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Productive Years in Schliersee: 1894–1897

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

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

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

¹ Ola Hansson to Paul Heyse, 5 February 1894.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Ola Hansson to Paul Heyse, 3 August 1893.

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

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

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

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

Marholm described her central theme in the book as follows:

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

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

⁸ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 19 July 1903.

⁹ Laura Marholm to Cotta, 6 May 1893.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹³ Ibid.

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

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

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

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

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

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

²⁰ Ola Hansson to Chavelita Dunne, 18 March 1894.

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

²² Ola Hansson to Ellen Key, 6 May 1893.

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

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

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

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

²⁴ Marholm, *Buch der Toten*, p. 132.

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

²⁶ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 11 October 1895.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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

³⁵ Broicher, p. 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1168.

⁴¹ Broicher, p. 5.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁴ Meißner, p. 111.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

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

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

⁴⁸ Meißner, p. 111.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

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

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

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

⁵⁵ Laura Marholm to Havelock Ellis, 3 May 1895.

⁵⁶ Laura Marholm to Arthur Schnitzler, 16 April 1895.

⁵⁷ Laura Marholm to Havelock Ellis, 3 May 1895.

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

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

⁶⁰ Dohm, "Reaktion in der Frauenbewegung," p. 282.

their own natures, but Dohm argues that Marholm is wrong to insist that it is the nature of every woman to wish to become a wife and mother. Dohm maintains that diversity among women is much greater than Marholm allows, and that every woman should be given the opportunity to develop her own individuality, “des Glaubens baar [sic], daß sie zum Dienst oder Zweck Anderer geboren ist.”⁶¹ Furthermore, Dohm objects to the caricature that Marholm has made of “die Emanzipierten.” Marholm adopts the posture of being persecuted by the women’s movement for choosing the roles of mother and wife, but: “Wer hat je ihrer Lust, ein Dutzend Kinder zu gebären, Schranken gesetzt?”⁶²

Dohm takes special exception to Marholm’s belief that women are intellectually inferior to men and, furthermore, that the cultivation of a woman’s intellect interferes with her sexual life and her ability to become a fit mother. Dohm poses a number of witty objections: First, if women are intellectually inferior, why should the reader have any faith at all in Marholm’s ideas? Second, if intellectual activity makes women less attractive, then why is the humble housewife so often forsaken by her husband for the artist or authoress? Third, if intellectual activity dampens erotic impulses, then why do men have a more active libido? Dohm does not fall into the trap of indignantly denying feminine sexuality, as did Adine Gemberg, for example. Instead, Dohm is able to turn Marholm’s own arguments against her.

Finally, Dohm points out that Marholm has ignored some social and political realities. The ideal portrait of a woman finding her fulfillment in a man loses some of its rosy glow when the dimension of financial dependency is added. Delivering one’s destiny into the care of a husband is a way of avoiding moral and intellectual responsibility. Marholm is being unrealistic and dishonest when she suggests that women should be able to shape public policy through the boudoir: “Kein Stimmrecht – kein Recht zu lieben!”⁶³

Another important reader of *Das Buch der Frauen* was, of course, Ellen Key. The following year Key published her monographs, *Missbrukad kvinnokraft* and *Kvinnopsykologi*, in which Marholm is mentioned quite favorably. In the furor that Ellen Key’s works created in Sweden, Marholm and Key were seen as allies. Thoughts that they share in common include the belief that intellectual work will damage the reproductive organs of women: “Läkare ha visat huru vissa arbeten eller överdrifter i studier ha skadat kvinnornas förmåga för normalt moderskap.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, both consider men to be the creators of culture, whereas women are emotional geniuses: “Följdsatsen blir då: att kvinnan med

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 290.

⁶² Ibid., p. 288.

⁶³ Hedwig Dohm, “Laura Marholms *Buch der Frauen*,” *Die Frauenbewegung*, I (1895), p. 94.

⁶⁴ Ellen Key, *Missbrukad kvinnokraft. Kvinnopsykologi* (Stockholm: Logos, 1891), p. 9. “Doctors have shown how certain jobs or excesses in studies have damaged women’s capacity for normal motherhood.”

sina snilleverk ej kommer att nå mannens högsta höjd, och att mannen i sitt känsloliv icke kommer att nå kvinnans djupaste djup.”⁶⁵ However, the point that Key liked the most in Marholm’s writing is to be found in *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*:

En kvinna har yttrat ett gränslöst djupt ord: Nämligen att det betecknande för den bästa som den sämsta kvinnonaturen är dess vildhet, denna med själva urnaturen djupt förbundna väsensart, som hos de yppersta kvinnorna når sin höjd i den stora hängivenheten och hos de sämsta i brottet, men hos båda yttrar sig som oförmåga att antaga den givna kulturens resultat såsom för sig förbindande.⁶⁶

Here, Key’s reading of Marholm has resulted in a slight distortion. The women that Marholm writes about are not quite the mavericks that emerge in this description of feminine “vildhet.” In fact, one of the central points in *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* is that women allow themselves to be shaped by the cultural norms created by men. Key also feels that Marholm has overemphasized feminine sexuality, but “hur mycket hon än överbetonat kvinnans egenskap av könsvarelse, så innehåller hennes överdrift flera för framtiden fruktbarande synpunkter på kvinnonaturen, än kvinnosakskvinnornas överdrift åt andra hållet.”⁶⁷

These monographs by Ellen Key were hotly debated in Sweden, and so, Laura Marholm’s name was also bandied about, particularly in the context of feminine “vildhet.”⁶⁸ Obviously a mutual exchange of ideas had taken place between Ellen Key and Laura Marholm; however, in the 1913 edition of these two monographs, Key felt compelled to add in a footnote: “Och när Laura Marholm med genial ensidighet gjort sina uttalanden, ha de icke lärt mig något nytt: det väsentliga i

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 87. “The consequence is then: that women in their works of genius will not reach the heights of men, and men in their emotional lives will not reach the deepest depths of women.”

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 52–53. “A woman has uttered an infinitely profound word: Namely, typical of the best as well as the worst within women’s nature is its wildness, that quality deeply bound with her primeval nature itself, which among the finest of women reaches its peak in great devotion, among the worst of women in crime, but in the case of both, it expresses itself as an inability to accept the given results of culture as binding upon itself.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 113. “however much she has overemphasized the aspect of woman as a sexual being, her exaggeration contains more potentially fruitful viewpoints on women’s nature than the exaggerations of the emancipationists in the other direction.”

⁶⁸ In addition to numerous newspaper articles, the following pamphlets appeared: Alma Cleve, *En protest med anledning af Ellen Keys föredrag i kvinnofrågan* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1896); Ellen Idström, *Några ord med anledning af fröken Ellen Keys föredrag öfver “missbrukad kvinnokraft”* (Stockholm, 1896); Ina Rogberg, *Kärlek och moderlighet* (Stockholm: Lars Hökerberg, 1896); Mathilda Roos, *Ett ord til fröken Ellen Key* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1896); Anna Sandström, *Kvinnorarbete och kvinnolycka* (Stockholm: Aftonbladets Aktiebolagets tryckeri, 1896).

hennes tankegång var sedan länge min egen.”⁶⁹ Certainly, Marholm had taken inspiration from Key’s monograph about Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, but it is perhaps not entirely fair for Key to claim that she, in turn, learned nothing from Marholm’s novel formulations about women’s nature. When Laura Marholm’s star eventually sank beneath the horizon, it did so in a manner that made claiming acquaintance with her an embarrassment. Comments like the one above by Ellen Key helped to bring about Laura Marholm’s eventual obscurity.

Yet obviously, *Das Buch der Frauen* struck a nerve in the time and place in which it appeared. What might account for the book’s extraordinary popularity? For one thing, an interest in abnormal feminine psychology was in the air. The year before, Cesare Lombroso’s *Das Weib als Verbrecherin und Prostituirte* had appeared in Germany, and that same year, Sigmund Freud’s *Studien über Hysterie* was published. In general, “hysteria” was a popular term and was used frequently in the Marholm criticism. Adine Gemberg calls Marholm “eine Profetin der Hysterie” and Fritz Mauthner writes, “Sie hat so lange in der Frauenfrage überall nur die hysterischen Seiten aufgesucht, bis das hysterische Weib ihr als Weib überhaupt erschien.”⁷⁰ At a time when the science of psychology was in its infancy, *Das Buch der Frauen* had a widespread impact on the understanding of feminine psychology.

Furthermore, the book was written in Germany as a reaction against Marholm’s experiences in Scandinavia. Regarding sex roles, Germany was generally more conservative than Scandinavia. For example, by 1873 women in Sweden were allowed to study most subjects, whereas this right was not achieved by German women until 1905.⁷¹ A greater German conservatism may also be seen in the German reception of Henrik Ibsen’s *Et dukkehjem*. In order for the play to be performed in Germany, Ibsen was forced to write an alternative ending for the German translation. Ibsen was told that a German public could never accept a heroine who deserts her family and so, in the alternative version, Nora does not leave her children.⁷² The conservative factions in Germany, which had felt threatened by the Scandinavian wave of women’s emancipation from the 1880’s, welcomed Marholm’s polemic against the women’s movement. Women who felt that their positions as wives and mothers were assailed by emancipatory trends found comfort in *Das Buch der Frauen*. Men who felt threatened by the encroachment of women upon traditionally male territory found in *Das Buch der Frauen* an argument for relegating women to the home.

⁶⁹ Key, *Missbrukad kvinnokraft. Kvinnopsykologi*, p. 175. “and when Laura Marholm with her brilliant one-sidedness made her statements, they did not teach me anything new: the essence of her thought had been my own for a long time.”

⁷⁰ Gemberg, “Eine Profetin der Hysterie” and Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

⁷¹ Barbara Gentikow, *Skandinavien als präkapitalistische Idylle. Rezeption gesellschaftskritischer Literatur in deutschen Zeitschriften 1870 bis 1914* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholz Verlag, 1978), p. 94.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 104–107.

Not long after the appearance of *Das Buch der Frauen, Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* was published by the Verlag der Wiener Mode, which Marholm later characterized as a “daarlig Udgiver.”⁷³ The first edition contains essays about Gottfried Keller, Paul Heyse, Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Tolstoy, August Strindberg and Guy de Maupassant.⁷⁴ The book did not reach a larger audience until it was reissued by Carl Duncker Verlag in 1896 in an expanded version, which contains an additional essay about Barbey d’Aurevilly. Albert Langen was not interested in publishing the book, most likely because, at the time he had recruited Marholm into his author’s stable, he had also gained Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson as a client. He was prudent enough to realize that Bjørnson would probably take offense at Marholm’s chapter about him. To a great extent, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* rode on the coattails of *Das Buch der Frauen*. Her boast to Albert Bonnier, “Das Buch schlug deutsch und norwegisch sehr an,” is a slight exaggeration.⁷⁵

Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter had been more or less completed long before *Das Buch der Frauen*. Her central thesis is basically derived from the essays she wrote about feminine types in Scandinavian literature for *Freie Bühne*: Women have shaped themselves after the female images presented to them in masculine literature: “Es ist des Weibes Natur, sich in eine Form zu prägen und nach einer Form zu verlangen, in die es sich prägen könne. Wohlgemerkt, in der Art sich zu geben, zu reden, zu denken, zu reagiren, zu fordern ist und bleibt immer nur eine Oberflächenprägung.”⁷⁶ With this as her basic premise, Marholm discusses the selected authorships in terms of the images of women they present. When Marholm has completed her catalogue, she admonishes her feminine readers not to seek their own “Weibwesen” in the writings of these “Dichter, Denker und Propheten,” but to rely instead on their own instincts.⁷⁷ The result of this introspection will be: “Und mir scheint, es zeigen sich die ersten Zeichen, daß das Weib sich wieder bewußt wird nichts Anderes zu sein, aber auch nichts Kleineres zu sein als: Die Auferbauerin der künftigen Geschlechter.”⁷⁸ This line of reasoning loosely ties together articles which she had written for *Vossische Zeitung* and *Nord und Süd* during the previous four years.

Even though *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* was not as popular as *Das Buch der Frauen*, it did receive some critical attention. One German critic remarked, “Das

⁷³ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 22 February 1896. “a bad publisher.”

⁷⁴ In Marholm’s proposal to the Cotta’sche Buchhandlung in May of 1893, she had planned to include articles on Paul Heyse, Gottfried Keller, Tolstoy, Paul Bourget, August Strindberg, J. P. Jacobsen, Arne Dybfest and “die deutsche socialistische Literatur des Frauenschilderers.” (Laura Marholm to Cotta, 27 May 1893.)

⁷⁵ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 29 July 1898.

⁷⁶ Laura Marholm, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* (Berlin: Verlag Carl Duncker, 1896), pp. 131–132.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Programm ist reichhaltig, die Ausführung geradezu erstaunlich!”⁷⁹ The chapter on Gottfried Keller bothered C. D. af Wirsén, conservative critic and member of the Swedish Academy, who saw in Marholm’s praise of Keller’s “natural” women a neglect of the spiritual side of women. Wirsén notes: “Författarinnan prisar Keller därför att hans qvinnor *blott* äro naturväsanden, dette är, i grunden, att ställa qvinnan bra lågt [. . .] hon felar, då hon med hänsynslös energi ensidigt framhåller den instinktiva sidan hos qvinnan och nästan förnekar dennas högre sjäsegenskapet. [original italics]”⁸⁰ This criticism is familiar, since Marholm’s neglect of the spiritual side of woman’s nature was a major argument against *Das Buch der Frauen*. Furthermore, Wirsén formulates the following objection to the chapter on Paul Heyse: “Det ser mellanåt ut, som om författarinnan trodde, att först i våra dagar och hufvudsakligen genom Paul Heyse qvinnan blifvit tecknad som en fri och sjelfständig varelse med myndighetskänsla. Det är märkvärdigt hvad man kan öfverdriva.”⁸¹ Heyse himself might well have agreed. Marholm describes Heyse’s reaction to *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* thus: “Paul Heyse schickte das Manuscript alsbald halb gelesen zurück; er verdürbe sich die Augen daran, es verstimme ihn, er fände es langweilig, er empfehle es zum Verlag an Costenoble, falls der es haben wolle.”⁸²

In the chapter on Ibsen, Marholm’s interpretation of *Hedda Gabler* received the most attention from the critics. Wirsén remarks, “Hennes teckning af den äfven för anmeldaren djupt vidriga ‘Hedda Gabler’ är knappast psykologiskt riktig.”⁸³ Marholm characterizes Hedda Gabler as “ein geschlechtsloses Nichts, das sich dumm verkauft, das die Frucht in ihrem Schooße verabscheut und von der Weibnatur nichts mehr, als die ohnmächtige lüsterne Neugier übrig hat.”⁸⁴ On the other hand, Karl August Tavaststjerna disagrees with Wirsén: “Hennes dom speciellt öfver Hedda Gabler är bland det allra bästa, som blifvit skrifvet om denna vid sitt framträdande så djupt missuppfattade och längre fram så mycket omdiskuterade typ.”⁸⁵

⁷⁹ B. L., “Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter,” *Deutsche Rundschau*, 85 (1895), p. 315.

⁸⁰ C. D. af Wirsén, review of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, *Vårt Land*, 17 July 1896, p. 2. “The author praises Keller because his women are *only* natural beings, that is in essence, to place women quite low [. . .] she is wrong when she with ruthless energy emphasizes the instinctive side of woman and almost denies her higher spiritual qualities.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.* “It occasionally seems as if the author believed that only in our day and chiefly through Paul Heyse, woman has been depicted as a free and independent being with a sense of autonomy. It is remarkable how much one can exaggerate.”

⁸² Marholm, “Erinnerungen an Paul Heyse,” p. 358.

⁸³ Wirsén, review of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, “Her depiction of Hedda Gabler, who is deeply repulsive even to this reviewer, is scarcely psychologically correct.”

⁸⁴ Marholm, *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, p. 157.

⁸⁵ Tavaststjerna, p. 200. “Her judgment, particularly about Hedda Gabler, is among the very best which has been written about that figure, which at its debut was so deeply misunderstood and subsequently so greatly debated.”

The two most controversial chapters were those on Bjørnson and Strindberg. As far as the women's movement was concerned, Marholm's negative treatment of Bjørnson combined with her sympathetic attitude toward Strindberg clearly put her on the side of "the enemy." In commenting that both *Das Buch der Frauen* and *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* are illustrated with portraits, Adine Gemberg remarks venomously, "Übrigens ist das auch bei den sieben Dichtern oder sechs Dichtern der Fall – oder ist August Strindberg auch ein Dichter?"⁸⁶ Despite Marholm's personal mistrust and dislike of Strindberg, she still viewed him as a literary genius and a brilliant intuitive psychologist. On the subject of Strindberg, Tavaststjerna had a kind word for Marholm: "I allmänhet vore jag frestad att påstå det Strindberg ännu icke funnit en biograf, hvilken förstått honom så mycket som Laura Marholm. [. . .] I alla fall ligger det i fru Marholms Strindbergsstudie mera ärligt arbete och godt förstånd än denna moderne Loke på länge kann hoppas att få från asarna i Norden."⁸⁷

The chapter on Bjørnson, however, would ultimately have the greatest impact on Marholm's career. Tavaststjerna, Wirsén, and an anonymous reviewer from *The Atlantic Monthly* all agreed that Marholm dealt with Bjørnson much too harshly. As the English reviewer describes, "The chapter on Bjørnson is full of this word 'plebian.' It rings with every possible accent of scorn, and the 'Priest of Purity' himself comes off, as it seems to the present writer, with epithets infused with hateful animus."⁸⁸ Marholm is merciless in her portrayal of Bjørnson as a vain, bombastic dandy. Karl von Thaler of *Neue Freie Presse* was amused by Marholm's treatment of Bjørnson: "Schon ihre erste persönliche Begegnung mit ihm erzählt sie in humoristischer Weise, und das ganze Capitel ihres Buches, welches sie ihm widmet, verräth heitere Laune."⁸⁹

One reader who was most definitely not amused was Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson himself. When Bjørnson caught sight of Thaler's sympathetic review in *Neue Freie Presse*, he composed the following letter to the editors:

Frau Laura Marholm ist eine sehr haushälterische Dame, die auf mehr als eine Weise Fleisch zu bereiten versteht. Bevor sie wieder norwegische Literatur deutschen Lesern vorsetzt, möchte ich doch auf das Folgende aufmerksam gemacht haben:

1. Ich habe nie eine Lehre vom Asketismus verkündet; von Tolstoi's Lehre darüber bin ich ein entschiedener Gegner.

⁸⁶ Gemberg, "Eine Profetin der Hysterie," p. 172.

⁸⁷ Tavaststjerna, pp. 200–201. "In general, I would be tempted to maintain that Strindberg has still not found a biographer, who has understood him as well as Laura Marholm [. . .] In any case, in Mrs. Marholm's Strindberg study, there is more honest work and good sense than that modern Loki can hope to receive from the Æsir of the north for quite some time."

⁸⁸ [Anonymous], "Two German Books of Criticism," *Atlantic Monthly*, 76 (November 1895), p. 698.

⁸⁹ Karl von Thaler, "Frauenspiegel," *Neue Freie Presse*, 8 February 1895.

2. Der Vortrag, den ich über "Monogamie und Polygamie" gehalten habe, ist, von Baronin Mary v. Borch übersetzt, in Berlin erschienen; er wird einen Jeden von der Unwahrheit der Behauptungen Frau Marholm's überzeugen.

3. Eine Unterredung, wie die, welche Frau Marholm behauptet, mit mir im Bois du Boulogne gehabt zu haben, hat nie stattgefunden.

4. Zu der norwegischen (und skandinavischen) Frauenbewegung habe ich in keiner andern Verbindung gestanden, als daß man mir die Preßorgane derselben zugesendet hat. Ich weiß nichts davon, daß diese Bewegung einen "Propheten" hat; aber sollte man mich als solchen betrachtet haben, so hat man es verstanden, dies in glänzender Weise zu verbergen.

Was Laura Marholm von dem Ziele und Wesen dieser Bewegung schreibt, ist erfunden.

5. Ich bin bisher nie des Fanatismus beschuldigt worden. Kein anderer Dichter meiner Zeit im Norden ist öfter für Toleranz eingetreten als ich. Meine dichterischen Arbeiten und mein öffentliches Leben sind unwiderlegliche Beweise.

Zu diesen fünf Punkten der Berichtigung möchte ich eine bescheidene Mittheilung hinzufügen:

Soll der Umstand, daß ich "muskulös" bin, mich daran hindern, Psycholog zu sein, so nehme ich bei meinem Sturze sowohl Balzac als Maupassant und Ibsen mit.

Ich schäme mich fast, solchen in jeder Weise unzutreffenden Dingen hier entgegentreten zu müssen; aber ich bin ein täglicher Leser der "Neuen freien Presse" und ziehe nach Oesterreich wieder, sobald der Sommer kommt; daher fühle ich mich so wohl in dieser ausgezeichneten Gesellschaft, daß ich ungern dies Verhältniß durch Verleumdungen getrübt sehen möchte.

Rom, den 10. Februar 1895⁹⁰

Although Marholm certainly exaggerated her portrait of Bjørnson, Bjørnson in his defense also stretches the truth somewhat. With regard to points one through three, it is clear that Bjørnson has been injured by Marholm's satire, but the most threatening satire is based on truth. Bjørnson did not view his principle of celibacy for both sexes until marriage as asceticism, but others did. Bjørnson's fourth and fifth objections are not strictly true. Bjørnson's association with the women's movement may not have been official from his point of view, but it was obvious to everyone in Scandinavia. Bjørnson was hardly renowned for his tolerance in the morality debates, and some members of the press indeed accused him of being a fanatic.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, "Laura Marholm's Buch 'Die Frauen und ihre Dichter,'" *Neue Freie Presse*, 14 February 1895.

⁹¹ See Bredsdorff, *Den store nordiske krig om seksualmoralen*. For example, one might take Jonas Lie's comments to Georg Brandes about Bjørnson: "Og, Tolerance mig her og Tolerance mig der, – den Sag han forkynder, ringer han altid om med en Kirkemur, saa Verden deles i Hellige og Vanhellige; det er vel det, som gjør Kraften i ham." ("And tolerance this and tolerance that – the cause he proclaims he always surrounds with a church wall, so that the world is divided into the holy and the unholy; that is what probably gives him his power.") [p. 280]

Clearly, Bjørnson must have felt betrayed by Marholm. When she was still an unknown in 1887, he had supported Marholm and even written a letter to Karl Bleibtreu recommending her articles. To make matters worse, during the same February that Bjørnson wrote his angry letter to *Neue Freie Presse*, another battle was waged over Bjørnson between Marholm and Konrad Telmann in the pages of *Berliner Tageblatt*.

Marholm wrote an article entitled “Baisse!” for *Berliner Tageblatt*, in which she complains about the poor quality of the Scandinavian literature that appears in translation. As a case in point, she names Bjørnson’s novella “Absalons Haar,” in which she claims Bjørnson acts “als Advokat seines Sohnes, gegen seine geschiedene Schwiegertochter.”⁹² Konrad Telmann, a good friend of Bjørnson’s from Rome, came to Bjørnson’s defense in a letter to the editor. Telmann essentially tries to defend the artistic merit of “Absalons Haar” and Bjørnson’s honor.⁹³ One wonders whether or not Bjørnson and Telmann collaborated in this effort. They were both in Rome at the time and had most certainly discussed the issue. Marholm, however, reasserted her opinions in another letter to the editor, bearing the insulting title of “Bjørnson als dichtende Schwiegermutter.” Marholm can see in “Absalons Haar” nothing but the “Indiskretionen einer gereizten Schwiegermutter.”⁹⁴ Not long after this reply, Bjørnson wrote to Albert Langen: “Laura Marholms bosheit und rohheit hat dieselbe höhe! [sic]”⁹⁵

At the time, Marholm could not know how these jabs at Bjørnson would later affect her career. Bjørnson had become her sworn enemy and in a little over a year the Bjørnson family would become united with the Langen family through a double wedding.⁹⁶ The “dichtende Schwiegermutter” would become the father-in-law of Marholm’s publisher.

In the late fall of 1894, Marholm and Hansson had returned to Schliersee, where Marholm basked in the success of *Das Buch der Frauen*. She was treated as an international expert on women’s issues and wrote authoritative articles for *Nordisk Revy*, *Die Zukunft* and *Revue des Revues*.⁹⁷ Marholm also became the recipient of mail from women asking for advice: “Mir war schon schriftlich von allen möglichen Damen, die meine Bücher gelesen hatten, alles Mögliche ‘gestanden’ worden, wofür sie dann Rath und Aufklärung suchten, die ich ihnen in

⁹² Laura Marholm, “Baisse!,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 3 February 1895.

⁹³ Konrad Telmann, “Bjørnsons Absalon,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 18 February 1895.

⁹⁴ Laura Marholm, “Bjørnson als dichtende Schwiegermutter,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 27 February 1895.

⁹⁵ Aldo Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen, I. Teil* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag 1986), p. 303.

⁹⁶ Albert Langen married Dagny Bjørnson on 10 March 1896, the same day that Einar Bjørnson married Langen’s sister Elsbeth. [Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen*, pp. 39–40.]

⁹⁷ Laura Marholm, “Kvinnofrågan,” *Nordisk Revy*, 1 (1895), pp. 261–263; “Deutsche Frauen,” *Die Zukunft*, 16 (25 July 1896), pp. 175–183; “La Femme Allemande,” *Revue des Revues*, 18 (1896), Bd. III, pp. 1–12.

den meisten Fällen nicht geben konnte.”⁹⁸ The Hanssons also received all manner of visitors. In the summer of 1895, their old friend Max Dauthendey stopped by at the same time that Hermann Bahr was passing through Schliersee on his honeymoon. Dauthendey writes in his memoirs that he was so touched by the domestic bliss of the Hanssons’ household, he decided to propose to his future wife.⁹⁹

During this time of great popularity, Marholm began writing fiction again. She followed up her successes with *Das Buch der Frauen* and *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* by publishing two more books that same year through Albert Langen: *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* and *Karla Bühnung*. *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* appeared sometime during the summer of 1895, and had gone into a second edition by November. Marholm’s first work of fiction in thirteen years appeared simultaneously in Norwegian and German. In October, Marholm offered the book in Hansson’s translation to Albert Bonnier, who published it in 1896. In 1899, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* was also translated into Dutch.

Zwei Frauenerlebnisse consists of two novellas, “Was war es?” and “Das Ungesprochene.” Marholm wrote of this work, “*Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* sind eine Ergänzung zum *Buch der Frauen*. Sie wurden gesondert herausgegeben, weil die intimere und detaillirtere Darstellung entscheidender Lebensmomente dieser beiden Frauen die Nennung ihrer Namen ausschloß und die novellistische Form erheischte.”¹⁰⁰ This is a clear instance of Marholm not drawing a strong distinction between fiction and non-fiction. “Das Ungesprochene” is a reworking of Marholm’s psychological sketch of Victoria Benedictsson in “Eine von ihnen.” “Was war es?” seems to be about Marholm herself. In the latter novella, many features are recognizable from Marholm’s biography: the pension, a matchmaking Gerda Brandes figure, the heroine’s profession as a theater reviewer, and the shotgun wedding between the daughter of the pension owner and one of the tenants. However, Marholm never refers to a love affair like the one portrayed in “Was war es” anywhere else outside the novella, and, therefore, it is perhaps not wise to accept the course of events as completely autobiographical. Marholm does however claim to have witnessed the workings of a hypnotic suggestion at first hand and says that this was the central point of interest to her in the novella.

The heroine of “Was war es?” Lonny Lauter, is an independent single woman living in Berlin, who supports herself by writing theater reviews. A young medical student residing in the same pension, Jössing, allows himself to be hypnotized, and on a whim, Lonny gives him a telepathic suggestion to fall in love with her. The suggestion takes effect, but Lonny, reluctant to relinquish her independence, only slowly begins to return his affection. Finally, Lonny succumbs

⁹⁸ Laura Marholm, *Buch der Toten* (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim Verlag, 1900), pp. 8–9.

⁹⁹ Max Dauthendey, *Gedankengut aus meinen Wanderjahren, Theil II* (München: Albert Langen, 1913), p. 135.

¹⁰⁰ Laura Marholm, “Das Buch der Frauen etc.,” *Die Zukunft* 16 (1896), pp. 461–462.

to her inclination for Jössing, and the pair becomes engaged. Jössing journeys to his family in Denmark in order to tell them about the engagement; however, when he returns to the bosom of his family, he forgets to mention his arrangement with Lonny. The magnetic power of his home eventually overcomes his affection for Lonny, and he breaks their engagement in a letter. Lonny takes the news quite well and explains to a friend:

Ich stehe jetzt wieder ganz allein, aber doch nicht so wie vorher. Denn etwas ist in mir aufgesprungen, was das Weib zum Weibe macht – das Bewußtsein lieben zu können. Sehen Sie, das hält unsere Erziehung und unsere eigene Furcht so lange in uns nieder, bis etwas besonderes geschieht, das den Reif sprengt mit einem Krach, in dem wir manchmal selbst zerspringen, aber manchmal kommen wir durch diese gesprengte Thür auch erst in unser Allerheiligstes als Weib.¹⁰¹

Here one can recognize the sentiment from *Das Buch der Frauen*, that love brings out the essential qualities of a woman. However, since women are taught to ignore any tender feelings they may possess, the experience of love can bring about drastic revelations.

If *Das Buch der Frauen* describes spiritually crippled women, Lonny Lauter is meant to represent a picture of health. Lonny is not quite what one might expect after reading in *Das Buch der Frauen* that intellectual pursuits drain the energies of women and love is a woman's only reason for living. Lonny is strong, independent, and an intellectual. She succumbs to love, but is not destroyed by its loss, although the possibility is held out for her that she will love again. Interestingly, Jössing is a fairly weak and ineffectual person. His main purpose in the story is to release through love all of the giving qualities in Lonny's nature. In her fiction from this point on, Marholm shows a tendency to treat men as objects. The male characters in her fiction are usually faintly drawn figures, who are primarily of interest as objects of a woman's love.

One specific exchange between Lonny and Jössing caught the attention of Havelock Ellis. When Jössing confesses to Lonny that he has never been with a woman before, she is disappointed in him. Ellis uses this as one piece of evidence to support the theory that women prefer men to have sexual experience.¹⁰² Lonny's disapproval of Jössing's purity is clearly a reversal of the Bjørnsonian "hanskemoral," which led Svava to reject her fiancé because of his premarital exploits.

A comparison of "Das Ungesprochene" and "Eine von ihnen" reveals that Marholm's assessment of Victoria Benedictsson's fate seems to have changed. "Eine von ihnen" was not particularly kind to Benedictsson. She was described as "Emma Lovisa Arnoldson – ein Weib wie aus Erz gegossen mit eckigen Formen und Geberden [sic] – und drunter alles zermürbt, zerstückt, verstüm-

¹⁰¹ Laura Marholm, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* (München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 148.

¹⁰² Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Vol. 6, p. 524.

melt.”¹⁰³ The tone of “Das Ungesprochene” is much more sympathetic. The story contains a frame, in which a Herr Borg and his wife Lonny learn of the suicide of a mutual acquaintance. The suggestion is that this is the same Lonny of “Was war es?,” some years later. The news of the suicide disturbs Lonny, who tells her husband, “Es ist auch das zweite Mal, daß ich es fühle, als sei ich mitschuld an eines Menschen Tod.”¹⁰⁴ Lonny then tells the story of Emma Louise Wikmann to her husband in order to alleviate this sense of guilt. Marholm has added to this new version of the story much more detail about the affair between Emma and Holger Berning. Berning, described as a Don Juan, is painted as the villain in the relationship. Emma’s death was a heroic act of revenge, inspired by an enormous intensity of feeling. Unlike Lonny in “Was war es?,” Emma’s suppressed emotions spring forth with such violence that they destroy her. At the time, Lonny claims she could foresee the course the relationship would take, but for fear of incurring Emma’s disfavor, she never spoke to her about it. This is the source of Lonny’s sense of guilt.

Marholm’s interpretation of Victoria Benedictsson’s death as a heroic act performed by a deep and complex personality is much more in line with the immediate reaction to the suicide which Marholm shared with Jonas Lie. Judging from “Eine von ihnen,” however, Marholm went through a phase where she blamed Benedictsson for the suicide and sought to view her as a victim of her own inhibitions. By 1895, she had begun to blame Brandes for taking the depth of Benedictsson’s affection too lightly. Marholm also felt a sense of guilt for having listened to Gerda Brandes’ unflattering portrayals of Benedictsson and for having initially sided with Georg Brandes.

Because of the familiar biographical content, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* received more attention in Sweden than in Germany. The book marked Marholm’s debut in a genre for which her husband had become known, the psychological novella, and thus, a number of critics were tempted to make comparisons. The most striking similarity between the Hanssons was found to be “benägenheten att dröja vid mystiska, psykiskt-fysiska, mycket obestämda och formlösa sensationer.”¹⁰⁵ This attention to sensations and irrational impressions was a hallmark of both *Sensitiva amorosa* and *Parias*. Fritz Mauthner observes that she has tried to apply the “Kunstmittel der impressionistischen Malerei,” though he feels the attempt has been unsuccessful.¹⁰⁶ Compared to her novella “Im Dienste zweier Herren” from 1882, Marholm’s prose style has changed somewhat. Even in 1882, Marholm was an observant student of psychology, but she has learned to express

¹⁰³ Laura Marholm, “Eine von ihnen,” *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 61 (1892), p. 501.

¹⁰⁴ Marholm, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁵ Hjalmar Sandberg, review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 22 April 1896, p. 3: “the inclination to linger over mystical, psycho-physiological, very vague and formless sensations.”; C. D. af Wirsén, “Litteratur: Tvenne Kvinnoöden,” *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*, 28 March 1896, A-edition, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

the psychology of her characters with more finesse, largely due to her new impressionistic style. No doubt, many of her techniques were learned from translating her husband's work.

On the whole, Swedish critics were positively disposed toward the first novella, "Was war es?" Both Jacobine Ring and C. D. af Wirsén, previously severe critics of *Das Buch der Frauen*, agree that "detta arbete är i alla händelser renare än föregående alster af samma penna."¹⁰⁷ Jacobine Ring observes with satisfaction that no longer does Marholm place an exaggerated emphasis on sexual urges and draws the conclusion that Marholm has recovered from her erotomania.¹⁰⁸ She also approves of Marholm's depiction of an independent female character, whose life is not crushed by the defection of her love interest. On the other hand, Karl von Thaler finds this aspect of the novella unconvincing: "Wir glauben nicht, daß ein getäushtes und verlassenes Mädchen sich so selbstbeschaulich trösten kann."¹⁰⁹

A critic from *Upsala Nya Tidning* is quite generous in his praise of "Was war es?," referring to it as "ett litet mästerstycke af enkel och lefvande berättarekonst."¹¹⁰ As was the case with *Das Buch der Frauen*, Marholm's style of writing receives compliments, and there is once again talk of Marholm's keen powers of observation. Mary Ekeblad writes, "Bägge novellerna falla inom gränserna för den speciellt kvinnliga realismen: den egna erfarenheten och den direkta iakttagelsen på andra är med påfallande tydlighet den grund på hvilken författarinnan bygger."¹¹¹ "Was war es?" is considered to be a convincing piece of psychology, though some critics object to the use of hypnotism in the story.¹¹²

Dissenting opinions about the novella's psychology were also registered, primarily by German critics. A Swedish dissenter, Hjalmar Sandberg, finds Lonny Lauter to be a "föga sympatisk dam," and Jössing is referred to as "den besynnerliga figuren."¹¹³ Karl von Thaler finds the Lonny character appealing, but he cannot understand her interest in Jössing: "Der Jüngling ist leider von Frau Marholm so charakterisirt, daß man diese Liebe nicht begreift. Er hat weder Geist noch Feuer, ihm fehlt Alles, was die Jugend liebenswerth macht, er ist blos [sic]

¹⁰⁷ Wirsén, "Litteratur: Tvenne Kvinnoöden." "this work is in any event purer than previous products of the same pen."

¹⁰⁸ Jacobine Ring [Jacqueline]. "Två kvinnoöden," *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 26 November 1895, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Karl von Thaler, "Neue Romane und Novellen," *Neue Freie Presse*, 7 March 1896.

¹¹⁰ [Anonymous], review of *Tvänne kvinnoöden*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 11 April 1896, p. 3. "a small masterpiece of simple and vital narrative art."

¹¹¹ Mary Ekeblad, "Litteraturbref," *Nordisk Revy*, 2 (1896), p. 308: "both novellas fall within the bounds of particularly feminine realism: personal experience and direct observations of others are with striking obviousness the basis upon which the author builds."

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹¹³ Sandberg, review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*. "not a very appealing woman"; "the peculiar figure."

schön, langweilig schön.”¹¹⁴ The interest that the dynamic Lonny takes in the weakling Jössing is something of a mystery.

As concerns “Das Ungesprochene,” Swedish reviewers almost unanimously condemned Marholm for her thinly-veiled account of Victoria Benedictsson’s suicide, whereas German reviewers barely even referred to this second novella. As *Göteborgs-Posten* expresses it, “Den andra berättelsen deremot – Det osagda – kunde gerna varit osagd eller rättare oskriven.”¹¹⁵ Marholm’s treatment of her deceased acquaintance was considered unsympathetic and tasteless. Jacobine Ring writes of Marholm’s analysis of Benedictsson, “Den är gjord med brutala, pietetslösa händer och verkar på läsaren uteslutande som en profanation, hvad den äfven är.”¹¹⁶ However, Mary Ekeblad, after lodging a protest against the depiction of Benedictsson, admits, “Hvad nu själfva novellen beträffar, så är den skrifven med en beundransvärd intensitet i skildringen.”¹¹⁷ In the context of objecting to Marholm’s use of her personal acquaintances for literary purposes, the reviewer from *Dagens Nyheter* relates an anecdote he has heard about Laura Marholm. It is said that one of her female friends from Copenhagen chastised Marholm in a letter for literarily exploiting people who had been kind enough to offer her hospitality. Marholm allegedly responded with a postcard bearing the words, “Du wirst auch porträtiert.”¹¹⁸ The anecdote is entertaining but most likely apocryphal.

The theme of Victoria Benedictsson’s suicide evidently preoccupied Marholm at this time, since she returned to it in her play *Karla Bühnung*. The play was written between August 20 and September 12, 1895. Marholm claims in the introduction that she intended the play for performance, not necessarily just for reading. Marholm tried very hard to get the play produced, but her efforts were to no avail. Marholm sent a Swedish translation made by Hansson to Erik Thyselius, the editor of *Nordisk Revy*, so that he might arrange a production. Marholm wrote to August Lindberg and Julia Håkansson about playing the roles of Collander and Karla Bühnung, and she had Harald Molander in mind as the director.¹¹⁹ Although they all expressed an interest in the play, it was never performed, no doubt because the figures of Victoria Benedictsson and Georg Brandes were too thinly veiled. Marholm confided to George Egerton that she

¹¹⁴ Karl von Thaler, “Neue Romane und Novellen.”

¹¹⁵ – gh, review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, 16 May 1896, Saturday edition, supplement, p. 1. “On the other hand, the second tale – ‘The Unspoken’ – could happily have remained unspoken, or more precisely unwritten.”

¹¹⁶ Ring, “Två kvinnoöden.” “It is done with brutal, impious hands and strikes the reader exclusively as a profanation, which it is.”

¹¹⁷ Ekeblad, “Litteraturbref,” p. 309. “As far as the novella itself is concerned, it is written with an admirable intensity in the depiction.”

¹¹⁸ [Anonymous] review of *Tvenne kvinnoöden*, *Dagens Nyheter*, 15 April 1896, A-edition, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Laura Marholm to August Lindberg, 26 June 1896. Laura Marholm to Harald Molander, 14 September 1896.

suspected a conspiracy of Jewish theater owners and newspaper editors of standing in the way of the play's success in both Germany and Scandinavia, in order to protect Georg Brandes.¹²⁰ George Egerton began translating the play into English for the stage, but personal problems prevented her from completing it. The Swedish and English translations were never published, so *Karla Bühnung* only appeared in German.

The play is quite different from Marholm's early historical dramas, since her understanding of dramaturgy has changed considerably. She writes of her ambitions for *Karla Bühnung*: "Ich wollte den Versuch machen, ein Stück zu schreiben, das – wenigstens in seinen Hauptlinien – rein pantomimisch sich selbst zu erklären geeignet war und das auch ohne die Erläuterung des gesprochenen Wortes die volle tragische Wirkung zu erreichen vermöchte."¹²¹ In the introduction to the play Marholm explains that the task of the dramatic author in shaping his characters is: "Die Umrisse zugleich so groß und so fest zu ziehen, daß der Schauspieler sowohl Ellenbogenraum wie eine Form vorfindet, innerhalb welcher er seine schöpferische Individualität entfalten kan."¹²² Marholm wrote the play with the performances of Eleonora Duse in mind.

One might also detect in the play the legacy of Strindberg's *Fröken Julie* and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. Marholm is clearly interested in creating a complex heroine of this ilk. Marholm describes her female characters thus:

Die Frauen, die darin vorkommen, sind, jede innerhalb ihrer Lebensstellung und Begabung, typisch für das, was die gegenwärtige Zeitbrechung aus dem Weibe macht. Sie sind herausgegriffen unter den vielen, ihnen ähnlichen, die mir im Leben entgegen kamen. Und in der Hauptperson habe ich des Weibes Lebensdrang bis in seine Lebenswurzel selbst hineinverfolgt, wo er wieder eins wird mit des Weibes Intaktheit als Weib und von ihr bedingt ist.¹²³

In weaving her tale, Marholm gathers her characters together in a resort, and although the course of events is condensed and fictionalized, it is perfectly obvious about whom she is writing. Gerda Brandes appears as the beautiful and insanely jealous Hildegard Collander, who spies on her husband through keyholes. Georg Brandes is portrayed in the figure of Siegfried Collander, a vain Don Juan, who leaves books inscribed to him by famous people lying about, so that his guests will find them. Victoria Benedictsson is easily recognized in *Karla Bühnung*, an artist with a limp. Otto von Wetterberg with his blond mustache and distant manner is Ola Hansson and Marholm includes herself in the figure of Lilli Bloom, an unmarried lady from Reval who has been taken into Hildegard's confidence.

Karla Bühnung is a talented violinist and a magnetic personality, who has passed through life "on tour." She has enjoyed the adulation of her fans, but has

¹²⁰ Laura Hansson to Chavelita Dunne, 25 June 1896.

¹²¹ Marholm, "Das Buch der Frauen, etc.," p. 462.

¹²² Laura Marholm, *Karla Bühnung* (München: Albert Langen, 1895), p. 6.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

never allowed herself to become attached to one place or one person. Karla has become discontented with her way of life, and her restlessness reaches a peak one summer's evening at the resort. The atmosphere is very much like that of the midsummer's eve in *Fröken Julie*. At this critical juncture, Siegfried Collander happens by and seduces Karla Bühnung. Unlike *Fröken Julie*, this seduction does not immediately prove to be Karla's undoing. Karla is upset with herself and disgusted by Collander, but she makes plans to continue her tour and intends to go on with her life as before. The situation only reaches a crisis when Otto von Wetterberg declares his love for Karla. Karla sees in Wetterberg her perfect mate, but she has destroyed her chance for happiness with Wetterberg through her dalliance with Collander. Only then does Karla despair of her life. Karla draws Wetterberg's attention to Lilli Bloom, who apparently harbors affection for him:

Sie widerstand der Verführung, der ich verfiel – denn für sie war es keine. Sie ist ein einfaches Lied, auf einer einzigen Oktave gespielt . . . kein raffiniertes Orchesterstück mit Schluchzen und Jauchzen und dem Zusammenklang von zwanzig Instrumenten. Aber diese herbe Frucht, die doch bald so süß sein wird – die begehrt Ihr nicht, Ihr Männer. Erst wenn wir angefault sind unter dem Fingerdruck des Lebens, – erst dann locken wir Euch. Erst wenn wir brennen – dann entzünden wir. Sieh – da geht die Mutter deiner Kinder.¹²⁴

After attempting to bring Wetterberg and Lilli together, Karla goes into the study and shoots herself within view of the audience. Marholm tries to go a step further than Ibsen and Strindberg, whose heroines commit suicide out of the public's sight.

With regard to the biographical angle of the play, one need not go so far as to conclude that Ola Hansson was once attracted to Victoria Benedictsson. Marholm seems simply to be analyzing the case of Benedictsson in terms of what went wrong and what might have saved her. Following this line of reasoning, Marholm comes to the unsatisfying conclusion that Benedictsson met the wrong man at the wrong time: "Das Weib in mir schmachtete nach seinem Weibsein . . . und er kam nicht, dem es sich noch halb unbewußt entgegendrängte, dagegen kam ein anderer . . ." ¹²⁵ The solution Marholm proposes is the solution that worked for her: marriage with Hansson. In this way, Marholm tried to fit Victoria Benedictsson into her general understanding of women, but in order to do so, she could not take Benedictsson's love for Georg Brandes seriously.

Since *Karla Bühnung* was only published in German and never performed, it did not reach a wide audience. For this reason, there was not much critical discussion. *Karla Bühnung* was well received by an anonymous critic in *Upsala Nya Tidning*, who refers to the play as "ett stycke djup kvinnopsykologi med af [sic]

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 121–122.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 128.

sällsynt gripande, dramatisk effekt.”¹²⁶ The reviewer would like to see the role interpreted by Eleonora Duse or Julia Håkansson, a suggestion with which Marholm would certainly have agreed. Alongside this praise, however, one objection is voiced: “Förf. har på sina ställen måhända gått längre i realism än som är förenligt med konstens fordran på måttfullhet och smak.”¹²⁷

Once again, Marholm is accused of poor taste in dealing with sexual themes. More than one reviewer observes that despite Marholm’s earnest wish to see the play performed, a public performance of the play would be impossible because of the scandalous subject matter.¹²⁸ Karl von Thaler describes *Karla Bühnung* as “Ein Drama, dessen Inhalt man kaum zu erzählen wagt.”¹²⁹ Mauthner remarks that men might be amused by the play: “Die Frauen aber könnten das Buch nur mit spitzen Fingern anfassen.”¹³⁰

A critic using the signature of Parvus in *Die Neue Zeit* devoted a substantial article to a discussion of *Karla Bühnung* and Marholm’s attitude toward women. In contrast to Marholm’s fan from *Upsala Nya Tidning*, Parvus maintains that there are “keine psychologischen Zusammenhänge” in the play.¹³¹ Moreover, he objects, “Laura Marholm macht zwei Reduktionen: einmal reduziert sie das Leben auf die geschlechtliche Liebe, und dann wieder die Liebe auf den geschlechtlichen Trieb.”¹³² This same sort of objection was made to Marholm’s previous books, as well as the following observation: “Aus der Vielheit und Verschiedenheit wird eine Allgemeinheit.”¹³³ Hedwig Dohm had also objected earlier to the manner in which Marholm underestimated the diversity of women. This does indeed represent a paradox in Marholm’s writing, since she is a strong adherent to the cult of the individual, but nevertheless makes broad generalizations which are meant to pertain to all women.

Leo Berg, a former acquaintance of the Hanssons from their Friedrichshagen days, sought to interpret *Karla Bühnung* in the light of Nietzschean philosophy. Berg sees in *Karla Bühnung* an incarnation of “das Überweib,” and chooses to give the play special mention in his book, *Der Übermensch in der modernen Litteratur*. Berg writes:

Oder man nehme die freche “*Karla Bühnung*” (1895) von Laura Marholm, ein Drama von rüpelhafter Draufgängerei, dessen Heldin, nachdem sie ihre Lust

¹²⁶ [Anonymous], review of *Karla Bühnung*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 2 March 1896, p. 3. “a piece of deep female psychology with a strangely gripping dramatic effect.”

¹²⁷ Ibid. “The author has perhaps in places gone further into realism than is consistent with art’s demand for moderation and taste.”

¹²⁸ Karl von Thaler, “Neue Romane und Novellen” Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Mauthner, “Poesie des Weibchens.”

¹³¹ Parvus, “Ein Frauendrama und eine Frauenphilosophie,” *Die Neue Zeit*, Jg. 14, Bd. II (1895–1896), p. 58.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

befriedigt, sich durch Verachtung des Befriedigers rächt (früher verachteten die Weiber aus umgekehrten Motiven). Selten ist so nackt und brutal weibliche Gemeinheit dargestellt worden, nie vermutlich von einem Weibe selbst.¹³⁴

Berg's reading of *Karla Bühnung* has been distorted by his thesis that Karla is "ein Überweib." From Marholm's perspective, she is a woman like any other, who is destroyed by her missed opportunity for happiness. Berg is fascinated by the fact that, in a sense, Karla uses Collander and then discards him. She is not shamed by her actions, until they are of importance to Wetterberg. The issue is not that she committed an immoral act, but that she has thrown her affections away on an unworthy object. There is a certain degree of amorality about Karla, which no doubt made Berg think of her in a Nietzschean context.

Between the spring of 1895 and early 1896, Marholm read two books which had a substantial effect on her thinking about women: Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman* and Gabriele Reuter's *Aus guter Familie*. On January 31, 1896, Marholm wrote to Erik Thyselius:

Med det samme sender jeg dem under Korsbaand Havelock Ellis "Man[n] & Weib." Han er vel for Tiden den bedste og mest ansete Populærvideenskabelige Forfatter i psykologisk og samfundsspørgsmaal, særskildt overgaar han betydeligt den Vielschreiber og upaalidlige Lombroso. Kanske han er noget for Sverige. Om de ønsker Autorisation kan jeg godt være Mellemand, da jeg corresponderer med ham [sic].¹³⁵

Only one letter from Laura Marholm to Havelock Ellis has been preserved, so it is difficult to tell whether Marholm is exaggerating her contact with Ellis. In addition to sending him *Das Buch der Frauen*, Marholm also sent Ellis *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* on another occasion. In the above passage, Marholm expresses her rejection of Lombroso, who in *Das Weib als Verbrecherin und Prostituierte* had presented women as naturally inferior to men, cruel, dishonest, selfish, and degenerate. These extremes were unacceptable to Marholm, who, in her own way, had a deep respect for womanhood.

Ellis' central thesis in *Man and Woman* is: "From an organic standpoint, therefore, men represent the more variable and the more progressive element, women the more stable and conservative element in evolution."¹³⁶ Women are the "universal primitive carriers," self-sacrificing and nurturing. Ellis writes:

¹³⁴ Berg, p. 210.

¹³⁵ Laura Marholm to Erik Thyselius, 31 January 1896. "Right away, I am sending you by parcel post Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman*. At this time, he is probably the best and most respected popular science author on psychological and social questions. In particular, he has abandoned considerably that Vielschreiber and unreliable Lombroso. Perhaps he is something for Sweden. If you want authorization, I can certainly act as an intermediary, since I correspond with him."

¹³⁶ Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* (London: Walter Scott, 1894), p. 367.

A large part of the joy that men and women take in each other is rooted in this sexual difference in variability. The progressive and divergent energies of men call out and satisfy the twin instincts of women to accept and follow a leader, and to expend tenderness on a reckless and erring child, instincts often intermingled in delicious confusion. And in women men find beings who have not wandered so far as they have from the typical life of earth's creatures; women are for men the human embodiments of the restful responsiveness of Nature.¹³⁷

It is easy to see what appealed to Marholm about Ellis' writing. Dr. Heinrich Kraft was right to see similarities in their positions. Marholm also felt that men were the creators of culture and women their supporters. More and more, however, Marholm also came to view men as reckless and erring children who were in need of the steady guiding hand of a woman. Ellis places women lower on the evolutionary scale, ergo closer to nature, but he does so in a manner palatable to Marholm. In his way, Ellis is also a great admirer of womanhood. For Cesare Lombroso, woman is congenitally deceptive, cruel, and perverse. For Ellis, women are stable, nurturing representatives of nature.

At one point in his book, Ellis makes an argument that Marholm took very much to heart, especially as she began to lean toward Catholicism. Ellis claims that the decadence of Greece and Rome was brought about by the domination of the male elements in society, which resulted in the degradation of sexuality and maternity: "All true lovers of the artificial and perverse find woman repulsive; 'Woman is natural,' it is written among the sayings of Baudelaire, 'that is to say abominable.'"¹³⁸ On the other hand, the Christianity of the middle ages was feminine and resulted in the idolization of the Madonna and Child. Marholm came to view the feminine, Catholicism, as the antidote to the decadence of the 1890's.

The second great influence on Marholm was Gabriele Reuter's novel, *Aus guter Familie*. Reuter's work affected Marholm profoundly, since she could see so much of herself in the heroine, Agathe. The number of parallels between Agathe and the young Laura Marholm are indeed uncanny. Both disliked the marriage-market rituals of attending balls, both lost a suitor because of financial considerations, both were dependent on moody parents, and both had books locked away from them that were considered a threat to their moral fiber. Both Agathe and Marholm yearned to escape the stifling care of their parents and managed for a time to break away into some artistic circles, only to be dragged back under the parental wings. Gabriele Reuter expertly exposes the oppressions and inhibitions created by the educational policies toward young girls which had been such an anathema to Marholm. The difference between Agathe and Marholm is that Agathe does not make a clean break from her family and does not meet the man who can rescue her from her way of life. As the result of

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 371.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 370–371; 395–396.

accumulated frustrations, Agathe goes insane. In *Aus guter Familie*, Marholm saw a frightening portrait of what her life might have been like had she not moved to Copenhagen and met Ola Hansson.

Previously, Marholm had been accused of not taking into consideration the fate of women who, for various reasons, could not marry, and she had become known for this bias. Franz Servaes writes in a review of *Aus guter Familie*: “Das Los der unverheirateten Frau ist zudem schon seit manchen Jahren in den Mittelpunkt der Debatte gestellt worden, und seitdem Laura Marholm hier mit kecker Hand durchgegriffen hat, sind die Erwartungen auf beiden Seiten nur noch mehr gespannt worden. Solchen Erwartungen kam Gabriele Reuter entgegen.”¹³⁹ Reuter effectively reached her goal of enlightening society about the problems confronting unmarried women, and even succeeded in changing Marholm’s perception of the issue. Reuter’s book heightened Marholm’s sensitivity and sympathy for the plight of single women and caused Marholm to consider acceptable life alternatives for women that did not include marriage.

By the fall of 1895, Albert Langen had published three fairly successful books by Laura Marholm. When Carl Duncker Verlag purchased the rights to Ola Hansson’s *Alltagsfrauen* and *Der Weg zum Leben*, they also expressed an interest in Laura Marholm’s work. According to Marholm’s version of the story, Langen was so anxious not to lose one of his most successful authors that he made two trips out to Schliersee in order to convince her to stay with his company and paid her a 2000 mark advance.¹⁴⁰ Langen, however, was still unwilling to publish *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, and so, Marholm made arrangements with Duncker Verlag for a second edition of the book.

By December 1895, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson had not forgotten the insults he had suffered at Marholm’s hands the previous February, and if he learned of the forthcoming second edition of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, the news certainly did not please him. At this time, Bjørnson made remarks about Marholm in his correspondence that show his enmity for her was very much alive. Bjørnson wrote to his biographer, Christen Collin, about a speech given by Hedwig Dohm in Munich: “En dame fra Berlin (Kladderadatschs datter) har holdt foredrag om kvindesagen her for fuldt hus, og deri har hun brugt mig til at tænde bålet, Laura Marholm skulde brændes på. Gud, for vellyst!”¹⁴¹ Also that winter, the wife of Konrad Telmann, the man who had defended Bjørnson’s honor against Marholm’s assault in *Berliner Tageblatt*, travelled through southern Germany and

¹³⁹ Franz Servaes, “Leidensbekenntnisse eines Mädchens,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 12 June 1896.

¹⁴⁰ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 26 May 1897.

¹⁴¹ Dagny Bjørnson Sautreau, ed., *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons og Christen Collins Brevveksling 1889–1909* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1937), p. 150. “A lady from Berlin (Kladderadatsch’s daughter) has given a lecture about the woman question before a packed house, and she used me to light the bonfire upon which Laura Marholm should be burned. God, what pleasure!”

chose to pay Laura Marholm a visit in Schliersee instead of looking up Bjørnson. Bjørnson let his astonishment over the taste of Telmann's wife be known to his friend: "Aber dass sie statt uns zu besuchen, sendet die Marholm aus, ist dass nicht göttlich!"¹⁴² Konrad Telmann passed on a message from Marholm to Bjørnson, "Die Marholm sagte ihr [Telmann's wife], sie würde Sie gelegentlich ruhig wieder besuchen und sei gewiß, Sie würden sie ganz freundlich aufnehmen, sie verehrte Sie ja immer noch, wie früher, und nur Ihre 'Handschuh'-Theorien müßte sie bekämpfen."¹⁴³ Marholm did not pay Bjørnson a visit, and it is doubtful he would have received her as kindly as she supposed. Telmann even adds salt to the wound by traitorously mentioning to Bjørnson that he liked Marholm's *Buch der Frauen*.

By January 1896, Albert Langen and Dagny Bjørnson were engaged, and Bjørnson already referred to Langen as his son-in-law.¹⁴⁴ At about the same time that the second edition of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* appeared, something soured in the agreement between Langen and Marholm. Whether these two occurrences were linked can only be guessed at through circumstantial evidence. On February 8th, Bjørnson wrote to Harden about what he deemed to be his son-in-law's excessive credulity: "Eben in diesen tagen ist er schlimm bestraft worden. Die Laura Marholm hat ihn überlistet! [sic]"¹⁴⁵ Bjørnson evidently felt that Marholm had somehow swindled Langen out of the 2000 mark advance. Marholm blamed the failure of their agreement on unreasonable demands made by Langen, though she was not specific about what they were: "Plötsligt ställde han diktatoriska krav och krävde underkastelse."¹⁴⁶ Is it possible that Langen thought he had purchased the rights to *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, which he had no intention of reissuing?

On March 10, Albert Langen married Dagny Bjørnson, and that same month, Langen took Marholm to court over the repayment of the 2000 marks. According to Marholm's perspective, immediately after Langen's unexpected change of mood "kom en processtämning med påstående att jag mottagit ett lån av honom. I processen var allt bedrägeri. Givetvis fälldes utslag mot mig."¹⁴⁷ The lawsuit dragged on for an entire year, since the Hanssons had already spent the advance and were unable to return it. Later on, Marholm saw Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's influence behind the case and referred to it as "Bjørnson Processen."¹⁴⁸ After 1900,

¹⁴² Aldo Keel, ed., *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen, I. Teil*, p. 324.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 325.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1n2.

¹⁴⁵ Aldo Keel, ed., *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson und Maximilian Harden. Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), p. 38.

¹⁴⁶ Laura Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 31 January 1919. "Suddenly he made dictatorial demands and demanded submission." See also: Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 26 May 1897.

¹⁴⁷ Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt." "came a lawsuit claiming that I had received a loan from him. In the trial, everything was fraud. Of course, the verdict was pronounced against me."

¹⁴⁸ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 9 November 1900.

Marholm was prone to make rash and unwarranted accusations about conspiracies against her, but it is quite possible her suspicion of the Bjørnson-Langen connection may have had some basis in reality. The public, as well as Marholm, seemed to see a connection between the reissuing of *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* and Langen's suit against Marholm, since the book sold out as soon as the case was made public knowledge.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, Langen did not always listen to Bjørnson's advice, as in the case where he continued to publish the novels of Marcel Prévost despite Bjørnson's protests.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps Langen had his own reasons for pressing his suit. He may have quite simply needed the money for the founding of his journal *Simplicissimus*. Regardless of what ulterior motives might have lain behind the case, Marholm did owe Langen the money, which was the decision the court reached the following spring.

Despite the inconvenience of the trial, Marholm made plans for another work of fiction: *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*. Marholm was given the idea for the title by an episode from *Aus guter Familie*. As a confirmation present, Agathe is given a copy of Paul Thumann's *Des Weibes Leben als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*, a catechism of the expectations that society imposes on young women. *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* is meant to provide an alternative to these expectations. Once again, Marholm draws from her own experience in order to propose possibilities for other women. Marholm describes her target audience for the book as follows: "Wenn ich Töchter hätte und sie wären fünfzehn, sechzehn Jahre alt, würde ich ihnen in dieser Form einen Einblick ins Leben geben."¹⁵¹

Many of the segments in the novel had been published as separate novellas in newspapers and journals during 1895. One of the segments, "Otteringning" or "Frühläuten," was performed as a one-act play on May 9, 1896, in Göteborg's Stora Teatern, with Julia Håkansson and T. Svennberg playing the roles. Apparently, since Julia Håkansson was unable to play Karla Bührung, she consoled herself and Marholm by performing this short piece. Unfortunately, the reviews were not very good. Because of the problems Marholm was having with her German publishers, *Frau Lilly* was the only one of her books to appear in Swedish before it appeared in German. Marholm offered the novel to Albert Bonnier in June, touting it as "en meget snäll Bog, med hvilken De strax kan berede Dem paa 2 Oplag [sic]."¹⁵² Marholm had the project finished by October and *Frau Lilly* appeared before Christmas 1896 in Swedish. Marholm claims that she wanted to write "ein Weihnachtsbuch," which meant something that was uncontroversial and would sell well.¹⁵³ The Langen case had clearly worried her about financial

¹⁴⁹ Ola Hansson, "Mein letzter Verleger," *Die Zukunft* 36 (1901), p. 166.

¹⁵⁰ Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Briefwechsel mit Deutschen*, p. 41.

¹⁵¹ Laura Marholm, "Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter," *Die Zukunft*, 17 (1896), p. 572.

¹⁵² Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 9 June 1896. "a very nice book, for which you can immediately prepare yourself for two editions."

¹⁵³ Marholm, "Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter," p. 572.

matters. *Frau Lilly* was published in German by Duncker Verlag and in Norwegian by Aschehoug in 1897.

Marholm's narrative technique in *Frau Lilly* was shaped by her preference for the novella format. Each segment can be read independently, and they sometimes differ greatly in narrative style. "Warten" follows the protagonist's moods through several hours of waiting for a promised visit from her fiancé; "Bubselchens Weihnachten" is a lively family portrait, in which the characters are treated with fond irony by the narrator; "Frühläuten" is a brief drama with stage directions and dialogue. There are even large chronological gaps between vignettes, but all these varied segments are joined together by the central theme of the book: Frau Lilly's personal development. When the work is viewed as a whole, the changing narrative voice and the fluctuating series of vignettes make a striking stylistic impression. *Frau Lilly* is a novel and not just a collection of short stories. Furthermore, Marholm has managed to abandon her famous "ensidighet" to a degree and turns her perceptive eye not only toward the flaws in a single woman's existence but also toward the shortcomings of married life. *Frau Lilly* is perhaps Marholm's best work of fiction and merits some detailed attention.

In the first segment, "Todtes Leben," the young protagonist, Lilly Mayland, pays a visit on "ein altes Fräulein," Luise Reibnitz. The two have a heart-to-heart talk, and it appears that Luise's life has not differed greatly from Agathe's in *Aus guter Familie*. Luise had her opportunities to marry, but because of her lack of inclination or because of finances, the offers had come to naught. Her family then decided that she would be of most use as a nurse to their ailing mother. She spent her life in self-sacrifice, but now finds herself in poor health, being taken care of by another sacrificing woman. Luise observes resignedly, "Das Leben ist ein ewiges Entsagen."¹⁵⁴ Lilly is despondent after her talk with Luise, since she recognizes in Luise's life her own probable fate. Lilly "weinte in hilfloser Angst vor dem Ausblick in ihre leere, graue Zukunft."¹⁵⁵

The next scene, "Junge Mädchen," takes place at a birthday party for a young girl. All are gossiping about their marriage prospects, and a girl named Nanny Geißler confides in Lilly: "Ich würde Jeden nehmen, Jeden, unbedingt der mich versorgen könnte . . . und wenn es ein Sechsziger [sic] wäre."¹⁵⁶ Lilly is offended by such talk and proclaims: "Ich würde in einer Dachstube glücklich sein und keine Millionärsehe beneiden . . ."¹⁵⁷ Subsequently, Lilly learns through the party conversation that a man she has loved, who entered a marriage for financial reasons, has died of typhus in Rome. The ideal of a marriage for love appears to be rendered impossible by the practical considerations of life.

¹⁵⁴ Laura Marholm, *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* (Berlin: Carl Duncker Verlag, 1897), p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

In "Warten," Lilly, who has begun to find her first gray hairs, is engaged. Easter is a family holiday and she has no place to go, since she has not heard from her fiancé. She spends an agonizing day wandering about the city, trying not to appear as someone with no destination. The unbearable day is brought to an end by the arrival of her fiancé, because now she has a place where she belongs. This well-written vignette illustrates how society makes single women feel superfluous. Only through a man can they become full participants in life.

In "Weiße Fläche," Lilly, who is now Lilly Holm, the wife of Karl Holm, sinks into a reverie about one of her female friends from before her marriage, "ein in ungläubigem Warten gealtertes, an Körper und Seele dürr gewordenes Mädchen," who claimed to have found her life's fulfillment in philosophy.¹⁵⁸ Lilly's reverie is interrupted by the waking of her baby. While nursing the child, Lilly feels, "ein kitzelnder, seliger Schauer über den ganzen Körper."¹⁵⁹ This segment is the clearest continuation of her thesis in *Das Buch der Frauen*, and at the same time, brings that book into perspective. Most of the essays Marholm wrote about unfulfilled intellectual women, she wrote as a young mother and wife. At the time, it was difficult for her to imagine that anyone could be happier than she.

"Bubselchens Weihnachten" is one of the most interesting segments in the novel. Marholm portrays Lilly and Karl Holm spending their first Christmas together with their 3-month-old son. The holiday is less than idyllic and is depicted with a warm sense of humor. Since she has no experience with small children, Lilly is totally dependent on Françoise, the French nanny, who has frightened Lilly with tales of the horrible diseases a small child might contract. The young couple goes into town to complete their Christmas shopping, but all is not entirely harmonious between the two. Lilly is chastised by Karl for wanting to kiss him in public. Money is in short supply, but Karl nonetheless makes extravagant purchases of liqueurs and spirits. Lilly secretly pawns a piece of her jewelry so that she can buy her husband a gift, but Karl discovers that he does not have enough money left for Lilly's present. Karl is fiscally irresponsible, and Lilly is left with the problem of making ends meet. She resorts to subterfuge in order to spare Karl the worry. On Christmas Eve, Lilly has changed into a seductive red dress just to please her husband. Suddenly, Bubselchen begins to wail, and the pair is at a loss to quiet him since the French nanny is at home with her family. Karl gets the idea that Lilly's red dress irritates the child and commands her to take it off: "Wie 'ne alte Person so blödsinnig sein kann!"¹⁶⁰ Lilly is deeply hurt by this, and as she changes into her shabbiest dress, she thinks, "Gott! – sie konnte ja so gerne gehen! Sie konnte Bubselchen nehmen und gleich gehen! Sie konnte ihr Kind schon ernähren, – dazu brauchte sie ihn gar nicht!"¹⁶¹ Once the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 138.

nanny is retrieved and Bubselchen stops crying, domestic peace returns to the household.

The interest of this piece lies in Marholm's realistic view of married life. In her previous works, a marriage of love was presented as a state of ideal bliss and utter devotion. The marriage between Lilly and Karl is certainly a love-match, but all is not roses. Lilly becomes irritated by always having to subordinate her will to her husband's, particularly when she sees that he is not acting in both of their interests. Instead of confronting Karl with the problem, she tries to rectify things without his knowledge. Yet, despite these conflicts between the pair, the situation returns to normal, and the sense of domestic harmony compensates for the previous troubles.

"Eheliche Liebe" is written in the same vein as "Bubselchens Weihnachten," but without the humor. "Eheliche Liebe" depicts a domestic quarrel. Lilly is fed up with Karl: "Sie wollte sich nicht in einemfort [sic] einsperren lassen, sie wollte sich nicht ewig über das freuen müssen, was ihn freute, und über das ärgern, was ihn ärgerte. Sie wollte auch was für sich haben. Sie war auch ein Mensch! Sie hatte auch ihre eigene Natur . . ." ¹⁶² When Karl comes home, Lilly lets him know exactly what is bothering her. First, "Ich habe sechs Jahre mit dir in der Einöde gelebt." ¹⁶³ Lilly is a city person, but she has lived out in the country for her husband's sake. Second, Karl is always ready to spend money on a good meal in a restaurant or on liquor, but there is no money whenever Lilly needs something, such as new clothing. Third, Karl is always badgering her about cooking his favorite dishes, something she does not enjoy. Lilly threatens to leave Karl for another man, Leerwig, but Karl robs Lilly of this threat by casting aspersions on Leerwig's manhood. Karl remarks, "Ihr habt Alle ein Gelüstchen zum Ehebrechen," to which Lilly replies, "Ja – (trotzig) das haben wir auch." ¹⁶⁴ The quarrel comes to an end when Lilly is forced to admit that she loves and is physically attracted to her husband. But Lilly admonishes Karl not to take advantage of this love, "Die eheliche Liebe, die ist für keine Frau, an der was dran ist, ein sanftes Ruhe-kissen für faule Männer." ¹⁶⁵ Lilly is clearly ready to fight to maintain her individuality in the marriage, but this rebellious streak is overcome by her sexual devotion to her husband.

In "Frühläuten," Lilly and Karl have been married for 10 years. Karl has been away on a business trip, and Lilly waits up, translating his book, in case he returns. Karl does come home, and there is a tender scene in which they say how much they have missed each other. Karl's attempts to found a journal have failed, and he thanks Lilly for having stayed with him in good times and bad, enabling him to turn down publishing offers that would have compromised his

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 158.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 160.

integrity. Lilly confesses a fear of their mortality, of the day when they will no longer have each other.

In the final vignette, “Was ist der Mensch . . .?” an old acquaintance from Lilly’s childhood drops by the Holms’ house in the countryside. The friend has married for social position and confesses her marital miseries to Lilly, but then dares to look down upon Lilly’s rustic way of life. The moral seems to be that Lilly, despite her lack of material wealth, is a richer woman than her affluent friend.

Frau Lilly manages to avoid the extremism and the proselytizing tone of Marholm’s other works. Certainly, her basic tenet, that women are happiest as wives and mothers, is still present, but *Frau Lilly* finally takes into account the diversity of women and honestly confronts the fact that there are drawbacks to the married state. Hedwig Dohm had accused Marholm of ignoring the dimension of financial dependence in marriage, which takes away something of matrimony’s rosy glow. In *Frau Lilly*, Marholm admits that this is a problem, though she does not actually solve it. Lilly has the ability to support herself financially should the need arise, but she is of the opinion that material wealth is less important than personal satisfaction. Nonetheless, the issue of money raises its ugly head each time the Holms quarrel.

The reception of *Fru Lilly* in Sweden was mixed. Some of Marholm’s critics enjoyed the unusual narrative effect of the novel, while others did not appreciate it. A. Jensen writes, “Där finnas många luckor i denna utvecklingshistoria, men dessa lakuner endast öka den konstnärliga stämningen. Det är en intelligent bok för en intelligent publik.”¹⁶⁶ Hjalmar Söderberg reviewed the book for *Ord och Bild* and issues this double-edged opinion: “I berättartekniken är fru Marholm verkligen i hög grad modern, ehuru icke i allra bästa mening.”¹⁶⁷ H. E. Larsson simply finds the narrative to be “abrupt” in places.¹⁶⁸ Of the eight segments which make up the novel, the most warmly recommended were: “Väntan” (“Warten”), “Lillpysens julafton” (“Bubselchens Weihnachten”), and “Den äktenskapliga kärleken” (“Die eheliche Liebe”). Significantly, these are the vignettes in which Marholm departs most greatly from her usual platform. Hjalmar Sandberg perceptively notes that, at times, the book is reminiscent of Gustave Droz’s domestic parody in *Monsieur, madame et bébé*.¹⁶⁹ The similarity

¹⁶⁶ A. Jensen [A-d. J], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts Tidning*, 10 February 1897, B-edition, p. 1. “There are many gaps in this story of development, but these lacunae merely accentuate the artistic mood. It is an intelligent book written for an intelligent public.”

¹⁶⁷ Hjalmar Söderberg, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Ord och Bild: Dagboken*, 3 (1897), p. 10. “In terms of her narrative technique, Mrs. Marholm is truly modern to a high degree, although not in the very best sense.”

¹⁶⁸ H. E. Larsson [-pt], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, 23 December 1896, evening edition, pp. 1–2.

¹⁶⁹ Hjalmar Sandberg [Hj. Sdg.], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 23 April 1897, morning edition, p. 3.

is in all likelihood not accidental. Three years later, Marholm would begin working on some memoirs to be entitled: “Die Conversion von Monsieur, Madame et Bébé.”

Although the narrative style received a degree of praise, some familiar objections were raised with regard to the ideas presented in *Frau Lilly*, which was interpreted very much in the shadow of *Das Buch der Frauen*. H. E. Larsson sums up Marholm’s philosophy as follows: “Qvinnans uppgift är att blifva maka och mor. Hennes verksamhet på andra områden, såsom författarinna, talare, lärare, såsom arbetare för federationen, qvinnosaken m. m. är blott surrogat för dem som förfelat sin hufvudsakliga kallelse i det ena eller andra afseendet.”¹⁷⁰ Once again, Marholm is perceived to depict women as bound by their physical being, without regard to their spiritual needs. Larsson chooses not to notice that Lilly’s spiritual needs are indeed given attention; however, Lilly is repeatedly led to compromise her intellectual needs, because of her emotional and physical dependence on Karl. Hjalmar Sandberg makes a familiar objection to “en ton af något på samma gång sensuellt och patologiskt, som ibland blir motbjudande.”¹⁷¹ Marholm claimed to Bonnier that she was writing a “nice book,” but she was nevertheless too candid about the sexual relationship between Lilly and Karl to suit public taste. After a generally positive review, the reviewer in *Stockholms Dagblad* is forced to remark, “Boken innehåller åtskilligt, som möjligen kan lämpa sig för en maka eller moder, men alledeles icke för en ungmö.”¹⁷²

Marholm had received criticism for her vague portrayal of Jössing in “Was war es?,” and once again, some critics of *Frau Lilly* object to the way in which Marholm depicts the men of the book, describing them as “manliga dimfigurer.”¹⁷³ Mystified, H. E. Larsson points out that Lilly wins the man she loves and is happy, despite the fact that her husband is an impoverished gourmand with a fondness for alcohol and “oaktadt han vidare anser henne ej ha någon annan uppgift än laga hans mat, sköta hans barn och se till honom.”¹⁷⁴ The shortcomings of Lilly’s husband are made abundantly clear to the reader, and Lilly is

¹⁷⁰ Larsson, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*. “Woman’s purpose is to become a wife and mother. Her activities in other areas, such as author, speaker, teacher, as a worker for the association for women’s rights, among other things, are merely surrogates for those who have failed their primary calling in one respect or another.”

¹⁷¹ Sandberg, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*. “a tone of something at the same time sensual and pathological, which is at times repulsive.”

¹⁷² [Anonymous], review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*, *Stockholms Dagblad*, 23 December 1896, p. 3. “The book contains various things that might possibly be appropriate for a wife or a mother, but certainly not for a young girl.”

¹⁷³ E. Iam, “Laura Marholm: Fru Lilly som flicka, maka och ungmor,” *Nordisk Revy*, 3 (1897), p. 235. “nebulous masculine figures.”

¹⁷⁴ Larsson, review of *Fru Lilly som ungmö, maka och moder*. “regardless of the fact that he does not consider her to have any other purpose than to cook his food, take care of his children, and tend to him.”

not blind to them herself. But despite his flaws, her husband plays an important role: he is the *object* that gives Lilly's life meaning. Based on a reading of *Frau Lilly*, E. Iam sums up Marholm's attitude toward men as: "Dyrkan af mannen såsom man, men ringaktning för honom såsom person."¹⁷⁵ This is a theme that permeates all of Marholm's writing, but it is impossible to tell how conscious she was of this trait.

While Marholm was working on *Frau Lilly*, she began making plans for another major non-fiction work about women: *Zur Psychologie der Frau*. She announced her idea for the project to Albert Bonnier in February 1896, and the following December she informed him: „Jeg er nu snart færdig med det Arbeide jeg betragter som min hovedbog: Til Kvindens Psykologi [sic]."¹⁷⁶ In light of the timing, one might suspect that Marholm hoped for another popular financial success because of the threatening court case with Langen. No doubt, financial considerations were a factor; however, *Zur Psychologie der Frau* meant something special to Marholm. She explained to Helena Nyblom, a Danish-Swedish author and conservative writer on women's issues: "Jeg har ikke lagt megen Vægt paa Fremkomsten af mine andre Bøger paa svensk: 'Kvinnor' stjal Adolf Bonnier, de to andre er flygtig skrevne Sager, – men 'Psykologien' er Resultatet af et helt Livs Søgen, Feltagelser og vunden Indsigt [sic]."¹⁷⁷ Although *Zur Psychologie der Frau* did not sell as well as *Das Buch der Frauen*, it did generate a considerable press debate. The book appeared in German (1897), Swedish (1897) and English (1899). Next to *Das Buch der Frauen*, it was her most successful work. This success was primarily due to the controversy that arose in its wake.

Zur Psychologie der Frau is largely a complicated patchwork of old and new influences. Marholm claims that the first eighty pages were written four years earlier, which would have been about the time she had her falling out with Samuel Fischer over a book which even then Marholm intended to call *Zur Psychologie der Frau*.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, the influences of the intervening years, especially the contact with Havelock Ellis, Max Runge, Gabriele Reuter and Ellen Key, are very clear. When she sent a copy of *Zur Psychologie der Frau* to Helena Nyblom, Marholm described yet another strong influence:

Bogen er fremkommen i en af Katholicismens hovedland og under min egen nærmere Bekjendskab med Katholicismen. Jeg er ikke som De gaaet tilbage til

¹⁷⁵ Iam, p. 234. "The worship of man as man, but contempt for him as a person."

¹⁷⁶ Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 22 February 1896; Laura Marholm to Albert Bonnier, 29 December 1896. "I will soon be finished with the work I consider to be my main book: Studies in the Psychology of Women."

¹⁷⁷ Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 17 March 1897. "I have not laid much weight on the publication of my other books in Swedish: Adolf Bonnier stole 'Women,' the other two are hastily written things, – 'Psychology' is the result of an entire life's searching, mistakes, and gained insight."

¹⁷⁸ Compare Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 17 March 1897 with Laura Marholm to Arne Garborg, 11 June 1893.

Moderkirken, men jeg er dog bleven stærkt og dybt greben af Catholicismens Livs anskuelse, Culturindhold och levende Continuität [sic].¹⁷⁹

It would be only a matter of time before Marholm would convert to Catholicism, and *Zur Psychologie der Frau* can give a hint as to some of her reasons for converting.

The arguments in *Zur Psychologie der Frau* are manifold, complex, and sometimes contradictory, making a concise summation of its gist rather difficult. The book is divided into three sections. In the first section, Marholm attempts to describe the psychology of her age à la Max Nordau. Civilization is in a state of degeneration, and one of the central causes of this crisis is the confusion of the natural sex roles. This is an idea which Marholm had found in Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman*. Ellis describes women as universal carriers and Marholm similarly calls "das Weib" "der tragende Organismus."¹⁸⁰ In fact the verb "tragen" in its various forms is a leitmotif throughout the work. Man is "der schöpferische Organismus," which approximates Ellis' definition of man as the progressive element in evolution.¹⁸¹

The degeneration of the sex roles began with the Reformation, Marholm maintains. Catholicism incorporated the sex drive, sensuality, into itself: "Im Katholicismus sublimierte sich der Geschlechtstrieb und hinterließ sich in seinen Bauten, Bildern, Musik als einheitliche Cultur."¹⁸² Sins of the flesh could be atoned for and forgiven. For Protestantism, the sex drive became something shameful and disgusting. The immediate result of this shift in attitude was the witch hunts. Women were persecuted for the sexual desire they aroused in men. Furthermore, "Der natürliche Fehltritt des Weibes wurde zum unnatürlichen, das uneheliche Kind wurde der Schandfleck der Schandflecke, und das Mädchen, das Mutter geworden war, ein Abschaum ihres Geschlechts."¹⁸³

In the current age, women are educated "zur Geschlechtslosigkeit."¹⁸⁴ Their own sexuality is kept a secret from them. Thus, three types of women have evolved. The "Détraquée" is "der mit Unwille tragende Organismus," who fulfills all of the wifely and maternal duties society dictates for her, but without taking pleasure in the task. The "grande Amoureuse" is "der mit Hingebung tragende Organismus."¹⁸⁵ The "grande Amoureuse" is the only category of woman

¹⁷⁹ Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 17 March 1897. "The book arose in one of the main centers of Catholicism and during my own closer acquaintance with Catholicism. I have not, as you have, gone back to the mother church, but I have nevertheless been powerfully and deeply taken with the Catholic view of life, cultural content, and living continuity."

¹⁸⁰ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau, Theil I* (Berlin: Carl Duncker Verlag, 1903), p. 29.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

able to love, and therefore comes closest to Marholm's definition of natural womanhood. The third female type is the "Cerebrale": "Es kann sich nicht vergessen, nicht das Bewußtsein seiner selbst verlieren, sich nicht hingeben in einer Extase, sich auch nicht unterwerfen."¹⁸⁶ These qualities are understood by Marholm to be a shortcoming, not an advantage. In the natural state of affairs, "Das Weib, das liebt, denkt mit dem Gehirn des Mannes, den es liebt."¹⁸⁷ The "Cerebrale" tries to think with her own brain, but only attempts such a thing, "Weil es keinen Mann hat, mit dessen Gehirn es denken kann."¹⁸⁸ On this point, Marholm has not changed her views since *Das Buch der Frauen*, in which Marie Bashkirtseff, Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, and Sonja Kovalevsky were all intelligent women, looking for a man to give them "einen Inhalt." The "ensidighet" which Marholm allowed to drop in *Frau Lilly* returns in *Zur Psychologie der Frau* with a vengeance.

The second section of the book is rather like *Das Buch der Frauen*, in that Marholm provides case studies of women from the current age. The women discussed are: Hilma Strandberg, a telephone operator who became an author; Gabriele Reuter's protagonist Agathe from *Aus guter Familie*; the Countess Adeline Schimmelmänn, who dedicated her life to altruistic deeds; Stella Kleve, an author and a love interest from Ola Hansson's youth; and Annie Besant, sometime socialist turned theosophist. Most of these essays were articles Marholm had published previously.

There is nothing very new or surprising about Marholm's analyses of these women, except for one point, which is summed up in the following statement: "Denn im letzten und tiefsten Grunde wird und kann sich das Weib nur für geschlechtliche und religiöse Dinge wirklich erwärmen."¹⁸⁹ Religion has not loomed large on Marholm's horizon before. Marholm's change of focus is clearly the result of personal changes, but also of the necessity to propose fulfilling life alternatives for unmarried women. Her unsatisfying solution is essentially: "Get thee to a nunnery!" Marholm, in fact, tries to make a distinction between a nun and an "alte Jungfer." Nuns are single by choice, she argues, whereas old maids are not. It is inconceivable to Marholm that a woman might choose to remain single without a religious motive.

In the third section of the book, Marholm returns to an analysis of her era, but this time with an eye to proposing future solutions to the current decadent trends. She begins the section with the following proclamation:

Ich gehe von dem früher Ausgeführten aus, daß das Weib nie, nirgends und in Nichts einen Ausgangspunkt schaffen oder bezeichnen könne, – daß Alles, was sie thut, leistet, oder veranlaßt, immer nur eine Ableitung, eine Anknüp-

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

fung oder Weiterführung von etwas zuvor Geschaffenem, Vorhandenem, Gegebenem darstellt, daß sie auf geistigem Gebiete denselben Gesetzen unterworfen ist wie auf physischem; und ob sie den physischen sich unterwerfe oder nicht, an den geistigen wird dadurch nichts verändert.

Sie hat nur eine, ihr eigenthümliche Eigenschaft: das, was sie empfängt, kann sich schön oder häßlich, stark oder schwächlich, gescheidt oder dumm, gut oder schlecht in ihr auswachsen, – das wird ganz wesentlich beeinflußt von ihrer eigenen Substanz, die sie dazugiebt; – aber auch das bestveranlagte Weib ist nicht im Stande einen falschen Gedanken in einen richtigen zu verwandeln oder eine schlechte Saat in eine gute Frucht.¹⁹⁰

The first point to be made about this statement is that in Marholm's view, woman is still determined by her biology. Throughout this third section, Marholm discusses feminine biology in a pseudo-scientific manner, but regretfully, she seems to have drawn most of her information from Dr. Max Runge's *Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität*. Of course, one of Runge's main pieces of supporting evidence for the theories in his book was Marholm's *Das Buch der Frauen*. The mutual admiration society of Runge and Marholm only serves to perpetuate their common prejudices, which have only a very slight relation to scientific truth.

The second interesting point is Marholm's unambiguous statement that women are incapable of original thought. She is obviously untroubled by the implications this view has for her own work. The consequence of such a position, however, is that women are relieved of ultimate responsibility, not only for the society in which they live, but also for what they become or do. Marholm blames the minds of "überstudirter, schwächlicher, anlehnungsbedürftiger Männer, in einer zerfallenen, verrohten, untergrabenen Gesellschaft" for having created the idea of women's emancipation.¹⁹¹ They are responsible for having planted a "bad seed" in the feminine psyche.

One "scientific" principle which Marholm has learned from Runge is the following: "Es [das Weib] ist alle 28 Tage durch mehrere Tage, wenn auch nicht krank, so doch in seiner Leistungsfähigkeit geschwächt. Das Weib bedarf ferner zur Verrichtung seiner Berufsarbeit: der Schwangerschaft, der Geburt, des Säugens des Kindes, der Schonung, und des Schutzes."¹⁹² Marholm extrapolates from this: ". . . Schutz. Darauf basirt das ganze Verhältniß des Weibes zum Manne."¹⁹³ In the interest of the species, men are obligated to protect women from the demands of emancipation, which entail spending vital biological

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 261–262.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Runge, *Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität*, p. 7. The doctor also has an interesting prescription for the "dried up" old maid: "Es giebt nun ein wirksames Mittel, diesen Process des Welkens aufzuhalten, ja die fast entschwundene Blüte wieder zurückkehren zu lassen: das ist ein regelmässiger geschlechtlicher Verkehr." (pp. 9–10.)

¹⁹³ Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, p. 279.

energy on physical labor or intellectual pursuits. The purpose of women is children, and those women who do not accept their lot resort to prostitution and emancipation: "Prostitution und Emanzipation gehen progressiv neben einander her; sie sind zwei Stämme aus derselben Wurzel, – der Verzweiflung des Weibes an dem ihm auf Erden beschiedenen Theil."¹⁹⁴

Herein lies a second shift in Marholm's thinking since *Das Buch der Frauen*. The first was a shift from the emphasis upon men as the only possible source of a woman's fulfillment to allowing both men and religion to share that role. The second shift is a change in woman's *raison d'être* from her love for a husband to the bearing of children. Actually, this shift even takes place within the covers of *Zur Psychologie der Frau* itself, between the first and the third sections. Most of the first section was written four years earlier than the third, and Marholm pursues there her old theme of the central importance of the erotic in a woman's life. Men bring out the best qualities in women. In the third section, however, men are reduced to the protectors of women and their children. Men, "immer recht eitel und leicht zu dupiren," are in general not treated very kindly in the final portion of the book.¹⁹⁵ Evidently, Marholm did not perceive this contradiction between her treatment of men in the first and last sections.

This new emphasis on children is no doubt due to the influence of Ellen Key. Nowhere is Key's presence more keenly felt than in the section entitled "Die productive Arbeit des Weibes," which is largely a restatement of Key's *Missbrukad kvinnokraft*. The primary task for women is to raise children, and when they are unable to have their own, they should be given work that makes the best use of their "Allmuttergefühl."¹⁹⁶ Marholm proposes the establishment of institutions for the care of illegitimate children, and further: "Krankenhäuser, Armenküchen, Pflegeanstalten aller Art."¹⁹⁷ Marholm has a peculiar fantasy that these enterprises will be funded by philanthropists.

The motivations for many of the themes in the third section can be traced back to the stress that Marholm underwent during the Langen case. This section was the only one entirely written during that time. When Marholm releases women from all culpability for their own actions, one may detect Marholm's own wish to be released from having to answer for the 2000 mark advance. In Marholm's admonishments to men to protect women, a wish to be relieved of her financial burdens may be perceived. In fact, in a letter to Maximilian Harden, Marholm directly appeals to "die Schutzbedürftigkeit der Frau und die Ritterlichkeit des Mannes," so that Harden might help her by taking up a collection so she can pay Langen.¹⁹⁸ Her philanthropic fantasies no doubt extended to her own case as well. Moreover, the new negativity toward men in this third section

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 305.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 329.

¹⁹⁸ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 6 April 1897.

might be interpreted as suppressed anger toward Hansson for not being able to support his wife, an anger to which Marholm could never have openly confessed, since she had often proclaimed herself willing to live in a hovel, if only she could be by his side.

Zur Psychologie der Frau evoked a strong reaction from critics. Quite apart from objections to the substance of Marholm's arguments, reviewers were unanimous in proclaiming the book to be poorly written. Some observe, "daß das Buch viel Widersprechendes und logisch Lückenhaftes aufweist."¹⁹⁹ Others point to a vagueness in Marholm's writing, "Skada blott, att det myckna jonglerandet med filosofiska termer gör boken så svårläst, stundom obegriplig."²⁰⁰ More than one reviewer remarks that her language becomes so bizarre at times that she slips into unintentional humor in phrases such as "hennes medvetet omedvetna medvetande."²⁰¹ These shortcomings were exacerbated in the Swedish version by a very poor translation by Ola Hansson. Apparently, after having lived most of the last seven years in Germany, he had forgotten his Swedish. Oscar Levertin describes the language in *Till kvinnans psykologi* as "ett språk, som står det mesopotamiska långt närmare än det svenska."²⁰² Moreover, the book does not escape the old criticism of "ensidighet" and poor taste. One reviewer complained of "en viss brist på finkänsla."²⁰³ Levertin colorfully seconds this opinion: "en människa med litet finkänslighet och bildning knappast kan uthärda det [hennes uttryckssätt] utan illamående," and further, he confesses a desire to "kasta boken i väggen."²⁰⁴

Some objections were registered about the scientific pretensions of *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, since the subjectivity of the book was so striking. Dr. Adams-Lehmann is amazed by Marholm's "Mangel an naturwissenschaftlicher Bildung," and calls Marholm's idea – that nervousness, anemia and depression in women from age 17 to 20 is brought about by not being married – "schrecklicher Unsinn."²⁰⁵ This was one of the notions Marholm garnered from Max Runge.

¹⁹⁹ H. B. Adams-Lehmann, "Zur Psychologie der Frau," *Die Neue Zeit*, 15 Jg, Bd. II (1896–1897), p. 591.

²⁰⁰ J. A. "Bokvärlden," *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning*, 17 December 1897, B-edition, p. 1. "It is only a pity that the frequent juggling of philosophical terms renders the book difficult to read, and occasionally incomprehensible."

²⁰¹ J. A., "Bokvärlden," "her consciously unconscious consciousness"; Adams-Lehmann, "Zur Psychologie der Frau," p. 593; Adine Gemberg, "Laura Marholms *Psychologie der Frau*," *Das Magazin für Litteratur*, 66 (1897), p. 644.

²⁰² Oscar Levertin, "Litteratur," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 27 December 1897, A-edition, p. 2. "a language which is much closer to Mesopotamian than Swedish."

²⁰³ [Anonymous], review of *Till kvinnans psykologi*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 24 December 1897, p. 3. "a certain lack of refinement."

²⁰⁴ Levertin, "Litteratur." "a person with a little refinement and education can scarcely endure it [her manner of expression] without feeling ill" . . . "throw the book against the wall."

²⁰⁵ Adams-Lehmann, "Zur Psychologie der Frau," pp. 591, 596.

Adine Gemberg objects to another of Marholm's scientific observations: "Es ist eine tendenziöse Unwahrheit, zu behaupten, die denkende, arbeitende Frau sei entweder steril, oder ihre Kinder seien entartet."²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, this was a common notion at the time, held by both Runge and Key among others, though it has no foundation in scientific fact.

Adams-Lehmann notices and is perplexed by Marholm's change in attitude toward men between the first and third sections of the book: "Auf der einen Seite hat es den Anschein, als sehe sie im Manne den einzigen Lebensinhalt des Weibes, als führe sie alle Leiden und Krankheiten des Weibes auf ihr unbefriedigtes oder enttäushtes Liebesbedürfnis zurück;" but then, at other points, "das Kind wird gewissermaßen als Endzweck des Lebens behandelt, den die Frau oft gern ohne Dazwischenkunft des Mannes erreichen möchte."²⁰⁷ Marholm's attitude towards men was changing, and most likely, she had not yet resolved these problems for herself, hence the confusion.

Furthermore, both Adams-Lehmann and Gemberg consider Marholm's suggestion – that women should be allowed to raise their children in peace and economic security, while men shield them from all the difficulties of existence by working to feed them – to be highly unfair to men. Adams-Lehmann agrees that during child-bearing years, a woman might need special consideration, but as for the rest of her life, "Was befreit sie von dem allgemeinen Menschenloos [sic], im Schweiß ihres Angesichts Brot zu essen?"²⁰⁸ Marholm excuses women from the work force, since working in an office, or as a telephone operator, does not agree with womanly nature. Gemberg responds to this: "so kann ich dagegen der Verfasserin verraten, daß auch der Mann seinen Schalterdienst und seine Arbeitsstunden im Bureau nicht zu den Genüssen seines Daseins rechnet, sondern zu eben derselben harten Notwendigkeit, die auch die Frau veranlaßt, auf solchem Posten auszuharren."²⁰⁹ Both Adams-Lehmann and Gemberg recognize in Marholm's writing a desire to escape from the dreary necessities of life, a wish which was in large part shaped by Marholm's desire to extricate herself from the *Langen* case. This same desire expresses itself in the feminine utopia Marholm describes, in which women organize their own separate matriarchy in order to perform all manner of altruistic activities without the intervention of men. One reviewer remarks, "Denna storslagna och vackra, om än väl fantastiska framtids-tanke försonar oss med mycket . . ." ²¹⁰ Others consider the idea too fantastic to be taken seriously.

²⁰⁶ Gemberg, "Laura Marholm's *Psychologie der Frau*," pp. 637–638.

²⁰⁷ Adams-Lehmann, "Zur *Psychologie der Frau*," p. 592.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 595.

²⁰⁹ Gemberg, "Laura Marholms *Psychologie der Frau*," p. 638.

²¹⁰ J. A. "Bokvärlden." "This grand and beautiful, albeit fantastic, view of the future reconciles us to a great deal."

Zur Psychologie der Frau was successful in the sense that it received much attention, albeit in the form of negative criticism. The book marks a transition in Marholm's work. She had become weary of the life of a misunderstood genius, which brought with it large doses of financial insecurity. The dream she had had since her youth of facing life's tribulations beside her beloved had lost its romance. All of these factors heightened her inclination toward the Catholic church, which she perceived as a protective organization, able to shelter its members from worldly matters. This desire for escape is quite understandable given Marholm's circumstances, but it is a sign of vulnerability. Up to this point, Marholm had always been an emotionally strong person. Although Marholm's thought is permeated with fantastic wishes, there is nothing pathological about it – yet. However, her steps in retreat are her first steps toward mental instability.

The year-long court case with Langen took its toll on Marholm. She complained to Harden, “Nur ein Ende möchte ich mit der Quälerei durch Langen haben, die mich mehr als einmal auch körperlich krank gemacht und mir viele Arbeitsstimmungen zerstört hat.”²¹¹ On another occasion, she described the inconvenience of the trial: “Ich bin inzwischen ein Jahrlang, da Langen meine Auflagen verweigert, in meinen Einnahmen zurückgebracht, durch die fortwährenden Informationen, die die Advokaten verlangten, in meiner Arbeit unablässig gestört und durch den sehr unvorhergesehenen Ausgang des Prozesses in die größte Geldverlegenheit versetzt.”²¹² Marholm felt that at the same time Langen demanded money from her, he prevented her from earning it.

In January 1897, Marholm was ordered by the court to pay Langen 1200 marks, which was what Marholm still owed from the 2000 mark advance. Marholm simply did not have the funds. She appealed to Duncker Verlag to pay the sum, but they would do this only if Marholm signed over all of the royalties to *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, which Marholm refused to do. She asked Maximilian Harden for help. She remembered the collections which had been taken up for Garborg and Strindberg and hoped that something similar could be done for her. Harden wrote to Bjørnson, “Albert Langen handelt gegen Frau Marholm nicht schön, finde ich. Er bedrängt die Arme wegen Geld. Es ist eine verwickelte Geschichte.”²¹³ In April, Marholm was faced with the ultimatum of paying Langen or having her property confiscated. A Munich resident by the name of Littenaur intervened, and the confiscation was delayed.²¹⁴ In May, Marholm wrote to Harden again about taking up a collection on her behalf, but this request came to naught.

Finally, instead of waiting for the return of money, which had long since been spent, Langen tried another tactic: “Über die Rückerstattung der Frau Marholm

²¹¹ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 6 April 1897.

²¹² Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 26 May 1897.

²¹³ Keel, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson und Maximilian Harden. Briefwechsel*, p. 85.

²¹⁴ Laura Marholm to Maximilian Harden, 11 April 1897.

gewährten Vorschüsse hatte Langen mit Duncker ein Abkommen getroffen.”²¹⁵
As a result of this agreement, the Langen episode in Marholm’s life came to an end. Now, the Hanssons became involved in litigation with Duncker Verlag. Exhausted by their setbacks in Germany, the Hanssons left Schliersee in June to spend the summer with Hansson’s family in southern Sweden.

²¹⁵ Floerke, p. 18.