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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 åttitalromantik* (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 Schlenther, 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 Schlenther, 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 kvinner* 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 Küchlein. 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'Aureville, 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 grænseløse 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.”