius and a brilliant intuitive psychologist. On the subject of Strindberg, Tavaststjerna had a kind word for Marholm: "I allmänhet vore jag frestad att påstå det Strindberg ännu icke funnit en biograf, hvilken förstått honom så mycket som Laura Marholm. [. . .] I alla fall ligger det i fru Marholms Strindbergsstudie mera ärligt arbete och godt förstånd än denna moderne Loke på länge kann hoppas att få från asarna i Norden."⁸⁷

The chapter on Bjørnson, however, would ultimately have the greatest impact on Marholm's career. Tavaststjerna, Wirsén, and an anonymous reviewer from *The Atlantic Monthly* all agreed that Marholm dealt with Bjørnson much too harshly. As the English reviewer describes, "The chapter on Bjørnson is full of this word 'plebian.' It rings with every possible accent of scorn, and the 'Priest of Purity' himself comes off, as it seems to the present writer, with epithets infused with hateful animus."⁸⁸ Marholm is merciless in her portrayal of Bjørnson as a vain, bombastic dandy. Karl von Thaler of *Neue Freie Presse* was amused by Marholm's treatment of Bjørnson: "Schon ihre erste persönliche Begegnung mit ihm erzählt sie in humoristischer Weise, und das ganze Capitel ihres Buches, welches sie ihm widmet, verräth heitere Laune."⁸⁹

One reader who was most definitely not amused was Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson himself. When Bjørnson caught sight of Thaler's sympathetic review in *Neue Freie Presse*, he composed the following letter to the editors:

Frau Laura Marholm ist eine sehr haushälterische Dame, die auf mehr als eine Weise Fleisch zu bereiten versteht. Bevor sie wieder norwegische Literatur deutschen Lesern vorsetzt, möchte ich doch auf das Folgende aufmerksam gemacht haben:

1. Ich habe nie eine Lehre vom Asketismus verkündet; von Tolstoi's Lehre darüber bin ich ein entschiedener Gegner.

⁸⁶ Gemberg, "Eine Profetin der Hysterie," p. 172.

⁸⁷ Tavaststjerna, pp. 200–201. "In general, I would be tempted to maintain that Strindberg has still not found a biographer, who has understood him as well as Laura Marholm [. . .] In any case, in Mrs. Marholm's Strindberg study, there is more honest work and good sense than that modern Loki can hope to receive from the Æsir of the north for quite some time."

⁸⁸ [Anonymous], "Two German Books of Criticism," *Atlantic Monthly*, 76 (November 1895), p. 698.

⁸⁹ Karl von Thaler, "Frauenspiegel," *Neue Freie Presse*, 8 February 1895.

2. Der Vortrag, den ich über "Monogamie und Polygamie" gehalten habe, ist, von Baronin Mary v. Borch übersetzt, in Berlin erschienen; er wird einen Jeden von der Unwahrheit der Behauptungen Frau Marholm's überzeugen.

3. Eine Unterredung, wie die, welche Frau Marholm behauptet, mit mir im Bois du Boulogne gehabt zu haben, hat nie stattgefunden.

4. Zu der norwegischen (und skandinavischen) Frauenbewegung habe ich in keiner andern Verbindung gestanden, als daß man mir die Preßorgane derselben zugesendet hat. Ich weiß nichts davon, daß diese Bewegung einen "Propheten" hat; aber sollte man mich als solchen betrachtet haben, so hat man es verstanden, dies in glänzender Weise zu verbergen.

Was Laura Marholm von dem Ziele und Wesen dieser Bewegung schreibt, ist erfunden.

5. Ich bin bisher nie des Fanatismus beschuldigt worden. Kein anderer Dichter meiner Zeit im Norden ist öfter für Toleranz eingetreten als ich. Meine dichterischen Arbeiten und mein öffentliches Leben sind unwiderlegliche Beweise.

Zu diesen fünf Punkten der Berichtigung möchte ich eine bescheidene Mittheilung hinzufügen:

Soll der Umstand, daß ich "muskulös" bin, mich daran hindern, Psycholog zu sein, so nehme ich bei meinem Sturze sowohl Balzac als Maupassant und Ibsen mit.

Ich schäme mich fast, solchen in jeder Weise unzutreffenden Dingen hier entgegentreten zu müssen; aber ich bin ein täglicher Leser der "Neuen freien Presse" und ziehe nach Oesterreich wieder, sobald der Sommer kommt; daher fühle ich mich so wohl in dieser ausgezeichneten Gesellschaft, daß ich ungern dies Verhältniß durch Verleumdungen getrübt sehen möchte.

Rom, den 10. Februar 1895⁹⁰

Although Marholm certainly exaggerated her portrait of Bjørnson, Bjørnson in his defense also stretches the truth somewhat. With regard to points one through three, it is clear that Bjørnson has been injured by Marholm's satire, but the most threatening satire is based on truth. Bjørnson did not view his principle of celibacy for both sexes until marriage as asceticism, but others did. Bjørnson's fourth and fifth objections are not strictly true. Bjørnson's association with the women's movement may not have been official from his point of view, but it was obvious to everyone in Scandinavia. Bjørnson was hardly renowned for his tolerance in the morality debates, and some members of the press indeed accused him of being a fanatic.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, "Laura Marholm's Buch 'Die Frauen und ihre Dichter,'" *Neue Freie Presse*, 14 February 1895.

⁹¹ See Bredsdorff, *Den store nordiske krig om seksualmoralen*. For example, one might take Jonas Lie's comments to Georg Brandes about Bjørnson: "Og, Tolerance mig her og Tolerance mig der, – den Sag han forkynder, ringer han altid om med en Kirkemur, saa Verden deles i Hellige og Vanhellige; det er vel det, som gjør Kraften i ham." ("And tolerance this and tolerance that – the cause he proclaims he always surrounds with a church wall, so that the world is divided into the holy and the unholy; that is what probably gives him his power.") [p. 280]

Clearly, Bjørnson must have felt betrayed by Marholm. When she was still an unknown in 1887, he had supported Marholm and even written a letter to Karl Bleibtreu recommending her articles. To make matters worse, during the same February that Bjørnson wrote his angry letter to *Neue Freie Presse*, another battle was waged over Bjørnson between Marholm and Konrad Telmann in the pages of *Berliner Tageblatt*.

Marholm wrote an article entitled “Baisse!” for *Berliner Tageblatt*, in which she complains about the poor quality of the Scandinavian literature that appears in translation. As a case in point, she names Bjørnson’s novella “Absalons Haar,” in which she claims Bjørnson acts “als Advokat seines Sohnes, gegen seine geschiedene Schwiegertochter.”⁹² Konrad Telmann, a good friend of Bjørnson’s from Rome, came to Bjørnson’s defense in a letter to the editor. Telmann essentially tries to defend the artistic merit of “Absalons Haar” and Bjørnson’s honor.⁹³ One wonders whether or not Bjørnson and Telmann collaborated in this effort. They were both in Rome at the time and had most certainly discussed the issue. Marholm, however, reasserted her opinions in another letter to the editor, bearing the insulting title of “Bjørnson als dichtende Schwiegermutter.” Marholm can see in “Absalons Haar” nothing but the “Indiskretionen einer gereizten Schwiegermutter.”⁹⁴ Not long after this reply, Bjørnson wrote to Albert Langen: “Laura Marholms bosheit und rohheit hat dieselbe höhe! [sic]”⁹⁵

At the time, Marholm could not know how these jabs at Bjørnson would later affect her career. Bjørnson had become her sworn enemy and in a little over a year the Bjørnson family would become united with the Langen family through a double wedding.⁹⁶ The “dichtende Schwiegermutter” would become the father-in-law of Marholm’s publisher.

In the late fall of 1894, Marholm and Hansson had returned to Schliersee, where Marholm basked in the success of *Das Buch der Frauen*. She was treated as an international expert on women’s issues and wrote authoritative articles for *Nordisk Revy*, *Die Zukunft* and *Revue des Revues*.⁹⁷ Marholm also became the recipient of mail from women asking for advice: “Mir war schon schriftlich von allen möglichen Damen, die meine Bücher gelesen hatten, alles Mögliche ‘gestanden’ worden, wofür sie dann Rath und Aufklärung suchten, die ich ihnen in

⁹² Laura Marholm, “Baisse!,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 3 February 1895.

⁹³ Konrad Telmann, “Bjørnsons Absalon,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 18 February 1895.

⁹⁴ Laura Marholm, “Bjørnson als dichtende Schwiegermutter,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 27 February 1895.

⁹⁵ Aldo Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen, I. Teil* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag 1986), p. 303.

⁹⁶ Albert Langen married Dagny Bjørnson on 10 March 1896, the same day that Einar Bjørnson married Langen’s sister Elsbeth. [Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen*, pp. 39–40.]

⁹⁷ Laura Marholm, “Kvinnofrågan,” *Nordisk Revy*, 1 (1895), pp. 261–263; “Deutsche Frauen,” *Die Zukunft*, 16 (25 July 1896), pp. 175–183; “La Femme Allemande,” *Revue des Revues*, 18 (1896), Bd. III, pp. 1–12.

den meisten Fällen nicht geben konnte.”⁹⁸ The Hanssons also received all manner of visitors. In the summer of 1895, their old friend Max Dauthendey stopped by at the same time that Hermann Bahr was passing through Schliersee on his honeymoon. Dauthendey writes in his memoirs that he was so touched by the domestic bliss of the Hanssons’ household, he decided to propose to his future wife.⁹⁹

During this time of great popularity, Marholm began writing fiction again. She followed up her successes with *Das Buch der Frauen* and *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* by publishing two more books that same year through Albert Langen: *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* and *Karla Bühnung*. *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* appeared sometime during the summer of 1895, and had gone into a second edition by November. Marholm’s first work of fiction in thirteen years appeared simultaneously in Norwegian and German. In October, Marholm offered the book in Hansson’s translation to Albert Bonnier, who published it in 1896. In 1899, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* was also translated into Dutch.

Zwei Frauenerlebnisse consists of two novellas, “Was war es?” and “Das Ungesprochene.” Marholm wrote of this work, “*Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* sind eine Ergänzung zum *Buch der Frauen*. Sie wurden gesondert herausgegeben, weil die intimere und detaillirtere Darstellung entscheidender Lebensmomente dieser beiden Frauen die Nennung ihrer Namen ausschloß und die novellistische Form erheischte.”¹⁰⁰ This is a clear instance of Marholm not drawing a strong distinction between fiction and non-fiction. “Das Ungesprochene” is a reworking of Marholm’s psychological sketch of Victoria Benedictsson in “Eine von ihnen.” “Was war es?” seems to be about Marholm herself. In the latter novella, many features are recognizable from Marholm’s biography: the pension, a matchmaking Gerda Brandes figure, the heroine’s profession as a theater reviewer, and the shotgun wedding between the daughter of the pension owner and one of the tenants. However, Marholm never refers to a love affair like the one portrayed in “Was war es” anywhere else outside the novella, and, therefore, it is perhaps not wise to accept the course of events as completely autobiographical. Marholm does however claim to have witnessed the workings of a hypnotic suggestion at first hand and says that this was the central point of interest to her in the novella.

The heroine of “Was war es?” Lonny Lauter, is an independent single woman living in Berlin, who supports herself by writing theater reviews. A young medical student residing in the same pension, Jössing, allows himself to be hypnotized, and on a whim, Lonny gives him a telepathic suggestion to fall in love with her. The suggestion takes effect, but Lonny, reluctant to relinquish her independence, only slowly begins to return his affection. Finally, Lonny succumbs

⁹⁸ Laura Marholm, *Buch der Toten* (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim Verlag, 1900), pp. 8–9.

⁹⁹ Max Dauthendey, *Gedankengut aus meinen Wanderjahren, Theil II* (München: Albert Langen, 1913), p. 135.

¹⁰⁰ Laura Marholm, “Das Buch der Frauen etc.,” *Die Zukunft* 16 (1896), pp. 461–462.

to her inclination for Jössing, and the pair becomes engaged. Jössing journeys to his family in Denmark in order to tell them about the engagement; however, when he returns to the bosom of his family, he forgets to mention his arrangement with Lonny. The magnetic power of his home eventually overcomes his affection for Lonny, and he breaks their engagement in a letter. Lonny takes the news quite well and explains to a friend:

Ich stehe jetzt wieder ganz allein, aber doch nicht so wie vorher. Denn etwas ist in mir aufgesprungen, was das Weib zum Weibe macht – das Bewußtsein lieben zu können. Sehen Sie, das hält unsere Erziehung und unsere eigene Furcht so lange in uns nieder, bis etwas besonderes geschieht, das den Reif sprengt mit einem Krach, in dem wir manchmal selbst zerspringen, aber manchmal kommen wir durch diese gesprengte Thür auch erst in unser Allerheiligstes als Weib.¹⁰¹

Here one can recognize the sentiment from *Das Buch der Frauen*, that love brings out the essential qualities of a woman. However, since women are taught to ignore any tender feelings they may possess, the experience of love can bring about drastic revelations.

If *Das Buch der Frauen* describes spiritually crippled women, Lonny Lauter is meant to represent a picture of health. Lonny is not quite what one might expect after reading in *Das Buch der Frauen* that intellectual pursuits drain the energies of women and love is a woman's only reason for living. Lonny is strong, independent, and an intellectual. She succumbs to love, but is not destroyed by its loss, although the possibility is held out for her that she will love again. Interestingly, Jössing is a fairly weak and ineffectual person. His main purpose in the story is to release through love all of the giving qualities in Lonny's nature. In her fiction from this point on, Marholm shows a tendency to treat men as objects. The male characters in her fiction are usually faintly drawn figures, who are primarily of interest as objects of a woman's love.

One specific exchange between Lonny and Jössing caught the attention of Havelock Ellis. When Jössing confesses to Lonny that he has never been with a woman before, she is disappointed in him. Ellis uses this as one piece of evidence to support the theory that women prefer men to have sexual experience.¹⁰² Lonny's disapproval of Jössing's purity is clearly a reversal of the Bjørnsonian "hanskemoral," which led Svava to reject her fiancé because of his premarital exploits.

A comparison of "Das Ungesprochene" and "Eine von ihnen" reveals that Marholm's assessment of Victoria Benedictsson's fate seems to have changed. "Eine von ihnen" was not particularly kind to Benedictsson. She was described as "Emma Lovisa Arnoldson – ein Weib wie aus Erz gegossen mit eckigen Formen und Geberden [sic] – und drunter alles zermürbt, zerstückt, verstüm-

¹⁰¹ Laura Marholm, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* (München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 148.

¹⁰² Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Vol. 6, p. 524.

melt.”¹⁰³ The tone of “Das Ungesprochene” is much more sympathetic. The story contains a frame, in which a Herr Borg and his wife Lonny learn of the suicide of a mutual acquaintance. The suggestion is that this is the same Lonny of “Was war es?,” some years later. The news of the suicide disturbs Lonny, who tells her husband, “Es ist auch das zweite Mal, daß ich es fühle, als sei ich mitschuld an eines Menschen Tod.”¹⁰⁴ Lonny then tells the story of Emma Louise Wikmann to her husband in order to alleviate this sense of guilt. Marholm has added to this new version of the story much more detail about the affair between Emma and Holger Berning. Berning, described as a Don Juan, is painted as the villain in the relationship. Emma’s death was a heroic act of revenge, inspired by an enormous intensity of feeling. Unlike Lonny in “Was war es?,” Emma’s suppressed emotions spring forth with such violence that they destroy her. At the time, Lonny claims she could foresee the course the relationship would take, but for fear of incurring Emma’s disfavor, she never spoke to her about it. This is the source of Lonny’s sense of guilt.

Marholm’s interpretation of Victoria Benedictsson’s death as a heroic act performed by a deep and complex personality is much more in line with the immediate reaction to the suicide which Marholm shared with Jonas Lie. Judging from “Eine von ihnen,” however, Marholm went through a phase where she blamed Benedictsson for the suicide and sought to view her as a victim of her own inhibitions. By 1895, she had begun to blame Brandes for taking the depth of Benedictsson’s affection too lightly. Marholm also felt a sense of guilt for having listened to Gerda Brandes’ unflattering portrayals of Benedictsson and for having initially sided with Georg Brandes.

Because of the familiar biographical content, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* received more attention in Sweden than in Germany. The book marked Marholm’s debut in a genre for which her husband had become known, the psychological novella, and thus, a number of critics were tempted to make comparisons. The most striking similarity between the Hanssons was found to be “benägenheten att dröja vid mystiska, psykiskt-fysiska, mycket obestämda och formlösa sensationer.”¹⁰⁵ This attention to sensations and irrational impressions was a hallmark of both *Sensitiva amorosa* and *Parias*. Fritz Mauthner observes that she has tried to apply the “Kunstmittel der impressionistischen Malerei,” though he feels the attempt has been unsuccessful.¹⁰⁶ Compared to her novella “Im Dienste zweier Herren” from 1882, Marholm’s prose style has changed somewhat. Even in 1882, Marholm was an observant student of psychology, but she has learned to express

¹⁰³ Laura Marholm, “Eine von ihnen,” *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 61 (1892), p. 501.

¹⁰⁴ Marholm, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁵ Hjalmar Sandberg, review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 22 April 1896, p. 3: “the inclination to linger over mystical, psycho-physiological, very vague and formless sensations.”; C. D. af Wirsén, “Litteratur: Tvenne Kvinnoöden,” *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*, 28 March 1896, A-edition, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

the psychology of her characters with more finesse, largely due to her new impressionistic style. No doubt, many of her techniques were learned from translating her husband's work.

On the whole, Swedish critics were positively disposed toward the first novella, "Was war es?" Both Jacobine Ring and C. D. af Wirsén, previously severe critics of *Das Buch der Frauen*, agree that "detta arbete är i alla händelser renare än föregående alster af samma penna."¹⁰⁷ Jacobine Ring observes with satisfaction that no longer does Marholm place an exaggerated emphasis on sexual urges and draws the conclusion that Marholm has recovered from her erotomania.¹⁰⁸ She also approves of Marholm's depiction of an independent female character, whose life is not crushed by the defection of her love interest. On the other hand, Karl von Thaler finds this aspect of the novella unconvincing: "Wir glauben nicht, daß ein getäushtes und verlassenes Mädchen sich so selbstbeschaulich trösten kann."¹⁰⁹

A critic from *Upsala Nya Tidning* is quite generous in his praise of "Was war es?," referring to it as "ett litet mästerstycke af enkel och lefvande berättarekonst."¹¹⁰ As was the case with *Das Buch der Frauen*, Marholm's style of writing receives compliments, and there is once again talk of Marholm's keen powers of observation. Mary Ekeblad writes, "Bägge novellerna falla inom gränserna för den speciellt kvinnliga realismen: den egna erfarenheten och den direkta iakttagelsen på andra är med påfallande tydlighet den grund på hvilken författarinnan bygger."¹¹¹ "Was war es?" is considered to be a convincing piece of psychology, though some critics object to the use of hypnotism in the story.¹¹²

Dissenting opinions about the novella's psychology were also registered, primarily by German critics. A Swedish dissenter, Hjalmar Sandberg, finds Lonny Lauter to be a "föga sympatisk dam," and Jössing is referred to as "den besynnerliga figuren."¹¹³ Karl von Thaler finds the Lonny character appealing, but he cannot understand her interest in Jössing: "Der Jüngling ist leider von Frau Marholm so charakterisirt, daß man diese Liebe nicht begreift. Er hat weder Geist noch Feuer, ihm fehlt Alles, was die Jugend liebenswerth macht, er ist blos [sic]

¹⁰⁷ Wirsén, "Litteratur: Tvenne Kvinnoöden." "this work is in any event purer than previous products of the same pen."

¹⁰⁸ Jacobine Ring [Jacqueline]. "Två kvinnoöden," *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 26 November 1895, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Karl von Thaler, "Neue Romane und Novellen," *Neue Freie Presse*, 7 March 1896.

¹¹⁰ [Anonymous], review of *Två kvinnoöden*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 11 April 1896, p. 3. "a small masterpiece of simple and vital narrative art."

¹¹¹ Mary Ekeblad, "Litteraturbref," *Nordisk Revy*, 2 (1896), p. 308: "both novellas fall within the bounds of particularly feminine realism: personal experience and direct observations of others are with striking obviousness the basis upon which the author builds."

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹¹³ Sandberg, review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*. "not a very appealing woman"; "the peculiar figure."

schön, langweilig schön.”¹¹⁴ The interest that the dynamic Lonny takes in the weakling Jössing is something of a mystery.

As concerns “Das Ungesprochene,” Swedish reviewers almost unanimously condemned Marholm for her thinly-veiled account of Victoria Benedictsson’s suicide, whereas German reviewers barely even referred to this second novella. As *Göteborgs-Posten* expresses it, “Den andra berättelsen deremot – Det osagda – kunde gerna varit osagd eller rättare oskriven.”¹¹⁵ Marholm’s treatment of her deceased acquaintance was considered unsympathetic and tasteless. Jacobine Ring writes of Marholm’s analysis of Benedictsson, “Den är gjord med brutala, pietetslösa händer och verkar på läsaren uteslutande som en profanation, hvad den äfven är.”¹¹⁶ However, Mary Ekeblad, after lodging a protest against the depiction of Benedictsson, admits, “Hvad nu själfva novellen beträffar, så är den skrifven med en beundransvärd intensitet i skildringen.”¹¹⁷ In the context of objecting to Marholm’s use of her personal acquaintances for literary purposes, the reviewer from *Dagens Nyheter* relates an anecdote he has heard about Laura Marholm. It is said that one of her female friends from Copenhagen chastised Marholm in a letter for literarily exploiting people who had been kind enough to offer her hospitality. Marholm allegedly responded with a postcard bearing the words, “Du wirst auch porträtiert.”¹¹⁸ The anecdote is entertaining but most likely apocryphal.

The theme of Victoria Benedictsson’s suicide evidently preoccupied Marholm at this time, since she returned to it in her play *Karla Bühnung*. The play was written between August 20 and September 12, 1895. Marholm claims in the introduction that she intended the play for performance, not necessarily just for reading. Marholm tried very hard to get the play produced, but her efforts were to no avail. Marholm sent a Swedish translation made by Hansson to Erik Thyselius, the editor of *Nordisk Revy*, so that he might arrange a production. Marholm wrote to August Lindberg and Julia Håkansson about playing the roles of Collander and Karla Bühnung, and she had Harald Molander in mind as the director.¹¹⁹ Although they all expressed an interest in the play, it was never performed, no doubt because the figures of Victoria Benedictsson and Georg Brandes were too thinly veiled. Marholm confided to George Egerton that she

¹¹⁴ Karl von Thaler, “Neue Romane und Novellen.”

¹¹⁵ – gh, review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, 16 May 1896, Saturday edition, supplement, p. 1. “On the other hand, the second tale – ‘The Unspoken’ – could happily have remained unspoken, or more precisely unwritten.”

¹¹⁶ Ring, “Två kvinnoöden.” “It is done with brutal, impious hands and strikes the reader exclusively as a profanation, which it is.”

¹¹⁷ Ekeblad, “Litteraturbrief,” p. 309. “As far as the novella itself is concerned, it is written with an admirable intensity in the depiction.”

¹¹⁸ [Anonymous] review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*, *Dagens Nyheter*, 15 April 1896, A-edition, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Laura Marholm to August Lindberg, 26 June 1896. Laura Marholm to Harald Molander, 14 September 1896.

suspected a conspiracy of Jewish theater owners and newspaper editors of standing in the way of the play's success in both Germany and Scandinavia, in order to protect Georg Brandes.¹²⁰ George Egerton began translating the play into English for the stage, but personal problems prevented her from completing it. The Swedish and English translations were never published, so *Karla Bühnung* only appeared in German.

The play is quite different from Marholm's early historical dramas, since her understanding of dramaturgy has changed considerably. She writes of her ambitions for *Karla Bühnung*: "Ich wollte den Versuch machen, ein Stück zu schreiben, das – wenigstens in seinen Hauptlinien – rein pantomimisch sich selbst zu erklären geeignet war und das auch ohne die Erläuterung des gesprochenen Wortes die volle tragische Wirkung zu erreichen vermöchte."¹²¹ In the introduction to the play Marholm explains that the task of the dramatic author in shaping his characters is: "Die Umrisse zugleich so groß und so fest zu ziehen, daß der Schauspieler sowohl Ellenbogenraum wie eine Form vorfindet, innerhalb welcher er seine schöpferische Individualität entfalten kan."¹²² Marholm wrote the play with the performances of Eleonora Duse in mind.

One might also detect in the play the legacy of Strindberg's *Fröken Julie* and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. Marholm is clearly interested in creating a complex heroine of this ilk. Marholm describes her female characters thus:

Die Frauen, die darin vorkommen, sind, jede innerhalb ihrer Lebensstellung und Begabung, typisch für das, was die gegenwärtige Zeitbrechung aus dem Weibe macht. Sie sind herausgegriffen unter den vielen, ihnen ähnlichen, die mir im Leben entgegen kamen. Und in der Hauptperson habe ich des Weibes Lebensdrang bis in seine Lebenswurzel selbst hineinverfolgt, wo er wieder eins wird mit des Weibes Intaktheit als Weib und von ihr bedingt ist.¹²³

In weaving her tale, Marholm gathers her characters together in a resort, and although the course of events is condensed and fictionalized, it is perfectly obvious about whom she is writing. Gerda Brandes appears as the beautiful and insanely jealous Hildegard Collander, who spies on her husband through keyholes. Georg Brandes is portrayed in the figure of Siegfried Collander, a vain Don Juan, who leaves books inscribed to him by famous people lying about, so that his guests will find them. Victoria Benedictsson is easily recognized in *Karla Bühnung*, an artist with a limp. Otto von Wetterberg with his blond mustache and distant manner is Ola Hansson and Marholm includes herself in the figure of Lilli Bloom, an unmarried lady from Reval who has been taken into Hildegard's confidence.

Karla Bühnung is a talented violinist and a magnetic personality, who has passed through life "on tour." She has enjoyed the adulation of her fans, but has

¹²⁰ Laura Hansson to Chavelita Dunne, 25 June 1896.

¹²¹ Marholm, "Das Buch der Frauen, etc.," p. 462.

¹²² Laura Marholm, *Karla Bühnung* (München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 6.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

never allowed herself to become attached to one place or one person. Karla has become discontented with her way of life, and her restlessness reaches a peak one summer's evening at the resort. The atmosphere is very much like that of the midsummer's eve in *Fröken Julie*. At this critical juncture, Siegfried Collander happens by and seduces Karla Bühnung. Unlike *Fröken Julie*, this seduction does not immediately prove to be Karla's undoing. Karla is upset with herself and disgusted by Collander, but she makes plans to continue her tour and intends to go on with her life as before. The situation only reaches a crisis when Otto von Wetterberg declares his love for Karla. Karla sees in Wetterberg her perfect mate, but she has destroyed her chance for happiness with Wetterberg through her dalliance with Collander. Only then does Karla despair of her life. Karla draws Wetterberg's attention to Lilli Bloom, who apparently harbors affection for him:

Sie widerstand der Verführung, der ich verfiel – denn für sie war es keine. Sie ist ein einfaches Lied, auf einer einzigen Oktave gespielt . . . kein raffiniertes Orchesterstück mit Schluchzen und Jauchzen und dem Zusammenklang von zwanzig Instrumenten. Aber diese herbe Frucht, die doch bald so süß sein wird – die begehrt Ihr nicht, Ihr Männer. Erst wenn wir angefault sind unter dem Fingerdruck des Lebens, – erst dann locken wir Euch. Erst wenn wir brennen – dann entzünden wir. Sieh – da geht die Mutter deiner Kinder.¹²⁴

After attempting to bring Wetterberg and Lilli together, Karla goes into the study and shoots herself within view of the audience. Marholm tries to go a step further than Ibsen and Strindberg, whose heroines commit suicide out of the public's sight.

With regard to the biographical angle of the play, one need not go so far as to conclude that Ola Hansson was once attracted to Victoria Benedictsson. Marholm seems simply to be analyzing the case of Benedictsson in terms of what went wrong and what might have saved her. Following this line of reasoning, Marholm comes to the unsatisfying conclusion that Benedictsson met the wrong man at the wrong time: "Das Weib in mir schmachtete nach seinem Weibsein . . . und er kam nicht, dem es sich noch halb unbewußt entgegendrängte, dagegen kam ein anderer . . ." ¹²⁵ The solution Marholm proposes is the solution that worked for her: marriage with Hansson. In this way, Marholm tried to fit Victoria Benedictsson into her general understanding of women, but in order to do so, she could not take Benedictsson's love for Georg Brandes seriously.

Since *Karla Bühnung* was only published in German and never performed, it did not reach a wide audience. For this reason, there was not much critical discussion. *Karla Bühnung* was well received by an anonymous critic in *Upsala Nya Tidning*, who refers to the play as "ett stycke djup kvinnopsykologi med af [sic]

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 121–122.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 128.

sällsynt gripande, dramatisk effekt.”¹²⁶ The reviewer would like to see the role interpreted by Eleonora Duse or Julia Håkansson, a suggestion with which Marholm would certainly have agreed. Alongside this praise, however, one objection is voiced: “Förf. har på sina ställen måhända gått längre i realism än som är förenligt med konstens fordran på måttfullhet och smak.”¹²⁷

Once again, Marholm is accused of poor taste in dealing with sexual themes. More than one reviewer observes that despite Marholm’s earnest wish to see the play performed, a public performance of the play would be impossible because of the scandalous subject matter.¹²⁸ Karl von Thaler describes *Karla Bühnung* as “Ein Drama, dessen Inhalt man kaum zu erzählen wagt.”¹²⁹ Mauthner remarks that men might be amused by the play: “Die Frauen aber könnten das Buch nur mit spitzen Fingern anfassen.”¹³⁰

A critic using the signature of Parvus in *Die Neue Zeit* devoted a substantial article to a discussion of *Karla Bühnung* and Marholm’s attitude toward women. In contrast to Marholm’s fan from *Upsala Nya Tidning*, Parvus maintains that there are “keine psychologischen Zusammenhänge” in the play.¹³¹ Moreover, he objects, “Laura Marholm macht zwei Reduktionen: einmal reduziert sie das Leben auf die geschlechtliche Liebe, und dann wieder die Liebe auf den geschlechtlichen Trieb.”¹³² This same sort of objection was made to Marholm’s previous books, as well as the following observation: “Aus der Vielheit und Verschiedenheit wird eine Allgemeinheit.”¹³³ Hedwig Dohm had also objected earlier to the manner in which Marholm underestimated the diversity of women. This does indeed represent a paradox in Marholm’s writing, since she is a strong adherent to the cult of the individual, but nevertheless makes broad generalizations which are meant to pertain to all women.

Leo Berg, a former acquaintance of the Hanssons from their Friedrichshagen days, sought to interpret *Karla Bühnung* in the light of Nietzschean philosophy. Berg sees in *Karla Bühnung* an incarnation of “das Überweib,” and chooses to give the play special mention in his book, *Der Übermensch in der modernen Litteratur*. Berg writes:

Oder man nehme die freche “*Karla Bühnung*” (1895) von Laura Marholm, ein Drama von rüpelhafter Draufgängerei, dessen Heldin, nachdem sie ihre Lust

¹²⁶ [Anonymous], review of *Karla Bühnung*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 2 March 1896, p. 3. “a piece of deep female psychology with a strangely gripping dramatic effect.”

¹²⁷ Ibid. “The author has perhaps in places gone further into realism than is consistent with art’s demand for moderation and taste.”

¹²⁸ Karl von Thaler, “Neue Romane und Novellen” Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

¹³¹ Parvus, “Ein Frauendrama und eine Frauenphilosophie,” *Die Neue Zeit*, Jg. 14, Bd. II (1895–1896), p. 58.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

befriedigt, sich durch Verachtung des Befriedigers rächt (früher verachteten die Weiber aus umgekehrten Motiven). Selten ist so nackt und brutal weibliche Gemeinheit dargestellt worden, nie vermutlich von einem Weibe selbst.¹³⁴

Berg's reading of *Karla Bühnung* has been distorted by his thesis that Karla is "ein Überweib." From Marholm's perspective, she is a woman like any other, who is destroyed by her missed opportunity for happiness. Berg is fascinated by the fact that, in a sense, Karla uses Collander and then discards him. She is not shamed by her actions, until they are of importance to Wetterberg. The issue is not that she committed an immoral act, but that she has thrown her affections away on an unworthy object. There is a certain degree of amorality about Karla, which no doubt made Berg think of her in a Nietzschean context.

Between the spring of 1895 and early 1896, Marholm read two books which had a substantial effect on her thinking about women: Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman* and Gabriele Reuter's *Aus guter Familie*. On January 31, 1896, Marholm wrote to Erik Thyselius:

Med det samme sender jeg dem under Korsbaand Havelock Ellis "Man[n] & Weib." Han er vel for Tiden den bedste og mest ansete Populærvideenskabelige Forfatter i psykologisk og samfundsspørgsmaal, særskildt overgaar han betydeligt den Vielschreiber og upaalidlige Lombroso. Kanske han er noget for Sverige. Om de ønsker Autorisation kan jeg godt være Mellemand, da jeg corresponderer med ham [sic].¹³⁵

Only one letter from Laura Marholm to Havelock Ellis has been preserved, so it is difficult to tell whether Marholm is exaggerating her contact with Ellis. In addition to sending him *Das Buch der Frauen*, Marholm also sent Ellis *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* on another occasion. In the above passage, Marholm expresses her rejection of Lombroso, who in *Das Weib als Verbrecherin und Prostituierte* had presented women as naturally inferior to men, cruel, dishonest, selfish, and degenerate. These extremes were unacceptable to Marholm, who, in her own way, had a deep respect for womanhood.

Ellis' central thesis in *Man and Woman* is: "From an organic standpoint, therefore, men represent the more variable and the more progressive element, women the more stable and conservative element in evolution."¹³⁶ Women are the "universal primitive carriers," self-sacrificing and nurturing. Ellis writes:

¹³⁴ Berg, p. 210.

¹³⁵ Laura Marholm to Erik Thyselius, 31 January 1896. "Right away, I am sending you by parcel post Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman*. At this time, he is probably the best and most respected popular science author on psychological and social questions. In particular, he has abandoned considerably that Vielschreiber and unreliable Lombroso. Perhaps he is something for Sweden. If you want authorization, I can certainly act as an intermediary, since I correspond with him."

¹³⁶ Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* (London: Walter Scott, 1894), p. 367.

A large part of the joy that men and women take in each other is rooted in this sexual difference in variability. The progressive and divergent energies of men call out and satisfy the twin instincts of women to accept and follow a leader, and to expend tenderness on a reckless and erring child, instincts often intermingled in delicious confusion. And in women men find beings who have not wandered so far as they have from the typical life of earth's creatures; women are for men the human embodiments of the restful responsiveness of Nature.¹³⁷

It is easy to see what appealed to Marholm about Ellis' writing. Dr. Heinrich Kraft was right to see similarities in their positions. Marholm also felt that men were the creators of culture and women their supporters. More and more, however, Marholm also came to view men as reckless and erring children who were in need of the steady guiding hand of a woman. Ellis places women lower on the evolutionary scale, ergo closer to nature, but he does so in a manner palatable to Marholm. In his way, Ellis is also a great admirer of womanhood. For Cesare Lombroso, woman is congenitally deceptive, cruel, and perverse. For Ellis, women are stable, nurturing representatives of nature.

At one point in his book, Ellis makes an argument that Marholm took very much to heart, especially as she began to lean toward Catholicism. Ellis claims that the decadence of Greece and Rome was brought about by the domination of the male elements in society, which resulted in the degradation of sexuality and maternity: "All true lovers of the artificial and perverse find woman repulsive; 'Woman is natural,' it is written among the sayings of Baudelaire, 'that is to say abominable.'"¹³⁸ On the other hand, the Christianity of the middle ages was feminine and resulted in the idolization of the Madonna and Child. Marholm came to view the feminine, Catholicism, as the antidote to the decadence of the 1890's.

The second great influence on Marholm was Gabriele Reuter's novel, *Aus guter Familie*. Reuter's work affected Marholm profoundly, since she could see so much of herself in the heroine, Agathe. The number of parallels between Agathe and the young Laura Marholm are indeed uncanny. Both disliked the marriage-market rituals of attending balls, both lost a suitor because of financial considerations, both were dependent on moody parents, and both had books locked away from them that were considered a threat to their moral fiber. Both Agathe and Marholm yearned to escape the stifling care of their parents and managed for a time to break away into some artistic circles, only to be dragged back under the parental wings. Gabriele Reuter expertly exposes the oppressions and inhibitions created by the educational policies toward young girls which had been such an anathema to Marholm. The difference between Agathe and Marholm is that Agathe does not make a clean break from her family and does not meet the man who can rescue her from her way of life. As the result of

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 371.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 370–371; 395–396.

accumulated frustrations, Agathe goes insane. In *Aus guter Familie*, Marholm saw a frightening portrait of what her life might have been like had she not moved to Copenhagen and met Ola Hansson.

Previously, Marholm had been accused of not taking into consideration the fate of women who, for various reasons, could not marry, and she had become known for this bias. Franz Servaes writes in a review of *Aus guter Familie*: “Das Los der unverheirateten Frau ist zudem schon seit manchen Jahren in den Mittelpunkt der Debatte gestellt worden, und seitdem Laura Marholm hier mit kecker Hand durchgegriffen hat, sind die Erwartungen auf beiden Seiten nur noch mehr gespannt worden. Solchen Erwartungen kam Gabriele Reuter entgegen.”¹³⁹ Reuter effectively reached her goal of enlightening society about the problems confronting unmarried women, and even succeeded in changing Marholm’s perception of the issue. Reuter’s book heightened Marholm’s sensitivity and sympathy for the plight of single women and caused Marholm to consider acceptable life alternatives for women that did not include marriage.

By the fall of 1895, Albert Langen had published three fairly successful books by Laura Marholm. When Carl Duncker Verlag purchased the rights to Ola Hansson’s *Alltagsfrauen* and *Der Weg zum Leben*, they also expressed an interest in Laura Marholm’s work. According to Marholm’s version of the story, Langen was so anxious not to lose one of his most successful authors that he made two trips out to Schliersee in order to convince her to stay with his company and paid her a 2000 mark advance.¹⁴⁰ Langen, however, was still unwilling to publish *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, and so, Marholm made arrangements with Duncker Verlag for a second edition of the book.

By December 1895, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson had not forgotten the insults he had suffered at Marholm’s hands the previous February, and if he learned of the forthcoming second edition of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, the news certainly did not please him. At this time, Bjørnson made remarks about Marholm in his correspondence that show his enmity for her was very much alive. Bjørnson wrote to his biographer, Christen Collin, about a speech given by Hedwig Dohm in Munich: “En dame fra Berlin (Kladderadatschs datter) har holdt foredrag om kvindesagen her for fuldt hus, og deri har hun brugt mig til at tænde bålet, Laura Marholm skulde brændes på. Gud, for vellyst!”¹⁴¹ Also that winter, the wife of Konrad Telmann, the man who had defended Bjørnson’s honor against Marholm’s assault in *Berliner Tageblatt*, travelled through southern Germany and

¹³⁹ Franz Servaes, “Leidensbekenntnisse eines Mädchens,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 12 June 1896.

¹⁴⁰ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 26 May 1897.

¹⁴¹ Dagny Bjørnson Sautreau, ed., *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons og Christen Collins Brevveksling 1889–1909* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1937), p. 150. “A lady from Berlin (Kladderadatsch’s daughter) has given a lecture about the woman question before a packed house, and she used me to light the bonfire upon which Laura Marholm should be burned. God, what pleasure!”

chose to pay Laura Marholm a visit in Schliersee instead of looking up Bjørnson. Bjørnson let his astonishment over the taste of Telmann's wife be known to his friend: "Aber dass sie statt uns zu besuchen, sendet die Marholm aus, ist dass nicht göttlich!"¹⁴² Konrad Telmann passed on a message from Marholm to Bjørnson, "Die Marholm sagte ihr [Telmann's wife], sie würde Sie gelegentlich ruhig wieder besuchen und sei gewiß, Sie würden sie ganz freundlich aufnehmen, sie verehrte Sie ja immer noch, wie früher, und nur Ihre 'Handschuh'-Theorien müßte sie bekämpfen."¹⁴³ Marholm did not pay Bjørnson a visit, and it is doubtful he would have received her as kindly as she supposed. Telmann even adds salt to the wound by traitorously mentioning to Bjørnson that he liked Marholm's *Buch der Frauen*.

By January 1896, Albert Langen and Dagny Bjørnson were engaged, and Bjørnson already referred to Langen as his son-in-law.¹⁴⁴ At about the same time that the second edition of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* appeared, something soured in the agreement between Langen and Marholm. Whether these two occurrences were linked can only be guessed at through circumstantial evidence. On February 8th, Bjørnson wrote to Harden about what he deemed to be his son-in-law's excessive credulity: "Eben in diesen tagen ist er schlimm bestraft worden. Die Laura Marholm hat ihn überlistet! [sic]"¹⁴⁵ Bjørnson evidently felt that Marholm had somehow swindled Langen out of the 2000 mark advance. Marholm blamed the failure of their agreement on unreasonable demands made by Langen, though she was not specific about what they were: "Plötsligt ställde han diktatoriska krav och krävde underkastelse."¹⁴⁶ Is it possible that Langen thought he had purchased the rights to *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, which he had no intention of reissuing?

On March 10, Albert Langen married Dagny Bjørnson, and that same month, Langen took Marholm to court over the repayment of the 2000 marks. According to Marholm's perspective, immediately after Langen's unexpected change of mood "kom en processtämning med påstående att jag mottagit ett lån av honom. I processen var allt bedrägeri. Givetvis fälldes utslag mot mig."¹⁴⁷ The lawsuit dragged on for an entire year, since the Hanssons had already spent the advance and were unable to return it. Later on, Marholm saw Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's influence behind the case and referred to it as "Bjørnson Processen."¹⁴⁸ After 1900,

¹⁴² Aldo Keel, ed., *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen, I. Teil*, p. 324.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 325.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1n2.

¹⁴⁵ Aldo Keel, ed., *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson und Maximilian Harden. Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), p. 38.

¹⁴⁶ Laura Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 31 January 1919. "Suddenly he made dictatorial demands and demanded submission." See also: Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 26 May 1897.

¹⁴⁷ Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt." "came a lawsuit claiming that I had received a loan from him. In the trial, everything was fraud. Of course, the verdict was pronounced against me."

¹⁴⁸ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 9 November 1900.

Marholm was prone to make rash and unwarranted accusations about conspiracies against her, but it is quite possible her suspicion of the Bjørnson-Langen connection may have had some basis in reality. The public, as well as Marholm, seemed to see a connection between the reissuing of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* and Langen's suit against Marholm, since the book sold out as soon as the case was made public knowledge.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, Langen did not always listen to Bjørnson's advice, as in the case where he continued to publish the novels of Marcel Prévost despite Bjørnson's protests.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps Langen had his own reasons for pressing his suit. He may have quite simply needed the money for the founding of his journal *Simplicissimus*. Regardless of what ulterior motives might have lain behind the case, Marholm did owe Langen the money, which was the decision the court reached the following spring.

Despite the inconvenience of the trial, Marholm made plans for another work of fiction: *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*. Marholm was given the idea for the title by an episode from *Aus guter Familie*. As a confirmation present, Agathe is given a copy of Paul Thumann's *Des Weibes Leben als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*, a catechism of the expectations that society imposes on young women. *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* is meant to provide an alternative to these expectations. Once again, Marholm draws from her own experience in order to propose possibilities for other women. Marholm describes her target audience for the book as follows: "Wenn ich Töchter hätte und sie wären fünfzehn, sechzehn Jahre alt, würde ich ihnen in dieser Form einen Einblick ins Leben geben."¹⁵¹

Many of the segments in the novel had been published as separate novellas in newspapers and journals during 1895. One of the segments, "Otteringning" or "Frühläuten," was performed as a one-act play on May 9, 1896, in Göteborg's Stora Teatern, with Julia Håkansson and T. Svennberg playing the roles. Apparently, since Julia Håkansson was unable to play Karla Bührung, she consoled herself and Marholm by performing this short piece. Unfortunately, the reviews were not very good. Because of the problems Marholm was having with her German publishers, *Frau Lilly* was the only one of her books to appear in Swedish before it appeared in German. Marholm offered the novel to Albert Bonnier in June, touting it as "en meget snäll Bog, med hvilken De strax kan berede Dem paa 2 Oplag [sic]."¹⁵² Marholm had the project finished by October and *Frau Lilly* appeared before Christmas 1896 in Swedish. Marholm claims that she wanted to write "ein Weihnachtsbuch," which meant something that was uncontroversial and would sell well.¹⁵³ The Langen case had clearly worried her about financial

¹⁴⁹ Ola Hansson, "Mein letzter Verleger," *Die Zukunft* 36 (1901), p. 166.

¹⁵⁰ Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen*, p. 41.

¹⁵¹ Laura Marholm, "Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter," *Die Zukunft*, 17 (1896), p. 572.

¹⁵² Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 9 June 1896. "a very nice book, for which you can immediately prepare yourself for two editions."

¹⁵³ Marholm, "Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter," p. 572.

matters. *Frau Lilly* was published in German by Duncker Verlag and in Norwegian by Aschehoug in 1897.

Marholm's narrative technique in *Frau Lilly* was shaped by her preference for the novella format. Each segment can be read independently, and they sometimes differ greatly in narrative style. "Warten" follows the protagonist's moods through several hours of waiting for a promised visit from her fiancé; "Bubselchens Weihnachten" is a lively family portrait, in which the characters are treated with fond irony by the narrator; "Frühläuten" is a brief drama with stage directions and dialogue. There are even large chronological gaps between vignettes, but all these varied segments are joined together by the central theme of the book: Frau Lilly's personal development. When the work is viewed as a whole, the changing narrative voice and the fluctuating series of vignettes make a striking stylistic impression. *Frau Lilly* is a novel and not just a collection of short stories. Furthermore, Marholm has managed to abandon her famous "ensidighet" to a degree and turns her perceptive eye not only toward the flaws in a single woman's existence but also toward the shortcomings of married life. *Frau Lilly* is perhaps Marholm's best work of fiction and merits some detailed attention.

In the first segment, "Todtes Leben," the young protagonist, Lilly Mayland, pays a visit on "ein altes Fräulein," Luise Reibnitz. The two have a heart-to-heart talk, and it appears that Luise's life has not differed greatly from Agathe's in *Aus guter Familie*. Luise had her opportunities to marry, but because of her lack of inclination or because of finances, the offers had come to naught. Her family then decided that she would be of most use as a nurse to their ailing mother. She spent her life in self-sacrifice, but now finds herself in poor health, being taken care of by another sacrificing woman. Luise observes resignedly, "Das Leben ist ein ewiges Entsagen."¹⁵⁴ Lilly is despondent after her talk with Luise, since she recognizes in Luise's life her own probable fate. Lilly "weinte in hilfloser Angst vor dem Ausblick in ihre leere, graue Zukunft."¹⁵⁵

The next scene, "Junge Mädchen," takes place at a birthday party for a young girl. All are gossiping about their marriage prospects, and a girl named Nanny Geißler confides in Lilly: "Ich würde Jeden nehmen, Jeden, unbedingt der mich versorgen könnte . . . und wenn es ein Sechsziger [sic] wäre."¹⁵⁶ Lilly is offended by such talk and proclaims: "Ich würde in einer Dachstube glücklich sein und keine Millionärsehe beneiden . . ."¹⁵⁷ Subsequently, Lilly learns through the party conversation that a man she has loved, who entered a marriage for financial reasons, has died of typhus in Rome. The ideal of a marriage for love appears to be rendered impossible by the practical considerations of life.

¹⁵⁴ Laura Marholm, *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* (Berlin: Carl Duncker Verlag, 1897), p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

In "Warten," Lilly, who has begun to find her first gray hairs, is engaged. Easter is a family holiday and she has no place to go, since she has not heard from her fiancé. She spends an agonizing day wandering about the city, trying not to appear as someone with no destination. The unbearable day is brought to an end by the arrival of her fiancé, because now she has a place where she belongs. This well-written vignette illustrates how society makes single women feel superfluous. Only through a man can they become full participants in life.

In "Weiße Fläche," Lilly, who is now Lilly Holm, the wife of Karl Holm, sinks into a reverie about one of her female friends from before her marriage, "ein in ungläubigem Warten gealtertes, an Körper und Seele dürr gewordenes Mädchen," who claimed to have found her life's fulfillment in philosophy.¹⁵⁸ Lilly's reverie is interrupted by the waking of her baby. While nursing the child, Lilly feels, "ein kitzelnder, seliger Schauer über den ganzen Körper."¹⁵⁹ This segment is the clearest continuation of her thesis in *Das Buch der Frauen*, and at the same time, brings that book into perspective. Most of the essays Marholm wrote about unfulfilled intellectual women, she wrote as a young mother and wife. At the time, it was difficult for her to imagine that anyone could be happier than she.

"Bubselchens Weihnachten" is one of the most interesting segments in the novel. Marholm portrays Lilly and Karl Holm spending their first Christmas together with their 3-month-old son. The holiday is less than idyllic and is depicted with a warm sense of humor. Since she has no experience with small children, Lilly is totally dependent on Françoise, the French nanny, who has frightened Lilly with tales of the horrible diseases a small child might contract. The young couple goes into town to complete their Christmas shopping, but all is not entirely harmonious between the two. Lilly is chastised by Karl for wanting to kiss him in public. Money is in short supply, but Karl nonetheless makes extravagant purchases of liqueurs and spirits. Lilly secretly pawns a piece of her jewelry so that she can buy her husband a gift, but Karl discovers that he does not have enough money left for Lilly's present. Karl is fiscally irresponsible, and Lilly is left with the problem of making ends meet. She resorts to subterfuge in order to spare Karl the worry. On Christmas Eve, Lilly has changed into a seductive red dress just to please her husband. Suddenly, Bubselchen begins to wail, and the pair is at a loss to quiet him since the French nanny is at home with her family. Karl gets the idea that Lilly's red dress irritates the child and commands her to take it off: "Wie 'ne alte Person so blödsinnig sein kann!"¹⁶⁰ Lilly is deeply hurt by this, and as she changes into her shabbiest dress, she thinks, "Gott! – sie konnte ja so gerne gehen! Sie konnte Bubselchen nehmen und gleich gehen! Sie konnte ihr Kind schon ernähren, – dazu brauchte sie ihn gar nicht!"¹⁶¹ Once the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 138.

nanny is retrieved and Bubselchen stops crying, domestic peace returns to the household.

The interest of this piece lies in Marholm's realistic view of married life. In her previous works, a marriage of love was presented as a state of ideal bliss and utter devotion. The marriage between Lilly and Karl is certainly a love-match, but all is not roses. Lilly becomes irritated by always having to subordinate her will to her husband's, particularly when she sees that he is not acting in both of their interests. Instead of confronting Karl with the problem, she tries to rectify things without his knowledge. Yet, despite these conflicts between the pair, the situation returns to normal, and the sense of domestic harmony compensates for the previous troubles.

"Eheliche Liebe" is written in the same vein as "Bubselchens Weihnachten," but without the humor. "Eheliche Liebe" depicts a domestic quarrel. Lilly is fed up with Karl: "Sie wollte sich nicht in einemfort [sic] einsperren lassen, sie wollte sich nicht ewig über das freuen müssen, was ihn freute, und über das ärgern, was ihn ärgerte. Sie wollte auch was für sich haben. Sie war auch ein Mensch! Sie hatte auch ihre eigene Natur . . ."162 When Karl comes home, Lilly lets him know exactly what is bothering her. First, "Ich habe sechs Jahre mit dir in der Einöde gelebt."¹⁶³ Lilly is a city person, but she has lived out in the country for her husband's sake. Second, Karl is always ready to spend money on a good meal in a restaurant or on liquor, but there is no money whenever Lilly needs something, such as new clothing. Third, Karl is always badgering her about cooking his favorite dishes, something she does not enjoy. Lilly threatens to leave Karl for another man, Leerwig, but Karl robs Lilly of this threat by casting aspersions on Leerwig's manhood. Karl remarks, "Ihr habt Alle ein Gelüstchen zum Ehebrechen," to which Lilly replies, "Ja – (trotzig) das haben wir auch."¹⁶⁴ The quarrel comes to an end when Lilly is forced to admit that she loves and is physically attracted to her husband. But Lilly admonishes Karl not to take advantage of this love, "Die eheliche Liebe, die ist für keine Frau, an der was dran ist, ein sanftes Ruhekissen für faule Männer."¹⁶⁵ Lilly is clearly ready to fight to maintain her individuality in the marriage, but this rebellious streak is overcome by her sexual devotion to her husband.

In "Frühläuten," Lilly and Karl have been married for 10 years. Karl has been away on a business trip, and Lilly waits up, translating his book, in case he returns. Karl does come home, and there is a tender scene in which they say how much they have missed each other. Karl's attempts to found a journal have failed, and he thanks Lilly for having stayed with him in good times and bad, enabling him to turn down publishing offers that would have compromised his

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 158.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 160.

integrity. Lilly confesses a fear of their mortality, of the day when they will no longer have each other.

In the final vignette, “Was ist der Mensch . . .?” an old acquaintance from Lilly’s childhood drops by the Holms’ house in the countryside. The friend has married for social position and confesses her marital miseries to Lilly, but then dares to look down upon Lilly’s rustic way of life. The moral seems to be that Lilly, despite her lack of material wealth, is a richer woman than her affluent friend.

Frau Lilly manages to avoid the extremism and the proselytizing tone of Marholm’s other works. Certainly, her basic tenet, that women are happiest as wives and mothers, is still present, but *Frau Lilly* finally takes into account the diversity of women and honestly confronts the fact that there are drawbacks to the married state. Hedwig Dohm had accused Marholm of ignoring the dimension of financial dependence in marriage, which takes away something of matrimony’s rosy glow. In *Frau Lilly*, Marholm admits that this is a problem, though she does not actually solve it. Lilly has the ability to support herself financially should the need arise, but she is of the opinion that material wealth is less important than personal satisfaction. Nonetheless, the issue of money raises its ugly head each time the Holms quarrel.

The reception of *Fru Lilly* in Sweden was mixed. Some of Marholm’s critics enjoyed the unusual narrative effect of the novel, while others did not appreciate it. A. Jensen writes, “Där finnas många luckor i denna utvecklingshistoria, men dessa lakuner endast öka den konstnärliga stämningen. Det är en intelligent bok för en intelligent publik.”¹⁶⁶ Hjalmar Söderberg reviewed the book for *Ord och Bild* and issues this double-edged opinion: “I berättartekniken är fru Marholm verkligen i hög grad modern, ehuru icke i allra bästa mening.”¹⁶⁷ H. E. Larsson simply finds the narrative to be “abrupt” in places.¹⁶⁸ Of the eight segments which make up the novel, the most warmly recommended were: “Väntan” (“Warten”), “Lillpysens julafton” (“Bubselchens Weihnachten”), and “Den äktenskapliga kärleken” (“Die eheliche Liebe”). Significantly, these are the vignettes in which Marholm departs most greatly from her usual platform. Hjalmar Sandberg perceptively notes that, at times, the book is reminiscent of Gustave Droz’s domestic parody in *Monsieur, madame et bébé*.¹⁶⁹ The similarity

¹⁶⁶ A. Jensen [A-d. J], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts Tidning*, 10 February 1897, B-edition, p. 1. “There are many gaps in this story of development, but these lacunae merely accentuate the artistic mood. It is an intelligent book written for an intelligent public.”

¹⁶⁷ Hjalmar Söderberg, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Ord och Bild: Dagboken*, 3 (1897), p. 10. “In terms of her narrative technique, Mrs. Marholm is truly modern to a high degree, although not in the very best sense.”

¹⁶⁸ H. E. Larsson [-pt], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, 23 December 1896, evening edition, pp. 1–2.

¹⁶⁹ Hjalmar Sandberg [Hj. Sdg.], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 23 April 1897, morning edition, p. 3.

is in all likelihood not accidental. Three years later, Marholm would begin working on some memoirs to be entitled: “Die Conversion von Monsieur, Madame et Bébé.”

Although the narrative style received a degree of praise, some familiar objections were raised with regard to the ideas presented in *Frau Lilly*, which was interpreted very much in the shadow of *Das Buch der Frauen*. H. E. Larsson sums up Marholm’s philosophy as follows: “Qvinnans uppgift är att blifva maka och mor. Hennes verksamhet på andra områden, såsom författarinna, talare, lärare, såsom arbetare för federationen, qvinnosaken m. m. är blott surrogat för dem som förfelat sin hufvudsakliga kallelse i det ena eller andra afseendet.”¹⁷⁰ Once again, Marholm is perceived to depict women as bound by their physical being, without regard to their spiritual needs. Larsson chooses not to notice that Lilly’s spiritual needs are indeed given attention; however, Lilly is repeatedly led to compromise her intellectual needs, because of her emotional and physical dependence on Karl. Hjalmar Sandberg makes a familiar objection to “en ton af något på samma gång sensuellt och patologiskt, som ibland blir motbjudande.”¹⁷¹ Marholm claimed to Bonnier that she was writing a “nice book,” but she was nevertheless too candid about the sexual relationship between Lilly and Karl to suit public taste. After a generally positive review, the reviewer in *Stockholms Dagblad* is forced to remark, “Boken innehåller åtskilligt, som möjligen kan lämpa sig för en maka eller moder, men alledeles icke för en ungmö.”¹⁷²

Marholm had received criticism for her vague portrayal of Jössing in “Was war es?,” and once again, some critics of *Frau Lilly* object to the way in which Marholm depicts the men of the book, describing them as “manliga dimfigurer.”¹⁷³ Mystified, H. E. Larsson points out that Lilly wins the man she loves and is happy, despite the fact that her husband is an impoverished gourmand with a fondness for alcohol and “oaktadt han vidare anser henne ej ha någon annan uppgift än laga hans mat, sköta hans barn och se till honom.”¹⁷⁴ The shortcomings of Lilly’s husband are made abundantly clear to the reader, and Lilly is

¹⁷⁰ Larsson, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*. “Woman’s purpose is to become a wife and mother. Her activities in other areas, such as author, speaker, teacher, as a worker for the association for women’s rights, among other things, are merely surrogates for those who have failed their primary calling in one respect or another.”

¹⁷¹ Sandberg, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*. “a tone of something at the same time sensual and pathological, which is at times repulsive.”

¹⁷² [Anonymous], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Stockholms Dagblad*, 23 December 1896, p. 3. “The book contains various things that might possibly be appropriate for a wife or a mother, but certainly not for a young girl.”

¹⁷³ E. Iam, “Laura Marholm: Fru Lilly som flicka, maka och ungmor,” *Nordisk Revy*, 3 (1897), p. 235. “nebulous masculine figures.”

¹⁷⁴ Larsson, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*. “regardless of the fact that he does not consider her to have any other purpose than to cook his food, take care of his children, and tend to him.”

not blind to them herself. But despite his flaws, her husband plays an important role: he is the *object* that gives Lilly's life meaning. Based on a reading of *Frau Lilly*, E. Iam sums up Marholm's attitude toward men as: "Dyrkan af mannen såsom man, men ringaktning för honom såsom person."¹⁷⁵ This is a theme that permeates all of Marholm's writing, but it is impossible to tell how conscious she was of this trait.

While Marholm was working on *Frau Lilly*, she began making plans for another major non-fiction work about women: *Zur Psychologie der Frau*. She announced her idea for the project to Albert Bonnier in February 1896, and the following December she informed him: „Jeg er nu snart færdig med det Arbeide jeg betragter som min hovedbog: Til Kvindens Psykologi [sic]."¹⁷⁶ In light of the timing, one might suspect that Marholm hoped for another popular financial success because of the threatening court case with Langen. No doubt, financial considerations were a factor; however, *Zur Psychologie der Frau* meant something special to Marholm. She explained to Helena Nyblom, a Danish-Swedish author and conservative writer on women's issues: "Jeg har ikke lagt megen Vægt paa Fremkomsten af mine andre Bøger paa svensk: 'Kvinnor' stjal Adolf Bonnier, de to andre er flygtig skrevne Sager, – men 'Psykologien' er Resultatet af et helt Livs Søgen, Feltagelser og vunden Indsigt [sic]."¹⁷⁷ Although *Zur Psychologie der Frau* did not sell as well as *Das Buch der Frauen*, it did generate a considerable press debate. The book appeared in German (1897), Swedish (1897) and English (1899). Next to *Das Buch der Frauen*, it was her most successful work. This success was primarily due to the controversy that arose in its wake.

Zur Psychologie der Frau is largely a complicated patchwork of old and new influences. Marholm claims that the first eighty pages were written four years earlier, which would have been about the time she had her falling out with Samuel Fischer over a book which even then Marholm intended to call *Zur Psychologie der Frau*.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, the influences of the intervening years, especially the contact with Havelock Ellis, Max Runge, Gabriele Reuter and Ellen Key, are very clear. When she sent a copy of *Zur Psychologie der Frau* to Helena Nyblom, Marholm described yet another strong influence:

Bogen er fremkommen i en af Katholicismens hovedland og under min egen nærmere Bekjendskab med Katholicismen. Jeg er ikke som De gaaet tilbage til

¹⁷⁵ Iam, p. 234. "The worship of man as man, but contempt for him as a person."

¹⁷⁶ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 22 February 1896; Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 29 December 1896. "I will soon be finished with the work I consider to be my main book: Studies in the Psychology of Women."

¹⁷⁷ Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 17 March 1897. "I have not laid much weight on the publication of my other books in Swedish: Adolf Bonnier stole 'Women,' the other two are hastily written things, – 'Psychology' is the result of an entire life's searching, mistakes, and gained insight."

¹⁷⁸ Compare Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 17 March 1897 with Laura Marholm to Arne Garborg, 11 June 1893.

Moderkirken, men jeg er dog bleven stærkt og dybt greben af Catholicismens Livs anskuelse, Culturindhold och levende Continuität [sic].¹⁷⁹

It would be only a matter of time before Marholm would convert to Catholicism, and *Zur Psychologie der Frau* can give a hint as to some of her reasons for converting.

The arguments in *Zur Psychologie der Frau* are manifold, complex, and sometimes contradictory, making a concise summation of its gist rather difficult. The book is divided into three sections. In the first section, Marholm attempts to describe the psychology of her age à la Max Nordau. Civilization is in a state of degeneration, and one of the central causes of this crisis is the confusion of the natural sex roles. This is an idea which Marholm had found in Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman*. Ellis describes women as universal carriers and Marholm similarly calls "das Weib" "der tragende Organismus."¹⁸⁰ In fact the verb "tragen" in its various forms is a leitmotif throughout the work. Man is "der schöpferische Organismus," which approximates Ellis' definition of man as the progressive element in evolution.¹⁸¹

The degeneration of the sex roles began with the Reformation, Marholm maintains. Catholicism incorporated the sex drive, sensuality, into itself: "Im Katholicismus sublimierte sich der Geschlechtstrieb und hinterließ sich in seinen Bauten, Bildern, Musik als einheitliche Cultur."¹⁸² Sins of the flesh could be atoned for and forgiven. For Protestantism, the sex drive became something shameful and disgusting. The immediate result of this shift in attitude was the witch hunts. Women were persecuted for the sexual desire they aroused in men. Furthermore, "Der natürliche Fehltritt des Weibes wurde zum unnatürlichen, das uneheliche Kind wurde der Schandfleck der Schandflecke, und das Mädchen, das Mutter geworden war, ein Abschaum ihres Geschlechts."¹⁸³

In the current age, women are educated "zur Geschlechtslosigkeit."¹⁸⁴ Their own sexuality is kept a secret from them. Thus, three types of women have evolved. The "Détraquée" is "der mit Unwille tragende Organismus," who fulfills all of the wifely and maternal duties society dictates for her, but without taking pleasure in the task. The "grande Amoureuse" is "der mit Hingebung tragende Organismus."¹⁸⁵ The "grande Amoureuse" is the only category of woman

¹⁷⁹ Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 17 March 1897. "The book arose in one of the main centers of Catholicism and during my own closer acquaintance with Catholicism. I have not, as you have, gone back to the mother church, but I have nevertheless been powerfully and deeply taken with the Catholic view of life, cultural content, and living continuity."

¹⁸⁰ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil I* (Berlin: Carl Duncker Verlag, 1903), p. 29.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

able to love, and therefore comes closest to Marholm's definition of natural womanhood. The third female type is the "Cerebrale": "Es kann sich nicht vergessen, nicht das Bewußtsein seiner selbst verlieren, sich nicht hingeben in einer Extase, sich auch nicht unterwerfen."¹⁸⁶ These qualities are understood by Marholm to be a shortcoming, not an advantage. In the natural state of affairs, "Das Weib, das liebt, denkt mit dem Gehirn des Mannes, den es liebt."¹⁸⁷ The "Cerebrale" tries to think with her own brain, but only attempts such a thing, "Weil es keinen Mann hat, mit dessen Gehirn es denken kann."¹⁸⁸ On this point, Marholm has not changed her views since *Das Buch der Frauen*, in which Marie Bashkirtseff, Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, and Sonja Kovalevsky were all intelligent women, looking for a man to give them "einen Inhalt." The "ensidighet" which Marholm allowed to drop in *Frau Lilly* returns in *Zur Psychologie der Frau* with a vengeance.

The second section of the book is rather like *Das Buch der Frauen*, in that Marholm provides case studies of women from the current age. The women discussed are: Hilma Strandberg, a telephone operator who became an author; Gabriele Reuter's protagonist Agathe from *Aus guter Familie*; the Countess Adeline Schimmelmänn, who dedicated her life to altruistic deeds; Stella Kleve, an author and a love interest from Ola Hansson's youth; and Annie Besant, sometime socialist turned theosophist. Most of these essays were articles Marholm had published previously.

There is nothing very new or surprising about Marholm's analyses of these women, except for one point, which is summed up in the following statement: "Denn im letzten und tiefsten Grunde wird und kann sich das Weib nur für geschlechtliche und religiöse Dinge wirklich erwärmen."¹⁸⁹ Religion has not loomed large on Marholm's horizon before. Marholm's change of focus is clearly the result of personal changes, but also of the necessity to propose fulfilling life alternatives for unmarried women. Her unsatisfying solution is essentially: "Get thee to a nunnery!" Marholm, in fact, tries to make a distinction between a nun and an "alte Jungfer." Nuns are single by choice, she argues, whereas old maids are not. It is inconceivable to Marholm that a woman might choose to remain single without a religious motive.

In the third section of the book, Marholm returns to an analysis of her era, but this time with an eye to proposing future solutions to the current decadent trends. She begins the section with the following proclamation:

Ich gehe von dem früher Ausgeführten aus, daß das Weib nie, nirgends und in Nichts einen Ausgangspunkt schaffen oder bezeichnen könne, – daß Alles, was sie thut, leistet, oder veranlaßt, immer nur eine Ableitung, eine Anknüp-

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

fung oder Weiterführung von etwas zuvor Geschaffenem, Vorhandenem, Gegebenem darstellt, daß sie auf geistigem Gebiete denselben Gesetzen unterworfen ist wie auf physischem; und ob sie den physischen sich unterwerfe oder nicht, an den geistigen wird dadurch nichts verändert.

Sie hat nur eine, ihr eigenthümliche Eigenschaft: das, was sie empfängt, kann sich schön oder häßlich, stark oder schwächlich, gescheidt oder dumm, gut oder schlecht in ihr auswachsen, – das wird ganz wesentlich beeinflußt von ihrer eigenen Substanz, die sie dazugiebt; – aber auch das bestveranlagte Weib ist nicht im Stande einen falschen Gedanken in einen richtigen zu verwandeln oder eine schlechte Saat in eine gute Frucht.¹⁹⁰

The first point to be made about this statement is that in Marholm's view, woman is still determined by her biology. Throughout this third section, Marholm discusses feminine biology in a pseudo-scientific manner, but regretfully, she seems to have drawn most of her information from Dr. Max Runge's *Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität*. Of course, one of Runge's main pieces of supporting evidence for the theories in his book was Marholm's *Das Buch der Frauen*. The mutual admiration society of Runge and Marholm only serves to perpetuate their common prejudices, which have only a very slight relation to scientific truth.

The second interesting point is Marholm's unambiguous statement that women are incapable of original thought. She is obviously untroubled by the implications this view has for her own work. The consequence of such a position, however, is that women are relieved of ultimate responsibility, not only for the society in which they live, but also for what they become or do. Marholm blames the minds of "überstudirter, schwächlicher, anlehungsbedürftiger Männer, in einer zerfallenen, verrohten, untergrabenen Gesellschaft" for having created the idea of women's emancipation.¹⁹¹ They are responsible for having planted a "bad seed" in the feminine psyche.

One "scientific" principle which Marholm has learned from Runge is the following: "Es [das Weib] ist alle 28 Tage durch mehrere Tage, wenn auch nicht krank, so doch in seiner Leistungsfähigkeit geschwächt. Das Weib bedarf ferner zur Verrichtung seiner Berufsarbeit: der Schwangerschaft, der Geburt, des Säugens des Kindes, der Schonung, und des Schutzes."¹⁹² Marholm extrapolates from this: ". . . Schutz. Darauf basirt das ganze Verhältniß des Weibes zum Manne."¹⁹³ In the interest of the species, men are obligated to protect women from the demands of emancipation, which entail spending vital biological

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 261–262.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Runge, *Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität*, p. 7. The doctor also has an interesting prescription for the "dried up" old maid: "Es giebt nun ein wirksames Mittel, diesen Process des Welkens aufzuhalten, ja die fast entschwundene Blüte wieder zurückkehren zu lassen: das ist ein regelmässiger geschlechtlicher Verkehr." (pp. 9–10.)

¹⁹³ Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, p. 279.

energy on physical labor or intellectual pursuits. The purpose of women is children, and those women who do not accept their lot resort to prostitution and emancipation: "Prostitution und Emanzipation gehen progressiv neben einander her; sie sind zwei Stämme aus derselben Wurzel, – der Verzweiflung des Weibes an dem ihm auf Erden beschiedenen Theil."¹⁹⁴

Herein lies a second shift in Marholm's thinking since *Das Buch der Frauen*. The first was a shift from the emphasis upon men as the only possible source of a woman's fulfillment to allowing both men and religion to share that role. The second shift is a change in woman's *raison d'être* from her love for a husband to the bearing of children. Actually, this shift even takes place within the covers of *Zur Psychologie der Frau* itself, between the first and the third sections. Most of the first section was written four years earlier than the third, and Marholm pursues there her old theme of the central importance of the erotic in a woman's life. Men bring out the best qualities in women. In the third section, however, men are reduced to the protectors of women and their children. Men, "immer recht eitel und leicht zu dupiren," are in general not treated very kindly in the final portion of the book.¹⁹⁵ Evidently, Marholm did not perceive this contradiction between her treatment of men in the first and last sections.

This new emphasis on children is no doubt due to the influence of Ellen Key. Nowhere is Key's presence more keenly felt than in the section entitled "Die productive Arbeit des Weibes," which is largely a restatement of Key's *Missbrukad kvinnokraft*. The primary task for women is to raise children, and when they are unable to have their own, they should be given work that makes the best use of their "Allmuttergefühl."¹⁹⁶ Marholm proposes the establishment of institutions for the care of illegitimate children, and further: "Krankenhäuser, Armenküchen, Pflegeanstalten aller Art."¹⁹⁷ Marholm has a peculiar fantasy that these enterprises will be funded by philanthropists.

The motivations for many of the themes in the third section can be traced back to the stress that Marholm underwent during the Langen case. This section was the only one entirely written during that time. When Marholm releases women from all culpability for their own actions, one may detect Marholm's own wish to be released from having to answer for the 2000 mark advance. In Marholm's admonishments to men to protect women, a wish to be relieved of her financial burdens may be perceived. In fact, in a letter to Maximilian Harden, Marholm directly appeals to "die Schutzbedürftigkeit der Frau und die Ritterlichkeit des Mannes," so that Harden might help her by taking up a collection so she can pay Langen.¹⁹⁸ Her philanthropic fantasies no doubt extended to her own case as well. Moreover, the new negativity toward men in this third section

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 305.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 329.

¹⁹⁸ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 6 April 1897.

might be interpreted as suppressed anger toward Hansson for not being able to support his wife, an anger to which Marholm could never have openly confessed, since she had often proclaimed herself willing to live in a hovel, if only she could be by his side.

Zur Psychologie der Frau evoked a strong reaction from critics. Quite apart from objections to the substance of Marholm's arguments, reviewers were unanimous in proclaiming the book to be poorly written. Some observe, "daß das Buch viel Widersprechendes und logisch Lückenhaftes aufweist."¹⁹⁹ Others point to a vagueness in Marholm's writing, "Skada blott, att det myckna jonglerandet med filosofiska termer gör boken så svårläst, stundom obegriplig."²⁰⁰ More than one reviewer remarks that her language becomes so bizarre at times that she slips into unintentional humor in phrases such as "hennes medvetet omedvetna medvetande."²⁰¹ These shortcomings were exacerbated in the Swedish version by a very poor translation by Ola Hansson. Apparently, after having lived most of the last seven years in Germany, he had forgotten his Swedish. Oscar Levertin describes the language in *Till kvinnans psykologi* as "ett språk, som står det mesopotamiska långt närmare än det svenska."²⁰² Moreover, the book does not escape the old criticism of "ensidighet" and poor taste. One reviewer complained of "en viss brist på finkänsla."²⁰³ Levertin colorfully seconds this opinion: "en människa med litet finkänslighet och bildning knappast kan uthärda det [hennes uttryckssätt] utan illamående," and further, he confesses a desire to "kasta boken i väggen."²⁰⁴

Some objections were registered about the scientific pretensions of *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, since the subjectivity of the book was so striking. Dr. Adams-Lehmann is amazed by Marholm's "Mangel an naturwissenschaftlicher Bildung," and calls Marholm's idea – that nervousness, anemia and depression in women from age 17 to 20 is brought about by not being married – "schrecklicher Unsinn."²⁰⁵ This was one of the notions Marholm garnered from Max Runge.

¹⁹⁹ H. B. Adams-Lehmann, "Zur Psychologie der Frau," *Die Neue Zeit*, 15 Jg, Bd. II (1896–1897), p. 591.

²⁰⁰ J. A. "Bokvärlden," *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning*, 17 December 1897, B-edition, p. 1. "It is only a pity that the frequent juggling of philosophical terms renders the book difficult to read, and occasionally incomprehensible."

²⁰¹ J. A., "Bokvärlden," "her consciously unconscious consciousness"; Adams-Lehmann, "Zur Psychologie der Frau," p. 593; Adine Gemberg, "Laura Marholms *Psychologie der Frau*," *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 66 (1897), p. 644.

²⁰² Oscar Levertin, "Litteratur," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 27 December 1897, A-edition, p. 2. "a language which is much closer to Mesopotamian than Swedish."

²⁰³ [Anonymous], review of *Till kvinnans psykologi*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 24 December 1897, p. 3. "a certain lack of refinement."

²⁰⁴ Levertin, "Litteratur." "a person with a little refinement and education can scarcely endure it [her manner of expression] without feeling ill" . . . "throw the book against the wall."

²⁰⁵ Adams-Lehmann, "Zur Psychologie der Frau," pp. 591, 596.

Adine Gemberg objects to another of Marholm's scientific observations: "Es ist eine tendenziöse Unwahrheit, zu behaupten, die denkende, arbeitende Frau sei entweder steril, oder ihre Kinder seien entartet."²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, this was a common notion at the time, held by both Runge and Key among others, though it has no foundation in scientific fact.

Adams-Lehmann notices and is perplexed by Marholm's change in attitude toward men between the first and third sections of the book: "Auf der einen Seite hat es den Anschein, als sehe sie im Manne den einzigen Lebensinhalt des Weibes, als führe sie alle Leiden und Krankheiten des Weibes auf ihr unbefriedigtes oder enttäushtes Liebesbedürfnis zurück;" but then, at other points, "das Kind wird gewissermaßen als Endzweck des Lebens behandelt, den die Frau oft gern ohne Dazwischenkunft des Mannes erreichen möchte."²⁰⁷ Marholm's attitude towards men was changing, and most likely, she had not yet resolved these problems for herself, hence the confusion.

Furthermore, both Adams-Lehmann and Gemberg consider Marholm's suggestion – that women should be allowed to raise their children in peace and economic security, while men shield them from all the difficulties of existence by working to feed them – to be highly unfair to men. Adams-Lehmann agrees that during child-bearing years, a woman might need special consideration, but as for the rest of her life, "Was befreit sie von dem allgemeinen Menschenloos [sic], im Schweiß ihres Angesichts Brot zu essen?"²⁰⁸ Marholm excuses women from the work force, since working in an office, or as a telephone operator, does not agree with womanly nature. Gemberg responds to this: "so kann ich dagegen der Verfasserin verraten, daß auch der Mann seinen Schalterdienst und seine Arbeitsstunden im Bureau nicht zu den Genüssen seines Daseins rechnet, sondern zu eben derselben harten Notwendigkeit, die auch die Frau veranlaßt, auf solchem Posten auszuharren."²⁰⁹ Both Adams-Lehmann and Gemberg recognize in Marholm's writing a desire to escape from the dreary necessities of life, a wish which was in large part shaped by Marholm's desire to extricate herself from the Langen case. This same desire expresses itself in the feminine utopia Marholm describes, in which women organize their own separate matriarchy in order to perform all manner of altruistic activities without the intervention of men. One reviewer remarks, "Denna storslagna och vackra, om än väl fantastiska framtids-tanke försonar oss med mycket . . ." ²¹⁰ Others consider the idea too fantastic to be taken seriously.

²⁰⁶ Gemberg, "Laura Marholm's *Psychologie der Frau*," pp. 637–638.

²⁰⁷ Adams-Lehmann, "Zur *Psychologie der Frau*," p. 592.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 595.

²⁰⁹ Gemberg, "Laura Marholms *Psychologie der Frau*," p. 638.

²¹⁰ J. A. "Bokvärlden." "This grand and beautiful, albeit fantastic, view of the future reconciles us to a great deal."

Zur Psychologie der Frau was successful in the sense that it received much attention, albeit in the form of negative criticism. The book marks a transition in Marholm's work. She had become weary of the life of a misunderstood genius, which brought with it large doses of financial insecurity. The dream she had had since her youth of facing life's tribulations beside her beloved had lost its romance. All of these factors heightened her inclination toward the Catholic church, which she perceived as a protective organization, able to shelter its members from worldly matters. This desire for escape is quite understandable given Marholm's circumstances, but it is a sign of vulnerability. Up to this point, Marholm had always been an emotionally strong person. Although Marholm's thought is permeated with fantastic wishes, there is nothing pathological about it – yet. However, her steps in retreat are her first steps toward mental instability.

The year-long court case with Langen took its toll on Marholm. She complained to Harden, “Nur ein Ende möchte ich mit der Quälerei durch Langen haben, die mich mehr als einmal auch körperlich krank gemacht und mir viele Arbeitsstimmungen zerstört hat.”²¹¹ On another occasion, she described the inconvenience of the trial: “Ich bin inzwischen ein Jahrlang, da Langen meine Auflagen verweigert, in meinen Einnahmen zurückgebracht, durch die fortwährenden Informationen, die die Advokaten verlangten, in meiner Arbeit unablässig gestört und durch den sehr unvorhergesehenen Ausgang des Prozesses in die größte Geldverlegenheit versetzt.”²¹² Marholm felt that at the same time Langen demanded money from her, he prevented her from earning it.

In January 1897, Marholm was ordered by the court to pay Langen 1200 marks, which was what Marholm still owed from the 2000 mark advance. Marholm simply did not have the funds. She appealed to Duncker Verlag to pay the sum, but they would do this only if Marholm signed over all of the royalties to *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, which Marholm refused to do. She asked Maximilian Harden for help. She remembered the collections which had been taken up for Garborg and Strindberg and hoped that something similar could be done for her. Harden wrote to Bjørnson, “Albert Langen handelt gegen Frau Marholm nicht schön, finde ich. Er bedrängt die Arme wegen Geld. Es ist eine verwickelte Geschichte.”²¹³ In April, Marholm was faced with the ultimatum of paying Langen or having her property confiscated. A Munich resident by the name of Littenaur intervened, and the confiscation was delayed.²¹⁴ In May, Marholm wrote to Harden again about taking up a collection on her behalf, but this request came to naught.

Finally, instead of waiting for the return of money, which had long since been spent, Langen tried another tactic: “Über die Rückerstattung der Frau Marholm

²¹¹ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 6 April 1897.

²¹² Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 26 May 1897.

²¹³ Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson und Maximilian Harden. Briefwechsel*, p. 85.

²¹⁴ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 11 April 1897.

gewährten Vorschüsse hatte Langen mit Duncker ein Abkommen getroffen.”²¹⁵
As a result of this agreement, the Langen episode in Marholm’s life came to an end. Now, the Hanssons became involved in litigation with Duncker Verlag. Exhausted by their setbacks in Germany, the Hanssons left Schliersee in June to spend the summer with Hansson’s family in southern Sweden.

²¹⁵ Floerke, p. 18.

Setbacks, Conversion, and Mental Instability: 1897–1905

Laura Marholm and Ola Hansson journeyed to Skåne with empty pockets and intentions of reestablishing themselves in Scandinavia. In March of 1897, when it became obvious that they would lose the Langen case, Marholm began preparing the ground for their return to Sweden. Marholm wrote to Helena Nyblom in order to establish a connection with the intellectual circles of Uppsala and Stockholm. Nyblom was a prudent choice, since she shared many of Marholm's views on women, and as the wife of Carl Nyblom, Uppsala Professor of Aesthetics, she enjoyed respectability and a prominent position in academic life.

Furthermore, Marholm attempted to rebuild some of the bridges that Hansson had burned in the past, and with this end in sight, she wrote flattering and conciliatory letters to Gustaf af Geijerstam, who had strong connections in the publishing world. Marholm praised Geijerstam's novel *Medusas huvud*, and diplomatically added, "Om der nogen gang har været en Misforstaaelse mellem Dem og ham [Ola Hansson], vil De tilgive ham den Skyld han bær deri [sic]"¹ The misunderstanding had to do with a grudge that Hansson held against Geijerstam for not coming to the defense of *Sensitiva amorosa*; in revenge, Hansson had painted an unflattering portrait of Geijerstam as Grazelius in *Resan hem*. Without Hansson's knowledge, Marholm wrote to Evert Wrangel, who was spearheading a new publishing endeavor in Lund, hoping to convince him to include Ola Hansson in the project.² Marholm herself aspired to create a literary center in Skåne which could compete with Stockholm. Such plans are reminiscent of her ambition to attract a literary coterie to Skurup in 1892.

Despite these preparations, shortly after their arrival in mid-June of 1897, it soon became evident that even this stay in Skåne would be only temporary. Wrangel proved uninterested in Ola Hansson's collaboration, and although Geijerstam's response was positive, the prospects of the Hanssons assuming an active role in Swedish literary life appeared faint. The major obstacle to a pleasant existence in Hansson's homeland seemed to be, once again, coexistence with Hansson's family. Relations were strained because of the Hanssons' precarious financial situation, and, as ever, Marholm could not get along with her

¹ Laura Marholm to Gustaf af Geijerstam, 10 April 1897. "If there has ever been a misunderstanding between you and him [Ola Hansson], can you forgive him his part in it?"

² Laura Marholm to Evert Wrangel, 30 March 1897.

mother-in-law.³ When Geijerstam asked Marholm to translate some novels for him, she answered: “Att finna tid, går nog, då jag i denna något urolige sommarvistelse vel må afstå från egna arbeten [sic].”⁴ Skåne always seemed to paralyze Marholm’s creativity. Ola, Jr. fell ill, and became a cause of great concern. Marholm harbored suspicions that the climate in Skåne was unhealthy for her son. Marholm confided to George Egerton, “Vi har siden vi kom hertil forresten ale tre været daarlige: det var Forkølelse og Depression, værst hos mig [sic.]”⁵ Marholm was deeply unhappy about returning to Skåne.

In *Buch der Toten*, Marholm relates a curious anecdote in conjunction with her son’s illness. When Ola, Jr. became sick, all of the relatives were certain that he had diphtheria and that his life was threatened. Overwhelmed by the fear of losing her son, “lag ich im Nebenzimmer neben dem fiebernden Kind auf den Knieen und betete zum ersten Mal zur Muttergottes . . . Was ich der Gottesmutter in jenen Augenblicken des Schreckens gelobte, das hab’ ich später gehalten.”⁶ This gesture seems to have been inspired by J. P. Jacobsen’s novel, *Niels Lyhne*; however, whereas Niels Lyhne’s child dies despite his wife’s prayers, confirming his atheism, the opposite happens to Laura Marholm. As *Zur Psychologie der Frau* indicates, Marholm already had an intellectual interest in Catholicism, but the experience by her son’s sickbed seems to have pushed her firmly towards conversion.

The Hanssons decided to return to Schliersee, but spent a month relaxing in Helsingborg before going home. Not long after their arrival in Schliersee, the

³ In her later paranoid musings, the animosity between Marholm and Hansson’s family took on sinister dimensions for her: “Denn ebenso hier in Schweden wie früher draußen fühlte ich das geheimnisvolle Tasten und Lauern um mich herum und es waren einzelne uns sehr nahe stehende Personen, die wie vom bösen Geist besessen, wie in einem geheimen Einverständnis mit feindlichen Mächten zu handeln schienen.” Laura Marholm, *Buch der Toten* (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim, 1900), p. 20.

⁴ Laura Marholm to Gustaf af Geijerstam, 2 July 1897. “Finding time will probably be possible, since during this somewhat turbulent summer visit, I have to give up my own work.” Geijerstam wanted Marholm to translate *Lille Karl* by Karl Tavaststjerna and *Inferno* by August Strindberg. In a letter from 30 July 1897, Marholm agreed to translate Tavaststjerna’s book, but had reservations about Strindberg’s: “Men hvad der angaaer en Bog af Strindberg med mig som Oversætterinde, saa kan jeg naturligvis ikke love nogetsomhelst, før jeg har læst hver Linie deraf. Mit litterære Navn i Tyskland udtrykker baade en Personlighed og en Retning saa bestemt og klart, at det ikke kan forbinde sig med nogen anden Navn og Retning af kanske modsat Beskaffenhed [sic].” (“But with regard to a book by Strindberg with me as translator, I can naturally not promise anything whatsoever before I have read every line of it. My literary name in Germany expresses both a personality and an orientation so defined and clear that it cannot ally itself with any other name and orientation of perhaps a contradictory nature.”)

⁵ Laura Hansson to Chavelita Dunne, 16 July 1897. “Since we came here we have been sick, all three of us: it was colds and depression. I was worst off.”

⁶ Marholm, *Buch der Toten*, pp. 143–144.

Hansson's fortunes went from bad to worse. Marholm became ill, though the nature of her malady is somewhat vague. Marholm only explains: "daß das 'Unwohlsein' von der ganz naturnotwendigen Beschaffenheit war, gegen die man überhaupt keine Mittel anwendet."⁷ Whatever the case may have been, Marholm did not feel well for quite some time. In October, she received a telegram informing her that her mother was dying, and this message was soon followed by a second telegram asking her if she wanted to come to the funeral. Marholm was too ill to travel alone, and since they could not afford a trip to Riga for both of them, Hansson attended the funeral in her stead.

Marholm and Hansson invited her widowed father, Fredrik Mohr, to come and live with them in Schliersee. Hansson returned to Schliersee, and Fredrik Mohr followed not long after, but Marholm's father did not enjoy the company of his daughter and son-in-law and left after only a few days. He returned to Riga and, thereafter, his only form of communication with his daughter was a yearly allowance of 300 rubels, sent more for his grandson's sake than for Marholm's.⁸ Shortly after the beginning of the new year, Hansson received a telegram summoning him to the funeral of his own mother. Since Marholm was still in poor health and their funds were extremely low, neither of them was able to attend.

This string of family tragedies signaled the beginning of an exceptionally difficult period for the Hanssons: "Die Zeiten [. . .] waren die der zunehmenden materiellen Bedrängniß und des endlichen äußersten und wörtlichsten Kampfes ums Dasein für uns. Auch Krankheit kam uns beiden immer Gesunden in verschiedener Weise und mit überraschender Plötzlichkeit."⁹ It is important to bear in mind that these circumstances constituted the background to the Hansson's decision to join the Catholic Church.

Both Hansson and Marholm have provided an account of their motives for converting to Catholicism. Hansson gives primarily intellectual reasons for his conversion. Living in Bavaria helped to lead him to Catholicism, but "ifølge en organisk tvingende magt, en indre lov."¹⁰ He reasons, "Alt det, der gav det gamle skaanske bondeliv dets præg, [. . .] var de omhyggelig [sic] opbevarede kultur-rester fra den katholske tid."¹¹ The books which influenced him include Paul Garin's *Dulcamara* and Georg Ratzinger's *Geschichte der kirchlichen Armenpflege* and *Die Volkswirtschaft in ihren sittlichen Grundlagen*. *Dulcamara* appealed to the mystical leanings in Ola Hansson's personality. Ratzinger's works presented a social utopia grounded in Catholicism and a cult of the Catholic Middle Ages. This utopia, which of course includes social welfare, was

⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

⁸ Ola Hansson, "Rustgården II," galley proof in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek, p. 221.

⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰ Ola Hansson, "Min Omvendelse," *Samtiden*, 11 (1900), p. 211. "according to an organic compelling power, an inner law."

¹¹ Ibid. "Everything that gave the old Scanian farmers' culture its special character was the carefully preserved cultural remnants from the Catholic era."

quite attractive to both the Hanssons. Marholm emphasizes that “besonders die Traditionen der katholische Wirthschaftspolitik” appealed to them.¹²

The Hanssons became personally acquainted with Ratzinger, probably in connection with their interest in the Bavarian *Bauernbewegung*. In conjunction with this cause, Ratzinger had worked closely for some years with Dr. Sigl, about whom Marholm had written an article for *Die Zukunft*. Furthermore, Ratzinger had written a monograph about “Die Erhaltung des Bauernstandes” and published a political pamphlet entitled: “Bauern, einigt euch!”¹³ Because of the interest in Catholicism his works had inspired in the Hanssons, Ratzinger suggested to them that they might consult Hofprediger Josef von Hecher for further instruction: “Aus dem Unterricht entwickelte sich wieder eines Tages, gewissermaßen ganz von selbst, die Konversion.”¹⁴ Marholm and Hansson were both accepted into the Catholic Church on August 22, 1898.

Marholm admitted that she had a greater interest in converting than Hansson and had to persuade him to do it. She became particularly eager to convert when she noticed that her son was being strongly influenced by his Catholic environment. Their cook taught Ola, Jr. how to cross himself and to say the Paternoster and Ave Maria. Ola, Jr. was the first in his family to announce a desire to become Catholic. Marholm reasoned, “daß es einfach Pflicht der Eltern sei, den Glauben, in dem ihr Kind aufwachse, zu theilen.”¹⁵

An accurate account of the events following their conversion is difficult to establish, since one has only Marholm’s and Hansson’s highly subjective and paranoid versions of the story to build upon. It seems clear that both Marholm and Hansson expected their conversion to bring about an improvement in their financial status. They felt themselves worthy of Christian charity. Quite to the contrary, their finances took a turn for the worse. Both Hanssons blamed Hofprediger Hecher for their predicament, which commenced “nachdem die vom Hofprediger anbefohlene Geheimhaltung der Conversion und die dadurch bewirkte Isolirung, in der er uns stecken bleiben ließ, uns jeder Verbindung und alles Erwerbes beraubt.”¹⁶ Both Hanssons had difficulties placing articles, and Marholm expected the Catholic Church to exert its influence on their behalf. Marholm claims that she was told instead: “Suchen Sie sich einen Platz als Näherin in einem Geschäft.”¹⁷ Marholm’s version of these events might be counterbalanced by Ellen Key’s equally subjective assessment of their situation: “Sedan hon och hennes Ola tråkat ut den protestantiska pressen, posera de nu

¹² Laura Marholm, “Pater Salvator,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 7 October 1900.

¹³ Ludwig Fränkel, “Ratzinger, J. Georg,” *Biographisches Jahrbuch und Deutscher Nekrolog*, Vol. 4, ed. Anton Bettelheim (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1900), pp. 246–247.

¹⁴ Marholm, “Pater Salvator.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Laura Marholm, “Die Nonne im Anger,” manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

¹⁷ “Pater Salvator.”

som martyrer för sin omvändelse och påstå sig bli refuserade af denna frisinnande press! Ren Schwindel!”¹⁸

Marholm was experiencing a period of critical disfavor, in part brought on by the publication in Germany of Ellen Key’s *Mißbrauchte Frauenkraft* in 1898. Marholm’s popularity had dropped markedly after *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, since the book was so poorly written. Public taste was changing, and Marholm’s revelations about female sexuality were no longer titillating. On November 12, 1897, Marholm delivered a talk to the *Münchener Journalisten und Schriftsteller-verein*; the next day, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* reported, “Sie hat keine Freunde.”¹⁹ In a way, Ellen Key had usurped Laura Marholm’s position in Germany. *Mißbrauchte Frauenkraft* was kinder to the women’s movement than Marholm’s writings had been, and therefore, made fewer enemies among the emancipationists. Marholm and Key were often compared by critics, to Marholm’s detriment. One such critic was Lou Andreas-Salomé who also began receiving attention for her essays on women at this time.²⁰ Marholm’s writing became eclipsed by her competition.

Whatever the reasons for their lack of publishing success, the Hanssons’ economy was seriously undermined. They were forced to pawn all their valuables in order to live. Hansson became quite ill, and the pair was thrown out of their house since they could not pay the rent. In April of 1899, Hansson and Marholm moved to Sofienstraße 5 in Munich, but left their son in the care of their former landlords in Schliersee. Hansson explains that they left their son in Schliersee for the sake of his schooling.²¹ As it turned out, because of the turbulent years that followed in Munich, living apart from his parents was probably the best thing for Ola Hansson, Jr. Apart from sporadic visits to him in Schliersee, the Hanssons were separated from their child for almost seven years.²² From this period of extreme hardship in Munich dates the onset of the Hanssons’ mutual paranoia and mental instability.

Despite the stresses, 1900 proved to be an extremely productive year for Marholm. She wrote a number of autobiographical sketches for *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Neue Freie Presse*, which she later meant to assemble under the title “Mohrenfratz.” The strangest of these is “Das Amulet,” in which Marholm claims her

¹⁸ Ellen Key to Georg Brandes, 26 August 1899, in Georg and Edvard Brandes’ *Brevväxling med svenska och finska författare och vetenskapsmän*, Vol. 2 (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1939), p. 193. “Since she and her Ola have bored the protestant press, they are now posing as martyrs for their conversion and claim to be refused by the liberal press! Pure chicanery!”

¹⁹ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil II* (Berlin: Carl Duncker Verlag, 1903), p. 102.

²⁰ For an account of the reception of *Mißbrauchte Frauenkraft* in Germany, see: Barbara Gentikow, *Skandinavien als präkapitalistische Idylle* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1978), pp. 158–170.

²¹ Hansson, “Rustgården II,” p. 204.

²² Ola Hansson, Jr., “Några drag ur min fars liv,” *Svensk Litteraturstidskrift*, 5 (1942), p. 51.

father is an English Freemason and blames his behavior after her mother's death on this circumstance.²³ Marholm's paranoia seems to have burst forth in force in December of 1900, but before this crisis, she was able to publish three books through the Franz Kirchheim Verlag. In August, a collection of novellas entitled *Der Weg nach Altötting und andere Novellen* appeared. November saw the publication of *Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung* and *Buch der Toten*. These two last books were also published in Holland, where Marholm suddenly received a great deal of attention through the efforts of Cornelia Huygens and Anna de Savornin Lohman.²⁴

In a notice for *Die Zukunft* about *Der Weg nach Altötting* and *Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung*, Marholm wrote that the two books could finally appear "nach dreijährigem unfreiwilligen Schweigen."²⁵ She remarks further, "Beide Bücher sind fast vollständig im Laufe des letzten Jahres geschrieben; zwei Jahre habe ich überhaupt fast nichts geschrieben, da ich ja doch nicht die Möglichkeit hatte, es zu veröffentlichen."²⁶ Marholm felt that she had been intentionally boycotted by publishing houses after the Langen case and her conversion. Marholm preferred to believe that she had been unjustly persecuted, rather than accepting any responsibility for the state of her affairs. The paranoia that would eventually take hold of her thinking arose out of a mixture of her denial of her own culpability and the real hardships caused by people who were genuinely unfriendly toward her.

Marholm writes that the five novellas in *Der Weg nach Altötting* were inspired by the light shed by her new Catholic world view "auf die 'geistige Freiheit', dann auf die 'Würde des Weibes', auf ihre 'rechtliche Stellung in der Gesellschaft', auf die 'Pflege des weiblichen Gefühlslebens', auf das gute Verhältniß von Eltern und Kindern und auf viele andere Dinge."²⁷ The first three novellas read like parables. "Burgmäd" tells the story of an unmarried woman who finds fulfillment in taking care of another woman's child. "Auf der anderen Seite" describes a woman who marries late in life, suffers through hardships with her husband, and then becomes religious. In "Der Weg nach Altötting," an unmarried woman meets a happily married childhood friend. The tale is a celebration of motherhood and of love matches. "Im Bann," the fourth novella, is a well-executed portrayal of the relationship between a mother and daughter. The fifth novella is rather different and perhaps falls under the heading of the "viele

²³ Laura Marholm, "Das Amulet," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 25 November 1900.

²⁴ See, for example, "Laura Marholm," *Het Zontagsblad*, 5 and 12 November 1900 or Cornelia Huygens, *Die liefde in het vrouwenleven voorheen en thans, naar aanleiding van "De liefde in de vrouwenquestie" van A. de Savornin Lohman* (Amsterdam, 1899) or Anna de Savornin Lohman, *De liefde in de vrouwenquestie* (Amsterdam, 1899). Anna de Savornin Lohman translated Marholm's *Buch der Toten* under the title *Levenservaringen*.

²⁵ Laura Marholm, "Der Weg nach Altötting – Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung," *Die Zukunft*, 32 (1900), p. 260.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

andere Dinge.” “Schwesternliebe” describes the fortunes of two sisters living in Riga. They both marry, but their happiness is undermined by a conniving Jewess. The tale is highly anti-semitic.

“Im Bann” constitutes the highpoint of Marholm’s literary career. The story consists of a nighttime conversation between two figures in a dimly lit room. One figure is not described at all except for the deep compelling quality of his voice. From his role in the conversation, one might assume he is a priest. The other figure is a woman whose emotional state is revealed by the activity of her hands: “Die andere öffnete die Hände, als ob sie nach etwas griffe . . .;” “Die weißen Hände bewegten sich nervös auf dem Tischtuch . . .;” “Die weißen Hände lagen wieder ineinandergefaltet, unbeweglich auf der Tischplatte . . .”²⁸ The woman seeks help from the other figure. She is tormented at night by a vision of her dead mother, who seems to need her daughter’s help to give her peace. In order to lay her mother’s spirit to rest, the woman makes “die Beichte einer Todten;” she confesses her mother’s sins to the priest.²⁹

What emerges is a fascinating portrait of a love-hate relationship between mother and daughter. In confessing her mother’s sins, something her mother could never have done for herself in life, the woman must allow herself to admit that her mother was not a good mother, but rather, a parasite on her daughter’s affections. Her mother did not allow her to have any friends and demanded her daughter’s complete devotion. The woman must confront the guilt she feels about leaving home, since she believes that if she had made her mother the center of her existence, she could have prevented her from sinking into self-indulgent depressions. Her confessor absolves the woman by saying, “Niemand hat das Recht, eines anderen Leben in sich aufzusaugen, an eines anderen Ent-sagungen sich stark zu wachsen und einen anderen den Kampf für sich selbst führen zu lassen, den jeder für sich selber führen muß.”³⁰

Artistically, the story is interesting since the possibility is left open that the entire exchange takes place in the mind of the woman herself. The mysterious atmosphere of the novella makes it a departure from Marholm’s other literary works, which are by and large realistic down to the most improper details. The narrator of “Im Bann” sets a minimal stage on which the conversation takes place; the result is effective. Furthermore, the didactic tone that can be somewhat disturbing in the first three novellas of this volume has disappeared.

Marholm’s next book, *Die Frauen in der socialen Bewegung*, takes up many old themes from Marholm’s earlier writings, though now they are viewed through an unabashedly Catholic filter. Women are best suited to being wives and mothers, and their right to these callings should be protected by the church. A woman may find fulfillment through being the wife of a good man or a bride of Christ.

²⁸ Laura Marholm, *Der Weg nach Altötting* (Mainz: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1900) pp. 91, 100, 107.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Perhaps the most striking difference from Marholm's earlier works is a raised socio-economic consciousness. Marholm advocates a society run on the lines of a type of Catholic socialism, which she believes to have existed in the Middle Ages. All work together for the good of society and the church, and, in turn, the church protects its members. The enemy of this social organization is capitalism, but "er verträgt nicht als Weltbeherrscher sichtbar zu werden."³¹ Further, Marholm observes, "Alle materiellen Kämpfe gehen unter geistiger Deckung vor sich, und die Berufenen des Worts, die Dichter und Denker, sollen sie decken."³²

Marholm views the women's movement not as a moral issue, but as an economic one; society does not want to support and protect its unmarried women. The current age is unfriendly to women and merely wishes to exploit them economically. In her chapter on prostitution, Marholm goes so far as to set aside her antagonism toward the women's movement and agrees that prostitution is the worst kind of exploitation of women. Cesare Lombroso had argued that women become prostitutes because of an innate inclination towards criminality. From Marholm's standpoint, they are driven to it out of financial necessity by an unsympathetic society. The remedy for this way of thinking is the veneration of women embodied in the Catholic Church and the cult of the Virgin Mary.

Even though Marholm's utopias border on the fantastic, *Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung* was written by someone of sound mind. Yet, she clearly feels that her misfortunes of the recent years have been brought about by powers who do not approve of her writing: "Wer aber öffentlich reden und drucken läßt, was er will, und dabei vielleicht der Majestät der kapitalistischen Ringe oder der Majestät der Landesfürsten, oder anderen heimlichen oder offenen Majestäten, die die Macht sich zu revanchieren haben, zu nahetritt, – dem geht es böß."³³ Further, Marholm reflects, "Es wäre mir gewiß sehr viel besser im Leben gegangen, wenn ich mich mit der Frauenfrage nicht so eifrig befaßt und statt dessen Novelletten und Romane geschrieben hätte."³⁴

Buch der Toten is probably Laura Marholm's most curious work. In the form in which it was published, the book contains three essays. The first, "Aus Liebe," describes the obsessive devotion of a Fräulein Schricking, who became a Marholm follower after having read *Das Buch der Frauen*. The second essay, "Die kleine Fanny," is an interesting account of life in Riga as Marholm was growing up. According to Marholm, she and her cousin Fanny were both considered "unmarriageable," Marholm because of her homeliness and Fanny because of her poverty. The final essay, "Dreimal," describes the three times that she and her husband had tried to settle in Skurup with Hansson's family.

³¹ Laura Marholm, *Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung* (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim, 1900), p. 78.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Even though Marholm's narrative voice is sometimes tinged with suspicion, there is nothing particularly offensive about the book, except perhaps to Fräulein Schricking and Hansson's family. Nevertheless, when Marholm offered the book to Karl Bonnier, he responded, "Den förläggare som utgifver dem [uppsatserna] på svenska går utan tvifvel ett nederlag till möte."³⁵ The original version seems to have contained much more explosive matter. In a letter to Bonnier, Marholm mentions having written in the book about "Langen-Bjørnsonske Processen [. . .] og den falske Dom."³⁶ On another occasion, Hansson described *Buch der Toten* as a portrait of "den internationella tjuf- och mördarligan i dess verksamhet i min och min hustrus familj."³⁷ Unfortunately, if this material ever existed, it has been lost. It was never included in the published version of *Buch der Toten*.

At the root of Marholm's growing mental instability lay the stress of extreme poverty, the humiliation of critical disfavor which deprived her of publishing possibilities, physical illness, and a keen sense of guilt about her family in Riga. Marholm was obviously very upset by the death of her mother. They had been close when Marholm was young, but had drifted apart, and a note of hostility had crept into the relationship. Amalie Roeder Mohr died before Marholm could become reconciled with her. Marholm dealt with the guilt she felt by making her mother a "bad mother;" in this way, Marholm's hostile feelings toward her mother became her mother's fault. Her story, "Im Bann," is an attempt to work out this strained relationship.

In her writings of this period, Marholm became quite fascinated with the subject of mothers and upbringing. This fascination was brought on, no doubt, not only by her guilt toward her own mother, but also by the fact that she had been separated from her son. In *Die Frauen und die socialen Bewegung*, she relates the following anecdote:

Ich kannte eine Frau, die mit viel Willen und gutem Mut sich ihren eigenen Lebensweg gesucht und gefunden hatte. Sie hatte dabei ihrer Mutter immer mit Zärtlichkeit und Verehrung angehangen. Sie wurde selbst Mutter, und wie sie nun ihr kleines Kind zwischen den Händen hatte und neben sich aufwachsen sah, da fiel ihr nach und nach und immer schwerer die Erkenntnis auf's Herz, daß ihre eigene Mutter ihr keine gute Mutter, sondern ein Quälgeist gewesen war.³⁸

This anecdote is about herself. Once again, Marholm shows that she can only express intensely personal feelings in the third person. Her rejection by her

³⁵ Karl Bonnier to Laura Marholm, 26 September 1900. "The publisher who publishes them [the essays] in Swedish will without a doubt meet with defeat."

³⁶ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 9 November 1900. "The Langen-Bjørnson case [. . .] and the false verdict."

³⁷ Ola Hansson to Karl Bonnier, 28 November 1901. "the international ring of thieves and murderers in action within my and my wife's family."

³⁸ Marholm, *Die Frauen in der socialen Bewegung*, p. 174.

father came hard on the heels of her mother's death. She had never been particularly close to her father, but the rejection hurt nonetheless. In this case, she chose to blame his alliance with the Freemasons for his behavior. At this point, Marholm began to suspect the intervention of outside agencies in her life; later on, during the worst of her mental illness, Marholm constructed an astonishingly complex paranoid system of conspiracies.

It is revealing to compare Marholm's type of paranoia with that of August Strindberg, who had gone through his crisis a few years earlier. Strindberg came to believe in "powers" that were shaping his destiny, but these powers belonged to the realm of the supernatural. Marholm reviewed Strindberg's *Inferno* and had this to say about the powers: "Die 'Mächte' lassen in unserer Zeit viele tanzen [. . .] Sie kommen mir auch weder so geheimnisvoll, noch so unmateriell vor, wie Strindberg und ihre anderen Dichter sie erscheinen lassen möchten."³⁹ For Marholm, the meddling powers belonged to this world, not the next. The spirits that sought to manipulate her destiny included the Freemasons, the Catholic Church, the Jews, and the royal houses of Europe. Despite this central difference between Marholm and Strindberg, their paranoia seemed to move along quite similar lines. Strindberg would take note of cloud formations, street signs, the name of his hotel, and so forth, and give a meaning to these items. Similarly, when Hansson fell ill after imbibing a schnaps at the inn *Zum Heiligen Franziskus* shortly after midsummer of 1899, the name of this inn became for both Marholm and Hansson a sign that the Catholic Church had tried to poison Hansson.⁴⁰ The situation was even more ominous since, at the time, the Hanssons were living in the *Hotel Deutscher Kaiser*.⁴¹

In April of 1900, Marholm published a prose poem entitled "Die Hände der Angst" in a women's magazine named *Haus und Welt*. It is Marholm's only attempt at poetry, and it gives powerful expression to Marholm's emotional make-up at the time:

Ich sehe sie nicht, aber ich fühle sie –, die Hände, die sich an mich klammern möchten.

Nachts im Schlaf greifen sie nach mir mit den verlängerten Fingern der Angst.

Sie suchen sich festzuhängen an meine Seele wie mit zitternden Tentakeln. Sie wecken mich auf mit ihrem Tasten, und ich fühle den keuchenden Atem der Besessenen in meiner Nähe.

Immer sind sie da, wenn die Nacht gekommen und die Stille, und umkreisen mich. Sie haben sich an mir festgebunden mit ihrem Denken und ihrem Wollen; mit ihrem bösen Wollen und ihrem schändlichen Denken und mit dem vorausgeworfenen Schatten ihrer lichtscheuen Thaten.

³⁹ Laura Marholm, "Etwas nordische Mystik," *Die Zeit*, Nr. 208 (24 September 1898), p. 202.

⁴⁰ Ola Hansson, "Die Geschichte von einem Schnaps," *Die Zukunft*, 35 (1901), p. 387.

⁴¹ Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil II*, p. 108.

Sie suchen ihr Leben in mir, wie der Vampyr das Blut der Lebendigen sucht.
Ihr Leben ist an mir festgebunden durch die scheuen Werke der Nacht.

Ich fürchte sie nicht. Aber ich fühle den heißen Dunst ihres angstvollen
Atems.

Und eine große Traurigkeit kommt über mich, und ich werde sehr müde von
der Last der vielen Hände, die nach mir greifen. [. . .]⁴²

Judging by this poem and the story “Im Bann,” Marholm’s emotional crisis had a salutary effect on her writing, just as Strindberg’s “Inferno crisis” revolutionized his authorship. Unfortunately, Marholm’s condition shortly deteriorated beyond the point where it was artistically productive.

In September, Marholm’s disillusionment with the Catholic Church became painfully evident. She wrote an article entitled “Pater Salvator,” which described her family’s conversion and subsequent victimization by the Catholic Church. Marholm saw to it that the article was published in Sweden, Germany, and Denmark. She sent “Pater Salvator” to Karl Bonnier with the comment: “Jeg tror at den smager besk i hele Norden, men den maa svælges. Lad ingen gemme sig bagved at Tidningerne ikke vil betale ‘honorar’ – jeg giver ‘Pater Salvator’ *gratis* til Sverige. Den er mig lige kjær som ‘Kronprinsessen . . .’ er til Sverige [sic; original emphasis].”⁴³ Marholm had begun to imagine a connection between the Catholic Church and the royal house of Sweden, which is why she thinks that Sweden will be disturbed by her article.

In December of 1900, Marholm’s sanity became seriously impaired. She began writing to various officials in Munich, complaining of the treatment she and her husband had been subjected to by the church. This behavior brought her to the attention of the Munich police. One such letter was sent to Dr. von Laubmann, librarian at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: “Uns ist unser sämtliches Eigenthum sofort nach der Conversion durch den Hofprediger Canonicus J. Hecher, und zwar ausschließlich von katholischer Seite abgefordert oder sonst weggekönnert worden, worüber auch Herr Finanzminister v. Rieche Klage entgegengenommen hat.”⁴⁴ On December 13, Marholm wrote to Karl Bonnier asking him to put a notice in the Swedish papers announcing the reversal of their conversion.

Also, in the letter to Bonnier, Marholm expresses the belief that Bonnier has accepted *Buch der Toten* for publication. In fact, Bonnier had not, but this notion became an obsession with Marholm. Over the next few months, a bizarre correspondence ensued, in which Marholm ignores Bonnier’s protestations that he never accepted the book. She suggests in one letter that he consult with the King

⁴² Laura Marholm, “Die Hände der Angst,” *Haus und Welt*, nr. 28 (7 April 1900).

⁴³ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 28 October 1900. “I believe that it will taste bitter to all of Scandinavia, but it must be swallowed. Do not let anyone hide behind the excuse that the newspapers do not want to pay the honorarium – I give ‘Pater Salvator’ to Sweden *for free*. It is as dear to me as ‘The Crown Princess . . .’ is to Sweden.”

⁴⁴ Laura Marholm to Dr. von Laubmann, 3 December 1900.

of England and the King of Sweden about publishing *Buch der Toten*.⁴⁵ In another, she refers to the Prince of Wales, “hovedet af Frimureriet,” who is somehow involved in “vore Mødres og Slægtninger Død, Navneforfalskningen, Testamentsforfalskning, Tullbedrag, Conversion etc [sic].”⁴⁶ Marholm believed that the royal houses of England and Sweden, the Freemasons and the Catholic Church were conspiring to keep *Buch der Toten* out of print in Sweden.

In May, Marholm made this plea to Bonnier: “Jag tror at De ikke vil nægte mig Udgivelsen af denne Bog af en svensk Medborgerinde paa svensk om ikke af andre, saa af den Grunden for at bevare hende og hendes Familj fra at svælte ihjel [sic].”⁴⁷ Out of compassion for her plight, Bonnier sent Marholm a gift of 300 marks. The money was immediately construed by Marholm as an honorarium for *Buch der Toten*. Irritated by her irrational letters, Bonnier wrote: “Jag har dock upprepade gånger försäkrat Eder att jag alldeles bestämt ej ämner trycka denna bok och jag begär att bli trodt på mina ord [. . .] Ty från min sida voro dessa pänger – som jag skref Er i mitt bref – endast en gåfva åt en familj som, enligt Ert brefkort af den 28 maj, var ‘husvill, utsulten och blottad på allt.’”⁴⁸ Marholm could not accept the notion of receiving charity. Even though she eventually understood that the money was not an honorarium, she wanted to think of it as a stipendium awarded on merit.

Soon, Karl Bonnier refused to accept correspondence from the Hanssons. Hansson had laid down a barrage of odd letters as well. Under the circumstances, Bonnier showed a remarkable tolerance toward the couple. Later, Karl Bonnier wrote about the Hanssons in his family history: “Hur hans [Ola Hansson’s] – och hans hustrus – fixa idéer om bojkott och förföljelse till slut växte till mani, och hur hans förebråelser mot mig och mot andra – och just mot dem, som verkligen velat hjälpa honom – växte till förolämpningar av den mest kränkande art, vilka tvang mig förklara för honom, att jag aldrig mera ville ha något med honom att skaffa – redogörelsen härför faller ej inom ramen för detta arbete.”⁴⁹ The Hanssons’ suspicions and complete lack of diplomacy lost them a

⁴⁵ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 18 April 1901.

⁴⁶ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 29 April 1901. “the head of the freemasons” “the deaths of our mothers and relatives, name forgery, will forgery, customs fraud, conversion, etc.”

⁴⁷ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 12 May 1901. “I do not think you want to deny me the publishing of this book by a Swedish citizen in Swedish, if for no other reason than to prevent her and her family from starving to death.”

⁴⁸ Karl Bonnier to Laura Marholm, 1 August 1901. “I have repeatedly assured you that I most definitely do not intend to print this book, and I demand to be taken at my word [. . .] As far as I am concerned, this money was – as I wrote to you in my letter – only a gift to a family which, according to your post card from May 28th, was ‘without shelter, starving, and destitute.’”

⁴⁹ Karl Otto Bonnier, *Bonniers. En Bokhandlarefamilj*, Vol. IV (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1931), p. 215. “How his [Ola Hansson’s] – and his wife’s – fixed ideas about boycotts and persecution finally grew into mania, and how his accusations against me and others

potentially valuable ally. They interpreted Karl Bonnier's rejection of them as a sign that he was part of the conspiracy. Marholm wrote accusingly to Bonnier: "Utsvältningen mod os fortsætter ufortrødent og nu helt öppen mod os fra Sverige, efter at have smyget os i Hælene siden vort Giftermaal. Vi har ikke ens kunnet betale Maten for vor Son i Schliersee for Juli maaned [sic]."⁵⁰

At the beginning of 1902, the Hanssons moved to Königstraße 61, most likely because they were in arrears with their rent. At this juncture, Carl Duncker Verlag's lawsuit against Marholm took a peculiar turn. Duncker Verlag had purchased the rights to *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, and somehow was able to compel Marholm to write sequels to both *Zur Psychologie der Frau* and *Das Buch der Frauen*. Many years later, Marholm explained that Duncker:

. . . krävde av mig på processvägen, utan kontrakt, andra delen av "Psykologien" och "Kvinnornas bok," som icke förefanns, samt för rätten att utge andra delen av min mans "Resan hem," vilken förelåg. Naturligtvis måste jag skriva dessa två andra delar, men jag skrev dem sedan med sådana anspelningar på höga personer och de smygande giftmorden att han blev rädd och jag blev fri från honom.⁵¹

The fact that these books were written under duress may explain, in part, why they were so strange.

Zur Psychologie der Frau II is a peculiar book, but evidently not peculiar enough to prevent Duncker from publishing it: a double edition of *Zur Psychologie der Frau, I & II* appeared in 1903. The work could just have easily been entitled *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter II*, since five out of the eight essays have to do with literature. In the book, bizarre arguments are sometimes punctuated with moments of unsettling lucidity. For example, the first essay deals with psychological differences between men and women which, Marholm would like to insist, are somehow connected with the way they smell. Yet, at the same time, she is also able to describe clearly how sexual inhibitions are dinned into young women: "Was so in uns hineingeschreckt worden ist, bleibt unerhört lange sit-

— and against precisely those who actually wanted to help him — grew to insults of the most offensive sort, which forced me to explain to him, that I never again wanted anything to do with him — an account of this does not fall within the purview of this book."

⁵⁰ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 8 August 1901. "The campaign to starve us out continues undaunted and now entirely in the open against us from Sweden, after having followed upon our heels since our marriage. We could not even pay for our son's food in Schliersee for the month of July."

⁵¹ Laura Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 31 January 1919. "demanded of me through a lawsuit the second parts of 'Psychology' and 'Modern Women,' which did not exist, as well as the right to publish the second part of my husband's 'Journey Home,' which did exist. Naturally, I had to write the two second parts, but I wrote them with such allusions to high personages and the secret murders by poison that he became frightened and I was free of him."

zen.”⁵² Marholm’s clear-sighted view of the beginnings of feminine psychoses is ironic since, at the same time, she was blind to her own deteriorating mental health. The essays in which Marholm actually does discuss topics pertaining to the psychology of women touch frequently upon mental illness. The subject seemed to preoccupy her.

Among other oddities in the book is the following statement: “Die meisten Menschen pflegen als persönliches Erlebnis, persönliches Mißgeschick, persönliches Glück und persönliches Unglück aufzufassen, was gar nicht persönlich ist und gar nicht auf sie ankommt.”⁵³ Curiously, Marholm is describing, in part, her own syndrome, but does not seem to notice its relevance to her own case. For example, in one letter to Bonnier, Marholm drew threatening significance from the fact that shortly after the settlement of the Langen case, Einar Bjørnson, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson’s son, founded the East Asian Company, and the Crown Prince of Sweden presided over the first meeting.⁵⁴ Obviously, this event had nothing to do with her, but she managed to draw a personal connection nonetheless: this was proof that Bjørnson and Langen were involved in a plot with the royal house of Sweden to bring about her ruin.

Marholm allows more personal references than usual to infiltrate her essays. “Die Besessenheit” is equipped with the following interesting introduction:

Ich greife nun auf jene Johanniswoche 1899 zurück. Während mein Gatte Ola Hansson von Fieber ermattet lag und die Veröffentlichung der Conversion mit allen Mitteln unterdrückt werden sollte, schrieb ich, nach Gesprächen mit ihm, die folgenden Seiten nieder, deren geistiges Eigenthumsrecht er später an mich abgetreten hat, nachdem er damals nicht im Stande gewesen, die Arbeit allein auszuführen und sie doch sofort gemacht werden mußte, um mit dem Honorar Obdach und Nahrung für den Kranken und mich zu bezahlen. – – –⁵⁵

This anecdote gives some idea of how closely Hansson and Marholm worked with each other, especially in this time of crisis. The great intimacy that caused them to dispute the authorship of an essay also fostered the sharing of the same paranoid delusions. As in the case of “Die Besessenheit,” the origin of these delusions – Marholm or Hansson – is difficult to ascertain.

After compiling *Zur Psychologie der Frau II*, Marholm wrote the sequel to *Das Buch der Frauen*, which was to be called, appropriately, *Buch der Frauen II*. With this book, Marholm succeeded in frightening Duncker: the project was curtailed in galleys. Among Laura Marholm’s papers in the Lund University Library, there are two sets of galley proofs from this volume dated May 28 and June 11, 1903. As soon as one begins to read the work, it is not difficult to understand why the book was never published, and it is surprising that it actually reached the galley proof stage.

⁵² Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil II*, p. 21.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁵⁴ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 4 November 1901.

⁵⁵ Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil II*, p. 125.

Ostensibly, the first essay is about Princess Emanuela Theresa, daughter of Kurfürst Max Emanuel, who became a nun. The second essay is nominally about Hedwig Elisabeth Charlotte, the chronicler of the court of Gustav III of Sweden. In essence, however, the work comprises Marholm's historical research into the fantastic and amazingly tangled conspiracy she believed to exist between the royal houses of Bavaria and Sweden, Freemasons, Catholics and Protestants. Duncker Verlag is, of course, also included in the plot. In the first essay, Marholm speaks of the spreading "cancer of conversion" that "schließlich alle protestantischen und katholischen Fürstenhäuser zu einem einzigen geheimen Haus- und Freimaurerverband in einander verschlang."⁵⁶ In the second essay, Marholm describes the "Calvinistische Militärloge" in Sweden, which she maintains has been "in alle Verschwörungen, von Fersen bis Dreyfuß verwickelt."⁵⁷ Furthermore, Marholm documents the historical disinclination of the monarchs of Sweden toward women, citing as examples Gustaf Adolf, Karl XI, Karl XII and Gustav III. She delves into the rumoured conspiracy, conducted by the Freemasons of course, to provide Gustav III with an heir. Historically, it has been suspected that Stallmeister Munck was the real father of Gustav IV Adolf.

Although she does not draw this conclusion in the essay, the reason Marholm was so interested in the libidos of Swedish kings was that she believed that the Swedish royal family wished to abduct Hansson and use him to father an heir to the Swedish throne. It goes without saying that these suspicions were without any foundation in reality. This delusion, however, seems even more peculiar when one considers that at the time, Oscar II was still reigning over Sweden, and his grandson, Gustav VI Adolf, had just married Margareta of Great Britain and Ireland. In other words, the royal succession was guaranteed for three generations and there were no grounds for fearing that the Swedish royal line was about to become extinct.

By 1902, family and friends had become quite concerned about the Hanssons. On May 30, 1902, Adolf Oberländer reported to Hansson's family in Skåne:

Ich glaube nun dass Frau Hansson, veranlasst durch wirkliches Missgeschick, *auf Wahnideen gekommen ist*, Vervolgung [sic] von Schweden aus, die sogar von den *allerhöchsten Kreisen* geleitet wird. Boykottierung durch die Verleger. Mord an einem Familienmitglied etc. etc., alles geht so wirr durcheinander, dass ich nichts mehr verstehe.

Auf meine ernsthafte Frage an Herrn Ola Hansson: "Glauben Sie das alles was Ihre Frau Gemahlin erzählt?" antwortete er bestimmt: "Ja". – Es musste also der psychologisch seltene aber doch schon dagewesene Fall einer *Übertragung der Wahnidee* vorliegen. [. . .]

⁵⁶ "Die Nonne im Anger. Buch der Frauen, Theil II," 28 May 1903, Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Herrn Hansson *allein* zu sprechen wird kaum möglich sein, er ist *immer* von seiner Frau begleitet und kann nicht aus ihrem Ideenkreis herausgebracht werden. [original italics]⁵⁸

This portrait of the Hansson marriage is in many ways typical of the way the pair was perceived by the outside world. Marholm had always been the gregarious, outspoken member of the family, and Hansson had always been shy and withdrawn. Under the influence of mental illness, Marholm became the spokesperson for the couple, and Hansson remained quiet, merely confirming his wife's statements when asked a direct question. From this circumstance, many drew the conclusion that the delusions all belonged to Marholm, and she had somehow forced these delusions upon her unfortunate husband. It is more than likely, however, that Hansson contributed his share of odd notions to their communal paranoia. Both Marholm and Hansson were mentally disturbed, but Marholm was the one committed to a mental hospital, because she was the more outspoken of the two.

Around Christmas 1902, Hansson's brother Jöns died, and Hansson fell ill after drinking some wine. Both Marholm and Hansson believed that the wine had been poisoned. Marholm wrote to Karl Bonnier that she believed that Jöns had been demanded as a human sacrifice by "den høieste Logeledningen," which always required a sacrifice at Christmas.⁵⁹ During 1903, Marholm physically assaulted Stiftprobst von Türck, an assistant to Hofprediger Hecher, and thereby was brought to the attention of the Munich police.⁶⁰ At the beginning of 1904, an episode played itself out in Marholm's correspondence with Henrik Hedlund, editor of *Göteborgs Handelstidning*, similar to the misunderstanding with Bonnier over *Das Buch der Toten*. This time, Marholm offered Hedlund "Koster," an account of her courtship with Ola Hansson, which Hedlund declined. Marholm became obsessed with the idea that he had ordered the article from her and demanded her honorarium. She assumed that Hedlund's refusal to print her article had to do with the King of England's visit to Copenhagen.⁶¹ On her own behalf, Marholm invoked the influence of Julia and Georg von Vollmar.

Marholm tried to draw on her old acquaintance with the Vollmars and wrote Julia von Vollmar a long letter describing how both she and Hansson had been

⁵⁸ Ingvar Holm, *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttitalsromantik* (Malmö: Gleerups, 1957), p. 397. Holm has made a careful study of the events from the middle of 1902 leading up to Marholm's commitment to a mental hospital in April 1905. Holm had access to records from the Oberbayerische Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Haar-München, which have since been misplaced. (Confirmed to me in a letter dated 26 August 1986 from Dr. Schulz, Director at the Bezirkskrankenhaus Haar bei München, as the hospital is now called.) For this reason, this study must rely on Holm's citations in Swedish of this missing archival material.

⁵⁹ Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 13 October 1903. "the highest lodge leadership."

⁶⁰ Holm, p. 398.

⁶¹ Laura Marholm to Henrik Hedlund, 15 April 1904.

mistreated by both Hedlund and Bonnier.⁶² In another letter to Georg von Vollmar, Marholm tried to enlist his aid in recovering the belongings they had pawned in the fall and spring of 1898 and 1899.⁶³ Marholm also tried to sell some of her family's books to Vollmar, which he politely refused.⁶⁴ These letters bear witness to Marholm's readiness to hurl accusations, as well as an increasing note of desperation in her circumstances.

In the first few months of 1905, the hostility and frequency of Marholm's accusatory letters to state officials and Catholic dignitaries increased. As Ingvar Holm relates:

Den bayerska regenten furst Luitpold hade hon kallat en 'kalvanistisk hund', som mördat sin föregångare Ludwig II. Prins Ludwig, Luitpolds son, var en lögnare – han hade lovat hennes man en konservatorplats vid Pinakoteket men hade inte hållit sitt löfte. Både Ludwig och Luitpold handlade 'im Auftrag der englischen Loge, aber das Ende des Hauses Birkenfeld ist nicht mehr ferne.' Vidare beskyldes prosten Türck för skamlöshet och det katolska prästerskapet för att ha ekonomiskt ruinerat henne och hennes man. Yttermera hade den påvliga nuntien (på uppdrag av svenske kungen) försökt förgifta Ola Hansson.⁶⁵

On March 3 and 17, 1905, letters were sent to Prince Ludwig, which caused the police to investigate. The police report provides a view of the marriage not unlike Adolf Oberländer's.

Upon his arrival, the investigator was told that Hansson was ill and could not be questioned. Marholm said she would speak for them both. With little prompting, Marholm began to elaborate the plots that had been hatched against them until the investigator halted her. On his way out, the investigator caught sight of Ola Hansson in an adjoining room and walked in to ask Hansson what he meant "med *sina* brev till H. K. H." [my italics].⁶⁶ Hansson had written the letters which prompted the police to intervene, but the significance of this detail seems to have been subsequently overlooked by the police, the press, and Hansson scholarship, since it was against Marholm that action was taken. Hansson, in fact, had a history of writing to Prince Ludwig, for he had written an accusatory

⁶² Laura Marholm to Julia von Vollmar, 12 July 1904.

⁶³ Laura Marholm to Georg von Vollmar, 22 June 1904.

⁶⁴ Laura Marholm to Georg von Vollmar, 6 July 1904; Georg von Vollmar to Laura Marholm, 8 July 1904.

⁶⁵ Holm, p. 398. "She had called the Bavarian regent, Prince Leopold, a 'Calvanistic dog,' who had murdered his predecessor Ludwig II. Prince Ludwig, Luitpold's son, was a liar – he had promised her husband a position as conservator at the Pinakotek, but had not kept his promise. Both Ludwig and Luitpold acted 'im Auftrag der englischen Loge, aber das Ende des Hauses Birkenfeld ist nicht mehr ferne.' Furthermore Dean Türck was accused of shamelessness and the Catholic priesthood of ruining her and her husband economically. Even further, the papal nuncio had (under the instructions of the Swedish King) tried to poison Ola Hansson."

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 399. "with *his* letters to H. R. H."

letter to Ludwig as early as May 30, 1901.⁶⁷ The fact that Marholm received the inspector while Hansson was hidden in another room seems to indicate that Marholm was trying to protect him. In later years, Marholm explained that she had drawn the attention of the police because she was so vocal in rising to the defense of her family.⁶⁸ With Marholm in the spotlight, Hansson's role in these events was overlooked.

Hansson responded to the investigator's inquiry about his intentions: "att han tillräckligt ingående hade förklarat detta i sitt brev. Men därefter började han komma med samma påståenden om tyske kejsaren i mycket upprörd ton och i nästan samma ordalag som hustrun . . ."⁶⁹ The inspector drew the following conclusion from his visit:

Vid mina upprepade samtal med fru H. fick jag det intrycket, att jag hade att göra med en utan tvivel sinnessjuk, av fixa idéer besatt kvinna, som med hänsynslös energi behärskar människorna i sin omgivning och även påverkar deras tal.

Men även hennes man måste jag betrakta som sinnessjuk, ty endast så förklaras dennes motståndslösa inträngande i hustruns sjukliga fantasier, som tydligen saknar varje verklighetsunderlag. Det sätt, på vilket han framställde dessa, visar att han fullständigt har tillägnat sig dem. Vidare har han de sinnessjukas egendomliga blick, som är riktad rakt fram brinnande och tom.⁷⁰

Like Oberländer, the inspector drew the conclusion that Marholm had forced her delusions upon her husband, although there is no clear evidence for this. As Ingvar Holm has pointed out, the notion of "induced insanity" was popular in Munich at the time. Marholm's volubility made her the easiest choice for the originator of the insanity.

The inspector was no doubt also influenced by the sensational testimony he gathered from the Hanssons' landlord, a Frau Betty Schweizer. The Hanssons were three months behind in their rent, but Frau Schweizer observed that they still had sufficient funds to purchase eight liters of beer a day. Indeed, Hansson's

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 398.

⁶⁸ Laura Marholm, "Omrids til en Biografi," manuscript in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 399. "that he had explained that in sufficient detail in his letter. But afterward, he began making the same assertions about the German Kaiser in a very disturbed tone and in almost the same words as his wife."

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 399. "During my repeated conversations with Mrs. H. I received the impression that I was dealing with an undoubtedly insane woman, possessed by fixed ideas, who with ruthless energy dominates the people in her surroundings and even influences their speech.

But I must regard even her husband as insane, because only in this manner can his unresisting participation in his wife's sickly fantasies, which apparently are without any foundation in reality, be explained. The manner in which he presented them shows that he has completely incorporated them. Furthermore he has the peculiar glance of the insane, which is directed straight forward, burning and empty."

excessive drinking habits may have contributed to the severity of their situation. However, Mrs. Schweizer also held Marholm responsible for the pair's problems:

Som fru Schweizer redan sedan 2 år hade kunnat iaktta, stod herr H. som en viljelös varelse under sin frus inflytande, han sade endast efter, vad denna inbillade honom, och trodde sig inte om att kunna göra något utan henne.

Nu var han säkert inte sjuk, ty på kvällarna hörde man, hur de båda gnabbades och krattade i vardagsrummet som nygifta 20-åringar. Efter sina iakttagelser de sista månaderna kom fru Schweizer endast till den slutsatsen att fru Hansson antingen var en demonisk, ofattbart dålig kvinna eller sinnessjuk.⁷¹

Ever since the two were married, Marholm had acted as business manager, impresaria, secretary, and housekeeper for Hansson, who never showed a great interest in taking care of such things himself. The conclusion many drew from this circumstance was that Marholm completely dominated her husband. Within their own home, however, Hansson dictated how things should be, and Marholm catered to him out of a sense of devotion. Frau Schweizer was evidently put off by what she perceived to be Marholm's aggressive manner. There are signs that Frau Schweizer's assessment of the Hanssons is not entirely reliable. In her testimony, Frau Schweizer also accused Marholm of abusing her son, who had returned to live with his parents when they could no longer pay Ola, Jr.'s caretakers in Schliersee. I agree with Ingvar Holm, who finds these accusations highly unlikely.⁷²

The police wished to examine Marholm further, and on April 11, she was requested to come to the police station for an appointment with the police doctor. Marholm was not allowed to return home and was sent to the Kreisirrenanstalt München "wegen Gemeingefährlichkeit."⁷³

The newspapers turned this event into a sensation. The *Berliner Tageblatt* reported on April 14: "Amtlicherseits ist durch Irrenärzte nunmehr festgestellt worden, daß die Dichterin Laura Marholm an unheilbarem Wahnsinn leidet."⁷⁴ The Munich newspapers turned the episode into a local controversy. The *Münchener Post* tried to draw political import from the story by reporting it under the headline "Bayerisch-Russisches."⁷⁵ The *Münchener Post* claimed that Marholm

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 400. "As Mrs. Schweizer had been able to observe already two years ago, Mr. H. stood as a will-less being under his wife's influence. He simply repeated what imaginings she gave him and did not believe himself capable of doing anything without her.

Now, he was certainly not sick, because in the evenings, one heard how they both fussed and tussled in the livingroom like newly-wed 20-year-olds. According to her observations during the past few months, Mrs. Schweizer came to the conclusion that Mrs. Hansson either was a demonic, incomprehensibly bad woman or insane."

⁷² Ibid., p. 400.

⁷³ "Laura Marholm geisteskrank," *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 15 April 1905, Morgenblatt, p. 3.

⁷⁴ "Telegramme: 13 April," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 14 April 1905.

⁷⁵ "Laura Marholm," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 April 1905, p. 10.

had been taken to the mental hospital by means of “gewaltsamen Schleppen.”⁷⁶ This dramatic version of the story caused other Munich newspapers to come to the defense of the Munich police. The *Allgemeine Zeitung* objected to the *Münchener Post*’s article, stating: “Gewissenlos aber ist es, den Fall als Sensation auszuschlachten oder ihm eine politische Bedeutung unterzuschieben.”⁷⁷

Münchener Neueste Nachrichten provides the most lengthy account, and the paper is clearly on the side of the Munich officials: “Wenn von einer gewaltsamen Verbringung der Schriftstellerin in die Anstalt die Rede ist, so muß dazu bemerkt werden, daß wohl kaum je ein Geisteskranker freiwillig eine solche Anstalt aufsucht, aus dem einfachen Grunde, weil den Kranken die Einsicht in ihren Zustand fehlt.”⁷⁸ *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* also provides an account of *Marholm*’s letter-writing and *her* delusions. Hansson is accused of nothing in the newspaper reportage. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* claims that *Marholm* had written “Bettelbriefe,” and when these were rejected she responded with “Droh- und Schmähbrieft.”⁷⁹ Accusing *Marholm* of begging is not entirely fair, since in *her* view she was only trying to regain what had been taken from *her*. It was not in *her* nature to beg. Nonetheless, *Marholm* was clearly a very ill woman, but she received no sympathy from the press.

The official diagnosis of *Marholm*’s condition came from Dr. Fritz Ast, a physician at the Kreisirrenanstalt. In 1906, he published an article entitled, “Beitrag zur Kenntnis des induzierten Irreseins,” in which he uses *Laura Marholm* and *Ola Hansson* as one of his case studies. Dr. Ast made an effort to research *Hansson*’s and *Marholm*’s prior history, though the picture he paints is not entirely accurate. Furthermore, he makes his diagnosis without ever having examined *Hansson*: “Der Mann in Freiheit, konnte nur gelegentlich, bei Besuchen usw. beobachtet werden.”⁸⁰

Ast made a laudable attempt to read the writings of *Laura Marholm*, but he clearly did not read everything. Ast writes, “Die Beziehungen ihrer paranoischen Veranlagung zu ihre produktiven Begabung überhaupt hier weiter zu verfolgen, würde zu weit führen. Der Einfluß derselben auf die letztere wurde erst gegen das Jahr 1897 so stark, daß er den Verlegern merkbar wurde und diese nicht mehr drucken lassen wollten.”⁸¹ Ast makes a false assumption here. *Marholm*’s lack of publishing success in 1897 was brought about by the alienation of *her* old publishers through lawsuits and *her* concurrent fall from critical favor. Of course, this publishing “boycott” later became part of *Marholm*’s system of conspiracies. Ast merely assumes that *Marholm* was already unstable and

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ “Der Fall *Marholm*,” *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 16 April 1905, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Fritz Ast, “Beitrag zur Kenntnis des induzierten Irreseins,” *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie*, 63 (1906), p. 43.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 44.

because of this drove her publishers away. Ast is wrong to assign Marholm's irrationality such an early date. Marholm's first truly bizarre work was *Buch der Toten*, written at the end of 1900.

Ast does give a very interesting account of Marholm's paranoid beliefs, though to what extent Marholm actually was the author of these delusions can never be ascertained with certainty. In particular, the designs of the European royal houses upon Hansson are fascinating:

Um nun die Fortpflanzung der durch und durch verfaulten Dynastien zu sichern, sind die oft impotenten Machthaber gezwungen, potente Bürgerliche die entsprechenden Funktionen ausüben zu lassen – was mit einem erstaunlichen Aufwand von Kenntnissen in der Familiengeschichte der Fürstengeschlechter bewiesen wird. Eine solche Funktion soll auch ihrem Mann zugemutet werden, den man deshalb mit allen Mitteln von ihr trennen will.⁸²

This particular twist to the conspiracies quite likely did emanate from Marholm. She was able to astonish Dr. Ast with the historical research she had done for *Buch der Frauen II*, which indicates that this theme was a pet project. Considering how important her husband was to her, it makes a certain amount of psychological sense that she would fear losing what she valued most highly. Marholm had made a career arguing for the importance of a normal sexual relationship with one beloved man for the psychological well-being of a woman. In her view, Hansson had made her life complete, and the conspiring powers could hurt her most by taking him away.

Another theme that Ast elaborates, however, is the Freemasons' alleged use of "Doppelgänger" in carrying out their sinister plans. This interest in "doubles" seems to bear Hansson's stamp. Hansson wrote a strange essay entitled "Mein Doppelgänger" as early as 1900,⁸³ but his interest in the theme goes back even farther. One might take as an example "Heimatlos" from 1890, in which a man is persecuted by a double projected by his psyche, a "double" who ultimately drives the man to suicide in an effort to rid himself of his tormentor.⁸⁴ Ast is aware of the odd essays published by Hansson in *Die Zukunft*, but he believes, "daß sie [Marholm] die eigentliche Schöpferin auch dieser Elaborate ist, mögen dieselben auch zweifellos eine gewisse selbständige Weiterverarbeitung seitens des Mannes verraten."⁸⁵ Ast draws this conclusion because, when asked about the essays, Marholm displayed an intimate familiarity with Hansson's works. This proves nothing, however, since from the outset of their marriage, the Hanssons had been closely acquainted with each other's writing.

Ast concludes from his evaluation of the Hanssons' psychosis: "Es ist ferner ohne weiteres ersichtlich, daß es die Frau ist, welche primär an ihr leidet und sie

⁸² Ibid., pp. 44–45.

⁸³ Ola Hansson, "Mein Doppelgänger," *Die Zukunft*, 32 (1900), pp. 573–575.

⁸⁴ Ola Hansson, "Heimatlos," *Wiener Mode, Im Boudoir*, Jg. 3 (1890), nr. 7–10, pp. 247–50; 283–84; 315–16; 349–52.

⁸⁵ Ast, p. 49.

auf den Mann übertragen hat.”⁸⁶ Ingvar Holm has objected to Ast’s diagnosis, because it is based on the supposition that Ola Hansson was healthy before he came under his wife’s influence. Holm is able to document an extensive history of nervousness, mistrust and paranoia in Hansson’s character. For example, Hansson wrote to Mathilda Malling back in 1886, “[Jag] har lärt mig misstro mig sjelf och hela verlden. Det kan vara ett ingenting som gör mig skygg: en nyans i en blick, en gest, något som kanske icke fins [sic] utom i min misstanke.”⁸⁷ The novellas in *Frau Lilly as Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* suggest that Hansson had a greater dependency upon alcohol than Marholm. Hansson’s considerable alcohol consumption would have done nothing to improve his mental stability.

One of Marholm’s few champions, Lars Nilsson, who was the Hansson family doctor in Skurup, gives this opinion on the issue:

Den åsikt som jag flera gånger hört framkastas att fru Ola Hansson genom sin påverkan skulle delvis ha varit skulden till mannens psykiska depression är enligt min ofrånkomliga mening oriktig. Ola Hansson var en sjuk man långt innan fru Laura Hansson psykiskt trycktes ner av deras gemensamma motgångar. Fru Laura höll sig längst uppe, men det är ju lätt förståeligt [sic], att med det intima själsliga samliv som förefanns dem emellan, hon förr eller senare också skulle mentalt gå under.⁸⁸

Although Lars Nilsson had not had the opportunity to examine the Hanssons as had Dr. Ast, he was thoroughly familiar with the Hansson family history.

According to the newspapers, Marholm was well treated during her stay in the Kreisirrenanstalt. She was housed in the best quarter, “um der Internierten jeden unangenehmen Eindruck zu sparen und sie in einen Gesellschaftskreis zu bringen, der ihrem Stande und ihrer Bildung angemessen ist.”⁸⁹ Hansson visited her every day and wrote letters to various German newspapers in order to obtain the release of his wife. He completely denied that Marholm was ill and saw only political motivations behind her commitment to the hospital. He claimed that he was denied access to the police records, but “Däremot har man upprepade gånger förklarat för såväl mig som min hustru, att hon genast skulle återfå sin frihet, om vi ville lämna München och Bayern. Detta är alltså afsikten med in-

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Holm, p. 413. “[I] have learned to mistrust myself and the whole world. It can be nothing at all which makes me timid: a nuance in a glance, a gesture, something that perhaps does not exist except within my suspicion.”

⁸⁸ Lars Nilsson, “Minnen och reflexioner,” *Skåne Årsbok* (1928), p. 123. “The opinion which I have heard put forth many times, that Mrs. Ola Hansson through her influence was partially responsible for her husband’s psychic depression, is in my firm opinion incorrect. Ola Hansson was a sick man long before Mrs. Laura Hansson became psychically downtrodden by their common misfortunes. Mrs. Hansson held herself up the longest, but it is easily understandable, considering the intimate spiritual cohabitation which existed between them, that she would sooner or later also mentally go under.”

⁸⁹ “Der Fall Marholm,” *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 16 April 1905.

terneringen.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, he saw the action as an attempt to break up their marriage and informed the press that they intended to remarry in both a civil and a Catholic ceremony.

Marholm’s stay in the Kreisirrenanstalt lasted approximately seven months, from April to October.⁹¹ Immediately after her release, the Hansson family moved to Austria. Evidently, Hans Larsson, Hansson’s relative and long-time friend, wanted to bring the Hanssons back to Sweden. No doubt, Larsson had the best of motives. Under the circumstances, he must have felt that Marholm and Hansson would be better off under the supervision of their family. He even went so far as to inquire of a local mental institution, whether it could provide Marholm with adequate care. Regardless of his actual motives, Larsson’s actions were viewed as hostile by both Marholm and Hansson. Marholm wrote many years later, “Vi reste till Feldkirch, och dit sändes oss ett brev efter, vari Hans Larsson krävde mig till inspärning i Lunds dårhus. Brevet var skrivet i den förmodan att vi skulle resa upp till Sverge [sic], och han bad ‘direktören’ om en autoritativ fullmakt, varmed han kunde lägga handen på mig.”⁹² Marholm also blamed Larsson for the loss of her correspondence with Hansson which disappeared at about this time: “Jag ved at Professor Hans Larsson var baade i München og i Schliersee – ikke blot en Gang. Jeg sjelv saa Rummet hvor han boede i München og jeg ved med hvem han omgikkes. Om De *ikke* har Olas Brev til mig og mine – *saa har han dem* [sic; original emphasis].”⁹³ Such suspicions did nothing to bring Hansson and Marholm closer to his family in their final years.

Even if she was treated relatively well in the Kreisirrenanstalt, the experience devastated her. Marholm’s pen remained inactive for 14 years. Considering that she had written almost unceasingly all her life, this lengthy hiatus seems to indicate a major spiritual defeat. After her hospitalization, Marholm lapsed into an uncharacteristic passivity. For the first time since their marriage, Hansson took charge of the family’s business arrangements, until his son became old enough to relieve him of these duties. Marholm seems to have eventually re-

⁹⁰ Ola Hansson, “Laura Marholms öde,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 13 June 1905. “On the other hand, it has been explained to me and my wife many times that she would instantly regain her freedom if we were willing to leave Munich and Bavaria. That, therefore, is the reason for the incarceration.”

⁹¹ The newspaper notices indicate she was incarcerated in April. Ola Hansson claims in “Rustgården II,” p. 228, that Marholm was released in October.

⁹² Marholm, “Kvinnornas valrätt.” “We travelled to Feldkirch and a letter was forwarded to us there, in which Hans Larsson demanded that I be locked up in Lund’s madhouse. The letter was written under the assumption that we would travel up to Sweden, and he asked ‘the director’ for a power of attorney, by which means he could get his hands on me.”

⁹³ Laura Marholm to Nils Hansson, January 1925. “I know that Professor Hans Larsson was both in Munich and in Schliersee – not only once. I myself saw the room where he lived in Munich and I know with whom he associated. If you do *not* have Ola’s letters to me and mine – *then he has them.*”

covered from her mental illness, but this healing process is shrouded in 14 years of silence.

News of Marholm's collapse reached Scandinavia. Hulda Garborg knew Marholm from better days and noted sadly in her diary:

Fra München skrives, at Laura Marholm Hansson er blit sindsyg. Hun blev indespærret mod sin egen og sin mands vilje, da hun mentes å være farlig for omgivelserne. Det er forfærdelig trist. Jeg husker, hvor hun var strålende, da hun første gang kom til Kolbotn, og da jeg senere traf hende i Berlin. Ikke så ganske ung længer; men kraftig og gjennom sund og freidig.⁹⁴

Marholm never fully regained her old self.

⁹⁴ Hulda Garborg, *Dagbok 1903-1914*, Karen Grude Koht and Rolv Thesen, eds., (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1962), p. 51. "From Munich comes the news that Laura Marholm Hansson has become insane. She was locked up against her own and her husband's will, since she was considered dangerous to the public. It is terribly sad. I recall how radiant she was when she came to Kolbotten for the first time, and then when I later met her in Berlin. Not quite so young any longer; but vigorous and thoroughly healthy and dauntless."

The Remaining Years: 1906–1928

The most complete account of the Hanssons' final years was given by their son in an article from 1942. Ola Hansson, Jr. was devoted to his parents and he begins his essay with a defense of his father:

Det har skrivits och talats mycket om den ömtålighet, hypersensibilitet, retlighet, förföljelsemani o.s.v. som skulle ha varit anledningen till att han så envist höll sig borta från Sverige. Orsaken var i själva verket omöjligheten för honom att finna sin utkomst hemma. Om man talar om besynnerligheter, så måste jag framhålla att om en människa ständigt får kämpa för sitt dagliga bröd, för sin och sin familjs existens år efter år, årtionde efter årtionde, nästan hela livet igenom, utan att vara säker på den närmaste framtiden, ja, ofta utan att veta var han skall lägga sitt huvud för den kommande natten, så är det klart att en sådan människa måste lida därunder och måste bli menligt påverkad i psykiskt avseende.¹

Like a good son, Ola Hansson, Jr. holds an unresponsive society responsible for the psychic deterioration of his parents, and there is no doubt a good deal of truth in this.

The portrait that the Hanssons' only child paints of the family's final years is one of isolation, poverty, and restlessness. Ola Hansson, Jr. claims that his father had "icke alls något umgänge med utomstående under de sista 25 åren av sitt liv."² Hansson had always been inclined toward isolation, and once Marholm's gregarious spirit was broken, the entire family kept to itself. Hansson became more and more prone to bouts of moodiness; his son describes Hansson's occasional violent outbreaks of temper when an article was refused. Every day, the

¹ Ola Hansson, Jr., "Några drag ur min fars liv," *Svensk litteraturtidskrift*, 5 (1942), p. 49. "Much has been written and said about the touchiness, the hypersensitivity, the irritability, the persecution mania, etc., which was said to have been the reason why he so stubbornly stayed away from Sweden. The cause was actually the impossibility for him to support himself at home. If one speaks of oddities, then I must maintain that if a person must constantly fight for his daily bread, for his and his family's existence year after year, decade after decade, throughout almost his entire life, without being sure of the immediate future, yes, often without knowing where he will lay his head that night, then it is clear that such a person must suffer from that and must be considerably affected with respect to his psyche."

² *Ibid.* "no social contact whatsoever with outsiders during the last 25 years of his life."

Hanssons consumed alcoholic beverages in order, they claimed, to ward off the chill in their drafty apartments. Even so, the family remained very close and would spend the evenings reading the classics of world literature to each other.

After leaving Munich, the family lived in Austria for approximately one year and then moved to the outskirts of Paris. Despite living so close to one of Europe's most vital cultural centers, the Hanssons did not take part in the Parisian artistic circles. In 1906, Hansson was awarded the Bonniers stipend, which not only came as welcome financial assistance, but bolstered his spirits as well. In the spring of 1907, the family travelled to Riga for a month where they stayed in Marholm's old parental home. Afterwards, the Hanssons spent three months in Stockholm, where they met with August Strindberg for the last time. Hansson also paid a visit to his family farm in Skåne. The Hanssons then made their way back to France via a circuitous route which took them to Vienna, Salzburg and Munich for stays lasting about six months in each place.³ The family stayed in Meudon outside of Paris from 1909–1914.⁴ In 1911, Hansson was awarded the Fröding stipend, but initially he was disinclined to accept it. His son eventually convinced him that it was an honor to have been chosen for this prize by the students of Sweden.

Also in 1911, Marholm tried to locate her father with the help of various consulates. Judging from her inquiries, it seems possible that Fredrik Mohr had avoided his daughter altogether during her visit to Riga in 1907. Marholm learned from one source, a W. von Stürmer, that her father had been living with a woman named Miss Eiche until her death in 1909.⁵ The English consul in Riga, one A. Woodhouse, passed along the following message: "In answer to your post card I beg to inform you that I have seen your father, Captain Mohr, who wishes me to inform you that he is quite well, but requests me not to give you his address."⁶ A few weeks later, the Russian consul in Riga supplied Fredrik Mohr's address, Nikolaistraße 9:2, but there is no evidence that Marholm was ever successful in reestablishing contact with her father.

Unavoidably, World War I began to impinge upon their existence. In 1914, Hansson noted in his diary: "Och nu ströva patruler omkring överallt; man kan icke ens gå så långt som till Chalais eller Villacoublay, vilket är strängt förbjudet. Ingenting annat återstår än att vandra omkring bland sina minnen."⁷ Ola Hansson retreated into the past in order to escape the unrest of the day. His son

³ Ola Hansson, *Ur Minnet och Dagboken*, ed. Emy Ek (Stockholm: Tidens förlag, 1926), p. 107.

⁴ Ola Hansson, *Man skriver om himmelriket när man har helvetet inom sig. Valda brev*, ed. Görgen Antonsson (Lund: Bakhåll, 1990), p. 9.

⁵ W. von Stürmer to Laura Marholm, 31/13 January 1911.

⁶ A. Woodhouse to Laura Marholm, 1 May 1911.

⁷ Hansson, *Ur Minnet och Dagboken*, p. 108. "And now patrols are roaming around everywhere; one cannot even go so far as Chalais or Villacoublay, which is strictly forbidden. Nothing is left but to wander around amidst one's memories."

observes: “Under de sista åren var det uppenbart, både för min mor och mig, att han allt mer gled bort från det verkliga livet, från dess händelser och intressen. Hans liv blev helt inåtvänt, och han sysslade enbart med det förflutna och brydde sig ej det minsta om tidens frågor och behov.”⁸ Hansson seems to have been deeply affected by the war, becoming even more introspective and melancholy than usual: “I den sidste Tid af hans Liv forandrede den svære Krigstiden meget i hans Væsen [sic].”⁹ In 1915, he sent out a number of post cards to the members of the Swedish Academy demanding the Nobel prize for “mig och min hustru.”¹⁰ These notes seem to indicate a relapse into the unstable thinking that had afflicted him ten years earlier. Marholm related at his graveside that his “ljusa sinnelag [. . .] övergick efter hand i en enstörings tillslutenhet i en dysterhet, som alldeles icke var väsentlig för honom.”¹¹

In 1915, the family moved to Worb, Switzerland, but they shifted residences several times during the war, returning to Meudon in 1916, then moving on to Bern and Zürich, and returning to Worb in 1917.¹² On May 5th of that year, Marholm’s father died at the age of 95, though Marholm did not learn of this until after the war. Whereas Hansson threw himself into historical research in order to avoid the present, Marholm stayed very much in touch with current events. The tragedy of World War I, in fact, prompted her to take up her polemical pen again. Marholm, like her husband, was appalled by the war, but she responded by writing articles of a strongly leftist bent, which she scribbled down on the reverse side of a calendar. Marholm first offered her articles to Hermann Radtke and the German Social Democratic Party, but received the reply: “Werte Genossin! [. . .] Als Broschüre können wir es nicht drucken lassen, da uns Papier dazu fehlt. Auch würde eine Umarbeitung noch notwendig sein.”¹³ In a reversal of the usual way of things, Marholm was able to find a publisher for her articles in Sweden. Some of her essays were accepted by the Social Democratic paper *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, edited by Fredrik Ström, and others were printed in

⁸ Hansson, Jr., “Några drag ur min fars liv,” p. 58. “During his final years it was obvious, both to my mother and me, that he drifted more and more away from real life, from its events and interests. His life became entirely introspective and he occupied himself only with the past and did not concern himself in the least about the questions and needs of the age.”

⁹ Laura Marholm to Hjalmar Gullberg, 27 April 1928. “In the last part of his life, the difficult wartime changed much in his being.”

¹⁰ Ingvar Holm, *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttitalsromantik*. (Lund: Gleerups, 1957), pp. 176–177. “me and my wife.”

¹¹ Laura Marholm, “Ett tack,” *Skåne Årsbok 1926*, p. 60. “bright disposition [. . .] turned afterward into a recluse’s reticence, into a melancholy which was not at all characteristic of him.”

¹² My thanks to Görgen Antonsson for providing me with an unpublished chronology of the Hanssons’ movements.

¹³ Hermann Radtke to Laura Marholm, 20 January 1919.

the slightly more radical *Stormklockan: Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbundets Veckotidning*.

Marholm's life-long interest in socialism, which lay at the root of her Catholic conversion, combined with her hatred of monarchy, which had manifested itself in such a bizarre form during her breakdown, resulted in her fervent support of the Russian Revolution. Throughout her life, Marholm had remained vague on the issue of her own national loyalties. She showed a tendency to adopt the nationality which would do her the most good at the time.¹⁴ When *Stormklockan* mistakenly referred to Marholm as German, however, she had them print the following retraction: "Av mistag hade där påståtts, att fru M. vore född tyska. Hon är ryska och har fortfarande ryskt medborgarskap samt tänker förbli rysk medborgare til sin död."¹⁵

Marholm's thinking in these articles is a mixture of familiar themes and a strikingly new view of life brought about by the political developments of the preceding years. The changes in Marholm's world view can be seen most clearly in her lengthy article, "Egendom." The article was printed as a series, and it is an interesting point of historical background that the series was interrupted by the coverage of the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The articles were introduced with the following disclaimer: "Vi hava nog här och var något avvikande mening med författarinnan, men våra ärade medarbetare som skriva under 'Dagens Krönika' stå själva med sina namn för sina uppsatser, vilka alltså icke äro direkta redaktions-uttalanden."¹⁶ As usual, Marholm did not espouse any particular party line, but instead, stated her own opinions.

¹⁴ Compare, for example, these varied utterances: "At de siger, jeg er svensk paa Grund af mit Giftermaal med en Svensk, – det har jeg vist ikke noget imod, blot det ikke sker paa en Maade at jeg taber mine Originalhonorarer i Tyskland." ["That you say that I am Swedish on the basis of my marriage to a Swede, – I certainly have nothing against that, just as long as it is not done in a way, so that I lose my original honoraria in Germany," Laura Marholm to Erik Thyselius, 28 January 1896]: "Om Gernandt vil udgive Bogen, saa faaer han betragte det som svensk Original." [sic; "If Gernandt wants to publish the book, then he must consider it a Swedish original," Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 28 March 1897]: "Jeg er dansk-rysk og mine nære Slægtninge er Kammerherren ved norske Hoffet Dr. Mohr og tyske Consuln i Bergen C. Mohr." [sic; "I am Danish-Russian and my close relatives are the Chamberlain at the Norwegian court, Dr. Mohr, and the German Consul in Bern, C. Mohr," Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 29 September 1900]: "Jeg er svensk medborgerinde . . . født dansk-rysk." [sic; "I am a Swedish citizen . . . born Danish-Russian," Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 9 November 1900].

¹⁵ "Författarinnan Laura Marholm," *Stormklockan*, 26 April 1919. "By mistake it was claimed there, that Mrs. M. was born German. She is Russian and still has Russian citizenship and intends to remain a Russian citizen until her death."

¹⁶ Introductory note to Laura Marholm, "Egendom," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 14 January 1919. "Here and there we certainly have somewhat different opinions than the author, but our honored colleagues who write under "The Daily Chronicle" stand with their own names behind their essays, which therefore are not direct editorial comments."

In “Egendom,” Marholm divides property into two categories: material and spiritual. Under the heading of material property, Marholm rails against the Industrial Revolution and the captains of industry who had laid claim to natural resources, which properly should belong to everyone, and have made human beings into machines. Part of her argument is a plea for the preservation of natural resources: “Det går inte längre att utplundra och ödelägga jordens inandömen. Dess rikedomskällor äro inte mera outtömliga, och varje land måste tänka på att tillvarataga sina. Vi måste för första gången tänka på dem som komma efter oss.”¹⁷ In Marholm’s view, the desire for control of these resources for the purposes of exploitation and profit was one of the main causes of the war. Natural resources, however, are property which belongs not only to all the people, but also to the subsequent generations, and therefore, must be administered and protected in the interests of everyone.

Marholm blames “de borgerliga filosofernas lurendrejerier” for establishing an age of materialism and machines after 1848.¹⁸ Here she refers to philosophers from Kant to Nietzsche. Marholm is outraged at the fate of the industrial worker and protests: “Han tål icke enformigheter och oföränderligheter av samma och mestadels så ansträngande arbete. Han behöver förändring, icke blott av ort och livsvillkor, utan också av intryck, omgivning, tankar och atmosfär.”¹⁹ In *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, Marholm had made exactly this claim on behalf of women: they did not belong in the workplace since they were not suited for monotonous work. At the time, she was taken to task by her critics for her chauvinism, but in “Egendom” Marholm has broadened her perspective from the category “woman” to the category “mankind.” No longer is it the case that woman alone is unsuited to the workplace; instead, the workplace is not suitable for mankind as a whole.

In her arguments pertaining to material property, Marholm falls prey to some of her old biologically deterministic thinking. She maintains, “Såsom jorden är basen av allt, så är den ursprungliga rasen basen av ägandet av allt, vad där är i, under och över jorden.”²⁰ Marholm’s attempt to give her social arguments biological legitimacy fail and result only in racism. According to her reasoning, “den ursprungliga rasen” is composed of the workers who have been subjugated by a genetically decadent ruling class. The Jews are a race of opportunists who have always aligned themselves with the capitalists. One may hope that these are

¹⁷ Marholm, “Egendom,” 14 January 1919. “It will no longer do to plunder and devastate the bowels of the earth. Its sources of wealth are no longer inexhaustable, and every country must think about safeguarding theirs. For the first time, we must think of those who will come after us.”

¹⁸ Ibid., 15 January 1919. “the frauds of the bourgeois philosophers.”

¹⁹ Ibid. “He cannot tolerate the uniformity and monotony of the same, and for the most part strenuous, tasks. He needs variation, not only of place and living conditions, but also of impressions, surroundings, thoughts, and atmosphere.”

²⁰ Ibid., 16 January 1919. “Just as the earth is the basis of everything, so is the original race the basis of ownership of everything in it, both under and above ground.”

among the sentiments to which the editor of *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* wished to take exception.

Marholm extends her biological justifications in an interesting fashion to women. Adopting a rather Lamarckian theory of evolution, Marholm believes that the women of the bourgeoisie and the ruling class have become decadent, lazy, and stupid because they have not been able to choose their own mates, or their own fates:

Rätten för kvinnan att välja och väljas kommer att bringa en stor förändring. För första gången tillhör kvinnan sig själv och förfogar över sig själv. Det är inte längre föräldrarna, det är inte längre mannen som råder över henne. Hon kan välja, hon behöver inte längre att taga och tacka. Därav måste ovillkorligen en betydlig förbättring av rasen framgå.²¹

Even though Marholm's biological reasoning is flawed, this statement shows a distinct change in Marholm's thinking from the days when she claimed that the content of woman was man.

The cause of this change is made clearer in another of Marholm's articles, "Kvinnornas valrätt." There, Marholm writes, "Kvinnorna hade haft det i sin hand att förhindra detta krig, om de alla hållit ihop utan åtskillnad på klass och ras."²² World War I destroyed Marholm's image of men as the proper administrators of society. In *Zur Psychologie der Frau II*, in a chapter entitled "Das Weib in der Politik," Marholm hinted darkly with specific reference to Queen Victoria, among others, that women were not capable rulers: "Denn sie waren unverantwortlicher als die unverantwortlichsten Fürsten, weil das Weib an sich schon keine Verantwortlichkeit anerkennt, – je höher und geschützter seine Stellung ist, desto weniger natürlich."²³ Now, Marholm has changed her tune completely, writing of "de stora kvinnor, som regerade länderna med visdom och moderlighet, byggde städer, anlade kanaler och vattenledningar, gjorde jorden bördig och spannmålen överrikliga, bevarade freden och – om kriget påtvangs dem – förstodo att segra genom skarpsinne och taktisk beräkning."²⁴ Marholm would gladly see the return of such legendary matriarchies. She is no longer willing to

²¹ Ibid., 15 January 1919. "The right of woman to choose and be chosen will bring about a great change. For the first time, woman belongs to herself and has control over herself. It is no longer her parents; it is no longer her husband who rule over her. She can choose; she no longer needs to accept and be grateful. This must absolutely result in a considerable improvement in the race."

²² Laura Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 31 January 1919. "Women would have had it within their reach to prevent this war, if they had held together without regard for class or race."

²³ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau II* (Berlin: Duncker Verlag, 1903), p. 215.

²⁴ Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt." "The great women, who ruled the countries with wisdom and maternal care, built cities, created canals and irrigation, made the earth fruitful and grain abundant, preserved the peace and – if war was forced upon them – understood to prevail through intelligence and tactical calculations."

recognize men as the creators of culture, an astonishing change from her writing of the mid-90's.

Marholm was also aware that, during the war, women had stepped into men's jobs, and, now that the war was over, Marholm observes "die rascheste Vertreibung der Frauen aus ihrem bisherigen Erwerb. Sie haben den Männern Platz zu machen – die Männer müssen Arbeit haben! Ja warum denn? Was hat denn das für Eile?"²⁵ In her eyes, women had proven themselves capable of maintaining vital services and industries while men conducted their immoral war. Marholm could not immediately see with what right men should resume their old positions in society. Once again, Marholm displays a major change in her thinking; in the mid-90's, she had argued at length against women entering the workplace and taking jobs away from men.

In the second half of "Egendom," Marholm addresses the subject of spiritual property. Whereas material property should be communal, spiritual property is individual. The ruling class, however, in its infinite greed, has sought to appropriate not only the material possessions of the oppressed, but also their spiritual possessions. The agencies through which the appropriation of a person's spirit is accomplished include the legal system, the educational system, and religion. For this reason, Marholm calls for:

1. en fullständig ombildning av rättsväsendet;
2. en fullständig ombildning av skolorna;
3. en betydlig inskränkning av universitetsstudium och universiteten;
4. religionens fullständiga frigörelse från statens förmyndarskap.²⁶

Marholm had abundant personal reasons for resenting the prevailing legal system and she names them:

Jag känner denna goda lagstiftning och dess tillämpning. Jag blev genom den plockad så naken som ett nyfött barn; och sedan jag berövats min ringa materiella och hela min andliga egendom, blev intet tillövers utan att dräpa även min ande. Jag citerades till polisen, där man meddelade mig, att jag utövade ett dåligt inflytande på min man. Jag blev med våld satt i sanitetsvagnen och förd till dårhuset.²⁷

²⁵ Laura Marholm, "Wohnung, Kleidung, Nahrung," manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

²⁶ Marholm, "Egendom," 17 January 1919. "1. a complete revision of the legal system, 2. a complete revision of the schools, 3. a considerable restriction of university studies and universities, 4. the complete liberation of religion from the authority of the state."

²⁷ Marholm, "Egendom," 23 January 1919. "I know that good legislation and its application. Through it, I was stripped as naked as a newborn baby; and after I had been robbed of my meager material and all of my spiritual property, there was nothing else left to do but to murder even my spirit. I was reported to the police, where they informed me that I exerted a bad influence upon my husband. I was put by force in an ambulance and driven to the madhouse."

Marholm wants to acknowledge only political reasons for her confinement to the *Kreisirrenanstalt*. She even gives the Russian consulate credit for having ultimately helped to free her. At the time of her arrest, there were indeed rumors that the act was political, but on the other hand, the evidence that Marholm was genuinely mentally ill is overwhelming.

Nevertheless, Marholm apparently managed to convince the editors of *Stormklockan* that she and her husband had been victims of political persecution. Thus, the editors wrote in an introduction to one of her articles: "Den skamliga hets, som från Kaiser-Tyskland i årtionden drivits mot de radikala makarna H., har tydligen hos dem mognat en social åskådning, som ställer dem helt och öppet på det revolutionära proletariats sida."²⁸ Including Hansson under the rubrik "radical" is a misrepresentation, but Hansson's name had more recognition value in Sweden, and therefore the editors gladly recruited him for their cause.

Marholm's objection to the prevailing educational system had a long history. Because of her own bad experiences in school, Marholm had always viewed schools as institutions of indoctrination, rather than education. A happy autodidact herself, she therefore recommended this path for everyone: "Jag har aldrig lärt mig något tillsammans med andra eller igenom andra. Jag gitte snart inte ens höra på. Jag har utvecklat mig själv på mitt eget sätt och själv sökt mig min egen väg."²⁹ Once again, Marholm displays her long-standing tendency to extrapolate general laws of human behavior out of her own personal experience. She maintains that the only thing children bring home from schools are: "löss, smittor och ovanor."³⁰

The third agency of spiritual theft by the ruling class is religion. Marholm was still a religious woman when she wrote "Egendom," but she objects to the way in which the state has appropriated and distorted religion to achieve its own ends. Marholm argues: "Kristus var – som vi nu skulle säga – en social revolutionär. Han var den förste som förkunnade gemenskapen av egendom. Han förkastade alla och envar, som uppsatte sig mot denna gemenskap."³¹ For more than any other reason, Marholm believes that Christ was crucified for his radical social theories. Christianity, however, was rendered harmless when it was adopted as a state religion: "Hela det översinliga [sic] och socialrevolutionära inne-

²⁸ Introduction to Laura Marholm, "Stulet arbete," *Stormklockan*, 8 March 1919. "The shameful persecution which has been conducted for decades by imperial Germany against the radical couple has apparently matured in them a social perspective which places them completely and openly on the side of the revolutionary proletariat."

²⁹ Marholm, "Egendom," 28 January 1919. "I have never learned anything together with others or from others. Soon, I could barely even manage to listen. I have educated myself in my own way and sought my own path."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 January 1919. "lice, contagions and bad habits."

³¹ *Ibid.*, 29 January 1919. "Christ was – as we now would say – a social revolutionary. He was the first who preached community property. He denounced each and every one, who set himself up against this communality."

hållet i hans lära och i hans liv undertrycktes. Tron på den försonande kraften av det oskyldigt utgjutna blodet var allt vad där krävdes.”³² The doctrines of forgiveness and eternal life dominated, and the rich were ensured a chance to enter heaven, despite the analogy of the camel and the eye of the needle. Marholm still adheres to the social aspects of Christianity which had attracted her to the Catholic Church in 1897. However, both forms of institutionalized Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism, are suspect to her, because of their alliance with the ruling class.

Judging from her postwar articles, Marholm’s thoughts had undergone extensive development during her 14 years of silence. Even though some of Marholm’s biological and historical speculations are a bit peculiar, overall her arguments are cogent, and in many ways, more balanced than her writing before her breakdown. Marholm has not overcome her suspicion of the ruling houses of Europe, however, and in fact claims: “Jag har i fjorton år överhuvudtaget inte givit ett ljud ifrån mig, enär de tre kusinerna Ångstmask kvävde varje det minsta ljud.”³³ Nevertheless, the nature of Marholm’s suspicions had moved away from a paranoid personal vendetta toward the more acceptable concept of a class struggle.

After the war, Tidens förlag expressed an interest in publishing the collected works of Ola Hansson, and Hansson was invited to become the editor of the undertaking. The war had rendered the Hanssons’ financial need even more acute than usual, and so, the offer of the publishing house was accepted gratefully. Hansson was not only pleased at the prospect of assembling and publishing his works in Swedish, but the task would also provide a steady income for a few years. So that Hansson could be closer to the project, the family moved to Esbjerg, Denmark.

At about this time, Marholm developed a keen interest in genealogy. She had evidently heard rumors of her wealthy cousin’s, Conrad Mohr’s, establishment of a fund of one million crowns in 1917, dedicated to the support of research by authors, artists, journalists, and scholars into socialism. Perhaps out of wishful thinking, Marholm failed to understand that the fund was not meant exclusively for members of the Mohr family. A number of letters exist in which Marholm tries to establish her right to the money. She wrote to Anton Mohr Wiesener, the librarian of the Bergen Library and the Mohr family genealogist, who simply referred her to his book. She also questioned Gerhard Gran, the editor of *Samtiden* and a member of the Mohr family on his mother’s side, but he could be of no help. It took two patient notes from Conrad Mohr himself to convince Marholm

³² Ibid. “All of the spiritual and social-revolutionary content in his teaching and in his life was suppressed. The belief in the reconciling power of the innocently spilled blood was all that was demanded there.”

³³ Marholm, “Stulet arbete.” “I have for fourteen years not even made a peep, since the three cousins Ångstmask [a euphemism for the ruling houses of England, Germany and Sweden, meaning literally “worms of anxiety”] squelched every little noise.”

that she was not entitled to apply for the money. As long ago as 1900, Marholm had begun dropping Conrad Mohr's name in an effort to impress various people. Laura Marholm and Conrad Mohr were actually fourth cousins, and it seems apparent that until she wrote to him, Conrad Mohr had been oblivious of her existence. Within the same time period, Marholm also tried to track down various inheritances that she might have been entitled to from her relatives in Riga. Because of the political situation in Latvia, this proved impossible.

The Hanssons resided in Denmark for two years, followed by a short stay of nine months in Skåne. The family departed hastily from Sweden in the first months of 1922. Twenty years later, Ola Hansson, Jr. explained that the family left in order to avoid involvement in a court case. With a degree of uncertainty, the Hanssons' son describes the situation as follows: "En tysk översättare av August Strindberg hade instämt min mor såsom vittne om vem som hade att gälla som översättare av en, jag minns nu ej vilken, teaterpjäs av Strindberg."³⁴ The cryptic utterances in the Hanssons' letters indicate that they did not have a clear notion of what the case involved. In a letter to Fredrik Ström from February 1922, Marholm associates the case with Professor Carlheim-Gyllensköld who was in the midst of a dispute over the possession of Strindberg's papers.³⁵ In any event, the prospect of any legal entanglement whatsoever was sufficient to propel the family into the final journey of Ola Hansson's life – through Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey.

Hansson died in Boujouk-Déré on the Bosphorus in the fall of 1925. He had been indisposed for some time, but Marholm and her son did not immediately notice that something was amiss. Hansson was in the habit of retiring to his bed and remaining motionless and uncommunicative. His son notes "att det icke var lätt att afgöra, om det var själslig eller kroppslig indisposition."³⁶

Marholm was greatly shocked by Hansson's death: "Han kunde have levde endnu 20 Aar og hans Død var pludseligt og meget svært [sic]."³⁷ She was six years older than he and, perhaps, had not expected to survive him. She described her reaction to his death at Hansson's funeral:

Oväntat, obegripligt utan att någonsin i hela sitt liv – alla de 35 åren av vårt äktenskap – hava varit sjuk eller ens i behov av läkare rycktes han bort så oförklarligt, att jag först då han låg död, fattade, att han icke längre gick, var i rummet, kom hem, satt dagen lång på samma plats och skrev och läste, alltid uppta-

³⁴ Ola Hansson, Jr., "Några drag ur min fars liv," p. 56. "A German translator of August Strindberg had subpoenaed my mother as a witness as to who was the translator of a – I do not now remember which one – play by Strindberg."

³⁵ Laura Marholm to Fredrik Ström, 3 February 1922.

³⁶ Ola Hansson, Jr., "Ola Hanssons sjukdom och död," manuscript in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "it was not easy to determine if the indisposition was spiritual or physical."

³⁷ Laura Marholm to Upsala-Studentcorps Ordförande, 6 February 1926. "He could have lived for another 20 years and his death was sudden and very difficult."

gen, aldrig utan sysselsättning, aldrig *trött*; han hade gått ut till den vandring, från vilken man en gång *icke mera kommer tillbaka*. [original italics]³⁸

In this passage, Marholm has exaggerated Hansson's perfect health, but her exaggeration serves to accentuate her sense of loss. Hansson's death caused Marholm to retreat into the past and she spent the last years of her life seeing to it that Hansson's memory would be preserved in Sweden.

Marholm and her son were required by the Turkish authorities to remain in Turkey for six months after Hansson's death, and, in the interim, Marholm tried to arrange for Hansson's burial in his homeland. She wrote to the student body of Lund University about having Hansson buried in Lund. When they did not respond as rapidly as she would have liked, Marholm wrote to the students in Uppsala to see if they would arrange for his burial in Stockholm: "Han hør Sverige til – ikke Skåne – hans Fødestælle var en ren Tilfældighed [sic]."³⁹ In this letter, Marholm is obviously distraught with grief and blames Hansson's death on the fact that the Nobel Library refused to send 30 volumes of Saint-Simon's notes about the Jesuits to Hansson by diplomatic courier: "Og gennem denne Skuffelse blev han syg, – hvad for Slags Sygdom? Kræfterne forfaldt. Han gick meget for tidligt bort . . . [sic]"⁴⁰

At last, the students of Lund University did agree to arrange for Hansson's burial, the same students who had voted to give him the Fröding stipend in 1911, an honor which he had almost refused. The funeral took place on May 28, 1926, and a long procession of students attended in honor of the deceased; Professor Axel Herrlin and Ernst Norlind gave speeches at the graveside; and Hjalmar Gullberg composed a poem in Ola Hansson's honor. Marholm delivered a speech of thanks, but she poorly concealed a note of bitterness at the fact that the recognition Hansson had yearned for in life was shown to him only after his death. She wished to thank "alla som här ägnade honom i överflod, vad som var honom förmenat i livet."⁴¹

After Hansson's funeral, Marholm and her son moved to Riga. Marholm returned not only to her childhood home, but also to a place in which she and Hansson had shared some pleasant memories. Plans were underway to publish

³⁸ Marholm, "Ett tack," p. 60. "Unexpectedly, incomprehensibly without ever in his entire life – all of the 35 years of our marriage – having been sick or even in need of a doctor, he was taken away so inexplicably that, only when he lay dead, did I first understand that he no longer walked, was in the room, came home, sat the entire day in the same place and wrote and read, always occupied, never without something to do, never *tired*; he had left on the journey from which one *never will return*."

³⁹ Laura Marholm to Upsala-Studentcorps Ordförande, 6 February 1926. "He belongs to Sweden – not Skåne – his birthplace was accidental."

⁴⁰ Ibid. "And through that disappointment he became sick – what sort of illness? His powers degenerated. He passed away much too early . . ."

⁴¹ Marholm, "Ett tack," p. 61. "all who have given him here in excess, what he was denied in life."

Ola Hansson's papers; Marholm was in frequent contact with Emy Ek and Hjalmar Gullberg, who were working on the project. The collection of Hansson's literary remains was important to her as a monument to her husband's memory. She bequeathed Hansson's manuscripts to the Lund University Library, firm in the conviction that subsequent generations would interest themselves in the details of Hansson's genius. Marholm also wanted to have a portrait of Hansson painted by Ernst Norlind, the Scanian artist and writer, but these plans came to naught.

Marholm wrote to Emy Ek: "Nu befatter jeg mig med at samle alle Minder efterhaanden, som angaaer Ola Hanssons huslige og personlige Liv, hans Interessen, hans Sæt at arbeide, at indele sig og tilbringe Dagene och Livet paa Reiserne og i de improviserede Hem [sic]."⁴² In her final years, Marholm lost herself in a cult of Ola Hansson's memory. The result of her efforts was "Omrids til en Biografi" which exists in manuscript form in Gothenburg's University Library. The document is a moving testimony to how greatly Marholm missed her husband:

Omstændighederne, som vi ikke sjelv havde Magt over, gjorde vårt Egteskab under denne lange Tid saa godt som uadskilligt. I Følge deraf maatte jeg vare uvillkaarligt med paa alt, hvad der angik ham, – med paa hans Venner, som han altid holdt meget af; med paa hans litterære Afsigter og Planer; se, hvorledes hans Arbeider opstod och formede sig, – oversætte dem, – da Blækket endnu ikke var tort, – saa længe der var Mulighed at publicere dem paa tysk i all de mange og alle lige daarligt betalende Blad i Tyskland og Østerrige [sic].⁴³

During the essay, Marholm's train of thought frequently wanders and dwells upon personal details of Hansson's appearance and behavior which have meaning only for her. Nevertheless, she considered these reflections to be of general interest and wished to have them published. The editor of *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts Tidning*, Henning Söderhjelm, wrote to Marholm's friend Lars Wåhlin: "Det vore, tycker jag, enbart pinsamt att publicera fragmentariska utläggningar som dessa, vilka visa sitt upphov från ett tröttkörd och oklart psyke."⁴⁴

⁴² Laura Marholm to Emy Ek, 22 September 1926. "I am now in the process of collecting in retrospect all the memories which have to do with Ola Hansson's domestic and personal life, his interests, his manner of working, of organizing himself, and of spending days and a life on journeys and in improvised homes."

⁴³ Laura Marholm, "Omrids til en Biografi," Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "Circumstances which we ourselves had no power over made our marriage during that long time as good as inseparable. As a result, I had to be unconditionally involved in everything that had to do with him, – involved with his friends, whom he always liked very much; involved with his literary opinions and plans; see how his works arose and took shape, – translate them – when the ink was not even dry yet – as long as there was a possibility of publishing them in German in all the many and equally poorly paying papers in Germany and Austria."

⁴⁴ Henning Söderhjelm to Lars Wåhlin, 14 October 1926. Accompanies the manuscript of "Omrids til en Biografi" in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "It would be, I think,

Laura Marholm-Hansson, geb. Mohr, died on October 6, 1928, in Majorenhof, a small resort town not far from Riga, and was buried in Riga on October 11.⁴⁵ Marholm once wrote of herself, “Jag undervisade mig själv, läste vad som tycktes mig värt att läsa, skrev ganska tidigt samt gav mig själv form och innehåll. Var gång det lyckades mig att bringa något i offentligheten, slogs jag brutalt till jorden.”⁴⁶ Marholm’s life can indeed be described as a series of obstacles and setbacks, which for many years, she succeeded in overcoming. Against all odds and without the help of her family, Marholm escaped from her restrictive life in Riga by means of her talent and determination. Supporting herself as a single woman in Copenhagen was another challenge she rose to meet, but her loyalty to her new husband won her the enmity of Georg Brandes. In Friedrichshagen, she was able to command the attention and the respect of the Berlin literati, until she collided with the obstacle of August Strindberg. Her inability to deviate from her principles was both a strength and a source of misfortune. Had she been willing to compromise with Samuel Fischer about her book on women, perhaps the Hanssons would not have fallen from grace with the *Freie Bühne* circle and thus would have avoided some lean years. Yet, she rose above even this setback to write a book on women which commanded the attention of Europe. Her *Buch der Frauen*, composed between translations and housekeeping chores, reached a wider audience than anything Ola Hansson ever wrote. Her brief years of fame and productivity eventually ground to a halt; she was simply too much encumbered by legal complications and poverty. Marholm’s strong spirit seemed to be finally broken, and yet she was able to collect herself for a final creative effort – her series of postwar articles. She could not recover, however, from the death of Ola Hansson.

Although Marholm’s fate was inextricably intertwined with Ola Hansson’s, she had her own story to tell. She spent her final years ensuring that Ola Hansson would be remembered, and in doing so, saw to it that her own considerable achievements would be eclipsed by those of her husband. Marholm achieved obscurity before her death. Hjalmar Gullberg wrote in her obituary: “Med Laura Marholm (pseudonym för Laura Mohr) bortgick en säregen personlighet, vars gärning varit föga känd i Sverige.”⁴⁷

merely embarrassing to publish fragmentary comments like these, which show their source in a worn-down and unclear psyche.”

⁴⁵ Hildegard Reinharde, “Laura Marholma-Hansona,” *Filologjyas materiali. Prof. J. Endzelinam sesdesmitaja dzimsanas diena veltits rakstu krajums*, Riga, 1933, p. 212.

⁴⁶ Marholm, “Kvinnornas valrätt.” “I taught myself, read what seemed to me worth reading, wrote rather early, and gave myself form and content. Every time I succeeded in bringing something out in public, I was brutally struck down to earth.”

⁴⁷ Hjalmar Gullberg, “Ola Hanssons maka död,” *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, 7 October 1928. “With Laura Marholm (pseudonym for Laura Mohr) a singular personality has passed way, whose deeds are little known in Sweden.”

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