

Edith Södergran's Modern Virgin:  
Overcoming Nietzsche and the Gendered Narrator

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation is an interdisciplinary study within a comparative Nordic-Germanic framework that proposes new approaches to reading representations of gender in European literary modernism and philosophy via the works of Finland-Swedish poet Edith Södergran and Friedrich Nietzsche. I posit that Södergran's avant-garde poetry presents feminine, masculine, and androgynous narrators that subvert the function of misogyny in Nietzsche's philosophy, which she had fervently read and incorporated into her writing. Surely, Södergran must have faced obstacles as she confronted Nietzsche's ostensible *ad feminam*; however, her progressive poetry, I contend, illustrates how Nietzsche's own discourse is constructed by androgynous rhetoric that exhibits paradoxically helpful appropriations of the female body. I therefore suggest that Södergran's reception of Nietzsche ushers in a transvaluation of the "modernist body" that overcomes the cultural body of Man and Woman as she opens up philosophical discourse with the feminine other in Nietzsche's otherwise phallogocentric discourse. Using a shared framework of post-structural feminist theory, narratology, and poetry criticism, this dissertation attempts to overturn long-standing interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy and to revise Södergran's mythologized biography and traditional analyses of her poetry.

In chapter one, I attempt to separate Edith Södergran from her romanticized biography and refigure the female writing subject in history in a way that de-emphasizes her glorified, personal afflictions and instead elucidates Södergran's creative efforts to redefine gender. In chapter two, I posit that Södergran's lyrical narrator is not an exclusively female subject but a speaker that is multiple: Södergran's narrators are voiced by female, male, and androgynous bodies; which leads to a type of transgendered experience of narration.

Chapter three focuses on Nietzsche's representations of women that I suggest influenced Södergran's writing. I attempt to show that Nietzsche's misogyny is actually a latent discussion of the cultural body that has been constructed and maintained by Western caricatures of femininity and masculinity. In chapter four, I examine the paradoxical representations of women in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* [Thus Spoke Zarathustra]. I look at what Zarathustra's hyper-masculine rhetoric can mean to a female reader who may be seeking ways to demystify essentialist constructions of sexual difference, and I explore the implications that Zarathustra's prophecy of the *Übermensch*—an advanced, idealistic human being—has for the human body.

In the final chapter, I look at the narratological techniques that Södergran and Nietzsche employ in their poetry. Through a combined narratological and feminist approach, I suggest that Södergran and Nietzsche meticulously construct disruptive archetypes of the cultural body via multi-gendered narrative voices. I argue that Nietzsche and Södergran transcend normative narrative devices and introduce unprecedented post-gendered bodies and voices into the European modernist tradition. Their particular depictions of the post-gendered body thus resonate with contemporary theories and philosophical discussions of sex and gender.

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## Introduction

In this dissertation, I argue that Finland-Swedish author Edith Södergran used androgynous narration in her poetry as a literary and intellectual response to the hyper-masculine and often misogynistic rhetoric of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, which she avidly read. Edith Södergran has made a vast and an enduring impression on Nordic literature despite having a short career that began in 1916 and ended with her early death in 1922.<sup>1</sup> Södergran is perhaps the most influential player in the development of Finland's literary modernism,<sup>2</sup> and she has been subsequently translated into several major languages, including multiple English translations. Influenced by German expressionism, French symbolism, and Russian futurism, Södergran produced metaphorically-rich poetry in free verse as part of her literary revolt against the outmoded artistic establishments in Scandinavia during the early twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Södergran's bold rejection of traditional lyrical structures and motifs in her five poetry collections has notably influenced generations of writers in Finland and Sweden; however, critical studies of Södergran's poetry have oversimplified the forcible presence of gender and intellectual thought in her writing. This study seeks to explain the significance of gender in Södergran's avant-garde poetry by analyzing her depictions of female, male, and androgynous speakers in relation to her reception of Nietzsche's philosophy. In this light, we can see Södergran as an early female critic of Nietzsche and his frequently overlooked philosophy of gender and the cultural body.

Södergran's debut *Dikter* (1916) incited passionate literary and critical responses that effectively led to the advent of modernism in Finland's literature.<sup>4</sup> The sudden surge of modernist literature in Finland was perhaps attributable, in part, to Finland's insular character and pre-war national turmoil. The country's internal division began in the early twelfth century when the kingdom of Sweden colonized Finland and caused a new cultural identity to emerge: the Finland-Swedes, a Swedish-speaking minority that struggled, and still struggles, to maintain a Finnish *and* Swedish identity—yet paradoxically *neither* a Finnish or Swedish identity. The problem of national identity persisted when Sweden lost control over Finland and the latter became a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809. By the time Södergran's writing debuted, Finland's civil war was on the horizon as the Social Democrats, commonly called the "Reds," and the non-socialist conservative "Whites" battled over leadership of Finland after it acquired sovereignty in the wake of the Russian Empire's collapse. Södergran, a multilingual Finland-Swede, spoke a Finnish dialect of Swedish (as most Finland-Swedes do), which caused her writing to be stylistically and syntactically unique. These linguistic nuances, coupled with the author's concern with cultural identity, gender, and philosophy, richly complemented her novel style and controversial avant-gardist intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> Södergran's final collection *Landet som icke är* was published posthumously in 1925 and edited by fellow Finland-Swedish authors Elmer Diktonius and Hagar Olsson.

<sup>2</sup> Before becoming an established literary movement in Scandinavia, modernist qualities had already shown up in the writing of Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), August Strindberg (1849-1912), and Sophus Claussen (1865-1931). Pär Lagerkvist (1891-1974) also contributed to the development of modernism with *Ängest*, published the same year as Södergran's *Dikter* (1916).

<sup>3</sup> Södergran was not the first, however, to write free verse poetry in Swedish, as Vilhelm Ekelund began writing free verse 1902, followed by Ivar Conradson. In Denmark, Johannes V. Jenssens *Digte* (1906) included free verse as well. (Pettersson 21).

<sup>4</sup> In "The Paradoxical Poetics of Edith Södergran," Ursula Lindqvist argues that Södergran's poetry has been too easily situated in Scandinavian literary history as a breakthrough in Finland's literary modernism; instead, she argues that Södergran's work is avant-garde.



Edith Södergran's modernist manifesto "Individuell konst" was especially groundbreaking. Published in the Swedish-language newspaper *Dagens Press* upon the release of her second collection *Septemberlyran* in 1918,<sup>5</sup> Södergran's manifesto called for a transfiguration of literature that would usher in a new wave of art created by the *individual*: "Jag uppmanar individerna att arbeta endast för odödligheten (ett falskt uttryck), att göra det högsta möjliga utav sig själva – att ställa sig i framtidens tjänst [...] Jag hoppas att jag icke blir ensam med det stora jag har att hämta" (qtd. in Tideström: 169). "Individuell konst" was the first European manifesto written by a woman, making Södergran's effort all the more unique to the literary landscapes of early twentieth century Europe (Lindqvist 813).<sup>6</sup> However, Södergran's contemporary critics did not, for the most part, embrace her trailblazing style. Södergran's poetry and adjacent manifesto were relentlessly attacked, and she was even publically psychoanalyzed by male reviewers at the height of "Fejden kring Septemberlyran"<sup>7</sup>; yet the controversy worked to her advantage. Södergran eventually garnered healthy support from literary colleagues, and she ultimately secured her position in Nordic literary history as a pioneer of modernism.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, however, Södergran scholarship has perpetually served as part-time biography, unapologetically merging Södergran the author with Södergran the woman.<sup>9</sup> Södergran's visionary poetry has thus been too long perceived as a diary of daydreams romanticizing an affinity for nature (and cats!), as she lamented unrequited love and tuberculosis. Surely, an understanding of history, including life history can be quite rewarding for literary criticism, yet such approaches to Södergran's work dangerously attribute one speaker to the entirety of her poems, thus obfuscating the rich complexity of her poetic expression. For this reason, part of my study will rely on narratology to help determine the multiplicity of Södergran's lyrical voices. To acknowledge multiple voices in Södergran's writing not only calls into question the gender of her speakers, but also helps to distinguish the biographical author from her art. For, in spite of recent attempts to disrupt the tradition of reading Södergran as a lonely, dying young woman, speculation about Södergran's personal life abounds throughout insightful and critical approaches to her work. For example, Ebba Witt-Brattström's influential *Ediths jag* (1997) adamantly declares her study to be one which "vill bryta med den unket biografiska tolkningstradition som ännu dominerar Södergranforskningen" (10), and her study certainly does much to lead Södergran scholarship in the non-biographical direction that Birgitta Holm effectively promoted in her essay, "Edith Södergran and the Sexual Discourse of the fin-de-siècle."<sup>10</sup> However, I find Witt-Brattström's study to contain subversive rhetoric and methodology reminiscent of (whom she herself calls) the "grand old men"

<sup>5</sup> "Individuell konst" was originally published in *Dagens Press* 31 December 1918. It has been reprinted in Tideström and Evers, *Hettan*.

<sup>6</sup> Lindqvist notes American manifestos by female writers: Mina Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" (1914) and Gertrude Stein's "Composition as Explanation" (1926). Lindqvist uses Susan Suleiman's 1990 reading of Hélène Cixous' "Le Rire de la Méduse" (1975) to define manifestos, which includes writing with an "I" who represents a group. I do not suggest that Södergran's collective "I" speaks exclusively for women. See Lindqvist 830.

<sup>7</sup> See Tideström, ch. "Fejden kring Septemberlyran" for a look at the backlash Södergran received after the publication of her manifesto and *Septemberlyran*.

<sup>8</sup> In "The Concept of Modernism in Scandinavia," P.M. Mitchell notes that two standard histories on Swedish literature, Alf Henriques *Svensk litteratur* (1944) and Alrik Gustafson's *History of Swedish Literature* (1961) fail to discuss Finland-Swedish poets at all. Mitchell points to the political and social unrest of isolated Finland as the possible reason for not including the Finland-Swedish poets, especially Södergran. (244)

<sup>9</sup> The first Södergran biography by Gunnar Tideström (1949) is comprehensive but includes biographical interpretations of her poetry that sometimes leads to pure fantasies about her life, thus compromising the reliability of the biography itself.

<sup>10</sup> See Holm.

who founded Södergran's biographical criticism.<sup>11</sup> One unfortunate consequence of reading Södergran's lyrical "I" as one speaker, or as Witt-Brattström describes as accentuating "konstansen i verket, genom att fokusera det märkliga jag som där talar" (11), is the implicit designation of one gender and one sex to all of Södergran's narrators: "Med Södergran föds det moderna jaget - som kvinna" (14). To acknowledge the force of an autonomous female composing subject in Södergran's poetry is surely rewarding for a feminist critique of her writing, but I suggest that Södergran's depictions of gender transcend self-essentializing conceptions of female subjectivity. I therefore posit in chapter four that each poem has its own teller that relates its own story and that soldering the narrators into a unified, or inherently unifying, subject reduces the poignant vocalizations made by female, male, and androgynous speakers in Södergran's oeuvre. Furthermore, I contend that Södergran's lyrical expressions of androgyny simultaneously propagate *and* contradict essentialist figurations of gender in Nietzschean fashion by constructing traditional narrative modes of representing men and women—including the physical, historical, and ideological categories that define them as such—through irony and parody. I maintain that by using language against itself, both Nietzsche and Södergran are able to rhetorically construct new figurations of bodies—bodies that are independent of their historical and cultural meaning.

A comprehensive study of gender in Södergran's writing would be ill-informed, of course, without addressing the historical context from which her poetry stemmed. The rise of women's movements in the Nordic countries during the final decades of the nineteenth century was still gaining momentum during Södergran's generation. Even with successful progress being made in women's liberation movements—including the literary triumphs of women writers during Scandinavia's Modern Breakthrough—influential thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Otto Weininger were producing harmful ideas that affirmed women's inferior social and cultural status, and Sweden's own August Strindberg propagated images of women that many understand as misogynist. "Karakteristiskt att se huru hon, som fått välja alla banor, endast vald de usla; som kejsarinna och drottning har hon varit tyrannisk, obetydlig eller usel, som abbedissa ränksmidat med präster, som skådespelerska och lindanserska visat sin kropp, som prostituée och hustru sålt sina gunster" (153). Yet it was undoubtedly Nietzsche who most influenced Södergran's work. Nietzsche's philosophy is, to say the least, profound, but what Nietzsche wrote about women has set off turbulent responses, and, contrary to some claims, is indeed important to his philosophy. In the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, for example, Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins justify the omission of feminist readings in the study by merely stating that "no single treatment of Nietzsche and feminism, in English, has yet managed to define the parameters of that debate" (Higgins and Magnus 14). Additionally, Walter Kaufmann, in his influential study of Nietzsche, states: "Nietzsche's writings contain many all-too-human judgments—especially about women—but these are philosophically irrelevant" (Kaufmann 84). Kaufmann further adds that arguments about Nietzsche and Woman are "trivial" and "impertinent" (84). Nietzsche has perplexed philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and sociologists for generations, and anything Nietzsche claimed, or did not claim, has been heavily debated—forever dividing interpretations of

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<sup>11</sup> Witt-Brattström opens *Edith jag* by criticizing the "grand old men" (9) of Södergran research, such as George C. Schoolfield and Gunnar Tideström.

his philosophy.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore vital, if not inevitable, that studies of Nietzsche and gender become part of Nietzsche's critical canon.

As a woman writer in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Södergran must have faced obstacles in her reading and writing as she confronted Nietzsche's ostensible misogynistic philosophy and boldly incorporated it (sans misogyny) into her verse. Her poems depict, for example, Dionysian artists, a staunch Zarathustrian mentality, and even Nietzsche himself ("Vid Nietzsches grav").<sup>13</sup> Given the androcentric nature of Nietzsche's writing and Södergran's own affinity for his concept of the patriarchal *Übermensch*, it is not surprising, then, that the problem of gender resounds in her writing. In an early German poem, Södergran's narrator remarks, "Wär ich ein Mann, hätt ich ihm längst/Von meiner Glut geschrieben;/Weil ich ein Mädchen bin, darf ich/Nicht offen lieben" (*Dikter och aforismer* 292). This poem, written when she was only fifteen years old, clearly shows Södergran's frustration with double standards of gender, an attitude that became more complex and defiant as her poetry increasingly confronted paradoxical constructions of Woman in both Nietzsche's philosophy and turn-of-the-century Nordic society.

Indeed, Södergran was utterly captivated by Nietzsche's philosophy, both artistically and personally, yet she was not influenced to the extent that Nietzsche played the role of "andlig fader och retorisk älskare för Södergran under hela hennes författarskap," as Witt-Brattström has claimed (174). Showing direct similarities between the two writers has already been frequently and successfully done and at best illustrates the thorough familiarity that Södergran had with Nietzsche's body of work.<sup>14</sup> But to continue this approach would be fruitless to the development of Södergran scholarship, since the import of her poetry in such comparative studies is often overshadowed by Nietzsche's presence. Instead, my study is a searching examination of how Södergran's poetics helped to evolve notions of gender in post-Nietzschean Europe, and I attempt to show this without replicating the image of Södergran as a Nietzsche-obsessed woman—whether biographically or rhetorically—but by reading her as a progressive writer in the dawn of European modernism.

### *Nietzschegalna fruntimmer*

Södergran particularly admired Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1886-88) and she is not coy about her affinity for the aggressively anti-Christian yet messianic Zarathustra and his heralding of the *Übermensch*. I contend that Södergran's creative response to Nietzschean ideology is so rich and so fresh after Nietzsche's death that her poetry may lay some significant groundwork for present feminist studies of Nietzsche's discussions of the cultural body. To begin, critics have long retaliated against, disavowed, and exhaustively interpreted and reinterpreted Nietzsche's curious ushering of gender into modernity. Luce Irigaray, for example, confronts Nietzsche head-on in her mesmerizing *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1980). Her text attempts to destabilize Nietzsche's phallogocentric discourse by presenting itself as Woman—in the shape of amorous fluid—who interrogates Nietzsche in lyrical form. Irigaray opens her challenge with:

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<sup>12</sup> In *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, Magnus and Higgins explain that there are usually two types of Nietzsche critics: they that see a positive, reconstructive side of Nietzsche that looks at the success of his attempted transvaluation of all values, and they that identify the "deconstructive aspect of his work, the sense in which he sought to disentangle Western metaphysics, Christianity, and morality in order to display what he took to be their reactive decadence" (3).

<sup>13</sup> See *Dikter och aforismer* 77.

<sup>14</sup> See Enckell, *Esteticism och nietzscheanism i Edith Södergrans lyrik*.

And you had all to lose sight of me so I could come back, toward you, with an other gaze. And, certainly, the most arduous thing has been to seal my lips, out of love. To close off this mouth that always sought to flow free. But, had I never held back, never would you have remembered that something exists which has a language other than your own. That, from her prison, someone was calling out to return to the air. That your words reasoned all the better because within them a voice was captive. Amplifying your speech with an endless resonance.

I was your resonance. (*Marine* 3)

Irigaray's critique is a richly poetic response to Nietzsche's writing that "covers debt to the maternal" (Oliver, *Feminist Interpretations* xvi) and accuses Nietzsche of trying to get a way with writing with the hand of a woman. Then there is Frances Nesbitt Opper who, in a more traditional approach, offers a refreshing look at Nietzsche's concern with gender:

What looks like misogyny may be understood as part of a larger strategy whereby 'woman-as-such' (the universal essence of woman with timeless character traits) is shown to be a product of male desire, a construct. Throughout the texts, 'woman' as a concept referring to female persons is erased as a matter we need to take very seriously, although she may still exist as a joke, and as history. Misogynist, indeed. (Opper 1)<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, feminist critics read Nietzsche differently, and it is certainly daunting to work through Nietzsche's veiled discussion of Woman, yet understanding his figurations of the feminine other is vital to exploring uncharted regions of his philosophy of the cultural body. Additionally, I do not suggest that Södergran's reception of Nietzsche in her own artistic aspirations is merely reactionary or even straightforward. Quite simply, Södergran's poetry and particular understanding of Nietzsche needs to be taken more seriously. Accused of being among the many "Nietzschegalna fruntimmer,"<sup>16</sup> Södergran and her female contemporaries, such as Swedish feminist writer Ellen Key, have historically been deemed unable to read Nietzsche—or any man, for that matter—intelligently. A closer reading of Södergran's poems will demonstrate that this is simply not the case.

Female intellectuals were harshly criticized, if not entirely dismissed, during Södergran's generation, and the case against women's aptitude was only strengthened after Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche (1846-1935) oversaw and eventually manipulated the publication of her brother's later works. Male critics attacked Förster-Nietzsche for her obvious mishandling of Nietzsche's texts, yet they blamed her inability to grasp and fairly distribute his philosophy on the premise of her sex.<sup>17</sup> Rudolf Steiner, who founded the religious movement Anthroposophy that Södergran coincidentally followed before her death, said of Förster-Nietzsche:

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<sup>15</sup> Opper claims that Nietzsche's texts eliminate "man" and "woman" altogether. I strongly agree with her ideas that Nietzsche is looking beyond "man" and "woman" and that Nietzsche's texts suggest we reconsider and overcome dichotomies (like man and nature); however, our particular interpretations and their outcomes differ significantly.

<sup>16</sup> Following the publication of "Individuell konst," critic Gustav Johansson, under the pen name "Jumbo," responded to Södergran's manifesto in *Hufvudstadsbladet* by declaring his "uppriktiga fasa för Nietzschegalna fruntimmer." See Tideström 169.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Kaufmann writes, "One wonders how [Förster-Nietzsche's] success was possible and why the many learned men who produced monographs on various aspects of Nietzsche's thought deferred so humbly to this woman" (4).

Daß Frau Förster-Nietzsche in allem, was die Lehre ihres Bruders angeht, vollständig Laie ist. Sie hat nicht über das Einfachste dieser Lehre irgend ein selbständiges Urteil. [...] ihrem Denken wohnt nicht die geringste logische Folgerichtigkeit inne; es geht ihr jeder Sinn für Sachlichkeit und Objektivität ab [...] Nein, sie glaubt in jedem Augenblicke, was sie sagt. Sie redet sich heute selbst ein, daß gestern rot war, was ganz sicher blaue Farbe trug. (Steiner 520)

Lou Andreas-Salomé made headway with a critical study of Nietzsche's life and thought, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (1894), yet her personal relationship with Nietzsche has often obscured her analytic approaches to his work. Without sympathizing with Förster-Nietzsche's revisions and additions to Nietzsche's texts, or essentializing Andreas-Salomé's position as a female critic, it is relevant to note that Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, however radical it may be, has not been devalued because of his sex (nor could it be). Using masculinity as a mouthpiece, Nietzsche defined his ideal disciple as unquestionably male: "Ist es nicht besser, in die Hände eines Mörders zu gerathen, als in die Träume eines brünstigen Weibes? Und seht mir doch diese Männer an: ihr Auge sagt es—sie wissen nichts Besseres auf Erden, als bei einem Weibe zu liegen" (ASZ 69). In spite of the fact that Nietzsche seems to write for an exclusively male audience, I suggest that Södergran not only saw through Nietzsche's misogyny, she consequently teased out the androgynous rhetoric with which Nietzsche used to construct his hyper-masculine philosophy. What is more, I do not intend to interpret Nietzsche's discussion of the body in a way that offers Södergran permission to take him on. In Witt-Brattström's chapter *Nietzsche som kvinna*, she identifies, once again, Nietzsche as the *andlig fader* from whom Södergran receives her poetic strength, or will, and identifies writing as the very device Södergran uses to communicate with "the father." Establishing Södergran as Nietzsche's intellectual daughter, or even patient, demeans the richness of her work. Instead, I see Södergran sophisticatedly engaging the philosopher and contributing to his thought in her verse. Upon reading Södergran's poetry with caution, a rediscovery of Nietzsche is imminent, yet equally significant is a transvaluation of bodies, gender, and their relation to each other that emerges in Södergran's literary triumph over the cultural body. Södergran's poetry, then, is not merely a case of artistic transference with Nietzsche in the physician's chair,<sup>18</sup> but a testament of the body unbounded by gender—a body that additionally recasts essential aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy in critical and innovative ways.

### *Du sökte en kvinna och fann en själ*

Writing during a time when gender was sex and sex was gender, Nietzsche and Södergran noticeably present bodies and voices that show, via appropriation, the arbitrary designation of gender in the body. This resonates with Judith Butler's claim that "when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and a *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one" (*Gender Trouble* 6). I posit that Nietzsche's attack on Woman is juxtaposed, and even layered, with his appropriation of her body, making not only his discourse androgynous but the heart of his philosophy, the *Übermensch*, his very

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<sup>18</sup> Witt-Brattström argues that Södergran's reception of Nietzsche's work is an example of transference: "snarare handlar det om en erotisering, där Södergran på Nietzsche överför känslor som inte är utan aggressivt självhävdande övertoner, eftersom hon avser att använda Nietzsche i egen sak" (Witt-Brattström 172).

own modern androgyne. The *Übermensch* and Södergran's own appropriation of it illustrate how gender becomes fluid when the corporeal surface comprises both sexes or qualities of both sexes, thus confusing the social substance of gender. Performing both genders as much as they deplete them, Nietzsche's and Södergran's texts therefore highlight the historical paradox of imposing gender onto bodies according to socio-cultural decree.

In 1918 Södergran opened her second collection, *Septemberlyran*, with the following declaration:

Att min diktning är poesi kan ingen förneka, att det är vers vill jag inte påstå. Jag har försökt bringa vissa motsträviga dikter under en rytm och därvid kommit underfund med att jag besitter ordets och bildens makt endast under full frihet, d.v.s. på rytmens bekostnad. Mina dikter äro att taga som vårdslösa handteckningar. Vad innehållet vidkommer, låter jag min instinkt bygga upp vad mitt intellekt i avvaktande hållning åser. Min självsäkerhet beror på att jag har upptäckt mina dimensioner. Det anstår mig icke att göra mig mindre än jag är. (*Dikter och aforismer* 65)

In a way, Södergran's attitude toward her art echoes how I approach her work. Looking at the inscriptions of her *handteckningar*, I analyze the structure and organization of their *dimensioner* with narratological tools. Whether Södergran's *handteckningar* really are *vårdslösa* is, in fact, a pertinent discussion to have. The structuralist beginnings of narratology regarded semiotics as an aspect or function of the text, an agent that moves the narrative but lacks characteristics that engage the interpreter with context. In this scenario, evaluating the worth or meaning of Södergran's poems has no place. However, Mieke Bal's description of narratology as "conceived as a set of tools, as a means to express and specify one's interpretive reactions to a text" does recognize interpretation as an effective narratological device (*Narratology* x). Moreover, Susan S. Lanser's inclination "Toward a Feminist Narratology" joins narratology with feminist criticism, a move that challenges the most fundamental intentions of the scientifically-aimed theory: feminist criticism deals largely with the (gendered) characters and context of a text, whereas early narratology simply does not deal with context.<sup>19</sup> Lanser suggests that feminist criticism and the experience of women's texts could, in fact, better inform narratology, whereas feminist criticism might benefit from the methods and insights of narratology ("Toward" 675). All of this presupposes the existence of a female voice at the same time as it questions it. Lanser argues that all texts have been universally men's texts, and her call for a feminist narratology is, I suggest, still urgent. But what is feminist narratology? Robyn Warhol defines it as "the study of narrative structures and strategies in the context of cultural constructions of gender" ("The Look" 5). Ruth E. Page adds that "one of the central tenets of feminist narratology is its insistence on the contextualization as a means of understanding the interplay between gender and narrative form" (2). Moreover, a feminist reading asks for a rewriting of narratology, one that acknowledges women as producers and interpreters of texts.<sup>20</sup> With regard to my study, Södergran will be read as a producer of texts who does not always indicate female authorship. Analyzing Nietzsche's poetry, for that matter, will show that the philosopher produces texts that are not

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Gerald Prince states: "[Narratology] is therefore not so much concerned with the history of particular novels or tales, or with their meaning, or with their esthetic value, but rather with the traits which distinguish narrative from other signifying systems and the modalities of these traits" ("Narratology" 4-5).

<sup>20</sup> See Lanser, "Toward a Feminist Narratology."

necessarily indicative of male authorship. My approach will keep the distinction between producer and implied author clear, while acknowledging that Södergran's role as a female interpreter of Nietzsche's texts is nevertheless relevant.<sup>21</sup>

In my first chapter I attempt to debunk the Södergran myth that began since her first critics psychoanalyzed the author instead of critically assessing her work. I include basic biographical information only to undermine its effectiveness in the interpretation of her poetry. Keeping the spirit of Södergran's manifesto in mind, "Vad som gör många av dessa dikter dyrbara är att de stamma från en individ av en ny art" (qtd. in Tideström: 168), I present Södergran's work in a way that reassesses her contribution to the development of modernism in Finland as an avant-garde feminist writer whose art engages intellectual conversation with the socio-political and philosophical issues of the time.

In my second chapter, I reevaluate the construction of female subjectivity in Södergran's debut collection *Dikter*, which is not traditionally read in Nietzschean light but rather understood as conventional "feminine" poetry about love and nature. I show how Södergran's avant-garde poetics use androgynous narrators with Nietzschean flair to simultaneously construct and undermine cultural dichotomies of gender. This chapter explains how Södergran's poems are vocalized by a plurality of speakers and not merely by a constant singular and exclusively feminine voice.

In my third chapter, I focus on the discussion of Woman in Nietzsche's philosophy, and I show how women writers and scholars have responded to his work while positing Södergran as a forcible player in Nietzschean criticism. I argue that Nietzsche's misogynistic discourse primarily functions as a way to conceal his androgynous rhetoric that presents paradoxically positive appropriations of the feminine other. Fearful of appearing "feminine," Nietzsche's philosophical voice overcompensates with phallogocentric discourse that inevitably locks Woman in metaphor. However, by taking on the oppositional voices of the Eternal Feminine and Emancipated Woman, Nietzsche produces an ironical dialogue that allows Woman to break free from metaphor and *narrate from a distance*. This chapter presents Nietzsche as a double-voiced, androgynous philosopher of the body that he is ever preparing for modernity.

In my fourth chapter, I examine the paradoxical representations of Woman in Nietzsche's published works<sup>22</sup> with particular focus on *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which I regard as the culmination of Nietzsche's garbed philosophy of the body and as the text that most influenced Edith Södergran's lyrical expressions of gender. I look at what Zarathustra's hyper-masculine messages can mean to a female reader contemplating ways to demystify essentializing constructions of sexual difference, and I explore the implications that Zarathustra's prophecy of the *Übermensch*, an advanced human being, has for the human body. Through Nietzsche's double-voiced rhetoric, the *Übermensch* body illustrates a corporeal overcoming of masculinity and femininity and becomes the Modern Androgyne. After showing how Nietzsche's writing becomes androgynous, I explore how feminist and gender theory can inform and be informed by Nietzsche's latent discussion of the

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<sup>21</sup> In "Historical and Implied Authors and Readers," William Nelles explains the relationship among the historical author, implied author, historical reader and implied reader: "It is the historical author's physical act, not the narrator's, that produces the text; the implied author's implicit intentions, not those expressed by the historical author or narrator, are the definitive source of meaning in a work: these intentions can only be entirely grasped by the implied reader, though the historical reader may speculate about them" (22).

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche criticism is often divided by those who find his notes more valuable than his published works and vice versa. Although I consider both valuable to understanding Nietzsche's thought, my project largely looks at the published works to which Södergran had access.

cultural body. I also look at how feminist theories of corporeal materialism can illuminate Nietzsche's discussion of the body and its mystery of sexual difference. I include postmodern and post-structural feminist criticism, especially Judith Butler's theories of gender performance, to show how Nietzsche's philosophy privileges materiality of the body (i.e. a body stripped of socio-cultural authority) over existential aesthetics of the self.

In my final chapter, I embed feminist theory, narratology, and poetry criticism to examine Södergran's and Nietzsche's respective lyrical expressions of gender. The application of narrative and gender theory to poetry proves to be an invaluable approach to literary criticism and needs to be advanced. I therefore posit that narrative utterances are just as performative as "the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler, "Performative" 519). By severing the author from the speakers of the texts, the sex of narrators are no longer fixed, yet articulating notions of gender remains possible through a naturalization of gender received by the reader. Careful not to essentialize these gendered voices, I seek to explain the ways in which narrators perform gender through direct and indirect utterances and particularly how Södergran and Nietzsche perform "narrated gender" in satirical and subversive ways.

Upon exploring the biological and cultural body in Södergran's and Nietzsche's writing, I do not intend to identify a particular meaning or ultimate *truth* about their illustrations of gender. Instead, I pursue their figurations of the body, especially Woman's body, cautiously, and I optimistically posit that Nietzsche and Södergran both imagine a body that has yet to occur. A body that is both pre- and post-gender, and perhaps even post-human.



## Chapter I

### *Jag är ingenting än märm:* Refiguring Edith Södergran's Literary Body in History

#### Introduction

Credited for ushering modernism into Finland's literary landscape with her irregular, non-rhyming verse, Swedish-speaking poet Edith Södergran was an unlikely force in a traditionally male-dominated profession. Södergran made bold public calls for the advancement of "individual art" by writers who could tear down antiquated art forms with one sweep of the emerging collective modernist spirit. Not surprisingly, however, Södergran's avant-garde campaign was met with heated opposition, yet she eventually overcame the rampant criticism—which relied heavily on public scrutiny of her sex—and managed to inspire Nordic writers for decades to come. Södergran has since become one of Finland's most widely read authors despite the fact that she produced relatively little: *Dikter* debuted in 1916 when Södergran was twenty-four years old, and she wrote three more collections before her death in 1923: *Septemberlyran* (1918), *Rosenaltaret* (1919), *Framtidens skugga* (1920). Her final collection, *Landet som icke är*, was published posthumously in 1925. She also published two collections of aphorisms, *Brokiga iakttagelser* (1919) and *Tankar om naturen* (1920). In spite of her short career, Södergran's daring free verse, unique sense of language, and ornamented biography distinguished her from her contemporaries and secured her place in the canon of Nordic literature.

Regrettably, Södergran's poetry has been traditionally interpreted by critics (initially mostly male ones) who found meaning in her writing via unfounded speculation about her romantic relationships (or lack thereof) and terminal illness. And even with contemporary feminist scholars seeking to do away with uncritical biographical interpretations, Södergran's poetic voice is still essentialized as a feminine persona and treated as an autobiographical confessor. But the concept of gender and female subjectivity in Södergran's writing runs deeper than her critics have purported. For example, Södergran's earliest "teenage" poetry shows thoughtful reflections on gender, sex and sexuality, "Die schöne Dame, das Weltall/Hat heute Menstruation,/Ein rotes Fleckchen schimmert/Am weissen Hemde schon/Wir sehen nur die Hemd(en?)/Wir sehen nur das Kleid" (*Dikter och aförismer* 282).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is more than ironical that, as a woman writer, Södergran's greatest intellectual opponent was also her greatest inspiration: Friedrich Nietzsche. Because Södergran studied Nietzsche's groundbreaking philosophy so ardently and openly incorporated it into her poetry, she must have confronted his notorious misogynistic remarks:

Die Dummheit in der Küche; das Weib als Köchin; [...] Das Weib versteht nicht, was die Speise bedeutet: und will Köchin sein! Wenn das Weib ein denkendes Geschöpf wäre, so hätte es ja, als Köchin seit Jahrtausenden, die grössten physiologischen Thatsachen finden, insgleichen die Heilkunst in seinen Besitz bringen müssen! Durch schlechte Köchinnen—durch den vollkommenen Mangel an Vernunft in der Küche ist die Entwicklung des

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<sup>1</sup> The uncertainty of *Hemd(en?)* is in the original poem.

Menschen am längsten aufgehalten, am schlimmsten beeinträchtigt worden: es steht heute selbst noch wenig besser. Eine Rede an höhere Töchter. (Nietzsche, *JGB* sec. 234)

Rather than disavowing this powerful yet disturbing force in Nietzsche's writing, Södergran, I contend, responded critically to his rhetorical misogyny (and contemporary European society) via provocative illustrations of female, male, and androgynous narrative voices. Södergran's poetic narrators thus defy and even parody the socio-cultural order of gender that has historically governed the female body and her language. But to be able to work through the dense and paradoxical presence of gender in Södergran's and Nietzsche's texts requires an examination of how the mythology of Woman and her idealized feminine body—including Södergran's own legacy—had been constructed by phallogocentric discourses in Europe at the turn of the century. Therefore, in this chapter I attempt to separate Edith Södergran from her romanticized biography and demonstrate how Södergran, as a woman writer, fashioned innovative expressions of gender that subverted implicit patriarchal ideals of the body perpetuated in literature, science, society, and philosophy.<sup>2</sup> My aim is to refigure the writing subject in history in a manner that de-emphasizes her glorified personal afflictions and instead elucidates her attempts to redefine gender in the poetry and philosophy of European modernism. I begin by tracing the history of Södergran scholarship, followed by a look at the socio-political and literary climates of the author's generation. This is complemented by a modest biography that introduces the author to an English-speaking audience. It is my hope that this approach will show how Södergran successfully sketches, palimpsestically, a quaking expression of avant-garde creativity that resonates beyond the historical contours of man and woman.

### ***Starving the corpse-worms: Un-writing the Biography of an Avant-Garde Poet***

Edith Södergran emerged as one of Finland's most renowned authors in spite of her personal struggles with terminal illness, a confused national identity, poverty, and political unrest. Yet as a female author writing at a time when it was still common for women to publish under male pseudonyms, Södergran struggled—and still struggles after her death—to be read independent of her mythologized biography. It is therefore beneficial to consider the historical context of her writing in order to appreciate the complexity, and not personal experience, of her work. Moreover, a look at women's social conditions in Finland at the time of Södergran's writing may be useful to the reader unfamiliar with her authorship and literary climate. I therefore provide Södergran's biography in order to “un-write” it; the process of “un-writing” Södergran's biography, I suggest, attempts to examine the historical context of her writing without guidance from her romantic relationships, or lack thereof, and valorized tragedies that make up her typical biographies. This eliminates distracting analyses based on intimate situations than can only be explored via speculation and fantasy on the author's part.

We can begin by considering the following quotation: “Jag, Edith Södergran, var ingen ljusstråle som oberörd av stormar och mörker genomskar natten” (Brunner, *Edith* 122). This

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<sup>2</sup> Agneta Rahikainen puts Södergran's romanticized biography into perspective: “Visst var Edith Södergrans liv präglad av fattigdom och svår sjukdom, men det var bara de sista fem åren. Före det fylldes hennes liv av litteratur, vänner, resor och mycket annat. Hon var sjuk, javisst, men inte dödssjuk hela tiden. Tuberkulosen var tidvis helt borta för att sedan bryta ut igen” (*Poeten* 311).

proclamation is not uttered by Edith Södergran, but by a character envisioned by author and critic Ernst Brunner in his fictional autobiography *Edith*, which uses research, biographies, letters, and poetry to present Södergran in her “own” voice. Indeed, a work of fiction, Brunner’s ambitious attempt to resurrect Södergran’s voice is only mentioned in this context because it *reflects* the trouble with actual Södergran criticism. Brunner’s Södergran is a mutilated body whose dismembered pieces of fact and fantasy compact Södergran’s romanticized life with the speakers of her poems, and this particular coalescence of fact and imagination is reminiscent of the approach taken by Södergran’s early, and predominately male, biographers.<sup>3</sup> Södergran’s first and rather influential biographer Gunnar Tideström, for example, stated in his 1949 study:

Det har därför synt mig angeläget att nu rädda undan glömskan så många upplysningar som möjligt om Edith Södergrans person, livsöden och miljöer. Även smådetaljer. Hennes liv är så mänskligt gripande, hennes diktning så personligt äktat och konstnärligt särpräglad och hennes insats så betydelsefull för mycket senare svensk lyrik, att ingenting som rör henne är helt oviktigt. (Tideström 8-9)<sup>4</sup>

In this light, Tideström’s approach is quite reminiscent of Brunner’s fictional account, even more so when we consider that Tideström’s biography was the first of her biographies to regularly interpret her poetry based on the “facts” of her life. Tideström’s particular style of scholarship, which has unfortunately set the precedent for Södergran’s later critics, has been especially cumbersome for women writers in whose works critics have too long sought romantic relationships and psychotic tendencies. Women’s texts, when they become objects of idealized biographies, are thus interpreted doubly, and this practice still continues with Södergran scholars, as W. Glyn Jones demonstrates in his 1992 introduction to a collection of essays on the poet:

There are many ways of viewing Edith Södergran’s work, but two stand out. First, there is the purely literary significance, the way in which she introduced a completely new way of writing, her unequivocally technical ingenuity, the power of her expression. Secondly, there is the very special life which those works chart: they show a girl and young woman’s struggle to overcome, and then to come to terms with, a deeply tragic personal fate; they illuminate rather than narrate, but in the way in which they do so, they contain a striking universal element. (xiii)

Indeed, biographical criticism has its worth, yet the constant search for Södergran’s “very special life” in her poetry has only deprecated the “power of her expression” and “unequivocally technical ingenuity” that Jones esteems in her writing. Still, it seems critics may have found justification for their biographical interpretations in Södergran’s striking statement: “Jag gör icke dikter, utan jag skapar mig själv, mina dikter äro min vägen till mig själv” (qtd. in Evers *Hettan*: 36). In fact, Ulla

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<sup>3</sup> According to Lisbet Larsson, biographies were prominent in Scandinavia. “Författaren och hans liv hade [...] definitivt kommit i centrum av ämnet, och blivit den princip som på ett självklart sätt formade svensk litteraturhistorie-skrivning. Under 1900-talets första hälft utgör författarbiografierna en central del av ämnets vetenskapliga produktion” (257).

<sup>4</sup> Agneta Rahikainen adds, “Tideström hann intervjuva rätt många personer som hade träffat Edith Södergran, men frågan är om han genom dem fick veta någonting väsentligt alls, eftersom han gjorde intervjuerna 25 år efter hennes död och de flesta av dem han intervjuade bara var ytligt bekanta med henne” (“Behovet” 43).

Evers' Jungian reading of this statement in *Hettan av en gud: en studie i skapandetemat hos Edith Södergran* (1992) goes so far as to regard it as evidence that Södergran's unconscious finds expression through her symbolism (36). Yet to create any kind of biography would appear to contradict Södergran's wishes. In an undated letter from 1922 to Finland-Swedish author Elmer Diktonius, Södergran wrote "[m]en lova heligt att mina brev aldrig kommer i händerna på likmaskarna som skriver biografier." (*Brev* 228).<sup>5</sup> Of course, as for any accomplished writer, the "corpse-worms" have created biographies, but some have prodded her body with speculative theories and psychological evaluation more than others. However, it is also worth noting that Södergran herself may have contributed to the construction of her own mythologization, as Agneta Rahikainen notes in her forthcoming comprehensive (and fantasy-free!) Södergran study: "Genom att hon förstörde personliga handlingar blev framförallt det biografiska källmaterialet så knappt att många övertolkat den information som finns, dragit alltför vittgående slutsatser och t.o.m. läst in sådant som inte egentligen kan beläggas" ("Behovet" 35).<sup>6</sup> Surely, the dramatic destruction of Södergran's materials piqued more interest in the unusual life of the obscure, and now mysterious, author.

There is a paradox of acknowledging Södergran's aversion to the *likmaskarna* in my own research; however, it is important to keep in mind that psychoanalysis was commonplace for Södergran's contemporary critics, and it was, of course, utterly unapologetic about its misogynistic methods. In an essay by psychiatrist H.A. Fabritius, "Fröken Edith Södergran: Sierska eller svindlerska," the doctor states that she is, in fact, neither but that "hennes egenartade fantasivärld ofta utgör hennes konstnärliga styrka men ibland tar sig sådana uttryck, att man inte bara har rätt att dra på munnen utan också, även ur medicinsk synpunkt, har anledning att 'skaka på huvudet'" (Tideström 171). Fabritius even goes on to suggest that Södergran had schizophrenic tendencies.<sup>7</sup> Fortunately, Boel Hackman, finding biographical readings as "counterproductive to a deeper understanding of how [Södergran's] body of work relates to the development of verse" (9), attempts to sever biography from poetry and illuminate the latter in *Jag kan sjunga hur jag vill*. Hackman, who writes one of the most non-biographical critiques of Södergran I have found, adds that in 1928 Erik Kihlman wrote with a "psykologiserande syn på Södergrans erotiska diktning [...] Sten Selander refererar också till 'en sval och famlande flicklängtan, en nästan slavinnelik ödmjukhet och åstundan att kuvas av erövraren-mannen'" (Hackman 18). Furthermore, even Södergran's face and physical features were scrutinized:

För att fördjupa bilden av Edith Södergrans psyke, söker sig Tideström till det vetenskapliga gränslandet och låter en konstitutionspsykologiskt intresserad filolog och rasforskare, Rolf Nordenstreng, göra en analys av henne utgående från ett fotografi. Nordenstreng kommer fram till att hon hör till den "intersexuella konstitutionstypen" [...] Den intersexuella konstitutionstypen betyder att en person har tydligt utvecklade manliga och kvinnliga drag, vilket alla konstnärnaturer har enligt [läkaren P.] Mathes. (Rahikainen, *Poeten* 262)

As we can see, there is a pattern in Södergran's criticism in which men feel the need to use psychoanalysis and pseudo-science to peer into the author's private life, as if this were the only way

<sup>5</sup> The letter is undated, yet she tells Diktonius that it is her birthday, making the date of the letter April 4, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> See Rahikainen "Behovet" 34-35 for further discussion of Södergran's self-mythologizing.

<sup>7</sup> Rahikainen notes that Södergran's "Mytbildningen blev också starkt beroende av litteraturforskningen som i och med det moderna genombrottet alltmer styrdes av bl.a. psykoanalytiska tolkningar, där dikten återspeglar sin författares psyke" ("Behovet" 34).

to understand (or dismiss) the writing subject's art. It is perhaps not surprising that this was common during her generation, but it is indeed troubling that this persists in more subtle forms today.

Ernst Brunner, in addition to his fictional Södergran account, has also published a critical Södergran study, *Till fots genom solsystemen: en studie i Edith Södergrans expressionism* (1985), which examines her expressionist aesthetic, but it, too, often relies on biographical and psychological analysis. According to Brunner:

Alltsedan sjukdomsbudet vid årsskiftet 1908-1909 nått Edith Södergran och fram till hennes död midsommaren 1923, utkämpar hon ett envig, stundom glödande intensivt, stundom mindre påtagligt, mellan ytterligheterna liv och död. Den Södergranska expressionismen formas därför till ett över 14 år utdraget drama i tre akter som beskriver jagets stridiga beteenden gentemot tillvarons bägge protagonister. Dessa tre akter har jag valt att kalla alienation, elevation och sublimering, eftersom de var och en domineras av organiskt förenade men inbördes klart differentierbara *själsförfattningar*. (*Till fots* 144)

Brunner additionally states that Södergran's expressionism was particularly influenced by her tuberculosis (164-165). Brunner's organization of Södergran's oeuvre has made an impression, for some critics still subscribe to his notion of the three stages of her work, yet these divisions are problematic because they are defined by emotional and physical conditions that Södergran allegedly experienced: "De psykologiska förutsättningarna är således till vissa delar jämförbara med förkrigs-expressionismens, men med det viktiga förbehållet att Södergran förmodligen var helt ensam om att skriva med et *dubbelt* dödshot vilande över sig—den kaotiska samtidens och det fysiska jagets" (Brunner, *Till fots* 145). Brunner argues that he relies on the "biografiska och psykologiska utgångspunkterna" of Södergran's writing to emphasize her poetry's roots in an expressionist worldview that preceded her dramatic life events; however, his attempts to relate her existential anxieties to Nietzsche's philosophy and expressionism relies more on her imminent death than her critical understanding of Nietzsche's thought.

Despite recent calls for non-romanticized criticism of Södergran's writing,<sup>8</sup> the title of Holger Lillqvist's article "Edith Södergran's Psychological Development" (1992) remains true to Tideström's style.<sup>9</sup> Another example of the merging of biography and criticism comes from Eva Ström's 1994 biography *Edith Södergran*: "Eftersom [Södergrans] yttre liv är så avgörande för hennes diktning har jag också försökt skildra de viktigaste händelserna i hennes liv, väl vetande hur tunt källmaterialet är" (Ström 12). Then there is the aforementioned Ebba Witt-Brattström, whose study, *Ediths jag* (1997), does attempt to sever the fusion between Södergran and her verse. Indeed, her book is an impressive study of Södergran's writing that reevaluates traditional interpretations and assumptions about Södergran, her literary milieu, and her lyrical voice; however, Witt-Brattström occasionally relies on biographical methodologies to explore Södergran's work.<sup>10</sup> For example, Witt-Brattström suggests that one of Södergran's most famous poems, "Dagen svalnar," is inspired by her sexual experiences, or lack thereof (121). "[...] En sexuell erfarenhet som Edith Södergran saknar.

<sup>8</sup> See Holm, Witt-Brattström, Rahikainen.

<sup>9</sup> See Jones and Branch.

<sup>10</sup> Boel Hackman additionally points out: "Liksom sina föregångare ägnar sig Witt-Brattström även åt biografisk-psykologiska antaganden som inte främst hämtar stöd i personhistoriska faktauppgifter utan i spekulativa gissningar" (29).

Det är en anledning till att tyngdpunkten hos Södergran ligger på det arketypiska i situationen: en ‘jungfrusjäl’ möter en opersonlig ‘härskare med kalla ögon.’ Det finns inget sensuellt och upplevt i denna arrangemang [...]” (121). Clearly, the tendency to read Södergran’s life into her poetry is difficult for many to resist, and Södergran didn’t help the situation, for it seems paradoxical that she condemned the corpse-worms (*likmaskarna*) but also stated “Jag gör icke dikter, utan jag skapar mig själv” (qtd. in Evers *Hettan*: 36). I see this statement as unproblematic, however, if we imagine that it reinforces Södergran’s avant-gardism, which proposes to fashion “en individ av en ny art” (qtd. in Tideström: 168). In this light, her poetry to her self is, I suggest, composed by her avant-garde speakers, for Södergran’s new poetics engender a speaking self that is multiple. They are androgynous—feminine, masculine, hermaphroditic, and gender-neutral—narrators that transcend gender as much as they transcend traditional poetic structures. Södergran does not perceive her poetry as traditional poetry, nor does she perceive herself as a traditional self. In a cautious attempt to avoid threading biography and criticism together, I now present historical facts emphasizing the cultural, social, and political climate of an author freeing herself from patriarchal tradition, and I de-emphasize her most personal experiences.

Edith Irene Södergran was born on April 4, 1892 to Helena Lovisa (née Holmroos) and Matts Södergran in the Russian Empire’s capital Saint Petersburg (Finland had been a Grand Duchy of Russia since 1809). After leaving a position at Alfred Nobel’s firm, Södergran’s father relocated the family to the Finnish Karelian village Raivola (now part of Russia and only six miles from Saint Petersburg) when she was only three months old. The Södergrans had an affluent lifestyle until Södergran’s father squandered the fortune. The family then had to rely on Edith Södergran’s inheritance from her grandmother; however, this, too, was lost during the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917.

Fortunately, Edith Södergran received a prestigious education despite the family’s initial financial setbacks. Education for women in Finland had been growing rapidly since the final decades of the nineteenth century. The rise of women’s movements in Finland began in the early 1880s, and in 1882 Emme Irene Åström was the first woman in Finland to receive a master’s degree (Jallinoja 638). Women began to study John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*, which Danish critic Georg Brandes introduced to Scandinavia (he also introduced Nietzsche to Scandinavia and mainstream European audiences). The *Suomen Naisyhdistys* (Finnish Women’s Association) was developed in 1884; it sought equal educational opportunities, equal pay, salary and property rights of women, women’s suffrage, and the elimination of the double standard in sexual mores and prostitution (Juusola-Halonen 454).<sup>11</sup> The *Suomen Naisyhdistys* ended in 1892 (the year of Södergran’s birth), and the Swedish-speaking women from the association formed the more liberal *Naisialiitto Unioni* [Feminist Union]. Women were given the right to vote and the right to be elected to parliament in 1906. In 1907 the Finnish-speaking members of the *Naisialiitto Unioni* [Feminist Union] formed the *Suomalainen Naisliitto* [Finnish Women’s Union] and women started working in parliament. “Between 1907 and 1920, 22 women candidates of bourgeois parties were elected to the *Eduskunta*, [the world’s first unicameral legislative body elected by universal

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<sup>11</sup> Most women belonging to the FWA were from the upper social classes and fifty-five percent of the women were married. The forty-five percent of unmarried members were primarily teachers. Eventually, the number of unmarried members increased to sixty percent. (Jallinoja 638)

suffrage].<sup>12</sup> Nearly half of these had been members of one or more of the early feminist organizations” (Jallinoja 639).

Of course, Edith Södergran had influential women in her personal life, too. Södergran’s career was not insignificantly aided by her mother, “vars hela liv var inriktad på att stödja dotterns författarskap” (Evers, *Hettan* 15). Helena Södergran was also vital to early Södergran research, as Marcus Galdia points out: “Helena Södergran wurde nach dem Tod ihrer Tochter als ihre einzige Lebensgenossin zur Informationsquelle für die Forschung” (11). By the time Södergran was ten, Helena ensured that her daughter was educated at Saint Petersburg’s best school, *Die deutsche Hauptschule zu S:t Petri*, which Lou Andreas-Salomé, psychoanalyst and Nietzsche’s colleague and critic, had attended a generation before. However, women were still culturally discouraged from receiving a proper education:

Scientists of the late 1800s argued on physiological grounds that women and men should receive different types of education. Women, they believed, could not survive intact the rigors of higher education. Their reasons were threefold: first, the education of young women might cause serious damage to their reproductive systems. Energy devoted to scholastic work would deprive the reproductive organs of the necessary “flow of power,” presenting particular problems for pubescent women for whom the establishment of regular menstruation was of paramount importance. Physicians cited cases of women unable to bear children because they pursued a course of education designed for the more resilient young man. (Fausto-Sterling, *Myths* 91)

In spite of the patriarchal ordering of educational institutions, Helena Södergran also managed to attend a prestigious school—Saint Annenschule, which was also built for the German-speaking population in cosmopolitan Saint Petersburg—when she was younger. It was perhaps only inevitable that Edith Södergran, a passionate atheist for most of her life, was then exposed to a somewhat liberal religious education at a Lutheran-based school for six years and became remarkably well-read.<sup>13</sup> According to Witt-Brattström, Södergran was among the best in her class, which included girls from German, Russian, Finnish, Scandinavian, and Jewish homes (30). Moreover, Södergran’s brief account of herself indicates pride over studying at the school: “residens: Raivola, Peterschülerin, lungsot vid 16 års ålder, Nummela, Davos, konstgjord pneumothorax, väntar på tuberkulosmedlets uppfinning” (*Brev* 94). Södergran could also be proud of her social milieu; her villa in Raivola, for example, had twelve rooms,<sup>14</sup> and she was certainly a member of the upper middle-class before experiencing poverty just years before her death in 1923. And even though secluded Raivola was not necessarily home to a thriving art scene, by 1915 the cultural and literary atmosphere of the more cosmopolitan Saint Petersburg was slowly developing. The environment

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<sup>12</sup> See Nordstrom 201.

<sup>13</sup> Critics have seen the influence of Verlaine, Baudelaire, Heine, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Theodor Storm, and Ludwig Uhland in Södergran’s unpublished poetry. An exercise book shows she was familiar with Maeterlinck, Fröding, Tegnér, Shakespeare, Carlyle, Emerson, Daudet, Balzac, Rilke, Verlaine, Loti, Pascal, Boileau, Bacon, La Rochefoucauld, Leonardo da Vinci, Madame de Sévigné and Ellen Key (Witt Brattström 29). Walt Whitman and Else Lasker-Schüler were also influential. Still, it is important to consider that “Man kan ju inte utgå från att hon läste alla böcker hon citerat ur, citaten kan ursprungligen ha ingått i andra sammanhang, som aforismsamlingar och tidskrifter” (Rahikainen, *Poeten* 36).

<sup>14</sup> Södergran’s villa burned down during the Finnish Winter War in 1939 and her gravestone was also destroyed. A new stone has been established in her memory, but it is allegedly not in the exact place of her original grave.

where Södergran lived most of her life:

hade en karaktär som skiljde sig en del från den i Helsingfors och svenska Österbotten. I finska Karelen med Viborg som centrum rådde en kosmopolitisk, kulturellt öppen atmosfär med en blandning av öst-och västimpulser. Till badorten Terijoki som låg nära Raivola, sökte sig många intellektuella och konstnärer. Inställningen till den modernistiska litteraturen förefaller här inte ha varit konservativt avvisande, utan nyfiken på det nya "ultramoderna." (Evers, *Hettan* 15)

As for the literary climate, Nordic writers had already focused on women's rights and the Woman Question during *Det Moderne Gennembrud*, which originated in the early 1870s with Georg Brandes' public lectures, *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur* (1871). Brandes discussed how a nation's perception of its literature is distorted because of its inability to maintain an objective view of itself; one cannot clearly see what is too close or too far from the eye. Brandes argued that foreign literature ought to inform the artistic, cultural, and social questions that contributed to Scandinavia's literature. Scandinavian authors eventually engaged foreign literary milieus and philosophies and forcibly confronted numerous social problems: class, working conditions, marriage, education, democracy, and sexuality. Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Amelie Skram, Victoria Benedictsson, Anne Charlotte Leffler, and J.P. Jacobsen were among the authors who helped to shift the Nordic literary landscape from romanticism to naturalism. Images of the New Woman emerged, such as Ibsen's controversial Nora who abandons her husband and children for independence in *Et dukkehjem* (1879). But not all representations of the New Woman were empowering; August Strindberg's criticism of sexual double standards and femininity sometimes presented Woman in a complicated discriminatory light reminiscent of Nietzsche: "En barnlös kvinna är icke en kvinna. Icke heller en man. Därför är det moderna kvinnoidealet en otäck Hermafrodit med icke så liten anslutning till Grecicismen" (*Giftas* 19). Fortunately, women got to speak for women, too. Ellen Key, a prominent feminist writer with whom Södergran was well familiar,<sup>15</sup> contributed heavily to the Woman Question. For example, Key's idea that the government, and not man, should support children influenced international child support laws and allowed women to work outside the house. A glimpse of her works reflects the nature of her progressive thinking: *Missbrukad kvinnokraft och naturenliga arbetsområden för kvinnan* (1896), *Kvinnorörelsen* (1909), *Kvinnornas del i moralens utveckling* (1920). It is evident that women writers and feminists were making headway prior to and during Södergran's debut.

Södergran's earliest poetry was written between January 1907 and the summer of 1909 in an oil-cloth notebook (referred to as *Vaxdukshäftet*) and comprises 242 poems, mostly in German. Composed years before her first publication, this collection has been mostly regarded as confessions in a journal than authentic poetry. The majority of poems are informed by themes of nature and love, whereas their style is influenced by the poetry of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and, especially, Heinrich Heine. Gunnar Tideström and George C. Schoolfield produced early studies of the notebook, yet they overlook the intensity of the poetry and focus on her life instead. "Edith Södergran är i Tideströms biografi präglad av sin sjukdom och sin otillfredsställda erotiska längtan, vilket sammantaget ger ett instabilt psyke" (Larsson 329). For example, Tideström reads a poem

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<sup>15</sup> Södergran writes to Olsson in a letter dated March 19, 1919: "Kom ihåg att fråga Ellen K. hur det var att vara la maitresse de N.!!!" (*Brev* 112). N. refers to Nietzsche; Key studied Nietzsche extensively.



with the lines, “Es gibt Gedanken so entsetzlich schwer/sie kommen oft/wo man im Dunkel tastend schluchzet/und nicht mehr hofft” (qtd. in Tideström: 38) as a confession of erotic love for her closest girlfriends. He adds, “så som Edith Södergrans situation var, ligger det väl ingenting onaturligt eller för skolflicksåldern ovanligt i att hon i sin erotiska spänning och sin ömhetslängtan fann en smula tillfredsställelse i en sensuellt färgad flickvänskap” (Tideström 38). In the same vein, George C. Schoolfield states, “Edith Södergran’s self-portraits take three forms at this time—in poems about the illness or death of a young girl, in poems about the girl who becomes a princess in a fairy-tale world, and in poems where the girl becomes aware of her identity as a poet” (29). Additionally, in his reading of the haunting poem “Ingenting” from posthumously released *Landet som icke är*, Schoolfield asks, “Is not the poem in fact another of Edith Södergran’s many arguments with herself, a wiser and older *persona* chiding a more foolish and younger one?” (60). Upon analyzing the line “och ingenting är äckligare än död för egen hand” (*Dikter och aforismer* 169), Schoolfield states, “The wise voice [of the poem] replies that death is horrible, death by suicide still worse (Edith Södergran had contemplated suicide several times in her life)” (60). Clearly, Södergran and her lyrical speakers are one in the same for Schoolfield.

Some of Södergran’s early poems did, however, point to individuals she knew. For example, a poem dated September 23, 1907 names her French instructor Henri Cottier: “Dort wohnt mein ganzes Leben/ Dort wohnt *Henri Cottier*,/O es ist heil’ger Boden/Auf dem ich häufig geh.” (*Dikter och aforismer* 263-64). Though Cottier is specifically named in several poems, readers should be cautious of using Södergran’s verse to make unwarranted assertions about her physical condition or emotional state of mind, for studies that aim to locate the men behind the imagery in Södergran’s writing only produce indirect biography and consequently impose limits on every poem. Furthermore, locating the biographical sources in these obviously “autobiographical” poems can distract the reader from Södergran’s otherwise striking pre-published poetry. My approach to reading Södergran’s poetry in the following chapters will therefore treat each poem (even her “school girl” poems) as an individual narrative, a textual artifact that can stand on its own.

The myth of Edith Södergran is predominately fueled by the belief that the theme of death in her poetry is directly inspired by her tuberculosis and the death of her father. This may be so, but this is too simple for any critical study of Södergran’s writing. Matts Södergran contracted tuberculosis in 1906 and was treated at the Nummela sanatorium in Nyland, eventually dying in October 1907. In 1908 Södergran contracted inflammation of the lungs that revealed early signs of tuberculosis. By January 1909 she was diagnosed with the disease and treated at the same sanatorium as her father. In 1911 Södergran traveled with her mother to Switzerland for treatment at the Alt-sanatorium in Arosa, and in January 1912 she moved to a sanatorium in Davos-Dorf,<sup>16</sup> and she remained there until March 1914 (Witt-Brattström 21). In addition to the death of her father, Södergran endured other sorrows: her foster sister, Singa, ran away from the Södergran home, according to Tideström, and was allegedly killed by a train (20).<sup>17</sup> Because these tragic circumstances have romanticized the poet and ironically overshadowed the richness of her craft, I contend that Södergran’s early poetry needs to be taken more seriously. For example, her “school-

<sup>16</sup> The same sanatorium is coincidentally depicted in Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1924).

<sup>17</sup> Witt-Brattström casts doubt on this dramatic scenario from Södergran’s biography, noting that Södergran nor her mother ever mention Singa. Witt-Brattström did, however, find the name “Singa Maria Lätjönen” handwritten on an unwritten card kept at the Svenska litteratursällskapets arkiv in Helsinki (26).

girl” poetry includes an eerie poem composed on May 7, 1908 that describes a doctor dissecting the dead body of its narrator.

Wenn ich einst vor Qual gestorben,  
Wird man meinen toten Körper  
Zu Professor Lasshaft bringen,  
Und er wird mich gleich sezieren.  
Er wird sagen: “Dies Mädchen  
Hat noch nie Korsett getragen,  
Hat auch Kinder nie geboren,  
Arbeitsscheu sind ihre Hände.”  
Und mit einem scharfen Schnitte  
Teilt er mich in gleiche Hälften  
Wird er Haut und Fleisch entfernen. (*Dikter och aforismer* 319-20)

This excerpt, reminiscent of Gottfried Benn’s *Morgue* poems (*Morgue und andere Gedichte*, 1912), shows the dark narrative tools that Södergran uses to dissect the female body. Not only is the probing of the body influenced by the earlier scientific style of naturalism, the shocking imagery and violent attack on aestheticism is on par with that of Benn and German Expressionism. In her 1994 study of Södergran, Eva Ström is quick to point out what she considers to be the poem’s naturalistic qualities, but she just as quickly projects the poem onto Södergran’s biographical body even though the poem was written well before Södergran was diagnosed with tuberculosis: “Vi kan ana oss till hennes skräck för lungsoten genom den våldsamma och ohyggliga liknelsen” (Ström 41-43). Ström closes the analysis with a personal anecdote of viewing a cadaver, slipping further away from the poem’s undead corpse. The concern with femininity and the female body makes this poem a striking example of how Södergran manipulates narration and gender. The narrator is a young female who brings about her own death through imperative prognostication, and her dead body retroactively lives on in her authoritative telling. Although her body is passively taken to the doctor, the narrator commands this and gives the doctor voice and action: “Er wird sagen.” Bestowing dialogue on him, she is separated from her body as he, voiced by her, reveals the non-female components of the corpse. This female body has not worn society’s labels (*Hat noch nie Korsett getragen*) and is thus not female. This body has not borne children and is thus not woman. Recall Strindberg’s comment: “En barnlös kvinna är icke en kvinna” (*Giftas* 19). The speaker’s hands show no signs of having worked, which marks a failure to succeed, a failure to produce. Silencing the doctor’s dialogue, the narrator tells us that her body is cut in two equal halves, the feminine and the non-female, as her flesh and skin are removed. This body is no woman. It does not deserve embalment and perfumes; it is an atrocity that needs to be mutilated, though already dead, into non-being. Does woman have a body, or is she *only* body?

In 1915 Södergran shared her latest poetry, now exclusively in Swedish, with fellow Finland-Swedish writer Arvid Mörne and eventually sent her manuscript to author Runar Schildt to be considered for publication by his cousin Holger Schildt’s publishing house. Prior to receiving a response from Schildt, Södergran, who once again needed medical treatment, began to study Schopenhauer and Nietzsche extensively. Södergran’s first collection *Dikter* was finally published by Christmas 1916 after she had relentlessly advocated the manuscript. Similar to the compositions of

her oil-cloth notebook, Södergran's debut featured themes of nature, alienation, love, and confinement. *Dikter* is rich with symbolism and explores womanhood, sexuality, existentialism and eroticism, all of which are intimately interwoven with images of nature. Södergran's romantic themes were, however, stylistically unhoused by free verse and unfixed meter, which eventually brought modernism to the fore of Finland's Swedish language literature.

### ***Södergran's Language and Finland-Swedish Identity***

Södergran spoke Swedish at home, but the language of instruction at her school, *Die deutsche Hauptschule zu S:t Petri*, was obviously German, which Södergran claimed to be her best language: "tyskan är mitt bästa språk och dess böcker [Hagar Olsson's *Kvinnan och nåden och Jordaltaret*] översätter jag gärna" (*Brev* 167).<sup>18</sup> She also knew Finnish, Russian, French, English, and some Italian. Being a Swedish-speaking, Russian-born Finn, Södergran's languages were powerful yet problematic tools for her mode of expression; she never fully mastered Swedish grammar or German nuances. In a poem dated September 9, 1908, Södergran's narrator states: "Ich weiss nicht, wem meine Lieder bringen,/Ich weiss nicht, in wessen Sprache schreiben,/Ich weiss nicht, zu wessen Herzen dringen,/Vor wessen Augen stehen bleiben" (*Dikter och aforismer* 337). For publication, however, Södergran ultimately composed her poetry in Swedish, a move that was vital to her artistic expression, as Agneta Rahikainen notes:

Det har spekulerats mycket i varför Edith Södergran plötsligt bytte språk men någon entydig förklaring finns inte, igen är det biografiska källmaterialet alltför knappt. När hon byter språk till sitt modersmål, försvinner också rimmen och den bundna formen nästan genast. Språkbytet hänger förmodligen starkt ihop med formbytet, den rimmade tyska poesin övergår i ett mer fritt, orimmat, associativ textflöde. (*Poeten* 40)

It seems that switching from German to Swedish led to an immediate shift in Södergran's style and even literary intentions. Clas Zilliacus offers a description of Södergran's unusual Swedish expression:

Hon skapade ett nytt språk, ett metaspråk. Orden erinrar om svenskans, men likheten är bedräglig. Säkrare är att ta dem för eoliska och gå till ett lexikon, och detta lexikon är den södergranska diktningen. I den utgör färgbeteckningar ett högfrekvent exempel på ord som har sin laddning inte av ytter- utan av innevärd. De har föga med spektret att göra, de ingår i ett poetiskt idiom som är absolut. Betydelse får de av relationerna inom det språket, inte av den yttre verklighetens färger. (155)

Södergran's distinct language was influenced by her Finland-Swedish identity<sup>19</sup> and her writing was

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<sup>18</sup> On Södergran's German language education, Rahikainen notes: "Man kan fråga sig varför Södergrans valde att placera dottern i en tysk privatskola fastän det fanns en svensk skola i S:t Petersburg, som dessutom upprätthölls av den församling familjen Södergran tillhörde. Svaret är givet, den tyska Die deutsche Hauptschule zu S:t Petri eller kortare Petrischule, precis som den tyska Annenschule där Helena Södergran gått, hade högre status bland det finländska borgarskapet i staden" (*Poeten* 30).

<sup>19</sup> However, Rahikainen raises an important point: "Vi vill mycket gärna kalla Edith Södergran finlandssvensk, men hur hade det gått om hon fortsatt att skriva sina dikter på tyska?" (53).

constructed by an in-between language, which has its roots in Sweden's colonization of Finland that took place centuries before her birth. At the time of colonization:

Swedes founded a number of colonies along [the eastern shore of the Gulf of Bothnia and northern shore of the Gulf of Finland and the archipelago] in order to trade with the interior. As Finnish settlement expanded deeper into the interior, Sweden strengthened its position in the south either by restoring the old Finnish fortifications or by building new ones. By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Swedish rule was secure in the most important parts of Finland. (Puntila 13)

The repercussions of regional division have caused the Finland-Swedes to be closely identified with their environment, especially the Finnish coastline. The Finnish coastline became "Swedish" and especially vital to international relations; all economic, political and cultural activity in Finland was now governed by the elite Swedish-speakers (Sundberg 3). Laws, regulations and policies were all administered in Swedish and translated into Finnish. Finnish was therefore not an authoritative language even though it was spoken by the majority of the population. This changed after Finland became a Grand Duchy of Russia: the Swedish-speaking citizens shifted from the cultural elite to the minority, and Swedish functioned as Finland's minority language.

During Södergran's lifetime, the Swedish language in Finland was simultaneously a locus of power and conflict. Language spurred the political, social, and cultural strains that plagued the development of the Finland-Swedish identity, and its impact can be seen in literary histories of Finland. Early on, the term *Finlandssvensk* (Finland-Swedish) distinguished Finland's Swedish literature from Sweden's Swedish literature. A typical history of Finland's literature shows that literature written in Finnish—largely regarded by Finns as the only genuine Finnish literature—was not widespread until the translation of the New Testament in 1542 (Ahokas 21). Yet the translation did not secure Finnish as the predominant literary language, as there were few literary achievements in Finnish until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (19).

Yet even after becoming the cultural minority and the object of growing resentment, the Swedish-speakers of Finland managed to maintain cultural elitism for a significant period of time. Witt-Brattström explains that in Finland, "Kring sekelskiftet omhuldades den skandinaviska minoriteten eftersom Skandinavien sågs som föregångare vad gällde hälsovård, teknologi och undervisning. Även den skandinaviska kulturen, med Ibsen, Strindberg, Lagerlöf och Hamsun i spetsen, rönste uppskattning" (32). But for Södergran, switching from German to Swedish meant limiting her audience, a move that perhaps equally reflected and contributed to her avant-garde aspirations:

Södergran's decision to switch to Swedish for her pioneering poetry likewise has limited her work's circulation among academic and popular audiences in the United States. But switching to Swedish was a distinctly avant-gardist decision consistent with Södergran's vision for her art. She sought to liberate the Swedish soul from the decadence of previous generations and infuse it with a new revolutionary spirit. (Lindqvist 815)

Indeed, breaking from the past was inevitable for the Finland-Swedish modernists. During the late nineteenth century, Finland was at least twenty five years behind Western Europe in intellectual

development; nationalism, liberalism, and socialism, along with variations of all three, gradually gained currency in Finland as the general public discovered new concepts through literature, the lecture hall, and other media (Puntila 13). Conflict intensified between the Finnish and Swedish-speaking citizens as Finnish nationalism began to rise after 1809, and the establishment of the University of Helsinki added further tension to the situation. Originally called Imperial Alexander University of Finland until 1917, the University of Helsinki welcomed influential thinkers who promoted the independent Finnish state and a Finnish identity. Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806-81), for example, contributed substantially to the university's national efforts. Snellman, a teacher and editor, embarked on a vigorous mission to convince fellow Swedish-speaking minorities to become "true Finns." He felt that "unity and independence could never be achieved until the whole country spoke and used the Finnish language, and only the Finnish language" (Hall 92). Before Södergran's generation, Swedish-speaking Finns only had to look at their own literature to see a movement toward a "genuine" Finnish identity. National poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg, for example, sought to secure a Finnish identity while paradoxically writing in Swedish. His national song "Vårt land" is an ode to Finland as the fourth stanza reveals: Här striddes våra fäders strid/Med tanke, svärd och plog,/Här, här, i klar som mulen tid,/Med lycka hård, med lycka blid, /Det finska folkets hjärta slog, /Här bars, vad det fördrog (Runeberg 56). Hence, the use of Swedish to advance a Finnish identity was not uncommon at the time: "The men who were obliged to adopt the Swedish language soon demonstrated the weakness of the theory that language and nationality went hand in hand. The increase in the number of Swedish speakers was matched by an increase in Finnish national feeling" (Hall 90).

After Finnish nationalism secured its Finnish-speaking Finnish identity, a Swedish-speaking Finnish identity began to develop. Axel Olof Freudenthal was a leading advocate of the "Swedish" identity in Finland. According to Johan Wrede, Freudenthal "var som en central upprättare av både nationella och specifikt svenskspråkiga institutioner. [...] Freudenthal var den som lyckades införa en ny ideologisk kategori, hembygden. Den kunde ge en svensk identitetskänsla som i Snellmans ideologiska förkunnelse helt och hållet saknades." (24)

The new movement helped Finland's Swedish-speakers maintain a distinction from the Finns, yet they were also distinguished from a strictly Swedish identity (i.e. the cultural Swedish identity in Sweden). According to Bengt Holmqvist, Snellman's proclamation, "Svenskar kunna vi icke vara, ryssar vilja vi icke bliva, alltså måste vi vara finnar" (11) eventually evolved into "svenskar kan vi inte vara, finnar vill vi inte bli, alltså måste vi vara finlands-svenskar" (11).

Among the early Finland-Swedish authors, Arvid Mörne can be singled out as one of the foremost champions of the Swedish language in Finland, instilling pride in the Swedish-speaking minorities who lived along the Finnish coastlines. Mörne described the inevitable transition into the Finland-Swede in his autobiography, in which he described the linguistic, geographical, and social divisions of the two national identities. Thus, the national and cultural division the Swedish-speaking Finns contributed inherently, if not overtly, to Finland-Swedish modernism. Torsten Petterson posits:

[F]örfattarnas benägenhet att avvika från den litterära traditionen sammanhänger ofta med en mångkulturell identitet. [...] [Finlandssvenskarna] stod både utanför den finskspråkiga majoriteten i sitt eget land och utanför det svenska språkets majoritetsområde i Sverige. I sådana fall fick en författare en mångkulturell identitet som både tjeck och tyskspråkig, både

finländare och svenskspråkig – och detta kunde vara en omständighet som gjorde honom eller henne benägen för modernistiska traditionsbrott under den centrala genombrottsperioden 1910-1925. (24)

Finally, we ought to keep in mind that Finland-Swedes continue to explore their identity, even after years of the literary and artistic expressions of Finland-Swedish modernists, as Merete Mazzarella remarks, “en finlandssvensk skulle då alltså vara en person som bringar en stor del av sin tid med att fundera på vad det vill säga att vara finlandssvensk” (12).<sup>20</sup>

### *Södergran's Modernist Manifesto*

Despite the original tenor of Södergran's poetry, the criticism that *Dikter* received was harsh and the cool response to her work caused a temporary drought in Södergran's literary output the following year. As for the reviews of *Dikter*, one critic from *Kaskö Tidning* stated on November 29, 1916 that he hadn't seen “så mycket 'smörja' i tryck som Edith Södergrans Dikter” (qtd. In Tideström: 140). *Vasabladet* featured a review with the headline “Dårdikter” on December 2, 1916.<sup>21</sup> From *Arbetarbladet*, December 15, 1916: “[Dikterna] är formlösa utbrott av en sjuk andes ve” (qtd. in Tideström:140). In *Nya Argus* Ruth Hedvall found Södergran's work to be intelligent but thought that it broke with “smak och poetisk finhet. Det finnes nog i dessa dikter jämte de konstnärliga dissonanserna ett stort antal okonstnärliga. Och den fria versen är inte sällan fullkomligt formlös” (qtd. in Tideström: 143). Yet Södergran was also critical of the release and quite vocal about her dissatisfaction with the editing of it. “Att införa rättelser i slutet av boken är väl omöjligt, men Ni kunde öra mig en stor tjänst, ifall Ni ville rätta dessa fel (Ni skall med lätthet finna dem enligt min anvisning) i exemplaren Förlaget tillsänder kritiken” (Södergran, *Brev* 77). Moreover, the final edition of *Dikter* omitted poems she considered vital to her vision and included poems she deemed too weak, even though she had asked for “full discretion” (*Brev* 82).<sup>22</sup>

After experiencing great disappointment with the reception of *Dikter*, Södergran traveled to Helsinki for the last time in 1917 in order to engage the literary milieu there. She met with Hans Ruin, who was critical of her work, as well as Erik Grotenfelt and Jarl Hemmer.<sup>23</sup> Hemmer stated that “her intellectual roots were different from ours” (Schoolfield 13). Södergran was unable to

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<sup>20</sup> *Svenskfinland* was originally the term delegated to the Swedish-speaking regions of Finland. ‘Finsk’ implies a Finn that speaks Finnish, whereas ‘Finländare’ signals residents of Finland regardless of language group. Yet because the terms ‘svensk’ and ‘finsk’ have historically determined a distinct identification with language, the term “Finländare” was often understood as implying Swedish-speaking Finns. It wasn't until active calls for an increased Swedish voice among Finns in the 1920s that the term ‘Finlandssvensk’ was adopted. Both terms, finländare and finlandssvensk, however, have “tolkats som uttryck för separatism.” Finlandssvensk especially reflects “språktillhörigheten framom landet-nationen.” (Åström 24).

<sup>21</sup> See Tideström 140.

<sup>22</sup> Another example appears in a letter to Olsson in 1919: “Schildtarna ha tagit bort ‘diamanterna på edra tår’. Jag skrev i korrekturet att jag önskade ha det kvar, ifall de icke absolut satte sig emot det, ty den andra biten utmynnar just däri” (Södergran, *Brev* 128).

<sup>23</sup> Hans Ruin's diary entry from October 1917 gives a detailed yet brief account of an unexpected visit by Södergran. Jarl Hemmer's introductions to *Min Lyra (9-11)* and *Brev till vänner* (215-216) give an account of his dinner with her and Grotenfelt, during which she asks the startling question “Säg mig, tror ni att jag skall bli lycklig?”

continue these literary expeditions<sup>24</sup> as her health deteriorated significantly and she began to face poverty after she lost investments in Russian and Ukrainian stocks in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The publication of Södergran's second collection *Septemberlyran* (1918) marked the awakening of bold and aggressive lyrical voices within Södergran's catalogue.<sup>26</sup> Inspired personally and artistically by Nietzsche's concepts of the *Wille zur Macht* and the *Übermensch*, Södergran's sophomore production is prefaced by fiery urgency, which, we may recall, includes the declarations: "Min självsäkerhet beror på att jag har upptäckt mina dimensioner. Det anstår mig icke att göra mig mindre än jag är" (*Dikter och aforismer* 65). Södergran's introductory remarks perhaps intended to distance the author from the general reading public, as Södergran hoped to cultivate an elite and exclusive readership. In addition to the audacious proclamations in *Septemberlyran*, Södergran published the aforementioned avant-garde manifesto "Individuell konst" in *Dagens Press*, and it is considered the first European manifesto written by a woman.<sup>27</sup> The following excerpt exhibits the voice of an inspired spirit reminiscent of Nietzsche:

Denna bok är icke avsedd för publiken, knappast ens för de högre intellektuella kretsarna, endast för de få individer som stå närmast framtidens gräns. [...] Vad som gör många av dessa dikter dyrbara är att de stamma från en individ av en ny art. [...] Jag kan icke hjälpa den som icke känner att det är framtidens vilda blod som pulserar i dess dikter. Den inre elden är det viktigaste människan äger. Jordklotet tillhör dem som inom sig bära den högsta musiken. Jag vänder mig till de sällsynta individerna och uppmanar dem att höja sin inre musik, detsamma som att bygga på framtiden. Jag offerar själv varje atom av min kraft för mitt höga mål, jag lever helgonets liv, jag fördjupar mig i det högsta människoanden frambragt, jag undviker alla inflytelser av lägre art. Jag betraktar det gamla samhället som modercellen, som bör stödjas till dess individerna resa den nya världen. Jag uppmanar individerna att arbeta endast för odödligheten (ett falskt uttryck) att göra det högsta möjliga utav sig själva – att ställa sig i framtidens tjänst. [...] Nya tider stunda. (qtd. in Tideström: 168-69)

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<sup>24</sup> With regard to the literary world, however, Södergran was "knappast mer isolerad än författarna i Helsingfors [...] fram till 1917 hade hon alla möjligheter för att köpa för henne intressant litteratur, bl.a. i S:t Petersburg, Viborg, Helsingfors och på resorna till Davos" (Rahikainen, "Behovet" 41).

<sup>25</sup> Södergran's poetry certainly addressed such political issues, although to a somewhat mild degree. Recall that Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire until its independence in 1917 and had been under Swedish rule before that. Some of Södergran's poems may have expressed contempt for the Russian Czarist regime, according to Witt-Brattström, who connects one poem to Bloody Sunday (50). "Wie viel gemordet, wie viel geraubt,/Bald offen, bald in der Stille!/Es schützt sie alle vorm Gericht/Des Zaren heiliger Wille" (*Dikter och aforismer* 292). The massacre of January 22, 1905 occurred when demonstrators, marching to present a petition to Tsar Nicholas II, were killed by the Imperial Guard. Furthermore, Witt-Brattström argues that Södergran was always revolutionary: "Mot den ryska, mörka samtidsfonden kan Vaxdukshäftets revolutionsdikter läsas som en förberedelse för den mogna poetens axlande av diktarens förkunnelsemantel" (59). Finally, exploring Finland's political chaos in Södergran's work can be productive, yet my intention to read gender in Södergran's work does not draw upon this; instead, I see her revolutionary spirit as fueling her avant-garde ambitions.

<sup>26</sup> Experiencing starvation, poverty, and decaying health in 1918, Södergran requested monetary compensation for her second release *Septemberlyran* in addition to a sum for the previously released *Dikter*, for which she had only been compensated with two complimentary copies.

<sup>27</sup> see Lindqvist

The manifesto sparked “Fejden kring Septemberlyran” in which criticism *seemed* to outweigh the praise. Writing about nature, love, sexuality, alienation, and death in a “formless” form, Södergran was dismissed as simply naïve, and her manifesto particularly incited claims that her poetry was literary “vansinnet,” according to Gustaf Johansson, who wrote causeries under the name “Jumbo” in Helsinki’s *Dagens Press* in 1918. The manifesto is what prompted the aforementioned psychiatric evaluation by H.A. Fabritius, “Fröken Edith Södergran: Sierska eller svindlerska,” that virtually diagnosed Södergran with mental illness. Rahikainen, however, remarks:

Man kan inte heller säga att Edith Södergran var missförstådd av sin samtid, fastän det många gånger hävdats. I själva verket var det få och mindre viktiga opinionsbildare som ogillade och inte förstod sig på hennes poesi. Vem minns i dag recensenten Uno Fleege i *Kaskö Tidning* eller kåsören Gustaf Johansson, alias Jumbo, för någonting annat än deras chauvinistiska uttalandet om Edith Södergrans dikter? (“Behovet” 37-38)

Fortunately, Södergran had her share of supporters. In 1919, Hjalmar Procopé, Arvid Mörne, Bertel Gripenberg, Sven Lidman, and Runar Schildt declared “vi önska öppet och utan tvekan sälla oss till den skara av dårar, som i Edith Södergrans diktning se en hängiven konstnärssträvan i ett högt plan och som där funnit glimtar av stor och egenartad skönhet” (qtd. in Tideström: 210).<sup>28</sup> And by the time of her death, “Södergran fick redan då bland sina författarkolleger status som en litterär ikon, hon behandlades som upphöjd och speciell i större utsträckning än någon annan samtida författare” (Rahikainen, “Behovet” 38). Södergran’s strongest supporters included Jarl Hemmer, Elmer Diktonius, and especially, Hagar Olsson.<sup>29</sup> Reflecting years later on the manifesto, Olsson writes:

No one had heard anything like this before. Here was the consciousness of modern humanity suddenly exploding into Finland’s provincial cultural milieu which, despite world war and civil war, was still completely anchored in the past and imagined that it still retained unchallenged possession of its territory. It is both tragic and comic to remember how totally incapable readers were of understanding such language at the time. Here was a poet who took it for granted that she was partly responsible for the future development of the human race, but who saw her poems not as evidence of personal talent –in this respect, like most great artists, Edith Södergran was humble – but as an independent spiritual phenomenon, something which grew and became reality in her subconscious, a gift she had received from the gods and was fortunate to be able to pass on. (qtd. in S. Mazzarella 25)

Södergran’s third collection *Rosenaltaret* (1919) was saturated with Nietzschean pretension yet exhibits tranquil images of nature, eroticism, and sisterhood. Her first collection of aphorisms

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<sup>28</sup> Originally printed in *Hufvudstadsbladet*, January 23, 1919.

<sup>29</sup> Södergran’s relationship with Olsson was turbulent. Olsson’s initial review of *Septemberlyran* in 1918 prompted the two writers to correspond, and an intimate friendship ensued. Södergran’s illness confined her to her home, leaving her unable to socialize and travel, and Olsson was therefore one of her few companions. In 1922 Olsson introduced Södergran to author Elmer Diktonius, who was mesmerized by Södergran and the two poets established an intellectual bond. Södergran’s ardent correspondences with Olsson and Diktonius, as well as Södergran’s vehement disposition, are candidly captured in Olsson’s *Ediths Brev*. Södergran’s personal letters are a rich glimpse into the author’s life, writing style, literary intentions, and an intimate look at her coping with illness.



entitled *Brokiga iakttagelser* (1919), containing Nietzschean and Christian undertones, were considered embarrassing by her critics. *Framtidens skugga* (1920) demonstrated another subtle transition. A Nietzschean voice still broods over her poetry, yet it is less abrasive. Her lyrical personae have become collectively more accepting of death, yet remain peacefully unaware of what lies beyond it; there are ambivalent moments of isolation, triumph, and longing. Eroticism and nature have become more embedded with each other and the poems concerning death are most intimate. Suffering from deteriorating health, and absorbed by intensive spiritual study of Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, Södergran stopped writing poetry during this time.

Södergran later translated a Finland-Swedish anthology of poetry into German to earn money and to familiarize Europe with Finland-Swedish literature; however, the anthology was not published due to the poor economic climate in Europe. Exhausted and disillusioned, Södergran burned the translation as she had done with many of her letters and poems. Her health worsened, but she refused to stay at another sanatorium. At the request of Diktonius and Olsson, Södergran resumed writing and contributed to the short-lived Finland-Swedish literary journal *Ultra*, for which she translated poems and wrote literary reviews. Under the care of her mother, Helena, Edith Södergran died on June 24, 1923 in Raivola. Although Södergran burned much of her remaining work, the posthumous *Landet som icke är* (1925) was compiled, comprising poems that were mostly written during the final year of her life. Södergran's last collection marked the triumphant return of nature in addition to a peaceful longing for death. Most striking, however, is that Södergran's final poems present soothing Christian imagery, a topic that she brutally attacked in much of her previous writing. Many of the lyrical voices in *Landet som icke är* embrace death and long for the awaiting paradisiacal life.

It was several years until Finland and Scandinavia collectively embraced Södergran's avant-garde vision:

Despite the Finland-Swedish beginnings of Scandinavian Modernism, the eyes of post-war literature in the other Nordic countries were searching elsewhere for inspiration. The germ of a possible pan-Scandinavian literature was not nourished; it was, again, a Scandinavianism that might have been. Measured by the cultural yardstick, Finland was much farther removed than Britain or France or Germany or the United States. (Mitchell 244)

Fortunately, Edith Södergran has since claimed her status as the pioneer of Finland-Swedish modernism, something she may have hoped for when she wrote “Jag är ingenting än mærg och min viskning skall höras over jorden” (*Brev* 188).

## Chapter II

### *Köttets mysterier:* Reimagining Södergran's Gendered Poetics

Edith Södergran's abandonment of strict rhyme, regular meter, and ordered alliteration is a testament to the artistic novelty that her avant-gardist poetry ushered into Finnish literature. Yet despite the author's own attempts to defy classical traditions of lyrical expression, the first-person narrators of Södergran's poems have long been regarded as singular, implicitly autobiographical, and female. However encouraging this may seem for a feminist reading, it is rewarding to reconsider this assumption since a careful review of Södergran's writing shows that her poems indeed present diverse and even contradictory perspectives of recurring themes and ideas, especially her depiction of gender. Gender is a vivid force in her writing, but it is often paradoxical, as she produced seemingly conventional "feminine" personas to narrate several poems yet sharply contrasted these with narrative voices that challenged patriarchal ideas of women and femininity. Furthermore, if we consider that Södergran was a post-Nietzschean and post-Modern Breakthrough writer, it is not surprising that her poetry is highly concerned with gender equality.<sup>1</sup>

I contend that Södergran's poetic voices are similarly multiple and therefore not autobiographical as her contemporary male critics have assumed. These critics preferred to uncritically conflate the author with her poetry and make her their unwilling patient, doomed to the latest fashionable methods of psychological analysis.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, a new wave of Södergran criticism sought to sever what Clas Zilliacus in *Den svenska litteraturen* refers to as "ett biografiskt korrelerat" (Zilliacus 152) from art and began to posit more critical interpretations of the poet's modernist style. Critics eventually de-emphasized the fairytale biography that Södergran had acquired over several decades and instead began to regard Södergran as a metapoet who self-reflexively referenced the act of composing in her writing. Unfortunately, most analyses of Södergran's metapoetic style have merely displaced the biographical charge critics seem unable to resist locating in her verse. As a result, Södergran the self-referential poet has tacitly become the biographical inspiration for the author's ostensible production of exclusively female lyrical expression. "Ofta uppträder jaget som ett tydligt diktande jag, dvs det jag som diktare dikten. Detta kan kallas 'det diktande jaget'. På detta diktande jag kan tolkaren anlägga ett djuppsykologiskt perspektiv" (Evers, *Hettan* 30). Even without explicit references to the implicit female speaker, psychoanalytic interpretations of the metapoet in Södergran's stead have led to inevitable correlations to the latter's life, thereby limiting the range of analytical tools for reading the content and form of the poems. In this chapter I will address contemporary criticism of Södergran's debut collection *Dikter* and explain how even female critics underestimate the force of Södergran's feminist writing when they propagate the popular misconception that *Dikter* is an autobiographical romanticization of nature, death, and unrequited love. I contend that the narrative techniques in *Dikter* illustrate that Södergran was engaged in a sophisticated critique of the gendered subject and that even though standard Södergran scholarship marks the start of Nietzsche's influence in her second collection, her debut collection was certainly Nietzschean-inspired.

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<sup>1</sup> I do not suggest that Södergran, an avid reader of Nietzsche, blindly followed his particular ideas; instead, she engaged his philosophy critically and contributed her own unique illustrations of gender in her writing.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter one.

## *Södergran's Multiple "I"*

As Södergran's critics eventually shifted away from biographical criticism and embraced her self-reflexive style, they additionally proceeded to read Södergran's poems as feminist testimonies against her male counterparts. Indeed, the inclination toward a feminist reading of Södergran as *den nya kvinnan* has been a much-needed breakthrough in Södergran scholarship; however, I suggest that Södergran's unique illustrations of ambiguously gendered speakers transcend all previously posited narrative identities of naïve girl, conscious poet, or voice of the new woman. I contend that throughout Edith Södergran's oeuvre, her lyrical voice does not constitute a singular presence embodied by a central female body, but that her first-person speaker is, in fact, multiple: Södergran's speakers stylize and are stylized by female, male, and gender-neutral bodies, a phenomenon which constitutes Södergran's avant-gardist defiance of the patriarchal two-sex model and which ultimately engenders the expression of the poet's prolific, yet inconspicuous, androgynous narration; thus, Södergran performs rhetorical drag throughout her writing. First, it is important to show how Södergran's poetic "I" is multiple. When critics such as Ebba Witt-Brattström, Ulla Evers, and Boel Hackman address Södergran's lyrical personae, they refer to the *jaget*, the "I" or ego, that acts primarily as a singular force. To be sure, their analyses do not explicitly identify one concrete being who voices all of Södergran's poetry, yet they do posit one lyrical "I"—one that changes, develops—that nevertheless governs the poems. Fortunately, this "I" is not, for these critics, explicitly the flesh and blood author, yet she is, for them, always a female speaker who demonstrates enough consistency in her themes, imagery, and discourse to be identified as a single narrating presence. "I Södergrans dikter kan det lyriska jaget vara 'implicit', som en 'röst' bakom texten, men oftast uppträder det som ett 'jag' i 1:a person singularis" (Evers, *Hettan* 30). That this singular speaker (and implicit body) is incessantly perceived as exclusively female corroborates Södergran's feminist intentions, yet this particular interpretation of Södergran's lyrical "I" also poses limitations on the avant-gardist body of Södergran's work. Evers continues, "Det lyriska jaget är således intensivt närvarande i Södergrans texter. Dikterna har som centrum ett tydligt jag, som i metaforer och symboler gestaltar sina inre erfarenheter" (*Hettan* 30). Therefore, whenever Södergran's readers conceptualize her narrators as a single entity, whether as a physical or psychological essence, we impose boundaries on the very formlessness that her poetry strives to convey. This leads to a distorted view of Södergran's discourses with and of bodies in her art and consequently propagates the otherwise non-threatening hostility between male and female difference in her writing. As Evers has already proven, whenever Södergran's narrators are received as one collective speaker, unsupported psychological assessments of the poet inevitably follow. While I do believe that psychoanalytic theory produces invaluable information within literary criticism, using it to uncritically speculate about authorial sublimation limits the art it seeks to explain. For example, Evers traces the development of Södergran's poetic ego (who comes quite close to being unproblematically aligned with the author) and argues that it grows substantially stronger with each collection.

I debutsamlingen *Dikter 1916* visar Edith Södergran fram ett jag, som ofta är splittrat, osäkert, utan självkänsla, vemodigt eller instängt i depressiva stämningar. Denna hållning kan sägas vara naturlig för ett ungdomligt, sökande och osäkert jag, som inte funnit sin väg. I den andra samlingen, *Septemberlyran 1918*, uppträder i allt fler dikter ett starkt, helt och

självmedvetet jag. Detta förändrade jag börjar samtidigt explicit tala om sig självt som ett diktande jag, som är medvetet om sin roll som diktare. (Evers, *Hettan* 36)

In Evers's study, she employs Jungian psychology to evaluate the development of Södergran's ego throughout her writing career, and her method of making the metapoet the platform for her own psychoanalytic criticism certainly yields intriguing interpretations, yet the conclusions she draws often return to Södergran's biography and therefore do little to advance critical approaches to Södergran's writing style. Evers suggests (via Jung) that Södergran is a being whose unique self strives for expression, and the Ego must therefore remain in dialogue with the self so that tension between the conscious and unconscious levels out. Only then can the latent resources be freed and the self gets "the courage to be oneself" (*Hettan* 36). This strategy is very promising and Evers even maintains that biographical information does not in fact play a significant role in her methodology, yet she paradoxically falls back into biographical discourse. Evers makes a distinction between "författarens jag och textens jag" (*Hettan* 31), but she does this by suggesting that the author has an innate need to "tala," and this can *only* happen via a medium (*Hettan* 31-32). For Evers, this medium is "Prinsessan Hyacintha" from a lost Södergran-text that later appeared in extracts in Hagar Olsson's essay of the same name.<sup>3</sup> In the essay Olsson writes, "Historien om Hyacintha är en art av inre monolog. Hyacintha själv är en syster till Edith Södergran, en lyckligare, fullkomligare syster, ett diktens barn av evig ungdom och skönhet. Denna sagoprinsessa har så mycken likhet med Edith Södergran, att man med djup rätt kan källa henne ett porträtt av författaren, och dock är hon så olika som lyckan är olika lidandet" (Evers, *Hettan* 252). Olsson and Evers thus take Södergran's words, "Man kommer att säga mig att jag sysslar med självbespeglingar, därtill kan jag endast svara: att prinsessan är av högsta smak och har ingenting med intigheter att skaffa. Hon är av mitt eget kött och blod och blickar klart och skrattande och är icke rädd för någonting, allra minst för att vara ofullkomlig" (252)<sup>4</sup> to align the poet with her fictional speaker: "Edith Södergran begrundar det faktum att hon både är, och inte är, Hyacintha" (Evers, *Hettan* 31). Evers therefore suggests that Södergran speaks with two voices: "den osynlige poetens röst som vi hör tala" (Evers, "Hyacintha" 152) and the medium Hyacintha, who is Södergran's "docka,"<sup>5</sup> through whom the poet can "tala, rikta ett tilltal till världen vi sin 'docka'" ("Hyacintha" 152). I argue that it is problematic to simply read Södergran via a ventriloquized object, for this only points to the critic's need to locate an artificial body, a doll no less, for Södergran's poetic voice. It's as if one needs to find a central source (Södergran's love life, tuberculosis, this doll) of Södergran's poetry. It is implicit that life experiences contribute to art, yet to aggressively attribute to Södergran's inspiration something more tangible for the reader demeans the force of Södergran's avant-garde and intellectually-engaged writing. To be sure, this *docka* could very well be one her Södergran's personas, but, if so, it is one of many.

Finally, according to Evers' interpretation, Södergran's "I" was divided, uncertain, and depressed before (she) began to compose metapoetry. Yet the unpublished poetry from Södergran's early teenage years already attests to the poet's keen political and social awareness, as I have already shown in chapter one with her illustration of the dissected body in the morgue. Boel Hackman

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<sup>3</sup> See Evers, *Hettan* 251 for Olsson's essay reprinted in its entirety.

<sup>4</sup> Evers responds to this quotation by claiming that "Södergran är klar över att hon som lyrisk poet använder sina egna inre erfarenheter som material" ("Hyacintha" 152).

<sup>5</sup> Södergran writes, "Varför släpar jag dig med mig överallt 'som ett barn sin docka?' Det är icke endast för att sy små nätta kläder åt dig och vira mina skrattande koraller kring din hals, nej det är för att tala medan du sluter dina lydigas läppar" (qtd. in Evers, *Hettan*: 252-53).

additionally disproves any notion that Södergran's "I" was lost and uncertain in her analyses of Södergran's darkly ironic depictions of marriage (Hackman 52-53). Evers does maintain that metapoetry by its very definition constitutes the self-referential poet's artistic sovereignty, yet she unwittingly subverts the self-awareness of Södergran's writing every time her criticism falls back into biographical or essentialist discourse. Evers further maintains that the visibility of the poet "som talar om sig själv som diktare, framträder nu med tydliga konturer, det är ett starkt jag och inspirationen är tydlig" (*Hettan* 43); This reveals that, for Evers, these self-referential contours are necessary to even recognize a confident speaker. She even argues that Södergran's voice is not fully developed until her "I" begins to speak the language of expressionism (Evers, *Hettan* 51). Indeed, Södergran's metapoetry is striking, yet obvious references to the composition of poetry are not needed to constitute or justify a self-aware poet. As it were, Evers' need for the visible poet indirectly denies the autonomy governing the non-meta poems, and as a consequence, the visible meta-writer in Evers' interpretation gains unnecessary biographical weight.

Ebba Witt-Brattström's *Ediths Jag* (1997) is an impressive exploration of Södergran's role as a female writer in the dawn of modernism. Reevaluating Södergran's biography and literary milieu, Witt-Brattström's study marks a turning point in Södergran scholarship. She describes Edith's "I" as:

ett fiktivt, litterärt jag och hennes besvärjelse [...] kan och bör tolkas som en nietscheansk och kvinnopolitisk strategi för att skapa sitt eget ursprung, ta makten över sitt eget öde [...] Edith Södergrans "jag" är ett metapoetiskt "jag" som hämtat en icke ringa del av sin styrka ur det nya seklets världsomvälvande händelser; ryska revolutionen, första världskriget, kvinnornas emancipation. Med Södergran föds det moderna jaget—som kvinna. (14)

To see Södergran's speaker as a fictional poetic-I who uses a Nietzschean inspired feminist strategy to give birth to the female modern ego seems well justified, and recognizing the social and political context of a female author is imperative. In fact, this is striking progress within Södergran scholarship: "Jag för in den läsande och skrivande kvinnans kontext under Edith Södergrans livstid och i hennes del av världen, 'som om' den angick också henne. Som om Södergran vore en Ny kvinna med rötter i den ryska messianismen, som om hennes val av lyriskt språk vore en nietscheansk strategi för att skapa modernismens messianism på nordisk botten" (Witt-Brattström 15). I agree with Witt-Brattström's above approach; however, her understanding of Södergran's lyrical "I" suggests that it is singular and unquestionably female. Though Witt-Brattström does not explicitly state that the same woman is behind each poem, the narrator, in her interpretation, nevertheless becomes essentialized, homogenous, and in direct opposition to the males and their symbolic masculinity in Södergran's writing. When not in opposition, however, "she" is man's lover, daughter, and patient. Witt-Brattström's strategy of applying historical context to situate Södergran as a female writer "as if" she had experienced events herself is quite effective until Witt-Brattström's "as if" approach loses stability whenever she engages outright speculation. For example, in her chapter "Nietzsche som kvinna," she compares Nietzsche's and Södergran's individual stays at sanatoriums:

bägge tvingades dessutom till långa promenader flera gånger om dagen, en anledning till att Nietzsche övergick till att skriva fragment som kunde kastas ner på en papperslapp i fria

luften. Kanske blev Södergran av samma anledning diktare och inte prosaförfattare. Patienter emellan skulle de två ha haft en del att avhandla—nu blev det istället via skriften som Södergran kommunicerade med “fadern.” (Witt-Brattström 169)

To question whether long walks determined Södergran’s decision to write poetry instead of prose diminishes her role as an avant-garde writer and sweeps her further under Nietzsche’s influential shadow. What is more, Witt-Brattström’s serene image of the authors strolling through nature and thereby honing their technique is immediately distorted by the fact that Södergran’s poetry writing predates her first stay at a sanatorium—a fact that surely deems this and similar conjectures moot. Finally, for Witt-Brattström, Södergran’s “I” is, in the above passage, not only singular, female, and sickly, she is also Nietzsche’s daughter and patient. Despite its contrary efforts, *Ediths jag* regrettably contributes to the stubborn characterization that Södergran was not an intellectual writer, but “Nietzsche-crazed.”

Boel Hackman study of Södergran’s poetry attempts to frame her writing “i dialog med tidens litteratur och idéer” (11), and she successfully reads Södergran without incessant biographical claims and speculative conclusions. Hackman’s approach is simply refreshing; however, our concept of the lyrical “I” also differs.

I Edith Södergrans Dikter gestaltas kvinnan som vägledare till en djupare själslig gemenskap mellan man och kvinna och till en fördjupad livskänsla, som kan kopplas till tidens kvinnosyn och feminism och till portalgestalten Ellen Key [...] På ett liknande sätt idealiseras kvinnan och kvinnligheten som mannens, kärlekens och samhällsförnyelsens ledstjärna i Dikter. (132-33)

I do not disagree that Södergran’s portrayal of woman and femininity is connected to the feminism of Södergran’s time, but I additionally suggest that the (female) narrators in *Dikter* present idealized images of Woman and femininity in order to criticize them. Hackman’s “woman as guide” to a deeper, spiritual connection between the sexes instead calls into question the very “between” that divides man and woman. Furthermore, Hackman sees Södergran’s alignment of Woman and nature (and therefore the body) as a positive force, contrary to patriarchal views that relate man to culture, intellect, and society, whereas Woman is negatively regarded as one with nature and emotional instincts. Hackman reinforces the idea that the marginalization of women can be used positively and she is not alone (139). Witt-Brattström, for example, quotes Södergran’s aphorism from *Brokiga iakttagelser* (1919): “Kvinnans största förtjänst är, att hon hittills icke mycket försyndat sig, intellektuellt” (*Dikter och aforismer* 129) to suggest that

[Södergran] behöver inte känna någon rädsla inför att invaderas av historien, som kvinna är hon redan ett historiens hittebarn, eftersom historieskrivningen har tilldömt kvinnorna åskådarplatsen. Också på Södergrans tid fick flickor lära sig att det var män som skrivit de bestående filosofiska, vetenskapliga och skönlitterära verken [...] Edith Södergran vänder här könets sociala marginalisering till något positivt. (Witt-Brattström 206)

According to Witt-Brattström, Södergran’s historically oppressed sex provides her (and implicitly all women) the privilege of having a less tainted intellectual past; yet such a claim unwittingly implies

that few women have made lasting contributions to western intellectual thought. To be sure, Södergran's own "Violetta skymningar..." does invoke the image of an historically untouched woman, yet the poem falls short of portraying her as intrinsically innocent and insignificant to history:

Violetta skymningar bär jag i mig ur min urtid,  
nakna jungfrur lekande med galopperande centaurer...  
Gula solskensdagar med granna blickar,  
endast solstrålar hylla värdigt en ömsint kvinnokropp...  
Mannen har icke kommit, har aldrig varit, skall aldrig bli...  
Mannen är en falsk spegel den solens dotter vredgad kastar mot klippväggen,  
mannen är en lögn, den vita barn ej förstå,  
mannen är en skämd frukt den stolta läppar försmå.

Sköna systrar, kommen högt upp på de starkaste klipporna,  
vi äro alla krigarinnor, hjältinnor, ryttarinnor,  
oskuldsögon, himmelspannor, rosenlarver,  
tunga bränningar och förflugna fåglar,  
vi äro de minst väntade och de djupast röda,  
tigerfläckar, spända strängar, stjärnor utan svindel. (*Dikter och aforismer* 30)

To claim that Södergran's writing ego is free of patriarchal conventions is to unfortunately reduce her to mythic realms. The first line of the poem reveals that the remaining lines describe the distant, ancient past—a past that is no more. The line "Mannen har icke kommit, har aldrig varit, skall aldrig bli..." strikingly denies man access to his own present, past, and future—he is nonexistent. However, the following three lines bring knowledge of him back into existence. The rage of the daughter and the rejection of man's rotten, deceptive fruit reveal that the sisters are not untouched; in fact, the daughter sees herself in his reflection. The heroines proudly reject man, as the female riders replace the once playful male centaurs.<sup>6</sup> It is not until the fighting women conquer (traditional conceptions of) masculinity and femininity within their own bodies that they make their own utopia. Witt-Brattström's idea of the historically ignored woman would have woman forget her past, even if she did not write it, and accept marginalization as a paradoxically privileged condition. But we have already seen in the previous chapter how "purifying" a gender can lead to essentialism and inevitable androcentric parameters from which to base or produce subjectivity. Despite Södergran's aphorism, which certainly seems to advocate women's innocent past, her more critical poetry does not reinforce this, which further suggests Södergran's ironical, if not intentionally passive-aggressive, tone in this remark. Hackman, on the other hand, does not contend "att [Södergrans] dikter kan knytas till någon bestämd uppfattning om kvinnans särart" (139), but she does suggest that

I kraft av sin intima förbindelse med naturen bekräftas kvinnas intuitiva, andliga och skapande förmåga. Hon kan därför inta en unik position som förmedlare av djupa insikter

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<sup>6</sup> I see the galloping centaurs as male; female centaurs, who showed up later than centaurs in antiquity, are called Kentaurides.

om den metafysiska verkligheten. Hon kan verka till att uppvärdera dessa kulturellt förträngda "egenskaper" och därigenom förändra samhället. Det är en tankemodell som legitimerar den kvinnliga författarpositionen i Södergrans debutdiktning. (Hackman 149-50)

For Witt-Brattström and Hackman, Södergran's idealized images of femininity and nature, free from man's earlier depictions and assessments of them, are pure and therefore less subversive to a feminist cause. This outlook is dangerously idealistic, for by taking Södergran out of historical and philosophical discourse one perpetuates the silencing of her voice; one offers her the "gift" of marginalization, as Witt-Brattström and Hackman have unintentionally done. Instead of recognizing Södergran's sharp ability to engage the history, philosophy, and literature that has ignored her, they present Södergran's complex depictions of femininity as original to her. At the risk of potentially locking her into phallogocentric discourse, I suggest that Södergran indeed contributes to the philosophy of Woman that has historically excluded her. In fact, history's penchant for identifying women with their bodies and nature may very well be positive, but not for the reasons posited by Hackman and Witt-Brattström, and I therefore contend that Södergran is capable of engaging philosophy without being subservient to patriarchal philosophies since, of course, "women have been philosophers since the ancient period" (Oliver and Pearsall viii).

### ***Rethinking Södergran's Women***

My rejection of a constant singular female ego in Södergran's writing does not work to defeminize her writing or to strip it of its female authority but instead seeks to call attention to her revolutionary vision of sexed bodies. Södergran's debut, *Dikter*, presents female and seemingly genderless narrators who ostensibly propagate social conceptions of femininity and masculinity within their respective socially-designated bodies. Consequently, Södergran's depiction of the celebrated, elevated feminine ideal has misled her critics. Ebba Witt-Brattström directly asks: "Vad är Ediths jag?" (Witt-Brattström 313). Although she acknowledges that "[e]n god del av sin styrka hämtar Ediths jag från överskridandet av kulturella tabun kring kvinnan som kropp" (313), she regards Södergran's lyrical "I" as strictly female and its femininity as the only consistent quality in her writing.

Det enda jaget håller fast vid är sina "kvinnliga" markörer. Ända från författarskapets början satsar Edith Södergran på att profilera sig som en kvinna som talar i framtidens tjänst [...] Södergrans diktade universum omspannar kvinnan som offer i *Dikter*, det alltmer terroristiskt tvingande, profetiska jaget i Septemberlyran och Rosenaltaret, den talande förgängelsens kropp i Framtidens skugga och efterskördens genomlysta stämma i Landet som icke är. Allt detta hålls samman av ett grandios jag som talar till oss liksom höjt över den värld vi möter... (Witt-Brattström 313)

For Lindqvist, Södergran is also perpetually female: "As in most of Södergran's work, the speaker is female, reflecting Södergran's consistent ideological and figurative conflation of the reproductive capacity of the female sex and the creative power of the female poet" (822). However, I contend that Södergran only ironically indulges these traditional images of femininity in order to elucidate its arbitrary place and value in the female body. Södergran thus produced meticulously rigid



illustrations of sexual difference, only to paradoxically destroy them, in a Nietzschean fashion, via the same rhetoric used as their foundation. Then, with her second collection, *Septemberlyran*, Södergran's narrators transitioned into female, male, and elusively androgynous speakers. Södergran is clearly aware of her gender play, as she startles her reader with overtly male voices that suddenly become female ("Vad är i morgon?") and a self-proclaimed "neuter" who is unwittingly branded by gender ("Vierge Moderne"). As I will demonstrate below, Södergran's lyrical narrators radically disrupt previous ideas of her exclusively feminine lyrical "I." I refer to her lyrical "I" simply as narrator, but in fact this "I" is plural, for I argue that each poem tells its own story. Approaching poems individually opens a vast plane of narrative situations that require greater navigational tools for understanding Södergran's avant-gardist poetics, including critical theories of gender and narrative that I use in the present and following chapter.

Let's take the self-referential poem "Jag" as an initial example of how gender proves to be inescapable in Södergran criticism.

Jag är främmande i detta land,  
 som ligger djupt under det tryckande havet,  
 solen blickar in med ringlande strålar  
 och luften flyter mellan mina händer.  
 Man sade mig att jag är född i fångenskap -  
 här är intet ansikte som vore mig bekant.  
 Var jag en sten, den man kastat hit på botten?  
 Var jag en frukt, som var för tung för sin gren?  
 Här ligger jag på lur vid det susande trädets fot,  
 hur skall jag komma upp för de hala stammarna?  
 [...] (*Dikter och aforismer* 29)

Regarding "Jag," George C. Schoolfield remarks that "the title can be taken as a bald statement of autobiography"; however, Schoolfield's eager categorization of the poem does little to advance the study of Södergran's art. (Schoolfield 38). Ulla Evers sees this "jag" as an "osjälvständigt, fångat och otillfredsställt subjekt" (*Hettan* 37). Additionally, Ursula Lindqvist offers a more explicitly autobiographical interpretation:

[Södergran] demonstrates that she accepted the avant-gardist's role. In this poem, Södergran anticipates literary society's rejection of the particular creative power she brought to bear. In Swedish lyrical tradition, the first-person pronoun "jag" refers to a poem's speaker, as in "diktens jag" [the poem's speaker]. This poem thus highlights not only the poet-speaker's sense of imprisonment and isolation in her geographical location but also her creative isolation and oppression in a cultural milieu that is hostile to her creative process. (Lindqvist 816)

I agree with Lindqvist that Södergran takes on the role of avant-gardist, yet Lindqvist clearly reads this as if Södergran herself is troubled by isolation and oppression as the poem's speaker writes in order to fulfill Södergran's manifesto "Individuell konst." Although Lindqvist does distinguish Södergran from her lyrical speaker, her interpretation of the poem appears only to have avoided

Södergran's name as she describes Södergran's literary intentions. Lindqvist adds "By creating this poem, the speaker can imagine rising above the present land in which she is a stranger and looking to the land of the future, where she belongs" to elaborate that the speaker of *Jag* is defining her avant-gardism. I do not disagree. However, for Lindqvist, the speaker is, once again, unquestionably a "she." This is not problematic in itself, yet my intention is to show that Södergran's critics incessantly presume that this speaker is, if not Södergran herself, undeniably female. As I have highlighted above, the poem can certainly be interpreted from various angles, yet critics' constant reliance on the feminine pronoun, though it is *not* present in the poem, urges me to read this poem through a gendered lens to see where, if at all, it is implied.

In "I" the narrator is a speaking body. This body is not explicitly marked by masculinity or femininity, yet I see this body nevertheless as oppressed by the implicit gender to which it is bound. The narrator is a stranger in this land (the body) and—trapped under the sea (gender)—is not comforted by the shining sun or ungraspable air that reaches its hands. "Man sade mig att jag är född i fångenskap." This line is passive and reveals that the narrator had to learn about its eternally intersubjective state, suggesting this is not a natural perception of affairs. Life has originated from its own prison and therefore the narrator knows no outside. The prison is itself the body: first, the womb (the female flesh), and then the narrator's own body (female *or* male). The body is a prison because it is forever marked by gender and forgets the difference, just as the ego comes into being and into language by the mother's flesh and forgets this "fleshy memory," making everything else foreign: "there is no face that would be known to me." The narrator senses that its relation to its body does not conform to law and asks "Var jag en sten, den man kastat hit på botten?/Var jag en frukt, som var för tung för sin gren?" The first question suggests punishment; someone casts the narrator beneath the depths of the sea of gender where the body is sedimented. The second question reveals how the narrator's own physical, weighty glory led to its bodily prison. The body becomes completely unknown to itself: is it hard as stone or soft as fruit? It is important to remember that the narrator is merely at an interim at the end of the poem. It is only dreaming of altering its perspective in order to find its true home. It has yet to climb the slippery branches. I suggest that the narrator of this poem could be a sexed body (any sex) that is isolated within its own body and oppressed by its gender.

Contrary to most Södergran scholarship, I contend that Södergran's narrators in *Dikter* ironically embellish figurations of women and femininity in order to articulate false sexual difference and fallacious dichotomies. Lindqvist argues that Södergran employs avant-gardist features that are similar to the "masculine poet-speaker [...] yet [Södergran] recasts them to serve her individual philosophical agenda. Accordingly, Södergran's poet-speaker is either feminine or gender-neutral" (818). Indeed, Södergran's *Dikter* narrators are frequently female, but the exaggerated illustrations of women serve to dissect the femininity they represent. The gender-neutral narrators, on the other hand, call attention to the readers' need to impose gender onto the body; which is evident whenever critics unapologetically (and perhaps unwittingly) refer to the non-gendered narrator as "she" or "her." We can see Södergran's own concern with intrusive pronouns in the poem "Konungens sorg." "Ordet 'sorg' lät konungen förbjuda vid hovet,/olycka', 'kärlek' och 'lycka' som all gjorde ont,/men 'hon' och 'hennes' funnos ännu kvar" (*Dikter och aforismer* 52). The female pronouns are indestructible in this poem; Man cannot deny or resist them, and Woman cannot escape them. The poem vividly illustrates how universal qualities such as happiness and sorrow hold less power over the subject than the feminine markers that provide it its very identity. For women to exist, to feel

pain or sorrow, she must first be culturally intelligible and this is bestowed to her when the male king orders her being into existence via feminine pronouns. The gender-neutral narration makes the poem's charge against patriarchy, if not more effective, then more visible at least. The poem reminds us that we, too, are kings who have always demanded a gendered pronoun.

Overall, Södergran's construction of Woman in *Dikter* becomes, I suggest, the destruction of her. In the poem "Kärlek," Woman falls apart:

Min själ var en ljusblå dräkt av himlens färg;  
jag lämnade den på en klippa vid havet  
och naken kom jag till dig och liknade en kvinna.  
Och som en kvinna satt jag vid ditt bord  
och drack en skål med vin och andades in doften av några rosor.  
Du fann att jag var vacker och liknade något du sett i drömmen,  
jag glömde allt, jag glömde min barndom och mitt hemland,  
jag visste endast att dina smekningar höllo mig fången.  
Och du tog leende en spegel och bad mig se mig själv.  
Jag såg att mina skuldror voro gjorda av stoft och smulade sig sönder,  
jag såg att min skönhet var sjuk och hade ingen vilja än - försvinna.  
O, håll mig slutet i dina armar så fast att jag ingenting behöver.  
(*Dikter och aforismer* 48)

Here Södergran's narrator presents a speaker who "liknade en kvinna." The implication is that the speaker is indeed female, yet the idea, flesh, and actions of Woman are destructive. As femininity is honored, the body, thought to be the producer of femininity, decays. The body that comes to man "looking like a woman" is naked, showing that even the physical body is adorned with expectations of gender. Drinking and sitting "like a woman" acknowledges the performative gestures that the body has adopted to its advantage. As Judith Butler suggests, "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" ("Performance" 523). Doing her gender as female, the woman becomes beautiful to man. No longer naked, but clothed in femininity, her gender and sex are united, never having been apart and never parting. She forgets her past, her separation from femininity. Having abandoned her soul, a feminine dress, the narrator uses man's mirror to see herself: dust. All the wine, roses, and caresses have turned woman into a decaying sculpture. The narrator succumbs to its nonexistence but the outcome is ironical. On the diegetic level of "Kärlek," the female body is revered, unveiled, wine, and perfumed. The glorified aesthetic descriptions of her come from man's point of view; yet throughout the poem the body is disintegrating. On the extradiegetic level, the narrator presents valorized images but surprises the reader twice: the reader is first confronted by the beautiful crumbling woman and then by her desire to continue on the path of ruination.

In addition to overthrowing images of Woman, Södergran destroys historical dichotomies such as in the poem "Min själ."

Min själ kan icke berätta och veta någon sanning,  
min själ kan endast gråta och skratta och vrida sina händer;  
min själ kan icke minnas och försvara,

min själ kan icke överväga och bekräfta.  
 När jag var ett barn såg jag havet: det var blått,  
 i min ungdom mötte jag en blomma: hon var röd,  
 nu sitter vid min sida en främling: han är utan färg,  
 men jag är icke mera rädd för honom än jungfrun var för draken.  
 När riddaren kom var jungfrun röd och vit,  
 men jag har mörka ringar under ögonen. (*Dikter och aforismer* 48)

The narrator's soul, being beyond gender and body, cannot recognize oppositional forces. It does not know fiction and truth cannot exist. It laughs and cries in harmony. Furthermore, being unable to remember, defend, consider, or judge reinforces the soul's innocence. Yet as a body experiencing space and time it sees gender: the sea was neutral and blue; the flower was female and red; the present stranger is male and colorless. The narrator shows that bodies recognize other material and attribute gender, somewhat arbitrarily, to them. The man is colorless because his masculinity, his maleness, his sex is foreign but not threatening—not oppositional. The virgin, however, is both red and white, which illustrates her refusal to choose one over the other, her ability to contain and synthesize opposition. The narrator shows that dichotomies are rejected or assimilated in the soul, but it is the body that sees difference. However, the virgin successfully unites dichotomous oppositions within her body, which is the non-fearing body; the narrator's own lack of fear additionally relates it to the virgin, implied by the shared red and white colors. What is more, the narrator's flesh is marked by darkness; which further implies vision and knowledge. The colors red and white certainly have their historical significance (In the Finnish civil war the conservative soldiers were labeled White and the communist soldiers Red), yet considering their relation to gender is just as important. Just as the virgin in "Min själ" is both red and white, the narrator of "Den Speglande Brunnen" must choose between red and white: "Ödet sade: vit skall du leva eller röd skall du dö!/Men mitt hjärta beslöt: röd skall jag leva" (*Dikter och aforismer* 49). White represents traditionally conceived images of feminine bridal purity, whereas red marks masculine war, blood, and overt sexuality. I see the narrator as female, yet she chooses to be masculine-red. The following lines, "Nu bor jag i landet, där allt är ditt, /döden träder aldrig in i detta rike" (49), show that she is now in man's territory, his world, his unbreakable body. She, as he, sits at the reflecting fountain and is asked if happiness has been here. "[S]kakar jag på huvudet och ler:/lyckan är långt borta, där sitter en ung kvinna och sömmar ett barnatäcke,/ lyckan är långt borta, där går en man i skogen och timrar sig en stuga" (49). The answer conjures conventional images of femininity and masculinity; the female is maternal and the male is independent, instinctive, and self-sustaining. To the female (as male) this appears to be happiness, yet the narrator chose to be in man's place. It is this decision that allows the narrator to be where "sköna dagar [spegla] sina leende drag" (49). Therefore, the opposition to happiness is not pain, or worry. The woman living in man's world is not unhappy—she is only untraditional.

### ***Södergran's Neuter***

I have shown that Södergran's *Dikter* depicts the female body as a body that needs to be revisited and revised. The female body, which has traditionally come into femininity through masculine discourse and synthetic dichotomies, is only reinforced by Södergran's narrators in order

reshape its historically inaccurate contours. Particularly vital to my study of Södergran's debut work is one of her most well known poems, "Vierge Moderne." Again, Södergran's language and imagery paradoxically uphold *and* shatter socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity, enabling poetic expression unbounded by circumscribing definitions of gender that have been imposed historically upon the body and speech.

Jag är ingen kvinna. Jag är ett neutrum.  
Jag är ett barn, en page och ett djärvt beslut,  
jag är en skrattande strimma av en scharlakanssol . . .  
Jag är ett nät för alla glupska fiskar,  
jag är en skål för alla kvinnors ära,  
jag är ett steg mot slumpen och fördärvet,  
jag är ett sprang i friheten och självet . . .  
Jag är blodets viskning i mannens öra,  
jag är en själens frossa, köttets längtan och förvägran,  
jag är en ingångsskylt till nya paradiset.  
Jag är en flamma, sökande och käck,  
jag är ett vatten, djupt men dristigt upp till knäna,  
jag är eld och vatten i ärligt sammanhang på fria villkor . . .  
(*Dikter och aförismer* 31-32)

The two sentences of the first line are simple statements, yet they are undeniably intricate. The first sentence "Jag är ingen kvinna" is a locutionary act that is made of oppositions. "Jag är" is a positive statement, whereas "ingen kvinna" is a negation with lasting implications. Stating that it is no woman, the narrator indicates that it once was woman or has, incorrectly, been perceived as woman. This is unfortunately unavoidable as Simone de Beauvoir points out, "if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: 'I am a woman'; on this truth must be based all further discussion. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man" (de Beauvoir xvii). Södergran's narrator shows that despite identifying itself as neuter, it must first separate itself from woman, and the very negation is therefore a marker that both ruptures and reinforces the relationship. Once the distinction has been made, the neuter comes into being. The neuter should refuse demarcations of sex and gender, being neither man nor woman, yet this neuter, the *Vierge Moderne*, is body, subject, and action housing fluid gestures and symbols of masculinity and femininity that disrupt and distort their very definitions. The neuter never takes shape of man or woman yet comprises them both. For Södergran's critics, however, this neuter has instead become a new woman. Boel Hackman states that, "'Vierge moderne' suggererar fram den moderna unga kvinnas många egenskaper och visar därmed på den nuvarande, gängse uppfattningens ytlighet och begränsning" (139). Ebba Witt-Brattström also sees it as woman, the *Nya Kvinnan*. She considers Södergran's negation and use of the term neuter to imply "jag är ingen (vanlig) kvinna, jag är en Ny kvinna (neutrum)" (210). Fortunately, Ursula Lindqvist points out the problem with regarding the *Vierge Moderne* as the new woman:

while [Södergran] is clearly deconstructing the figure of "woman" in this poem, she offers no single alternative vision of what a New Woman would look like. Instead, her ecstatic

descriptions mutate rapidly and unpredictably, like the colors and shapes in a kaleidoscope, propelled forward by the momentum of the repeated “I am.” By declining to erect a single woman figure to replace the one she destroys in the poem’s opening line, Södergran once again stands fast in her subject position by making it impossible to demarcate a representative figure to cast in an object position—not even a revised, woman-friendly, politically updated object position. (Lindqvist 828)

Södergran is not creating the new woman or any woman. Instead, Södergran’s narrator is expressing itself as a sexless yet sexual body, a subject of inanimate objects that refuse to be objectified, and actions (*steg, sprang, skål, frossa*). Södergran shows rather cleverly that this speaker is both corporeal and beyond corporeality, thus resistant to any classifications of a concrete being. Indeed, the narrator is not gendered itself, but the very symbols and signs of non-gender, femininity, and slight masculinity create an ostensible paradox. Lindqvist adds that, “The speaker systematically deconstructs the psychological fantasy of woman by declaring the ‘modern virgin’ to be paradoxical” (826). Yet the paradoxes are only paradoxes when they are outside this body. The *Vierge Moderne* is able to interpret the paradoxes into harmonious syntheses within and via its own body, a body that transcends man, woman, neuter, object and action.

I have argued that the Modern Virgin is not as pure as the completely genderless subject Lindqvist puts forth. The presence of masculinity and femininity cannot be escaped, but it is how they function in the poem that makes the Modern Virgin androgynous and not necessarily gender-neutral. Lisa Rado indicates a distinction between a gender-neutral figure and the “third-sexed” androgyne that houses male and female qualities:

Many modernist writers of both sexes became increasingly attracted to a culturally specific notion of a third-sexed, or androgyne, imagination—and here I use the term “androgyne” instead of androgynous to indicate the almost hermaphroditic nature of the concept of androgyny in the modernist age—that reflected and capitalized upon the changes in the modern sexual landscape. (12)

The images of gender in *Vierge Moderne* do not function as designators of sex, but as effects of actions far removed from the body. In other words, gender is not, for the Modern Virgin, a quality or essence of the subject, but an effect of it. The purely neutral narrator is only neuter by its own self-designated declarations that displace gender from the body to actions and material objects. Södergran’s androgynous narrator calls attention to the reader’s compulsion to locate and thus project gender onto language and body rather than receiving distinctions of gender from them (which would also be problematic). Carefully portraying the body’s relationship to gender, language, and gestures, Södergran methodically perpetuates the inclination toward the standard dichotomy of masculinity and femininity, celebrating sexed and gendered bodies as a fine tool to revalue and devalue the construction of such models, thereby detaching the body and its voice from their historically designated gender. Hence, the dichotomy in the poem is only as real as we make it. The *Vierge Moderne* spreads itself corporeally and non-corporeally across the planes of gender and non-gender, and as the enunciator of feminine, masculine, and neutral actions and descriptions, Södergran’s narrator becomes the modern androgyne.

In the next chapter, I look at the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and his discussion of Woman in order to show, in subsequent chapters, how Södergran's reception of Nietzsche was informed by her own critical understanding of his thoughts on gender, Woman, and the cultural body.

## Chapter III

### Narrating from a Distance: Nietzsche's Double-voiced Discourse

Ich will die Menschen den Sinn ihres Seins lehren:  
welcher ist der Übermensch, der Blitz aus der dunklen Wolke Mensch.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Edith Södergran's use of androgynous narration was a bold step in the development of Nordic female authorship, and her resistance to the patriarchal hegemonies that dominated European society at the time of her career is evident in her reception of Friedrich Nietzsche. But what did Södergran face as a female reader of Nietzsche? It is commonly known that Nietzsche propagated negative illustrations of Woman in his philosophy and thereby carried with him a particularly outdated vision of the feminine other into modernity. Surely, women's movements were already on the rise in Södergran's native Finland by the mid-nineteenth century, yet Nietzsche's polemic against women's social and cultural worth, and his denial of her intellectual aptitude was detrimental to her socio-cultural status in Europe. Moreover, because Nietzsche's thought constructed an antiquated feminine body by and into discourses of modernity, he left the "untouched woman," the biological female, behind; thus, in Nietzsche's philosophy the feminine other has yet to speak and be heard. Nevertheless, I will show in this chapter how a feminist reading of Nietzsche's illustrations of the feminine other *can* locate a voice, or voices, in his writing that is indeed feminine, yet not necessarily female. Nietzsche's "feminine" voices, I argue, ultimately construct paradoxically positive images of the feminine other, and in light of this, I suggest that Södergran's avant-garde poetry appropriated this type of Nietzschean rhetoric, an act that demonstrates a female writer intellectually engaging the very patriarchal hegemonies attempting to silence her: "[Ich] ich denke, dass es ein rechter Weiberfreund ist, der den Frauen heute zuruft: *mulier taceat de muliere!*" (Nietzsche, *JGB* sec. 232).<sup>2</sup> Thus, Södergran's avant-gardist convictions, partly encouraged by Nietzsche's concept of overcoming the self, inspired her to ignore historical restrictions placed upon women writers and instead write with a free hand, unbound by gender and literary tradition.

To begin, Nietzsche's philosophizing hammer, to use his own metaphor, did not make or break woman; he was just one of the many men who buffeted her about the halls of history. Within the realm of poetry, for example, the feminine voice has long bestowed the gift of verse to men in the form of the Muse; however, the Muse was only a mouthpiece for the male god who provided divine utterance. Fixed between god and man, the female Muse thus engaged in a psychosexual union with the poet, "bequeath[ing] to the poet heightened sexual powers [...] Plato's Muses seduce the poet and the poet's audience into an orgiastic departure from reality through their Dionysian mysteries" (Rado 3-4). Aristotle, for his part, also portrays the male poet as "possessed by the female emissary

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<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, *ASZ* Prologue, sec. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche's remarks on Napoleon's comment, "Woman should be silent about woman," about French writer Germaine de Staël, commonly known as Madame de Staël.



of a male god” (4). During the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, the female Muse became feminized Nature and male poets were now averse to any feminine authority; they sought to control her by appropriating her qualities and “by taking on the feminine virtues of compassion, mercy gentleness and sympathy, the male Romantic poets could speak with ultimate moral as well as intellectual authority” (Mellor 23-24). Diane Hoeveler refers to this particular appropriation of “female qualities” by Romantic poets as *Romantic androgyny*.<sup>3</sup> The rise of Modernism, however, brought forth a heightened sense of sexual difference and female subjectivity began to gain greater substance. By the turn of the century, women’s liberation groups were rapidly growing and several sex theorists emerged who introduced new concepts of androgyny in the body. For example, in *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), Edward Carpenter states:

In late years (and since the arrival of the New Woman amongst us) many things in the relation of men and women to each other have altered, or at any rate become clearer. The growing sense of equality in habits and customs—university studies, art, music, politics, the bicycle, etc.—all these things have brought about a *rapprochement* between the sexes. If the modern woman is a little more masculine in some ways than her predecessor, the modern man (it is to be hoped), while by no means effeminate, is a little more sensitive in temperament and artistic in feeling than the original John Bull. (9)

In Carpenter’s view, Woman is no longer mythological or metaphorical; her body has finally taken shape, yet her physicality only sharpens the dichotomy of Man and Woman and specifically calls into question the masculinity of men’s bodies. In the process, however, Man becomes hyper masculine in his overtaking of the “feminine” qualities while remaining unquestionably, though paradoxically, masculine. This deems men who, according to Carpenter, contain “the tenderer and more emotional soul-nature of the woman” (18) superior. Another early example of modern androgyny comes from influential German scientist Richard von Krafft-Ebing who, in his 1892 work *Psychopathia Sexualis*, defined homosexuals not by same-sex attraction, but by a psychic androgyny: men are “females in feeling” whereas women can be males in feeling (Krafft-Ebing 279). For Carpenter and Krafft-Ebing, androgynous qualities are described as inverted masculine and feminine energies in a single-sexed body, yet even more startling conceptions of a threatening and inherently negative third sex eventually emerged:

A “three-sex” model of sexual categories consisting of men, women, and a third, or “intermediate,” sex, initially [comprised] homosexuals but soon [became] a more inclusive category. While at first this new division allowed white men, threatened by the blurring of gender roles, to retain their sense of superiority over all things feminine by associating the potentially subversive androgynes (male or female) with the genetically degenerate, it soon became more difficult to preserve the old hierarchy between the sexes on biological grounds. (Rado 11)

One of the strongest proponents of a third sex was Sigmund Freud, Nietzsche’s equally influential contemporary, who uprooted modern society with his psychoanalytic theory that, among other things, posited origins of the “bisexual” body. Freud argued that “Ein gewisser Grad von

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<sup>3</sup> See Hoeveler.

anatomischem Hermaphroditismus gehört nämlich der Norm an” (*Drei* 6) and therefore “Die Auffassung, die sich aus diesen lange bekannten anatomischen Tatsachen ergibt, ist die einer ursprünglich bisexuellen Veranlagung, die sich im Laufe der Entwicklung bis zur Monosexualität mit geringen Resten des verkümmerten Geschlechtes verändert (*Drei* 7). Especially relevant to this trajectory, Freud claimed that “alle menschlichen Individuen infolge ihrer bisexuellen Anlage und der gekreuzten Vererbung männliche und weibliche Charaktere in sich vereinigen, so daß die reine Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit theoretische Konstruktionen bleiben mit ungesichertem Inhalt” (“Psychische” 410).<sup>4</sup>

Nietzsche’s philosophy, which certainly contributes to this reevaluation of the body by male minds, demonstrates, on the one hand, an increased sense of innate sexual difference, and on the other hand, the appropriation of the female body and femininity reminiscent of the Romantic poet. “Dass der Schaffende selber das Kind sei, das neu geboren werde, dazu muss er auch die Gebälerin sein wollen und der Schmerz der Gebälerin” (ASZ 111). In the following look at Nietzsche’s rhetorical voices, I intend to highlight his flattery, worship and appropriation of the feminine other that is seldom discussed openly in his work.

First, we may question why female readers, or anyone for that matter, would consider it worthwhile to free Woman from Nietzsche’s metaphors at all? In *Postponements: Women, Sensuality, and Death in Nietzsche*, David Farrell Krell asks “have we not already decided that in matters touching woman and sensuality [...] we have come a long way since Nietzsche, so that he no longer has anything to tell us?” (3). Krell adds: “[...] how daunting all this must be for those women who are not *la femme* but women; who are, that is to say, the women we know” (10). To be sure, any attempts to discern what Nietzsche says about Woman should be done without inappropriately appropriating his philosophy to fit a feminist agenda. However, pursuing female subjectivity in Nietzsche’s writing may help us to understand how and why his figuration of Woman attributes her with the fortitude and intellect that his own phallogocentric discourse sets out to deny her; this illustrates a common thread in men’s writing of the time. I additionally suggest that Nietzsche’s overt criticism of femininity, within the female and male body, surreptitiously defines the limitations of masculinity (also within the male and female body). Therefore, Nietzsche’s critique of gender’s relation to the self introduces a transvaluation of the socio-cultural and psychical body into one that is no longer inscribed within the arbitrary institution of gender; it is a vision of the body unencumbered. Recognizing the possibility of a female body overcoming and transcending man and woman is essential to understanding the full implications of Nietzsche’s concern with gender.

With doctors, philosophers, and sexual theorists affirming Nietzsche’s modern misogyny, it is striking, then, that a young poet—and a woman at that—living on the Finno-Russian border resolutely confronted Nietzsche’s philosophy in her writing and sparked a literary movement in a nation coping with internal war, disease, poverty, and the lingering effects of colonization. Edith Södergran’s first collection *Dikter* (1916) is, once again, not traditionally read in Nietzschean light, yet her multiple narrators—who possess feminine and gender-neutral bodies and who additionally deconstruct the very gendered images they appear to perform—demonstrate her Nietzschean

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<sup>4</sup> Freud similarly claimed, “The proportions in which the masculine and feminine mingle in the individual are subject to quite extraordinary variations [...] what constitutes masculinity or femininity is an unknown element which is beyond the power of anatomy to grasp” (“Femininity” 155-56).

tendency to create in order to destroy...and to create anew.<sup>5</sup> In chapter four, I will explore how Södergran specifically challenged Nietzsche's misogynistic writing, but first it is necessary to look at what Nietzsche said, and did not say, about women and femininity.

In Nietzsche's writing there is not a single text in which Woman is the primary subject, yet her presence—whether maligned, fetishized, or indirectly honored—is everywhere, as Krell points out: “[Woman is] most persistent yet never fully developed, never formulated explicitly as a doctrine or envisaged clearly as an idea” (preface). Hence, Krell sees women as postponed in Nietzsche's thought for “essential reasons, reasons that resisted even Nietzsche's incomparable gifts of language and intelligence” (preface). However, to merely accept that the female other resists the philosopher's words is to perpetuate history's silencing of her voice, as the idea of “Woman” had been mystified and biologically essentialized historically. Instead, I suggest that Nietzsche's apparent deferral of the female subject is intentional and very much part of his critique of turn of the century Western culture, which itself has long fostered and consequently demanded the belief in women's ontological elusiveness: “Vorausgesetzt, dass die Wahrheit ein Weib ist -, wie?” (*JGB* 1). Nietzsche's rhetorical question is just one example of how his philosophy incessantly confines the female sex to metaphor, a violent metaphor of herself (the female as man's idealized Woman) that inevitably appropriates her body--especially the reproductive organs--and ostensibly excinds the feminine other from his writing altogether. Not surprisingly, Nietzsche's supposed exclusion of the female subject has led several critics, such as Kathleen J. Wininger in “Nietzsche's Women and Women's Nietzsche,” to understand that “women are not the real subject of [Nietzsche's] writings” (221). But Wininger's claim is immediately suspect because Nietzsche, quite simply, discusses women a lot and how he does it is, on the surface, much too unambiguous and unoriginal for his otherwise notoriously metaphorical style. I therefore argue in this chapter that regardless of whether Nietzsche was for or against women in his writing, it is important that women read Nietzsche on their own terms without unwittingly contributing to self-essentialism.

Misogyny abounds in Nietzsche's writing: “Ein Mann hingegen [...] kann über das Weib immer nur orientalistisch denken: er muss das Weib als Besitz, als verschliessbares Eigenthum, als etwas zur Dienstbarkeit Vorbestimmtes und in ihr sich Vollendendes fassen” (*JGB*, VII: 238); yet we shouldn't be so quick to either dismiss such remarks or to accept them as being merely symptomatic of the times. I argue in this chapter that Nietzsche surreptitiously undermines his own misogyny via the many contradictions he uses to anchor his polemics against the eternal feminine and the emancipated woman. These contradictions eventually open up spaces in Nietzsche's writing where we can see a latent discussion of the female body unrestrained by cultural norms and discourses constructed and maintained by patriarchal Western laws. I will show in this chapter that Nietzsche's philosophy is overwhelmingly corporeally charged, as his writing appears to favor the material body over existential aesthetics of the self. As such, Nietzsche's misogynistic metaphors play with illusions of both masculinity and femininity in a way that defies the established philosophical and scientific interpretations of the material body of his time, all the while his writing disrupts the once male-only domain of philosophy by employing a rhetoric with an intentional “feminine” style.

Nietzsche's adamant “no” to women as socially and culturally autonomous beings is infamous, and his superior attitude toward them is often crude:

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<sup>5</sup> Södergran's second collection *Septemberlyran* (1918) is unapologetically inspired by Nietzsche and marks the birth of Södergran's overcoming Übermensch-like narration that constructs and deconstructs gendered and non-gendered voices via irony

Das, was am Weibe Respekt und oft genug Furcht einflösst, ist seine Natur, die "natürlicher" ist als die des Mannes, seine ächte raubthierhafte listige Geschmeidigkeit, seine Tigerkrallen unter dem Handschuh, seine Naivetät im Egoismus, seine Unerziehbarkeit und innerliche Wildheit, das Unfassliche, Weite, Schweifende seiner Begierden und Tugenden... Was, bei aller Furcht, für diese gefährliche und schöne Katze "Weib" Mitleiden macht, ist, dass es leidender, verletzbarer, liebebedürftiger und zur Enttäuschung verurtheilter erscheint als irgend ein Thier. (*JGB*, VII: 239)

Unfortunately, Nietzsche's apparent stance on women and their rights as human beings was typical of the ideology of his time, but it wasn't always appreciated. Georg Brandes, for example, writes in a letter to Nietzsche: "There were also in the other work [*Beyond Good and Evil*] some reflections on women in general which did not agree with my own line of thought [...] When you write about women you are very like him [August Strindberg]" (Gilman 63, 78). But like Strindberg, Nietzsche was far from conventional when he propagated inequality between the sexes; in fact, the blatant sexism in Nietzsche's writing perhaps shows him to be more conscious of the inequality of sexual double standards than an advocate of it.

Es ist etwas ganz Erstaunliches und Ungeheures in der Erziehung der vornehmen Frauen, ja vielleicht giebt es nichts Paradoxeres. Alle Welt ist darüber einverstanden, sie in eroticis so unwissend wie möglich zu erziehen und ihnen eine tiefe Scham vor dergleichen und die äusserste Ungeduld und Flucht beim Andeuten dieser Dinge in die Seele zu geben. [...] Aber hierin sollen sie unwissend bis in's Herz hinein bleiben: – sie sollen weder Augen, noch Ohren, noch Worte, noch Gedanken für diess ihr "Böses" haben: ja das Wissen ist hier schon das Böse. (*FW*, II:71)

Here, Nietzsche appears to be well aware of Western cultural laws that have long mandated women's lives and the social behavior of their bodies. For instance, "Genteel women in Wilhelmine society were not actually expected to be as sexually aroused as their husbands, and sexual intercourse was construed more as a duty than as a pleasure; there was also a school of medical thought which held that it was good for women's health, and prevented them from becoming 'hysterics' (Diethel 44). Yet despite Nietzsche's apparent criticism of women's oppression in Wilhelmine society, it isn't immediately clear what he prescribes for this situation. Indeed, reading Nietzsche will often leave the reader with a lingering impression that he only all too eagerly accepted women's current state, as if the woman question were of no concern for the task of philosophy. "[...] denn wir sind Artisten -; feind, kurzum, dem ganzen europäischen Feminismus (oder Idealismus, wenn man's lieber hört), der ewig 'hinan zieht' und ewig gerade damit 'herunter bringt'" (*M* sec. 10). We can, however, better understand the motivations behind Nietzsche's aversion to "European feminism" and the consequences he anticipated from it if we first briefly consider women's social status during Nietzsche's lifetime and then explore the unconventional problems he may have had with it.

In *Nietzsche on Gender*, Frances Nesbitt Opiel points out that in Prussia, where Nietzsche grew up, the expectations for women were simple: "to be a good wife, mother, and moral guardian of the family. The public (masculine) and private (feminine) dichotomy was enforced not only by social pressure but by law in Prussia and Bavaria, where from 1850s on women were barred from

participating in meetings where politics were discussed” (7). In addition to societal norms and cultural practices governing women’s place in the world, the female subject and her body, her physical existence, were replaced by the eternal feminine aesthetic: “images of women playing like angelic children, smiling serenely amid hoards of children, soulfully gazing heavenward out of windows, reading the Bible to an assembled family, singing at the piano...were reproduced in plays, novels, magazines stories, photographs, and portraits throughout the century. These images constitute the material of the ‘eternal feminine’” (Oppel 7). In this light, Nietzsche’s aforementioned use of the term “Femininismus” does not necessarily refer to any kind of women’s movement but to society’s idolization of the eternal feminine that romanticized “the obscure but compelling attraction of the feminine to the good, the innocent, the pure and the holy” (Oppel 16). But even if Nietzsche is, in this passage, condemning the eternal feminine rather than conventional feminism, it does not mean that he refrained from attacking any feminist resistances that threatened the sovereignty of patriarchal European values (which is at once puzzling since much of Nietzsche’s philosophy called for a transvaluation of these very values). In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), for example, Nietzsche asserts that “the weaker sex”:

[...] verlernt den Mann zu fürchten: aber das Weib, das “das Fürchten verlernt”, giebt seine weiblichsten Instinkte preis. Dass das Weib sich hervor wagt, wenn das Furcht-Einflössende am Manne, sagen wir bestimmter, wenn der Mann im Manne nicht mehr gewollt und grossgezüchtet wird, ist billig genug, auch begreiflich genug; was sich schwerer begreift, ist, das ebendamit – das Weib entartet. (Nietzsche, *JGB* 239)

In this passage, Nietzsche’s discussion of women’s shifting cultural character at once delimits the identity of “Woman” as it sets it apart from the antithetical (and therefore inherently masculine) identity of the disruptive feminist. Accordingly, the feminist who unlearns her fear of man is no longer a woman, because she has renounced all claims to the eternal feminine. Regrettably, Nietzsche’s sentiment toward the cultural status of women and their imminent emancipation in the above passage was not unlike his contemporaries.

In the nineteenth century, some scientists wrote that women who work to obtain economic independence set themselves up for a ‘struggle against Nature,’ while author after author used Darwin’s theory of evolution to argue that giving the vote to women was, evolutionary speaking, retrogressive. Physicians and educators alike warned that young women who engage in long, hard hours of study will badly damage their reproductive systems, perhaps going insane to boot. (Fausto-Sterling, *Myths* 4)

Nietzsche’s warning against women “unlearning to fear man” therefore seems to spur modern man’s fear of the unknown progeny that might result from integrating the fearless “feminine” with history’s patriarchal institutions—including philosophy. In fact, Jacques Derrida eloquently comments on this very anxiety in *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, “Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. And the philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on these shoals and is hurled down these depthless depths to its ruin” (Derrida 51). As female autonomy and notions of sexual equity began to rapidly materialize during the turn of the century, Nietzsche simultaneously exhibits *and* mocks the philosopher’s anxiety of an emasculated and castrated philosophy by distributing excessive, pejorative attacks on women’s

character—an act which seems to foreclose women’s voice in philosophical discourse. As a result, Nietzsche’s preclusion of the feminine other ostensibly constructs a grand-scale disavowal of her social and cultural intelligibility throughout his writing and produces a gross overcompensation of the masculine. “Bist du der Siegreiche, der Selbstbezwinger, der Gebieter der Sinne, der Herr deiner Tugenden? Also frage ich dich” (ASZ 90). Such overt displays of overcompensation has led Kathleen Wininger to claim that, “What Nietzsche was concerned with was not women but a rather typical use of ideas of women in order to come up with a conception of masculinity” (Wininger 240). I suggest, however, that Nietzsche’s unwavering praise of masculinity via terms like *Siegreiche*, *Selbstbezwinger*, and *Gebieter der Sinne*, does, indeed, say a lot about women at the same time as it makes his own criticism of masculinity all the more subtle. “Der Mann soll zum Kriege erzogen werden und das Weib zur Erholung des Kriegers: alles Andre ist Thorheit” (ASZ 85). Statements like this are unimaginative and quite antiquated in comparison with Nietzsche’s otherwise innovative use of words, and such declarations appear to trap men and women in an historically unchallenged discourse, which first violates and then inevitably replaces the material body. But I would argue that this is not what Nietzsche is doing. I suggest that Nietzsche’s rhetorical violence to the body is ultimately ironic as he clothes *both* men and women in grotesque metaphors that reflect the synthetic doctrines posturing as nature that society and even philosophy have imposed on the self. By doing so, Nietzsche turns his own misogyny on its head and thereby reveals the inversion of his words on women and their bodies.

Incidentally, by the 1890s Nietzsche had already gained the support of many feminists, which may lead us to further speculate why so many female readers, such as Södergran, would come to admire his philosophy at all. First, since Nietzsche so vigorously critiqued the patriarchal values of fin de siècle Western culture and the discriminatory institutions they brought forth, it might not be too surprising that nineteenth- and twentieth-century feminists were responsive (to varying degrees) to Nietzsche’s ideas. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that the feminisms of Nietzsche’s lifetime were no more unified than they are today.

During Nietzsche’s childhood there were a large number of charitable women’s groups such as the one his Aunt Rosalie belonged to in Naumburg, but these were essentially set up to do good works and were an outlet for the benevolent activities of middle-class women. This remained the ideological core of early German feminism for several decades, though women soon began to polarize into separate interest groups which often had very clear objectives; some would be in favor of campaigning for suffrage, others in favor of abolishing the law which made prostitution legal in Germany; still others held varying views on women’s entry to the professions and on a woman’s right to abortion. (Diethe 139)

The divisions between moderate (or what we might today consider conservative) and radical feminisms can be seen in the varied responses to Nietzsche’s work, especially regarding his thoughts on women. To be sure, Nietzsche’s female contemporaries were mostly apprehensive about overtly criticizing the philosopher’s depictions of women, and this was most likely attributable to women’s paradoxical dilemma of needing to be liberated from yet accepted by men. In *Nietzsche’s Women: Beyond the Whip*, Carol Diethe explains that women on all sides of the spectrum of women’s rights struggled to successfully achieve liberation without losing their cultural worth in patriarchal society.

“The secret was to actually *be* liberated without admitting any allegiance towards the movement for women’s liberation: a female double standard only open to women of wealthy circumstances” (59).

We can see a paradoxical dedication to feminism in of one of Nietzsche’s most renowned friends and contemporaries, Lou Andreas-Salomé. Even though Salomé’s influence on Nietzsche and her profession was encouraging for women, she also agreed with Nietzsche’s belief that the emancipated woman was an unhealthy one, and she even “berated the attempts of emancipated women to gain admittance to the professions” (Diethe 59). In the following passage from “Ketzereien gegen die moderne Frau,” Salomé praises women writers but only as long as they stay feminine and avoid all competition with male writers:

Sollen etwa deshalb die Frauen keine Bücher mehr schreiben? Das mögen sie thun, so oft es sie dazu treibt, wie sie überhaupt Alles thun mögen, wozu es sie treibt. Das stört Keinen und Manchen freut es. Denn Weiblichkeit ist ja ein fröhliches Blühen – wenn nur alle Frauen einsähen, ein wie fröhliches! –, nicht aber irgend eine Zwangsanstalt mit vorgeschriebenen Bewegungen. 239

Indeed, Salomé champions female authority, including women’s inherent rights to think and write, but her words echo much of that cultural sentiment so devoted to maintaining the ideal feminine identity, as her inclination to “[please] many” via blossoming femininity only encourages Western culture’s infatuation with the eternal feminine. Surely, celebrating femininity is admirable, but it is evident that Salomé’s femininity is really man’s femininity, i.e., man’s historical projection of femininity onto women. Another female friend of Nietzsche, Ida von Miaskowski, conveys a similar attitude when commenting on Nietzsche’s views on women: “There are so many beautiful indeed, sublime words about women and marriage in his works.”<sup>6</sup>

Yet another influential woman in Nietzsche’s life and career was Helen Zimmern, who translated several of Nietzsche’s works into English. Discussing how she personally resolved Nietzsche’s sexist ideas with her own feminism, Zimmern explained:

I know what your question is aiming at; it has been asked often enough. I also know what Nietzsche wrote about women. [...] There are apparently men who have theories about women, which they never put into practice. There are apparently others who can combine brutal practice with the most beautiful theories. [...] Certainly [Nietzsche] did not use the famous whip. (Gilman 168)

Zimmern, Salomé, and Miaskowski all overlooked Nietzsche’s misogyny to varying degrees, but there were other female contemporaries of Nietzsche who had stronger reservations, though they refrained from combating Nietzsche’s viewpoints outright. Malwida von Meysenbug, a writer and friend of Nietzsche, believed that he simply didn’t understand women and suggested that “he drop the subject of women” altogether (Wininger 238). But regarding Nietzsche’s misogyny as only a “passing phase in his development,” von Meysenbug, like Salomé and Zimmern, disapproved of the discrimination while essentially looking the other way. Of course, there is always the possibility of reading Nietzsche in more convenient ways: Resa von Schirnhöfer, a student familiar with Nietzsche

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<sup>6</sup> Stated by contemporary and friend of Nietzsche Ida von Miaskowski. “Erinnerungen an den jungen F. Nietzsche” *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), September 12, 1907. Qtd. in Wininger: 239.

through Von Meysenbug, explained, “Once [Nietzsche] said that I should not take offense at the—later so notorious—whip-passage in *Zarathustra*. This had not occurred to me, since I did not read it as an indictment of women, but only as a poetic generalization of individual cases” (qtd. in Wininger: 240).

Still, others were not so impressed. In “*Nietzsche und die Frauen*” [“Nietzsche and Women”] (1898), loyal *Nietzscheanerin* Hedwig Dohm exclaimed, “Friedrich Nietzsche! Du mein größter Dichter des Jahrhunderts, warum schreibst Du über die Frauen so ganz jenseits von Gut? Ein tiefes, tiefes Herzeleid für mich. Es macht mich noch einsamer, noch älter, noch abseitiger” (534-43). In fact, Dohm took such offense to Nietzsche’s thoughts on women that she accused him of never having an intimate relationship with a woman.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, another female artist and critic of Nietzsche was Helene Stöcker, a typical “radical bourgeois feminist”<sup>8</sup> who worked with aesthetics and intellectual history. Stöcker’s feminism advocated sexual freedom for both men and women, and her work may have benefited from “Nietzsche’s friendliness to ideas of sexuality and sensuality, the absence of dogmatism, and even the idea of an aristocracy of the spirit [...]” (Wininger 248). Stöcker’s magazine *Die Neue Generation* additionally “tried to make human sexuality a powerful instrument not only of reproduction, but of progressive evolution, and concurrently of a heightened and cultivated joy of life” (qtd. in Wininger: 248) and her writing largely reinforced the idea that “Nietzsche was not anti-feminist, but actually a philosopher who respected women” (Dieth 161). In a letter to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche in 1895, Stöcker wrote, “I am happy that the picture you draw of him [Nietzsche] completely harmonizes with the one I had of him. I absolutely do not believe that he “hated women” – at least, in the usual sense” (qtd. in Dieth: 161).<sup>9</sup> Regrettably, however, finding the good in Nietzsche’s discussion of women can sometimes lead to fostering the image of the Eternal Feminine, as we have already seen with Salomé. Stöcker continues, “Anyone who could write such wonderful words on marriage, - anyone who could go to such pains to conceive of man and woman in such a noble way, - such a one probably does have the right to speak harsh words about the narrow, petty and pathetic things, which, unfortunately, are too often found in woman generally” (161). It is quite evident that committing to a position on Nietzsche’s misogyny has its risks. On the one hand, it is obviously careless to disavow or dismiss the sexism as simply part of his cultural milieu; moreover, any theoretical attempts to explain it away must not forget the very real attacks Nietzsche makes. On the other hand, Nietzsche’s steadfast propagation of misogyny poses perplexing contradictions that can haunt anyone looking at Nietzsche’s writing to advance their own intellectual or artistic endeavors. Therefore, it is, as previously mentioned, perhaps best not to question whether Nietzsche was exclusively for or against women, but whether women can read Nietzsche on their own terms without unwittingly contributing to self-essentialism.

Unfortunately, Nietzsche’s female contemporaries (regardless of their support or criticism of Nietzsche) were customarily dismissed by the many men who sought to uphold the very patriarchal values, which these women and even Nietzsche himself threatened. In Otto Weininger’s influential *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903), for instance, the author dismisses any woman who reads and esteems Nietzsche:

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<sup>7</sup> See Dohm 20-34.

<sup>8</sup> See Dieth 153

<sup>9</sup> See Dieth 161: Unpublished letter from Helene Stöcker to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche dated May 28, 1895 (Goethe-Schiller Archive, Weimar 72/114a).



Die Frauen haben, wenn auch der äußere Schein für das Gegenteil sprechen mag, in Wahrheit gar keinen Sinn für das Genie, ihnen gilt jede Extravaganz der Natur, die einen Mann aus Reih' und Glied der anderen sichtbar hervortreten läßt, zur Befriedigung ihres sexuellen Ehrgeizes gleich [...] So gilt ihnen denn auch der geistreiche Mensch als der geniale, Nietzsche als der Typus des Genies. (127)

Unfortunately, Nietzsche himself had already promoted such a belittling idea: “Wenn ein Weib gelehrte Neigungen hat, so ist gewöhnlich Etwas an ihrer Geschlechtlichkeit nicht in Ordnung. Schon Unfruchtbarkeit disponirt zu einer gewissen Männlichkeit des Geschmacks; der Mann ist nämlich, mit Verlaub, ‘das unfruchtbare Thier’” (*JGB IV*: 144). We see in both examples that women are not only relegated to their bodies, to their reproductive system, but that they are governed by it. In these passages, women’s sexuality, when it malfunctions, gives rise to unnatural inclinations toward contemplation, emancipation, and even lesbianism. Weininger and Nietzsche thus reveal to us how intellect is synonymous with masculinity and masculinity is synonymous with sexuality—with *correct* sexuality. Hence, the intellectual woman is no longer a woman; she is an invert who, though no longer a woman, is paradoxically incapable of knowing man’s genius, and her sacrificed sex, furthermore, only rewards her with a more culturally-hollow voice.<sup>10</sup>

As we can see, with some women seeking to reinforce the Eternal Feminine<sup>11</sup> and with men both for and against women’s rights, the relationship between Nietzsche and women is not in the least unambiguous. In spite of Nietzsche’s harmful misogyny and the men and women who supported it, it is obviously important to keep in mind that women do have a say in what and how they read. “What Nietzsche’s essentialism (whether biological or cultural) ignores is that women—as the history of the women’s movement amply testifies—have their own depth, their own courage, wisdom and severity” (Ansell-Pearson, “Woman and Political” 30). I believe that Nietzsche, too, was well aware of women’s critical faculties, and he interdicted women’s severity by having misogyny stand in for the female sex in his writing—a kind of synecdoche gone bad. Philosophy’s historical lack of discussing women explicitly, much less fairly, causes Nietzsche to project this energy inwards (into his discourse, that is), and it is precisely within Nietzsche’s sexist rhetoric where we can locate his acknowledgment of female potency, for a worthy opponent to Nietzsche’s polemic must undergo the tyranny of his words:

Das Weib zum Beispiel ist rachsüchtig: das ist in seiner Schwäche bedingt, so gut wie seine Reizbarkeit für fremde Noth.— Die Stärke des Angreifenden hat in der Gegnerschaft, die er nöthig hat, eine Art Maass; jedes Wachsthum verräth sich im Aufsuchen eines gewaltigeren Gegners—oder Problems: denn ein Philosoph, der kriegerisch ist, fordert auch Probleme zum Zweikampf heraus. Die Aufgabe ist nicht, überhaupt über Widerstände Herr zu

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<sup>10</sup> Even though this kind of blatant double standard thrived during Nietzsche’s time and well beyond it, we shouldn’t forget that not all men were opposed to the advancement of women’s rights and to the advancement of their intellectual and cultural intelligibility. “German feminism, like British feminism, can boast of a number of men who took up the cause of women in their writing, as Mill did in Victorian England. In fact, as far back as 1792, T.G. von Hippel had expressed his concern that women had not gained emancipation through the French revolution [...]” (Diethel 138).

<sup>11</sup> Most of the women who sought to preserve women’s feminine essence were from the upper-class and regarded calls for women’s emancipation and introduction into the work force as socialist threats to their privileged status.

werden, sondern über solche, an denen man seine ganze Kraft, Geschmeidigkeit und Waffen-Meisterschaft einzusetzen hat,—über gleiche Gegner ... Gleichheit vor dem Feinde—erste Voraussetzung zu einem rechtschaffnen Duell. Wo man verachtet, kann man nicht Krieg führen; wo man befiehlt, wo man Etwas unter sich sieht, hat man nicht Krieg zu führen. (EH 274)

Compulsory heterosexuality has long defined females by material difference, a definition based on lack, and designated them as men's most vexatious "opponents." Moreover, the conspicuous remarks on females and femininity (the latter not fixed to the former) in Nietzsche's texts do not just "happen to present themselves"; on the contrary, ardent yet (simultaneously) hesitant attention is given to women throughout Nietzsche's polemics. In this respect, Nietzsche's definition of the duel can work to reframe his misogyny: instead of being a testament to the incompetence of women, Nietzsche's harmful words become rhetorical weaponry against his *equal*. Misogyny is therefore Nietzsche's somewhat narcissistic provocation to get women to take up his philosophy; yet such a roundabout way of locating the strength of women is still troublesome. If misogyny, in this instance, is discursive evidence of women's authority, then this is not an honest duel. Having misogyny usurp the female body, as I suggest Nietzsche does, shows Nietzsche to fashion the body of his own opponent and therefore situate himself in a one-sided duel. Has female agency, then, escaped the text once again? On the contrary, Nietzsche's positive discourse with the feminine other is ultimately retrievable in the unfortunate residue of his misogyny and appropriation of the female body. The appropriation, I suggest, is a kind of "rhetorical drag" that shows both masculinity and femininity to "occur" in (or be donned by) both sexes. When we see the misogyny for what it is—narcissistic provocation and ironic caricature—Nietzsche's notorious criticism against "the weaker sex" becomes displaced, and we can then interpret his thoughts on women in new ways. Yet the question remains: with all the progress feminism has made, why should we bother with Nietzsche at all?

Historically, the majority of Nietzsche scholarship has particularly ignored his virulence toward women. For example, in Walter Kaufmann's early critical study of Nietzsche, he dismisses Nietzsche's misogyny as being merely symptomatic of the discourse of his generation:

Nietzsche's writings contain many all-too-human judgments—especially about women—but these are philosophically irrelevant; and *ad hominem* arguments against any philosopher on the basis of such statements seem trivial and hardly pertinent [...] Therefore the unjust and unquestioned prejudices of a philosopher may be of interest to the historian as well as to the psychologist; but Nietzsche's prejudices about women need not greatly concern the philosopher. (Kaufmann 84)

At once, Kaufmann cuts females off entirely from philosophy in his attempt to deny Nietzsche's debt to them, demonstrating Kaufmann's own allegiance to philosophy's rich tradition of silencing women. Dismissing women, however, is obviously what Nietzsche did not do, and within the last thirty years feminist interpretations of Nietzsche have flourished in an effort to reevaluate the (mostly male) philosophical canon and to make it more accessible to female readers. As a result, Nietzsche's paradoxical propagation of misogyny and his attack on the very values that permit its operation have surely divided feminist approaches to his work. On the one hand, Nietzsche's apparent devaluation of femininity, maternity, and female sexuality makes his philosophy utterly

incompatible with the agendas of most, if not all, feminisms.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, more optimistic critics have attempted to identify Nietzsche's less obvious depictions of women that do not necessarily advocate misogyny, while showing how feminist criticism can inform and be informed by Nietzsche's critique of the gendered self. In *Resentment of the "Feminine" in Nietzsche's Politico-Aesthetics*, Caroline S. Picart outlines the general categories of readers of Nietzsche and women: "(1) those who believe Nietzsche's writings are essentially feminist; (2) those who believe Nietzsche's writings are at least potentially useful to feminism; (3) those who maintain that Nietzsche's writings are irredeemably misogynistic; and (4) those for whom a possible connection between Nietzsche and feminism is not even a mentionable or speculative issue" (2). To be sure, any consonance posited between Nietzsche and feminism is polarizing, and to disavow or uncritically accept Nietzsche's notorious remarks about women—as Kaufmann and Weininger do—is to carelessly stifle our understanding of his thought. Nietzsche's brazen bouts of textual misogyny are, I argue, his call for the reader to genealogically question the social and cultural systems that govern (what we now distinguish as) sex and gender's place in philosophy and the body as well as the interpellations of gendered bodies that result from these cultural practices. Looking critically at Nietzsche's illustrations of female and even male bodies may not only be insightful to our own contemporary ideas of gender and the body, but it may also help to explain how Nietzsche was able to inspire so many creative women whom his texts ostensibly took great pains to dismiss. In light of this, I argue in chapter four that Södergran, at least, found Nietzsche to be especially fruitful to her own feminist writing, making her a reader and critic who sifted through his misogyny and found a triumphant female sex. And Södergran was certainly not alone.<sup>13</sup> Ansell-Pearson remarks:

[On] the level of a textual politics in which the question of style is paramount, there can be found in Nietzsche's writings a celebration of the "feminine" and of woman conceived as sensuality, the multi-faceted body, and passion, an affirmation which stands in marked contrast to the masculinist tradition of Western philosophy which has erected the phallus of Reason in a position of superiority over emotion, desire, and passion. (Ansell-Pearson, "Who is Übermensch?" 327)

In the first part of this chapter, *Thus Spoke Man (but not Woman?): Nietzsche and Feminist Criticism*, I attempt to show that Nietzsche's apparent misogyny is actually a latent discussion of the gendered self that is constructed and maintained by caricatures of femininity and masculinity that have ossified into parodies of the material body. In doing so, I address whether the female has a voice in Nietzsche's writing, which is a main source of contention in feminist interpretations of Nietzsche. In *Womanizing Nietzsche*, for example, Kelly Oliver argues that Nietzsche's phallogocentric meditations on the sexes do not necessarily give voice to a specifically feminine other. Phallogocentrism, according to Elizabeth Grosz, functions:

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<sup>12</sup> In "Nietzsche's Feminization of Metaphysics and its Significance for Theories of Gender Difference," Sigríður Thorgeirsdóttir remarks, "[We] also have to bear in mind that [Nietzsche] was less of a political analyst or theorist than a philosopher who diagnosed the human condition in the face of nihilism. Therefore, one also comes to see that he was less interested in the fight of feminists for equal rights than in describing their state of mind or what he perceived as their mentality" (55).

<sup>13</sup> In Carol Diethe's *Nietzsche's Women: Beyond the Whip*, the author explores Nietzsche's influence on "creative women" Paula Modersohn-Becker, Gabriele Münter, Marianne Werefkin, Franziska zu Reventlow, Laura Marholm, and Gabriele Reuter, among others.

to reduce or categorise femininity so that it is conceived as a simulacrum, mirror-image or imperfect double of masculinity. Our received images of femininity have been masculine—inverted, projected images of male ideals and fantasies, images of the male 'other' rather than a female subject.... It proceeds by two processes: one, a leveling process, whereby all differences are reduced to variations of sameness; and the other, a hierarchising process, requiring judgment of the two sexes by the same criteria. (Grosz, "Irigaray and Sexual Difference" 68)

I suggest that although Nietzsche does excessively reduce the female sex to men's vision of her, he in fact leaves discourse with the feminine other open through his infamous contradictions and grotesque exaggerations of misogyny. It is in this abject space that Nietzsche urges female and feminist readers to work through his open-ended discussion of the body as a still evolving phenomenon.

### ***Thus Spoke Man (but not Woman?): Nietzsche's Double-voiced Rhetoric***

Bound by patriarchal law, culture, and even clothing, women during the turn of the century were coming into modernity with a body *and* a voice. Surely, Nietzsche's own criticism of patriarchal Christian Europe must have disrupted the antiquated concept of Woman, yet his phallogocentric discourse persisted as he appropriated her body (being) and voice (intellect) and finally buried her deep in metaphor. "Alles am Weibe ist ein Räthsel, und Alles am Weibe hat Eine Lösung: sie heisst Schwangerschaft." (ASZ 85). It is therefore not surprising that Kathleen Wininger, in "Nietzsche's Women and Women's Nietzsche," points out that when it comes to discussions of the sexes, "women appear to be the one topic where Nietzsche accepts the cultural convention to dichotomize" (238). However, the sharp dichotomy of sexual difference that Nietzsche underscores in his writing is the very thing that undoes it, and by soldering femininity and the female body into female essence, the eternal feminine, Nietzsche illustrates that the biological sex of man, her historical antithesis, is similarly willed by culture and essentialized. The more feminine the female becomes and the more masculine Nietzsche's writing appears, the greater physical, material lack comes into focus, for the male is often marked by his womb-less body in Nietzsche's texts. To hide the appearance of potential shame and inferiority, the male philosopher's lack must become woman's punishment—but only in words, the text's clothing—for Nietzsche is also mocking the overcompensation of the patriarchal dialectic. For Nietzsche, sexual difference incites contempt as it is simultaneously disavowed whenever the male takes on the female body for himself. Nietzsche's critique of Woman is therefore a critique of his own gender, and the perennial fluidity of masculinity and femininity in Nietzsche's textual bodies demonstrates that a dichotomy between man and woman is not based in the biological body but rooted in the very patriarchal ideologies that contribute to philosophies and sciences of the body. My study does not seek to explain away Nietzsche's misogyny so that it becomes safer ground for a feminist readership, but to explore how it may serve a more critical purpose in philosophy's treatment of women without, however, forgetting that it is firmly rooted in an era that largely regarded women as inferior to men.

That Nietzsche predominately speaks about woman via metaphor would suggest an idealization of her feminine essence as well as a disavowal of her corporeality; however, in *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body* Christian J. Emden reminds us that for Nietzsche, "metaphor is [especially] grounded in both rhetoric and physiology; it concerns not only language

but also the body” (Emden 62). Nietzsche’s particular ambivalence toward the body therefore encourages interpretation, and he set this in motion by presenting woman as truth, life, danger, pregnancy, wisdom, slave, cat, cow, lightning, child, and plaything. She is also ancient woman and goddess (Ariadne, Baubo, Demeter) seduced by gods (mostly Dionysus). Regrettably, the more metaphorical woman becomes, the more she seems to disappear from the text; and even though the use of metaphor had largely become a central explanatory model for many of Nietzsche’s contemporaries (Emden 83), his reluctance or refusal to speak about women directly makes his conspicuous dedication to metaphor suspicious.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, I suggest that by persistently discussing women via metaphor, Nietzsche constructs his *own* kind of “feminine” language that stretches out the materiality of women’s bodies until it is pliable enough to cover the expanse of the male philosopher’s dream. Her body becomes his vision, his style, his philosophy. Of course, such metaphors mostly do rhetorical violence to women: “Noch ist das Weib nicht der Freundschaft fähig: Katzen sind immer noch die Weiber, und Vögel. Oder, besten Falles, Kühe” (ASZ “Vom Freunde”). Nietzsche thus circumscribes women to the concept of the eternal feminine (or “Woman”) via violent metaphor and consequently constructs an arena in which contradictory facets of women are constantly at play. Furthermore, his abusive *ad feminam* not only relegates women to denigrated, abject loci, it also severs women into antithetical categories that are ultimately dovetailed back into female essence. Oppel explains, “Nietzsche’s texts set women apart as a singular class, whose social role is to be women, whereas men come in many different classes, whose social roles are differentiated according to avocation and skills, not according to sex-gender” (Oppel 16). Therefore, whether we find women with shame, or in rare instances with virtue, women seem to be punished simply for being women. But if we trouble ourselves to sort through the contradictory rhetoric that makes up Nietzsche’s figurations of the female sex, somewhere in the metaphors and the name-calling we can locate brighter images of women that withstand Nietzsche’s abuse. We can find a position on women that transcends the language of the text.

In *Nietzsche and the Scene of Philosophy*, Sarah Kofman suggests that there are two women in Nietzsche’s texts and that only one is the object of Nietzsche’s scorn.<sup>15</sup> According to Kofman, Nietzsche denounces the woman who does not overcome the gender that society and culture have assigned to her.<sup>16</sup> Frances Nesbitt Oppel also sees the duality of “woman” in Nietzsche’s words: “The word ‘woman’ is used in two ways in Nietzsche’s texts: literally, to refer to a person of the female sex, and metaphorically, to illustrate abstract concepts such as life, truth, happiness, wisdom, and sensuality” (15). Oppel suggests that Nietzsche’s misogyny is directed toward the woman that is the female essence, the cultural construct. I add that Nietzsche’s rhetoric juxtaposes his praise of the “perfect woman”<sup>17</sup> with the denouncement of the “masculine” woman<sup>18</sup> in his effort to subvert the

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<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche’s frequent use of metaphor has made critics skeptical of his approach. Some took Nietzsche less seriously because of Nietzsche’s apparent refusal to distinguish between figurative and literal language, which reduces everything to metaphor. “Such a position, many commentators have argued, is inevitably self-contradictory: claiming that everything is metaphorical means that nothing is metaphorical, for the notion of metaphor makes sense only in opposition to a commonly accepted literality” (Emden 61).

<sup>15</sup> See Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la scène philosophique*. 252-254. Also: Diethelm argues that Nietzsche attacked “the women who upheld the values enshrined in [the Eternal-Womanly], who were sanctimonious in their patriotic moralizing and superficial in their tastes and aspirations” (45).

<sup>16</sup> Kelly Oliver argues that Kofman does not distinguish woman from mother. See *Womanizing Nietzsche* 151.

<sup>17</sup> GD, *Sprüche und Pfeile*, sec. 20

<sup>18</sup> JGB sec. 239

ancient custom of bifurcating bodies, for Nietzsche extends the same criticism to male bodies by juxtaposing masculine and effeminate men.

Which women are praised and which women are degraded in Nietzsche's writing? Among the "women" in Nietzsche's texts, the "eternal feminine" is most prominent, but she is a patriarchal ideal that Nietzsche's writing "deplores, debunks, and temporizes" (Oppel 17). In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* the women of this ideal, exemplifying the weaker will and herd morality, willingly submit to man for their own gain:

Ein Zeichen für die Klugheit der Weiber ist es, dass sie es fast überall verstanden haben, sich ernähren zu lassen, wie Drohnen im Bienenkorbe. Man erwäge doch, was das aber ursprünglich bedeuten will und warum die Männer sich nicht von den Frauen ernähren lassen. Gewiss weil die männliche Eitelkeit und Ehrsucht grösser als die weibliche Klugheit ist; denn die Frauen haben es verstanden, sich durch Unterordnung doch den überwiegenden Vortheil, ja die Herrschaft zu sichern. (*MA* sec. 412)

In this passage, the women who possess such venerable qualities as wisdom, strength, and keen instinct help to make up the eternal feminine ideal; however, this is turned against them as their strength ultimately lies in manipulation and the false image they construct for themselves in order to be sustained. "Ist es nicht besser, in die Hände eines Mörders zu gerathen, als in die Träume eines brünstigen Weibes?" (*ASZ* 69). By willingly subordinating themselves, these women play on man's own willingness to be affirmed by the "virtues" of the eternal feminine. In reality, however, Nietzsche accuses this exchange of breeding parasites:

Der Parasit. - Es bezeichnet einen völligen Mangel an vornehmer Gesinnung, wenn Jemand lieber in Abhängigkeit, auf Anderer Kosten, leben will, um nur nicht arbeiten zu müssen, gewöhnlich mit einer heimlichen Erbitterung gegen Die, von denen er abhängt. - Eine solche Gesinnung ist viel häufiger bei Frauen als bei Männern, auch viel verzeihlicher (aus historischen Gründen). (*MA* sec. 356)

Nietzsche's simultaneous acts of punishing and pardoning these women reinforce the patriarchal sovereignty over the female sex in all that she does, and his seamless shift from "men" to "women" underscores the historical role women have exercised as men's scapegoat. Yet her active part in the operation, her willingness to submit, is forgotten once it is forgiven on account of her inability to escape the "unfortunate" fact that she was born a woman and cannot construct her identity and social well-being by any other means. In this case, to be forgiving becomes a masculine trait, since it is only the female who can truly be pardoned. Her deeds are worsened by her sex. Her transgression is her sex.

Nietzsche's discussion of the eternal feminine ideal is certainly derogatory yet it may be indirectly helpful. To begin, Nietzsche eclipses women's ability to act and to procure influence over men by making men, in their compliance, *provide* her with the "upper hand." Their strength becomes a gift from men that enables this master-slave transaction. Faced once again with the tiresome image of women stripped of their authority, we can fortunately find some relief in this scenario because Nietzsche's attack on the eternal feminine is an attack on an impossible ideal,<sup>19</sup> an

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<sup>19</sup> See Oppel 16.

ideal that “male” philosophy has long promoted, as we can see in the following passage by Schopenhauer: “Daß das Weib, seiner Natur nach, zum gehorchen bestimmt sei, giebt sich daran zu erkennen, daß eine Jede, welche in die ihr naturwidrige Lage gänzlicher Unabhängigkeit versetzt wird, alsbald sich irgend einem Manne anschließt, von dem sie sich lenken und beherrschen läßt; weil sie eines Herrn bedarf” (qtd. in Ackermann 123). Nietzsche’s “no” to the eternal feminine thus makes room for a new kind of woman who resists her previous reliance on men and the gender norms prescribed by them. Here we can understand why Nietzsche had feminist support early on, as “Nietzsche’s contemporaries were involved in a women’s liberation movement that began as a movement to abolish state-sanctioned prostitution, provide respectable work as an alternative to prostitution for unwed mothers, and orphanages for children whose mothers could not care for them” (Wininger 247).<sup>20</sup> We may also recall Helene Stöcker, whose writing favored Nietzsche’s philosophy and who additionally led the feminist group *Bund für Mutterschutz*, which “refused to regard it as woman’s social duty to have children, or even her biological destiny [...] (154).”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it is telling that Nietzsche’s female contemporaries, like Salomé and Stöcker, found his excessively sexist philosophy somewhat encouraging (albeit indirectly) for women’s rights.

But what else could women “be” if not the embodiment of the eternal feminine? In Nietzsche, the antithesis to the eternal feminine is often the emancipated woman, and it is her defilement of femininity via her emerging societal roles that causes Nietzsche to contradict himself by defending the flawed ideal of the eternal feminine. “Emancipation des Weibes”—das ist der Instinktthass des missrathenen, das heisst gebäruntüchtigen Weibes gegen das wohlgerathene” (*EH*, “Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe” 5). Nietzsche describes the emancipated woman as one who is no longer a woman because she lacks the feminine essence needed to fulfill man’s need to procreate; instead, her independence is seen as a rejection of the womanly qualities that constitute her cultural intelligibility. “The type of gender-equality that the feminists of [Nietzsche’s] time were striving for contains a rejection of feminine attributes. Nietzsche considers these attributes elementary for the recovery of rationality, which he thinks has become sterile due to the repression of feminine elements” (Thorgeirsdottir 55).<sup>22</sup> What is it about a non-feminine woman that was so threatening? Why did Nietzsche both admonish and justify the eternal (and maternal) feminine? “More surprising in this iconoclastic thinker is the fact that his insistence on woman’s domestic role blends seamlessly with conventional male misogynic opinion of the day, which held that the emancipated blue stocking was unfeminine, and that the feminist was probably a lesbian: views which, moreover, were shared by many women too, conventional or not...” (Diethe 42-43). We can further see the fear of non-feminine women in the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, where the once condemned eternal feminine is now well-reared (*wohlgerathenes*) and sensible (*klug*), whereas the emancipated woman is masculine (*männlich*) and stupid (*Dumm*).

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<sup>20</sup> Helene Stöcker was a prominent force in the efforts to abolish prostitution: “an illogical position for her to hold because of the fundamentally repressive ideology of the Abolitionists, who argued that woman’s nature was essentially chaste, and that the solution to the moral and social problem of prostitution was that men should be encouraged to be chaste as well” (Diethe 154).

<sup>21</sup> The League also sought to help women with paternity suits, welfare for unmarried mothers, and contraception. It was also against the position of moderate feminists, who “had been schooled to the idea of duty, and appear to have actually believed that it was genteel for a woman not to be sexually orientated” (Diethe 155).

<sup>22</sup> It is also worth noting that although Nietzsche complained about the lack of femininity caused by feminism, “he gives us a critique of the cultural tendency to look for equality bolstered by totalizing impulses” (Wininger 248).

und die "Emancipation des Weibes", insofern sie von den Frauen selbst (und nicht nur von männlichen Flachköpfen) verlangt und gefördert wird, ergibt sich dergestalt als ein merkwürdiges Symptom von der zunehmenden Schwächung und Abstumpfung der allerweiblichsten Instinkte. Es ist Dummheit in dieser Bewegung, eine beinahe maskulinische Dummheit, deren sich ein wohlgerathenes Weib - das immer ein kluges Weib ist - von Grund aus zu schämen hätte. Die Witterung dafür verlieren, auf welchem Boden man am sichersten zum Siege kommt; die Übung in seiner eigentlichen Waffenkunst vernachlässigen; sich vor dem Manne gehen lassen, vielleicht sogar "bis zum Buche", wo man sich früher in Zucht und feine listige Demuth nahm; dem Glauben des Mannes an ein im Weibe verhülltes grundverschiedenes Ideal, an irgend ein Ewig- und Nothwendig-Weibliches mit tugendhafter Dreistigkeit entgegenarbeiten; dem Manne es nachdrücklich und geschwätzig ausreden, dass das Weib gleich einem zarteren, wunderlich wilden und oft angenehmen Hausthiere erhalten, versorgt, geschützt, geschont werden müsse. (JGB sec. 239)

Whereas men can make up various classes and social positions in Nietzsche's writing, I suggest that the emancipated woman and the woman of the eternal feminine are actually one and the same for Nietzsche—another unfortunate effect of phallogocentrism—only the emancipated woman is diseased and has infected the gender order that constitutes the eternal feminine ideal. The memory of the eternal feminine is no longer chastised but exulted and her instincts are favored, for the threat of the emancipated woman does greater damage by exposing the façade of the double compliance of men and women within the political arena of the eternal feminine that postures as biological and even metaphysical truth. This compliance of men is revealed in the "masculine stupidity" that Nietzsche attributes to the emancipated woman, whose feminism may additionally take on the role of the patriarchal male who others the eternal feminine. The emancipated woman thus becomes the hegemonic male, which Nietzsche is every secretly criticizing. Moreover, the "neutralizing" body of the emancipated woman (not quite feminine, not quite male) ultimately castrates the masculine maintenance of the eternal feminine and reveals the "artful humility" of the women within it:

man denke über die ganze Geschichte der Frauen nach, – müssen sie nicht zu allererst und - oberst Schauspielerinnen sein? Man höre die Ärzte, welche Frauenzimmer hypnotisiert haben; zuletzt, man liebe sie, – man lasse sich von ihnen "hypnotisieren"! Was kommt immer dabei heraus? Dass sie "sich geben", selbst noch, wenn sie – sich geben.... Das Weib ist so artistisch... (FW sec. 361)

Nietzsche's reflection on women in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* reaffirms the willing subjugation of the eternal feminine, and the emancipated woman risks revealing this process as a masquerade. However, if Nietzsche first opposes the flawed ideal of the eternal feminine, should he not then welcome the emancipated woman who threatens her existence?

Nietzsche's ambivalent polemics against the eternal feminine and the emancipated woman contribute to a series of notable contradictions and paradoxes that frequently occur in Nietzsche's philosophy.<sup>23</sup> In *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, Maudemarie Clark outlines Nietzsche's

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<sup>23</sup> "In a way, Nietzsche tried to have it both ways: he spoke of woman's superficiality, but objected to attempts to rectify this: the whole section 'Our Virtues' (JGB, VII) *defends* the position of woman as feather-brained dependent" (Diethel 45).



perspectivism (his inclination to contradict his own ideas) and posits two ways of approaching Nietzschean paradox. One method is “to show that the self-contradiction is only apparent” (4) and the other is “to admit the contradiction but to argue that its presence in Nietzsche’s work teaches us something about truth” (4). I suggest that both instances of Nietzschean paradox can be discerned when it comes to his thoughts on women. On the one hand, the contradictions are only apparent if we view the attacks on the emancipated woman as not coming directly from Nietzsche but from the sensible woman of the eternal feminine (Oppel 33). In the above passage from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (in which the emancipated woman is declared stupid and masculine), the narrator, who is ostensibly male, has aligned himself with the eternal feminine and presents *her* perspective since he has been willingly seduced by her and suspects the emancipated woman to be the imminent death of the heterosexual two-sex model, which he believes he governs via his willingness. Here we simultaneously see the male narrator as a mouthpiece for the feminine (a nod to the muse of romantic tradition) and the eternal feminine acquiescing her act of narration in order to sustain herself: she narrates from a distance, an instance of Nietzsche’s double-voiced rhetoric. That Nietzsche’s narrator speaks *as* the eternal feminine, and not necessarily *for* her, explains why the previously denounced eternal feminine is now “sensible” and “well-reared.” If this is so, then Nietzsche has pitted “women” against women with no recourse in sight. Moreover, the eternal feminine (whom Nietzsche himself has defined, constructed, and now appropriated) attacks the “masculine” emancipated woman in order to distract us from the possibility that we might discover the secret masculinity of the eternal feminine (Oppel 33). If the eternal feminine willingly subordinates herself as a means to sustain herself (“Die jungen Frauen bemühen sich sehr darum, oberflächlich und gedankenlos zu erscheinen; die feinsten unter ihnen erheucheln eine Art Frechheit. – Die Frauen empfinden leicht ihre Männer als ein Fragezeichen ihrer Ehre und ihre Kinder als eine Apologie oder Buße” [FW, II: 71]), then she is putting on a “mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men” (Riviere 303). Fearing the consequences of becoming “manly” and dismantling her eternal feminine empire, the “sensible woman” projects her masculinity onto the emancipated woman whose “masculinity” is more apparent and therefore easier for man to punish. What is more, some feminists of Nietzsche’s time—mostly moderate (or conservative) feminists—significantly reinforced the stereotype of the eternal feminine. For example, Helene Lange, who championed right wing feminism, considered socialism to be a threat to the conservative movement, and her opposition to feminisms seeking to undermine patriarchal structures of female essence “were a gift to the critics of the campaign for women’s emancipation and gave rise to much general mirth in bourgeois society” (Diethel 152). Of course, Nietzsche had already anticipated this dilemma. “Und ist es nicht wahr, dass, im Grossen gerechnet, "das Weib" bisher vom Weibe selbst am meisten missachtet wurde—und ganz und gar nicht von uns?” (JGB, VII: 232).

On the other hand, the contradictions remain if we understand, as I have suggested, that the eternal feminine and emancipated woman are indeed one and the same. Nietzsche’s paradoxical practice of directing misogyny and praise toward the same body suggests that human bodies are not exclusively feminine or exclusively masculine, but that it only appears that way: male and female bodies, their “essence,” are both feminine *and* masculine, yet the surface, like Nietzsche’s discourse, manifests as one or the other and is unable to be outwardly perceived as harmonious. In this respect, Nietzsche’s own writing becomes a metaphor for the body; to only read the surface of Nietzsche’s writing is to falsely impose “truth” onto it, just as the body’s surface misleads us to conclusions of sex and gender that we are trained to see. In light of this, we can see how Nietzsche’s double-voiced

rhetoric of the eternal feminine and emancipated woman destabilizes essentialist visions of gender that make up bodies and texts.

We have seen the eternal feminine speak through Nietzsche's masculine narrator and the emancipated woman has, in her state of antithesis, affirmed her resistance to masculine constructions of the feminine, only to be pejoratively declared masculine herself. But do "real" women, the texts' feminine other, have a voice in Nietzsche's philosophy? I suggest that she does speak, yet she speaks implicitly and therefore *noiselessly*, making philosophical discourse with the feminine other a textual labyrinth. Nietzsche's ambiguous misogyny opens up a space in his philosophy that encourages women to take notice and take action. "Nietzsche certainly employs stylistic techniques whose end is a call to action. The intentionally inflammatory is used with equal energy in his dealings with the history of philosophy, religion, or vegetarianism. He dares the reader to provide him with a defense" (Wininger 239). Working through an unwritten philosophy of the body (which includes women's bodies, too, for that matter), women writers have long responded to Nietzsche's misogyny and shown that they are no longer Nietzsche's "gefährlichste Spielzeug" (ASZ "Von alten und jungen Weiblein"). Their criticism demonstrates that the female is a reader, a speaker, a thinker, a writer, and a philosopher. For example, in *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (1894), Lou Andreas-Salomé found Nietzsche's very style to house the feminine. Looking at a pregnancy metaphor in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, "Es gibt zwei Arten des Genies: eins, welches vor allem zeugt und zeugen will, und ein andres, welches sich gern befruchten lässt und gebiert" (248) Salomé suggests that "zweifelloso gehörte er [Nietzsche] der letzteren Art an. In Nietzsches geistiger Natur lag—ins Grosse gesteigert—etwas Weibliches" (Salomé 48). Salomé was one of the earliest critics to see the "feminine" in Nietzsche and presents him here as a genius mother (we may recall Weininger's claim that women mistake Nietzsche's genius for something sexual).<sup>24</sup> As a female thinker, Salomé's criticism was often dismissed, but she was not the only one who regarded Nietzsche's philosophy as somewhat feminine. Unfortunately, however, the many who regarded Nietzsche's writing as feminine used this interpretation as a way to disregard his philosophy altogether. "One of the reasons he is not taken seriously as a philosopher for a long time is his 'unmanly' focus on aesthetics, on values that change, and on cultural conventions. [...] In the late nineteenth century the description of Nietzsche as a feminine writer was tantamount to calling him bad" (Wininger 242-43). Whereas Nietzsche's contemporaries saw the feminine in his writing to be proof of his shortcomings, these very "feminine" qualities can be explored in greater depth to see how, if at all, they elucidate our understanding of Nietzsche's thinking and if they can positively contribute to our own notions of the body.

In *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, Derrida's deconstructive reading of Nietzsche shows how his plurality of writing styles is feminine, which is, according to Derrida, a reflection of Nietzsche's resistance to fixed identities and historically unquestioned essences. Derrida also shows that "rather than producing discourse, men and women are produced by it."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in response to the question that opens *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, "Vorausgesetzt, dass die Wahrheit ein Weib ist -, wie?" (1). Derrida expounds that if truth is a woman, then there is no truth because there is no woman:

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<sup>24</sup> "Although Nietzsche had approved of the broad thrust of [Salomé's] book, we must recall that he had lapsed into insanity five years before it saw print and his intellectual discussions with [Salomé] were restricted to the year 1882, twelve years before the book's publication" (Diethé 49).

<sup>25</sup> Ackermann 134

But, on the other hand, the credulous and dogmatic philosopher who *believes* in the truth that is woman, who believes in truth just as he believes in woman, this philosopher has understood nothing. He has understood nothing of truth, nor anything of woman. Because, indeed, if woman is truth, she at least knows that there is no truth, that truth has no place here and that no one has a place for truth. And she is woman precisely because she herself does not believe in truth itself, because she does not believe in what she is, in what she is believed to be, in what she thus is not. (Derrida 53)

Derrida contends that our assumptions of truth are only assumptions, and as a result of this “woman as truth” metaphor, woman, too, is an assumption. Any attempts to define “woman-as-such” are inherently false, so Derrida, like Nietzsche, lets her thrive in metaphor: “Woman (truth) will not be pinned down. In truth woman, truth will not be pinned down. That which will not be pinned down by truth is, in truth—*feminine*” (*Spurs* 55). Derrida’s “feminine” that cannot be pinned down by “truth woman” is, in actuality, Nietzsche’s writing and should not be mistaken for “woman’s femininity, for female sexuality [...]” (Derrida 55). Rather than suggesting that the supposed elusiveness of “woman” in Nietzsche’s writing may invite anti-essentialist representations of women, Derrida’s interpretation has women losing their femininity and sexuality to men. In fact, Derrida goes so far as to posit that Nietzsche’s writing identifies with three types of women:

He was, he dreaded this castrated woman.  
He was, he dreaded this castrating woman.  
He was, he loved this affirming woman.  
At once, simultaneously or successively, depending on the position of his body and the situation of his story, Nietzsche was all of these. Within himself, outside of himself, Nietzsche dealt with so many women. (101)

In *Postponements* David Farrell Krell sympathizes with Derrida’s reading by arguing that Nietzsche writes with the hand of woman: “both Nietzsche and Derrida record the plaint of women against ‘the foolishness of the dogmatic philosopher, the impotent artist, or the inexperienced seducer’” (Krell 10-11).<sup>26</sup> But there is a problem with suggesting that Nietzsche and Derrida write “with the hand of woman.” Derrida fails to question Nietzsche’s misogynistic remarks against the women who Derrida himself declares to no longer exist. Furthermore, Derrida reduces women to metaphor where she congeals into Nietzsche’s style and becomes merely a means to Nietzsche’s own deconstructive thinking. As Keith Ansell-Pearson states, “the ‘feminine’ Derrida writes about is totally neutered, desexed. The intentions behind his reading may not have been misogynistic, but that is certainly the result” (“Nietzsche, Woman” 35). I agree with Ansell-Pearson’s assertion, but I also suggest that Derrida’s reading exceeds misogyny. Throughout *Spurs*, Derrida rather disingenuously romanticizes “woman” beyond the role of desexed muse to the point of her non-existence, more so than his interpretation of “truth woman” admits. “[...] the male romantic poets locate their muses not in heaven or nature per se but rather in specific female types – the Mother, Sister, muse, Beloved, Femme Fatale – whose energies they appropriate and whose identities they ultimately—if successful – make disappear” (Rado 7-8). I agree with Derrida’s initial claim concerning the plurality of Nietzsche’s styles when I suggest that Nietzsche’s antithetical

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<sup>26</sup> Krell quotes Nietzsche from JGB 43:54.

juxtapositions (including the sexes and their embodiments of masculinity and femininity) are designed to question false dichotomies constructed by Western culture; however, I consider it necessary not to ignore the misogyny but rather to displace it from its function as an unshakable institution in Nietzsche's writing.

In *Womanizing Nietzsche*, Kelly Oliver's central thesis is "that while Nietzsche and Derrida, in particular, attempt to open up philosophy to its others—the body, the unconscious, nonmeaning, even the feminine—they close off philosophy to any specifically feminine other" ("Womanizing" xi). Oliver cleverly argues that Nietzsche and Derrida (as well as Freud) silence the female as they fall back into phallogocentric discourse, and she reads Nietzsche's and Derrida's rhetoric as performing autocastration, or self-parody, which works to feminize philosophy "such that it takes the place of its other; it becomes feminine; the philosopher becomes female" (Oliver "Womanizing" xiii). We can see this in Nietzsche's pregnancy metaphors that eventually reify as Zarathustra's relentless desire to parthenogenetically procreate: "selig aber ist der also Schwangere!" (ASZ 287). Luce Irigaray, moreover, sees the female body as confined to Nietzsche's very syntax. In *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Irigaray declares that Nietzsche's "words reasoned all the better because within them a voice was captive," and she proceeds to speak to Nietzsche (and implicitly Derrida) as water (Irigaray's own metaphor for woman), stating, "I had to be supple and stretched, to fit the texture of your words" (Irigaray 3). Nietzsche's artful selection and placement of his words, metaphors, and poetry do appear to confine the female in his writing, yet it is this very intricacy of syntax that produces the ambiguity which turns the misogyny on its head: the female is only captive if we accept Nietzsche's misogyny and appropriation at face value.

Oliver's and Irigaray's responses to Nietzsche's writing both declare the absence of woman's voice—the historical silencing of her—as well as the mutation and mutilation of her body in philosophy. But if the female is stuck in Nietzsche's words, as Irigaray suggests, can we not ask whether his philosophy is androgynous? Or is the female in his writing completely absent as Oliver claims: "There is no trace of woman in Nietzsche or Derrida, save the mother, and she has no writing hand" (*Womanizing* 160). Nietzsche's rhetorical condemnation of the female purposely roots her strength in obscurity as he distracts us from his appropriation of her. As idealistic as it may seem, I argue that Nietzsche's unwillingness, or initial inability, to reconcile the status of women in his writing points to his understanding that intellectual idealism may need to begin to yield to corporeal reality.<sup>27</sup> In other words, women and their bodies deserve to "speak" for themselves. He certainly challenged women enough, and no matter what feminist critics say, a woman will never truly *speak* in Nietzsche's texts. Therefore, I see the surface contradiction of degrading yet becoming Woman not as Nietzsche closing off discourse to a genuine feminine other as Oliver suggests, and neither as a loophole or permission for females to engage and embrace his philosophy (as women need no approval), but as a locus of his philosophy that questions the authenticity of bodies governed by gender, discourse, and existential aesthetics of the self.

Nietzsche's convoluted discussion of gender—with regard to how we understand gender today—warns us that attempts at vocalizing gender, or defining it for better or worse, may not repair the damage historically done to the body by patriarchies but instead confine the body to new rhetorical prisons. That is, efforts to make the body not determine gender (and vice versa) inevitably turn *words* into demarcations of gender, consequently leading us back to the very essentialism we

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<sup>27</sup> Some Nietzsche critics fear that despite scholarly efforts to "rescue" Nietzsche from charges of misogyny, "it is possible to see Nietzsche as unable or unwilling to mature out of these views" (Winger 238).

seek to escape. I suggest that Nietzsche's apparent silencing of the female voice is a cautionary move against setting up further gender traps; his contradictory metaphors and proclamations against women work to subvert trapping them in language and not as a way to "steal" their language via violent acts of auto castration as Oliver claims. In the next section I will continue to explore how discourse with the feminine other is open, and I will show how Nietzsche's appropriation of the female body is a caricature of the human body (male and female) as well as an ironic call to focus less on existential idealism and more on biological materiality without, however, becoming trapped by the illusory physical landscapes of the body. Incidentally, in Nietzsche's texts it is the male's latent yet recurring fear of his lack of the womb that has prompted Nietzsche to write "androgynously." Castrated he/she is not.

## Chapter IV

### Nietzsche in Drag: The Birth of the Modern Androgyne

In the previous chapter I described how the figure of woman in Nietzsche's writing is divided into the eternal feminine, man's ideal who postures as feminine essence, and the emancipated woman, whose "masculine" efforts for equality threaten the gender order of the eternal feminine arena in which women willingly submit to men for their own sustenance. Additionally, we have seen how critics like Derrida and Salomé consider Nietzsche to write with "the hand of woman," an idea that still resonates among some of Nietzsche's contemporary feminist critics: "Nietzsche's attempt at a style of philosophy which seeks to articulate an inward experience, to communicate the passion of the body and the pathos of will to power as eternal life, can thus be seen as a powerful ally in the cause of creating a feminine style of writing" (Ansell-Pearson, "Who is" 329). Indeed, Nietzsche's exaggerated illustrations of hyper-masculine imagery, syntax, and ideology coalesce with a tacit feminine authority that is corporeally charged, and I will show in this section how Nietzsche takes the staunch binary of sexual difference and reduces it to one androgynous body when Zarathustra becomes the masculine mother. This is not to suggest that Nietzsche conceives of an ideal androgynous subject as truth, origin, or natural state of the self (for Nietzsche deplures ideals) but that when he writes with androgynous rhetoric, he challenges how we designate social ownership of masculinity and femininity in the body and how it is used to constitute subjectivity. In this light, the more Nietzsche's writing validates the categories which give order and meaning to what is masculine and feminine, the more these qualities lose their prior meanings as well as the material substance they have acquired over time; for if, according to Nietzsche, there is no truth as such, (and perhaps no woman as such), then there is no female *and male* body as such:

Dass etwas Vorhandenes, irgendwie Zu-Stande-Gekommenes immer wieder von einer ihm überlegenen Macht auf neue Ansichten ausgelegt, neu in Beschlag genommen, zu einem neuen Nutzen umgebildet und umgerichtet wird; dass alles Geschehen in der organischen Welt ein Überwältigen, Herrwerden und dass wiederum alles Überwältigen und Herrwerden ein Neu-Interpretieren, ein Zurechtmachen ist, bei dem der bisherige 'Sinn' und 'Zweck' nothwendig verdunkelt oder ganz gelöscht werden muss. (Nietzsche, *GM* II:12)

However, before we can settle on the dangerously naive idea of Nietzsche artlessly soldering femininity onto masculinity and thereby undoing gender in his writing, it is important to explore the significance of Nietzsche's appropriation of the female body and the implications this has for sexual difference. It is one thing to philosophize about women and leave them out of the discussion entirely, which Luce Irigaray and Kelly Oliver accuse Nietzsche of doing, yet Nietzsche's appropriation of the biological functions of the female body confuses the operation of his misogyny altogether by indirectly acknowledging the magnitude of the female body. At the same time, of course, Nietzsche's allusive esteem for the female body may cause more harm than good: to reduce women to their reproductive organs and then "use" the organs himself can inflict such violence and humiliation upon women's bodies that we could only come to regard Nietzsche's philosophy as irredeemably misogynist. I suggest, however, that within Nietzsche's critique of Western culture, he favors the fleshy materiality of the body over the existential aesthetics of the self to the extent that

sex-gender (as we largely understand it today) is seen as a structure of social and cultural practices that disingenuously demarcates bodies by their reproductive operations, which have, in turn, become emblematic for both scientific and metaphysical truths. For Nietzsche, bodies that are regulated by these sickly cultural processes bring about such incorrect forms as the eternal feminine and the “stupid” emancipated woman who rejects her femininity. Women, in this case, would appear to have no recourse in Nietzsche’s writing, for they are depicted as either products of socio-cultural normative practices or false opponents of men whose aim is to become men themselves, since women do not historically exist outside the patriarchal order of Western institutions. Either way, the female subject in Nietzsche’s writing is ostensibly always the object of the male’s body, his speech, his gaze. In *Spurs*, for example, Derrida argues that Nietzsche regarded female feminists as castrated women--that is, feminine-less women who, like men, fail at being men:

[feminism] is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man. And in order to resemble the masculine dogmatic philosopher this woman lays claim—just as much claim as he—to truth, science and objectivity in all their castrated delusions of virility. Feminism too seeks to castrate. It wants a castrated woman. (65)

As we can see, Derrida’s own interpretation of Nietzsche’s emancipated woman resorts to masculine imagery and, more specifically, to the male body to even imagine the concept of the castrated woman; which is not surprising considering that in Nietzsche’s time “[what] is strikingly absent in nineteenth-century thought is any concept of female sexuality which is independent of men’s” (Weeks 43). In the following section I aim to show that Nietzsche’s attacks on the eternal feminine and the emancipated woman do not at all depict the feminist as a “castrated woman,” for such attacks are too unimaginative and conformist for Nietzsche’s style not to be considered ironic. Instead, I suggest that Nietzsche’s discussion of women (and men) is sooner found in his troubling illustrations of the female body within his deconstruction of the dualistic conventions of patriarchal (Christian) law. Nietzsche’s polemics regularly situate the female body within the male body in a way that subverts sexual difference, for better or worse, to the extent that sexual difference no longer holds its uncontested place in a culture that he is ever preparing for the *Übermensch*; because however unfortunate it may be to relegate the female to the male body, Nietzsche’s writing performs this rhetorical androgyny to the point of caricature, as if to remind us that we have been using and abusing women’s bodies so long that they are only intelligible and functional in their relation to men, who are themselves rendered unintelligible after a transvaluation of culture. So if man is to be overcome, then woman, too, is to be overcome, as well as the institutions that have kept her cultural body intact. I argue, therefore, that Nietzsche challenges the immemorial dichotomy of gender via “rhetorical drag,” which both celebrates and parodies the female body and her voice. Like the drag performer, Nietzsche dons the figure and features (the more cliché the better) of the female body and imitates her voice in his effort to play with the “artifice, play, falsehood, and illusion” of sex (Butler “Gender Trouble” xxiii). Of course, we can preview this performance when we consider Nietzsche’s famous claim in *Ecce Homo*, “Als mein Vater bereits gestorben, als meine Mutter lebe ich noch und werde alt.” (*EH* “Warum ich so weise bin” 1). Nietzsche is in drag.

To begin, Nietzsche’s focus on physiology was not surprising, as a growing number of scientists were positing new conceptions of the body. “For Nietzsche, as for many other authors writing during the second half of the nineteenth century, the problem of language and thought is

embedded in a wider intellectual framework marked by the growing influence of something we can describe as ‘the sciences of the body’” (Emden 82). Additionally, at the time of Nietzsche’s writing, the two-sex model of sexual difference “was presumed to be based on the scientific truth lurking below the surface, under the skin, in a newly conceptualized biological substrate” (Oppel 6). Early medical practitioners, for example, believed that sexual difference “involved quantitative variation. Women were cool, men hot, masculine women or feminine men warm” (Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing* 33). Since Nietzsche often reduced his empirical observations of culture to the body, which I will illustrate below, he would argue that the body, and certainly not culture, should be the primary designator of gender--should the latter come to exist at all in a heuristic reevaluation of the body-sex dichotomy. At the same time, however, I do not maintain that Nietzsche posits a certain truth about gender or even biological sexual difference; instead, I emphasize that Nietzsche warns us of the inherent problems of underestimating the physiological components of the body within the processes of human knowledge as well as the danger in trying to organize or put into practice said components. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche writes, “Der Glaube an den Leib ist fundamentaler, als der Glaube an die Seele: letzterer ist entstanden aus der unwissenschaftlichen Betrachtung der Agonien des Leibes” (WZM 491). As such, I see Nietzsche’s latent philosophy of the body as one that gives priority to what Anne Fausto-Sterling describes as “biological instincts or drives [that] provide a kind of raw material for the development of [sex],” which “allows some biological processes a status that pre-exists their meaning” (Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing* 23). Nietzsche’s vision of the overcoming body is thus one which underscores the materiality of that body and consequently challenges its fundamental identity, which was, at the time of Nietzsche’s writing (and perhaps even today), manifest sexual difference.

To briefly return to Edith Södergran and her formulations of the body, in *Skrevet med blod*, Benedikte F Rostbøll argues that Södergran’s own manifesto “Individuell konst” is a metaphor for the body:

Med ordene “blod” og “pulserer” sættes noget kropsligt i spil. [Södergran knytter] *blod* til sine digte. Hun skaber en metafor, hvor hun omtaler sine egne digte som organismer, som fremtidens vilde blod *pulserer* i. Fremtiden, et abstract begreb, gøres sanselig/konkret, idet den siges at indeholde blod og samtidig gøres også digtene sanselige og konkrete, eftersom dette blod siges at pulsere i dem. Som nævnt ser Södergran, i overensstemmelse med Nietzsches program, sig selv som et fremtidens menneske. [...] Blod kan være metafor for det nye, stærke individ og samfund, hvis komme Södergran varsler. Dette bud understøttes af et andet eksempel på kropsmetaforik i Södergrans kommentar i *Dagens Press*: “Jag betraktar det gamla samhället som *modercellen*, som bör stödjas till des individerna resa den nya världen” (123-24).<sup>1</sup>

Upon further exploration of Nietzsche’s (and later, Södergran’s) take on sexual difference, we must consider “the status of psychology and physiology as emerging scientific disciplines in Germany, as well as induction as a scientific paradigm in nineteenth-century thought” (Emden 83). Modern conceptions of sex, and subsequently gender, were in the early stages of development at the time of

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally, in a letter to Hagar Olsson, Södergran writes “Jag har överlämnat mig åt mitt allsmåktiga kött. Jag har den drucknes säkerhet och är icke människa, utan vansinnig” (*Brev* 188).



Nietzsche's writing, and influential scientists and psychologists were, by default, breaking new ground. "[The] modern science of sexology, with its reliance on the individual case study as well as the discourses of biology, anthropology, and – later—psychoanalysis, has been in existence only since the end of the nineteenth century" (Rado 13-14). But instead of subjecting the body to the patriarchal pseudo-science of his colleagues, Nietzsche ultimately merges the body with consciousness and gives precedence to the former: "Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem; und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe" (ASZ 39). So when Nietzsche rejects the psyche's authority over the body, he emphasizes "that the body is what compares and creates and that thought and the ego are its instruments" (Diprose 3). Nietzsche therefore conceives a body that is not fundamentally governed by external cultural forces; which makes him a forcible predecessor to feminists who find theories of gender that ignore materiality suspect. As a result, Nietzsche's reimagined subject and her physiological operations pave the way for a future of bodies that preclude patriarchal traditions of socio-corporeal constructions, double standards, and hierarchies.

In *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body*, Christian J. Emden also describes how Nietzsche considered "the mental to be reducible to the physical; the cultural, to biological self-regulation. Instead of favoring "mind" (Geist) as the main starting point for reason and knowledge, Nietzsche increasingly came to argue that reason and knowledge depend on the body's physiological organization" (84). If Nietzsche does privilege physiology over the intellect, we are then urged to consider the implications this has for male and female bodies; however, it is necessary to explore Nietzsche's potential discussion of sex-gender and its relation to the body without imposing an ahistorical reading of it onto his philosophy. We must remember that, in addition to such thinkers as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's most fashionable concepts were "informed by his reception of contemporary science, especially biology and physiology" (Emden 82). Among the many theories of the body that sought to ontologically divide men and women, Darwin, in *The Descent of Man* (1870), stated that "in the formation of her skull, [the female] is said to be intermediate between the child and the man" (302). What is more, directly after this statement, Darwin refers to the section of Carl Volgt's "Lectures on Man" (1864) where Volgt claims that "the skulls of man and woman are to be separated as if they belonged to two different species... We may, therefore, say that the type of the female skull approaches, in many respects, that of the infant, and in a still greater degree that of the lower races" (qtd. in Dijkstra, *Idols*:166-67). Furthermore, Otto Weininger argued that:

ob denn dieser Anschauung nach die Frauen überhaupt noch Menschen seien? Ob sie nach der Theorie des Verfassers nicht eigentlich unter die Tiere oder die Pflanzen gerechnet werden müßten? [...] Der Mensch ist, nach der Ansicht, die sein Wesen am tiefsten erfaßt hat, ein Spiegel des Universums, er ist der Mikrokosmos [...] Die Tiere sind ferner bloß Individuen, die Frauen Personen (wenn auch nicht Persönlichkeiten). (391)

We can see certainly see overt expressions of this kind of "scientific" thinking in Nietzsche's writing whenever we encounter his dichotomy of man and woman. His stinging misogyny is not only found in his rhetorical attacks and metaphors, which present women in all their "intermediate" glory, but in the physical absence of women in his texts, which only reinforces her "foreign species." As we have already seen, the text's surface (its body, if you will) talks *about* women but not *to* or *with* them; however, my position that Nietzsche ultimately collapses the man-woman dichotomy through parody and irony suggests that Nietzsche is suspicious—despite the priority he has given to the

body—of any “sciences of the body” that use biological materiality as the foundation for ontological categories of sex. In fact, Nietzsche’s reception of Friedrich Albert Lange’s *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* was especially important to Nietzsche’s particular “science of the body.” Lange posited that “modern science is marked by an uncanny tendency to explain the empirical, that is, physical events and objects, through acting ‘forces’ that essentially personify nature. At the heart of human knowledge, [stands] our continuous attempt to transfer the attributes of human life to matter and nature” (Emden 82). Lange further maintains that “knowledge about the external world is a product of our biological and physiological organization” (Emden 83). Moreover, regarding the organization of power, Elizabeth Grosz, in “Nietzsche and the Stomach for Knowledge,” writes that knowledge and power are the results of the body’s activity and self-overcoming. Accordingly,

[...] organs, bodily processes, muscles and cells do not, indeed cannot, as the empiricist presumes, yield knowledge of even error; rather, the body necessarily generates and presumes interpretations, perspectives, partial and incomplete acquaintance which serves its needs in the world and which may enhance its capacity and hunger for life. (54)

In this light, Nietzsche’s excessive metaphors of women as life, death, and various animals mark his method of illuminating the extent to which social and cultural institutions take advantage of the physiological dimensions of the subject in order to make them intelligible signs and emblems for ideological truths; hence, the body in Nietzsche’s writing becomes a kind of metaphor for culture; which is deeply ironic, considering Nietzsche’s very criticism of culture doing this to the body. And instead of explicitly challenging this metaphorical objection of the body, Nietzsche makes it the rule in order to return to the body, to matter, through irony.

In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche clearly illustrates how socio-cultural exchanges with the body cause its raw materiality to be replaced with a culturally rooted “soul” which assumes precedence over the self and eventually acquires more fleshy material than the body itself.

Alle Instinkte, welche sich nicht nach Aussen entladen, wenden sich nach Innen – dies ist das, was ich die Verinnerlichung des Menschen nenne: damit wächst erst das an den Menschen heran, was man später seine »Seele« nennt. Die ganze innere Welt, ursprünglich dünn wie zwischen zwei Häute eingespannt, ist in dem Maasse aus einander- und aufgegangen, hat Tiefe, Breite, Höhe bekommen, als die Entladung des Menschen nach Aussen gehemmt worden ist. (Nietzsche, *GM* II sec.16)

For women, the “soul” has taken the harmful shape of the eternal feminine who is constituted by her own femininity which is always turned against her. Therefore, it is up to Nietzsche’s metaphorical woman to wryly illustrate how Western culture does, in fact, pay attention to the female body when her material sexual difference (her ovaries, breasts, and genitalia) is used to constitute her implicitly inferior cultural intelligibility. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler maintains that “‘Sex’ is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the ‘one becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (*Bodies* 2). But because the female has the “wrong” body, her body needs to be corrected by cultural practices; thus, once the female body has appropriately learned her gender, and as a result inherits

her cultural body that merely serves to nourish the male body, materiality is forgotten as the law suppresses its fleshy memory of the female body into non-existence. Nietzsche's satirical construction of misogyny and corporeal metaphor is therefore his self-aware memorial to the unknown body that was yet has also never been.

In *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture*, Eric Blondel maintains that "metaphors of the body, which are predominant in [Nietzsche's] texts, have the job of giving an account of a preconceptual foundation, by virtue of their more obvious proximity to the empirical world. The body, in contrast to the evanescent Ideal, is apparently more real" (204). The weight of the body is substantial in *Ecce Homo*, when Nietzsche tells us how he interprets culture:

Mir eignet eine vollkommen unheimliche Reizbarkeit des Reinlichkeits-Instinkts, so dass ich die Nähe oder—was sage ich?—das Innerlichste, die "Eingeweide" jeder Seele physiologisch wahrnehme—rieche ... Ich habe an dieser Reizbarkeit psychologische Fühlhörner, mit denen ich jedes Geheimnis betaste und in die Hand bekomme: der viele verborgene Schmutz auf dem Grunde mancher Natur, vielleicht in schlechtem Blut bedingt, aber durch Erziehung übertüncht, wird mir fast bei der ersten Berührung schon bewusst. [...] Meine Humanität ist eine beständige Selbstüberwindung.—Aber ich habe Einsamkeit nöthig, will sagen, Genesung, Rückkehr zu mir, den Atem einer freien leichten spielenden Luft ... ("Warum ich so weise bin" sec. 8)

Nietzsche's incomparable use of metaphor evokes a *mélange* of facetiousness and earnestness that slightly distracts us from the severity of his thought. Nietzsche reinforces his idea that the essence of the self is not consciousness but the body, for consciousness is merely a part of a whole, a *physical* whole that touches, smells, and perceives with its flesh beyond the soul of culture to its equally fleshy core—culture's entrails. For Nietzsche, physiological contact with culture masquerading as nature suggests a materiality behind the law, a materiality that has been disavowed and forgotten. In other words, Nietzsche's material body is able to reach through the veils of culture and touch itself, thereby reaffirming that "philosophy is based on a disavowal of its corporeal origins and its status as corporeal product" (Grosz 57). Having digested the cultural constructions that we eventually assimilate, the human body is not only culturally conditioned, it is culturally perceived, interpreted, and communicated, and by locating the "concealed dirt at the bottom of many a nature," Nietzsche once again makes it possible for us to see that the "naturalness" of sexual difference is merely dressed up as nature. A drag performer himself, Nietzsche invites us to see that every corporeal interpellation of sexual difference is a masquerade, as bodies in culture cannot know or project nature.

In *Bodies that Matter* Judith Butler argues that sexual difference is, "never simply a function of material differences which are not in some way both marked and formed by discursive practices [...] [Sex is] not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms" (2). Since modern distinctions between sex and gender have begun to widely (but certainly not universally) reject "naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume that the meaning of women's social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology" (Butler "Performative Acts" 520), the body has been seen by some feminists as a natural surface inscribed by culture, making gender a socio-cultural construction that is potentially reversible and which designates the

body as the source of information for our questions about sex and sexualities. However, Butler even calls the “naturalness” of sex into question by positing that materiality, the body itself, might also be culturally constructed and constituted by discursive acts that define their effects as natural facts:

If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all [...] gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive,’ prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts. (Butler, *Gender* 9-10)

In place of viewing gender as originating from various models of construction (social, cultural, political, etc.),<sup>2</sup> Butler proposes “a return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a *process* of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (*Bodies* 9).<sup>3</sup> To be sure, Butler’s discussion of a self that is not only subjectivated by culture but whose body is also subjectivated by its own materiality and discursive acts is redolent of Nietzsche’s meditations on the subject’s belief in cause and effect.<sup>4</sup> In *Der Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche writes:

Wir unterscheiden uns, die Thäter, vom Thun, und von diesem Schema machen wir überall Gebrauch, — wir suchen nach einem Thäter zu jedem Geschehen. Was haben wir gemacht? Wir haben ein Gefühl von Kraft, Anspannung, Widerstand, ein Muskelgefühl, das schon der Beginn der Handlung ist, als Ursache missverstanden, oder den Willen das und das zu thun, weil auf ihn die Aktion folgt, als Ursache verstanden. (*WZM* sec. 551)

Nietzsche, and later Butler, describes how “we” fashion an imaginary subject that is the doer, the “I” that performs acts. He additionally claims that, “‘Ursache’ kommt gar nicht vor: von einigen Fällen, wo sie uns gegeben schien und wo wir aus uns sie projicirt haben zum Verständniß des Geschehens, ist die Selbsttäuschung nachgewiesen” (*WZM* sec. 551). Our belief in the illusion of cause and effect may explain the irretrievability of the historical moment and place of a body that is independent of and prior to “gender”—a subject untouched by the juridical social structures and material processes that preclude the “I.”

One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied

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<sup>2</sup> In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz also argues against the nature versus nurture model and suggests that “we cannot merely subtract the environment, culture, history and end up with nature or biology” (qtd. in Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing*: 25).

<sup>3</sup> My emphasis

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Grosz additionally claims that, “the notion of corporeal inscription of the body-as-surface, as it is primarily developed in a number of scattered writings of Nietzsche, rejects the phenomenological framework of intentionality and the psychoanalytic postulate of psychological depth; the body is not a mode of expression of psychological interior, nor a mode of communication or mediation of what is essentially private and incommunicable. Rather, it can be understood as a series of surfaces or energies and forces, a mode of linkage, a discontinuous series of processes, organs, flows and matter” (“Stomach”52).

predecessors and successors as well. It is, however, clearly unfortunate grammar to claim that there is a 'we' or an 'I' that does its body, as if a disembodied agency preceded and directed an embodied exterior. More appropriate, I suggest, would be a vocabulary that resists the substance metaphysics of subject-verb formations and relies instead on an ontology of present participles. The 'I' that is its body is, of necessity, a mode of embodying, and the 'what' that it embodies is possibilities. (Butler, "Performative" 521)

Indeed, Nietzsche's physiological interpellations of bodies that are not governed by consciousness or ego similarly affirm that there is no "I" that does its body. "Ich' sagst du und bist stolz auf diess Wort. Aber das Grössere ist, woran du nicht glauben willst, - dein Leib und seine grosse Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich" (*ASZ I:IV*). Here Nietzsche intimates the existence of a pre-culturally constituted body independent of soul, identity, and ego. But how does he resolve this with the subject's perpetual drive to lay claim to a self, a doer of that body—indeed, the "Du" he in fact addresses, and who must overcome the body and self alike? And why are this doer and his body always masculine?

In *Womanizing Nietzsche*, Kelly Oliver asks "What if the onset of subjectivity, the very ability to conceive of oneself as a subject, is simultaneous with the onset of conceiving of oneself as belonging to a particular sex?" (54). Oliver's vital question is part of her attempt to show how we can deconstruct Nietzsche's philosophy, his writing, and open it up to sexual difference. I suggest, however, that the very idea of "belonging to a particular sex" places limitations on the kind of body Nietzsche may have been imagining in his abundant pregnancy metaphors and rhetorical appropriations of the female body. By using (though Oliver would say *abusing*) a "feminine style" as well as androgynous and even hermaphroditic images of a pregnant *Übermensch* (which I will illustrate below), Nietzsche's writing illustrates that the body is not, on the onset, limited by normative conceptions of sex and sexed-bodies. Furthermore, if Nietzsche were to simply advocate sexual difference, he would need to rely on the existence of the two-sex model, which is, on the one hand, vital to recognizing the existence of the female other in the historical structures that have excluded her; on the other hand, reliance on the two-sex model may unwittingly diffuse a compulsive heterosexuality that cannot help but serve the patriarchal gender order; which returns us to the paradox of women's inclination to establish their subjectivity in relation to their male "opposite." To be sure, during Nietzsche's lifetime, many women were "convinced that woman had a different nature to man, which should be honoured and given greater recognition [...] and those who were impatient because this argument did not actually lead to an amelioration of the lot of women [...]" (Diethel 138). But Nietzsche's criticism of turn of the century feminists argues indirectly, almost to the point of secrecy, against women positioning themselves in any relation at all to men in their efforts to gain self-governing cultural intelligibility. "Freilich, es gibt genug blödsinnige Frauen-Freunde und Weibs-Verderber unter den gelehrten Eseln männlichen Geschlechts, die dem Weibe anrathen, sich dergestalt zu entweiblichen und alle die Dummheiten nachzumachen, an denen der 'Mann' in Europa, die europäische 'Mannhaftigkeit' krankt" (*JGB VII: 239*). Although Nietzsche's words seem to encourage the eternal feminine aesthetic, one can see that Nietzsche is attacking the patriarchal dialectic, the same one that breeds gender appropriateness and suppresses diverse bodies. The learned man, and therefore the learned woman, ought to avoid becoming the sickly man in exchange for their prior genders, which are (not coincidentally) the product of man's sickness. Incidentally, Butler echoes Nietzsche's sentiment when she warns that,

“Feminist critique [ought] to understand how the category of ‘women,’ the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought” (*Gender 2*).

I therefore contend that Nietzsche anticipated a post-feminism that understands feminisms, in their perhaps paradoxical commitment to establishing cultural intelligibility within a patriarchal arena, to merely circumscribe women within their own discourse and discursive practices.

“Nietzsche’s objections to classical feminism can be seen to contain the ‘post-feminist’ message that women’s attempts to define ‘woman as such’ commit the same essentialist fallacies as the masculinist tradition of western philosophy” (Ansell-Pearson, “Woman and Political Theory” 33).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Lawrence J. Hatab asks, “What *would* Nietzsche oppose in contemporary feminism? Not a woman ‘liberating’ herself, pursuing either a masculine role or a masculine-feminine mix, but rather seeing liberation not as an *individual* matter but as a “women’s movement” (Hatab 342). It is therefore important to consider that Nietzsche’s discussion of the feminine other is perpetually concealed within his discussion of man; a situation which would at once appear to merely contribute to the problem of subverting female subjectivity, yet it is precisely from such phallogocentric discourses that Nietzsche takes great pains to keep women free.

In *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the prophetic Zarathustra preaches to a nearly all-male audience via parody, irony, and ultra-masculine language, and the text’s sparse female presence seems to reinforce the overwhelming implications that the text is for men’s eyes only. However, as I have argued in chapter two that Södergran’s verse is constructed by multiple lyrical narrators, it is also important to note that “it is not Nietzsche himself who speaks directly to readers but a variety of characters, and [...] the principal character, Zarathustra, undergoes significant development in the course of the narrative” (Patton XI). The multiplicity of speakers in the narrative exemplifies the plural essence of Zarathustra’s *Übermensch* who defies fixing interpretations and boundaries onto the body and thought, for *Übermensch* is to be understood “not as a rigid structure with an absolutely determined content, but as a functional ideal indicating the human form that is superior to the present real one” (Simmel 174). In fact, in his later work, *Der Wille Zur Macht*, Nietzsche declares the multiplicity of the subject:

Die Annahme des Einen Subjekts ist vielleicht nicht nothwendig; vielleicht ist es ebensogut erlaubt, eine Vielheit von Subjekten anzunehmen, deren Zusammenspiel und Kampf unserem Denken und überhaupt unserem Bewußtsein zu Grunde liegt. Eine Art Aristokratie von »Zellen«, in denen die Herrschaft ruht? Gewiß von pares, welche mit einander an's Regieren gewöhnt sind und zu befehlen verstehen? Meine Hypothesen: Das Subjekt als Vielheit. (*WZM* 490)

At once, Nietzsche’s conception of the self, particularly his ideal *Übermensch*, eschews a stable, homogenous identity, consequently making it accessible to all the diverse identities that come into contact with it. More importantly, the plural essence of the *Übermensch* inevitably opens up spaces for non-masculine and even non-male bodies to interact with the text beyond the narrative level.

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<sup>5</sup> We can see a perhaps unintentional example of this phenomenon in Luce Irigaray’s *This Sex Which is Not One*, in which she argues that there is only one sex: the masculine. She begins by claiming that the “‘feminine’ is never to be identified except by and for the masculine, the reciprocal proposition not being ‘true’” (85). In her subsequent description of sexual difference, Irigaray’s illustrations of male and female bodies essentialize women and men under an unshakable two-sex model within a heterosexual matrix.

[The] *Übermensch* also refers to the question of the "we" in Nietzsche, how author and reader are constituted and transformed in the act of reading. [...] The overman is "we," that is, the readers of his texts, who must decipher their meaning by learning the "art of interpretation," gaining from it the insight that, just as there is no "way," so there is no truth- for truth, like woman, does not exist. There is only truth, woman, and overman in the plural. (Ansell-Pearson, "Who is" 323-24)

If we take the "we" in Nietzsche's oeuvre into account, then it is immediately evident that "we" are not only male bodies. Nietzsche's writing certainly extends to women on the narrative level and, most importantly, beyond it, which is not only crucial for understanding Nietzsche's misogyny but Nietzsche's critique of existential aesthetics of the self. Although Nietzsche does not explicitly discuss gender as we perceive it today (largely but not universally regarded as a socio-cultural construction), I suggest that Zarathustra's *Übermensch* is gender-conscious as it eternally recreates itself in society by overcoming its self and social values, constantly shaking and reconstructing its foundations while incessantly advocating—particularly important to this study—masculinity.

To define Zarathustra, the herald of the *Übermensch*, is problematic as Günther K. Lehmann suggests, "Zarathustra verbirgt sich, er ist der Unverstandene und bleibt unverständlich. Er muß unverständlich bleiben, um Zarathustra sein zu können" (16). But if we look carefully at Zarathustra's language, we can see what being a man, versus a woman, means to him. Zarathustra speaks with what might be stereotypically called "men's language," which, according to Dan Spender, is "direct, [...] forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, and masterful" (33). The following plea from the chapter "Von Krieg und Kriegsvölke" in *Zarathustra* illustrates Nietzsche's dramatization of masculinity. "Der Krieg und der Muth haben mehr grosse Dinge gethan, als die Nächstenliebe. Nicht euer Mitleiden, sondern eure Tapferkeit rettete bisher die Verunglückten. Was ist gut? fragt ihr. Tapfer sein ist gut. Lasst die kleinen Mädchen reden: 'gut sein ist, was hübsch zugleich und rührend ist.'" (ASZ 59). On the surface, this passage clearly echoes contemporary beliefs about the sexes:

In the nineteenth century authorities argued that man, naturally stronger, 'is fitted for ... civil and political employments' while 'the consciousness of her physical weakness renders women timid and sedentary.... Woman ... fits only for sedentary occupations ... necessarily remains much in the interior of the house.' (Fausto-Sterling, *Myths* 124)

I suggest, once again, that Nietzsche exacerbates these traditional images of masculinity and femininity to the point of caricature. The profuse masculinity that Zarathustra champions via muscular language appears to underscore inherent sexual difference; yet this is performed ironically, as Zarathustra's very commandments suggest that masculinity is something that can be willed, demanded, and worn but only if there is a feminine other to be willed against. Through the willing of gender, Nietzsche consequently shows us that gender is not nature but performative in nature, but he does so through parody. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler writes that, "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this case, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (34). If this is true, then Nietzsche embraces Darwinian sciences of the body as part of his own masculine meta-drag.

Exaggerating his masculinity with the aid of “science,” Nietzsche ‘puts on’ masculinity in order to illustrate its inorganic substance that always fools us into seeing nature. Nietzsche visibly constructs a willing subject capable of compelling his own masculinity and thereby ironically destabilizes the “naturalness” of the male body, ultimately revealing it to be equally constituted “through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex” (Butler, *Gender* xxxi). We know this is parody, for Nietzsche has already discredited the subject as the doer of the body as well as the subject as essentially singular.

It is additionally worth noting that the threat of emasculation in the above passage from “War and Warriors” is provoked by feminine “little girls,” and we should consider the significance of this term. According to Schopenhauer, women “bleiben [...] ihr Leben lang Kinder” (Sämtliche 651), and Darwin argued that, “in an evolutionary sense females represented the less variable, more juvenile or primitive state of the species. During evolution the male built more elaborate structures upon the simpler female baseline” (Fausto-Sterling, *Myths* 180). Rather than merely echo his contemporaries (Nietzsche certainly distanced himself from Darwin), Nietzsche instead transcends longstanding trajectories of discrimination and attacks the overcompensation of femininity that is the womanly masquerade, the eternal feminine. But critique of the eternal feminine is not limited to women since both women and men who engage the masquerade are sustained by sexual difference, which demands their opposition in exchange for existence. This is the wrong battle, according to Nietzsche, for the real threat of emasculation comes from Christian values and not femininity. That Zarathustra aligns femininity with Christian pity would constitute another blow to women, but “pretty and touching” are hackneyed attributes of femininity that Nietzsche has already debunked. In fact, once masculinity *and* femininity are perceived to be aspects of asceticism, a result of Judeo-Christian patriarchy, they are to be overcome. What is more, later in the same text we find that women are not always so “little.” “Der Mann fürchte sich vor dem Weibe, wenn es hasst: denn der Mann ist im Grunde der Seele nur böse, das Weib aber ist dort schlecht” (ASZ 85). It is regrettable that femininity and “little girls” are placed on the negative spectrum of metaphor at all, but I contend that Nietzsche exploits this tradition in order to communicate his rejection of it, for the more grotesque and Christian women appear, the more displaced the grotesque and Christian body becomes from its previous meaning; thus, the feminine body has no meaning. But if we think about “the body not as essence, but as a bare scaffolding on which discourse and performance build a completely acculturated being,” (Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing* 6) then the discourse that constructs the female body, at least in Nietzsche’s writing, can be deconstructed and argued against, thereby ushering multiple and powerful constellations of “women” in Nietzsche’s texts. But this possibility presents yet another Nietzschean paradox, for, on the one hand, the discourse that Nietzsche uses to construct the female body reveals itself to be satire and therefore not an honest discourse, so any version of her body consequently escapes the text; on the other hand, Nietzsche does perform the acculturation of the female body via antithesis but consequently renders this body meaningless, too, when he argues against any discursive practices and performances that threaten to produce the grotesque Christian body. Fortunately, the female other inevitably begins to resist Nietzsche’s representations of her, in part because of his commitment to excluding her material body from the text. In other words, women’s meaninglessness in Nietzsche’s philosophy is the onset of her meaning. No longer a reference to real women (whatever that may be in Nietzsche’s writing) the little girls of the eternal feminine are merely a metaphor for the very Christian morality that helps to maintain the eternal feminine arena. “Erst das Christenthum, mit seinem Ressentiment gegen das



Leben auf dem Grunde, hat aus der Geschlechtlichkeit etwas Unreines gemacht: es warf Koth auf den Anfang, auf die Voraussetzung unseres Lebens ..." (GD "Was ich den Alten verdanke" sec. 4). Hence, femininity loses its origins in the female body and its alleged place on the evolutionary ladder and finally reveals itself to be merely a Christian condition that governs the organization and practices of that body. The very essence of femininity (as well as masculinity) is now, within Nietzschean metaphor, simultaneously lost and fulfilled in both male and female bodies.

Nietzsche's drag is particularly compelling when his writing imitates the female voice. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche performs an unusual lip-sync during his infamous counsel: "Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiss die Peitsche nicht!" (86). The ingrained misogyny notwithstanding, this statement was not uttered by Zarathustra but by the little old woman he meets in the chapter "Von alten und jungen Weiblein." Of course, Nietzsche is the author of this crude statement, but what does it mean that he has a woman say this? Why has her agency in this asseveration been forgotten by so many critics who have pointed to it in their charges against Nietzsche? By transposing the misogynistic remark to the woman's speech, Nietzsche inverts his hyper-masculine discourse and destabilizes our strict adherence to cultural conceptions of sexual difference by holding a mirror up to our own presumptions. With general references to this quotation often neglecting the woman as its diegetic source, Nietzsche shows us (as if he willed it forward) in an ironical way how our own expectations of hegemonic patriarchy exceed our reading of the text. But Nietzsche's drag is especially convincing in this instance because the woman's speech is indirect; she *narrates from a distance* as Zarathustra dramatically mouths her words in her stead:

Als ich heute allein meines Weges gieng, zur Stunde, wo die Sonne sinkt, begegnete mir ein altes Weiblein und redete also zu meiner Seele: "Vieles sprach Zarathustra auch zu uns Weibern, doch nie sprach er uns über das Weib." Und ich entgegnete ihr: "über das Weib soll man nur zu Männern reden." "Rede auch zu mir vom Weibe," sprach sie; "ich bin alt genug, um es gleich wieder zu vergessen." (ASZ 86)

The whole of this chapter is a conversation, between Zarathustra and a male follower, initiated by the man's direct question, "Was schleichst du so scheu durch die Dämmerung, Zarathustra?" (86); but it is Zarathustra's discussion with the little old woman that provides the chapter its substance. Yet her physical presence is forbidden and her voice may only take narrative shape, and thereby acquire sound, through Zarathustra's mouthing of her words. By relegating the female other to spaces unknown, Nietzsche takes credit (in a richly ironical way) for her words, her thoughts, her philosophy. Once again, the "female" in Nietzsche has lost her agency and because of this, we must remember to acknowledge our role in how Nietzsche's writing is received and inevitably constructed. Nietzsche's tongue-in-cheek performance scolds the reader for historically ascribing the words to the male, all the while reinforcing the very male force behind the construction: paradox and irony abound. Moreover, the startling impact the little old woman has on Zarathustra and the reader is deeply reflected in her age, which not only makes her capable of forgetting, but she is incapable of childbearing. Her advanced age therefore makes her appear desexualized and thus symbolically as well as physically closer to the androgyne. By positioning the little old woman in such a liminal space in the text allows Nietzsche to speak with an androgynous double-voice with greater ease. Nietzsche's androgynous discourse does not excuse Nietzsche for the whip remark, for it is still unsettling, but it helps us to be cautious of falling into further gender traps. As we can see, essentializing the sexes is

all-too easy to do when arguing against essentialist conceptions of them, and this makes exploring Nietzsche's labyrinth of misogyny all the more jeopardous. It is particularly important to keep this in mind when exploring Nietzsche's many pregnancy metaphors that bring about the masculine mother. Who is he/she and what is her body?

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's misogynistic metaphors culminate when he traps women in their own bodies and reduces them to the womb of the eternal feminine: "Alles am Weibe ist ein Räthsel, und Alles am Weibe hat Eine Lösung: sie heisst Schwangerschaft" (ASZ 85). At the time of Nietzsche's writing, there was certainly nothing groundbreaking or revisionist about confining women to language and the body, so Nietzsche naturally ventures further and takes on the female body for himself in order to become the masculine mother. The discourse involving creation and pregnancy is rich in *Zarathustra* and creating the self into something greater is to a large extent the foundation of Zarathustra's preaching: "Schaffen—das ist die grosse Erlösung vom Leiden, und des Lebens Leichtwerden. Aber dass der Schaffende sei, dazu selber thut Leid noth und viel Verwandlung" (ASZ 110). Soon it becomes evident that most of the males in Nietzsche's texts, including Zarathustra himself, suffer from envy of the womb,<sup>6</sup> and it is perhaps this envy that manifests as misogyny in his texts: "In his desire to achieve the impossible, namely to give birth to himself, Nietzsche expresses a fundamental resentment towards that which he feels ardour for and most esteems—maternal creativity" (Ansell-Pearson, "Woman and Political" 40). If this is the case, then we should ask whether Nietzsche's pregnancy metaphors are merely resentful appropriations of the female body that consequently reduce the other to the self, or whether Nietzsche indirectly esteems (or regrettably idealizes) the female body and its ability to create whenever he becomes the *masculine mother*.<sup>7</sup>

To begin, I suggest that the masculine mother, the pregnant Zarathustra, is in reality Nietzsche's eternally overcoming *Übermensch* who creates and directs its own place in the world. But in order for *Übermensch* to do this, it must first overcome the biological body as well as the cultural body that has been confused with the former. Accordingly, *Übermensch* and therefore all the men of Nietzsche's texts "need to overcome, especially, their resentment of their own vulnerable bodies, of time and change, and of women" (Oppel 3). As a result of this ambitious overcoming, the *Übermensch* takes on a corporeal form that is both male and pregnant—an illustration of the hermaphroditic body which eventually took shape after romanticism's symbolic androgyny began to acquire materiality. "Unlike the romantics – who [...] gesture toward an androgyny involving the incorporation of feminine qualities such as sensibility into a singularly male consciousness – the moderns go further to represent the imagination as a part of the subjective mind that is biologically both male and female [...]" (Rado 12-13). The pregnant philosopher, who was once male and feminine, now insists on becoming both male and female when the *Übermensch* transcends the margins of masculinity and femininity and takes what Nietzsche/Zarathustra considers to be

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<sup>6</sup> Luce Irigaray in *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* and Caroline S. Picart in *Resentment and the "Feminine"* also argue that the female's natural ability to give birth foments Nietzsche's envy of her. Picart additionally notes that Nietzsche's affinity for Dionysus underscores his concern with the feminine: "Dionysus was predominantly a god of women—he was a god who was awakened and nursed by women, a god accompanied by women, a god awaited eagerly by women who were the first to be overcome by his divine man-ness" (90).

<sup>7</sup> The idea of a masculine mother was not uncommon at the time. In a letter to Birger Mörner, Strindberg (who also corresponded with Nietzsche) attacks Ibsen in a provocative way: "Ser du nu att mina frön har fallit i själva Ibsens hjärnkapsel – och grott! Nu bär han på mina semina och är min uterus! Det är Wille zur Macht, och min lustkänsla att sätta andras hjärnor i molekularrörelse" (qtd. in Linder: 99).

Woman's greatest virtue—life-giving child bearing—and orchestrates his own virgin birth.<sup>8</sup> “Meine wilde Weisheit wurde trüchtig auf einsamen Bergen; auf rauhen Steinen gebar sie ihr Junges, Jüngstes” (ASZ 107). Though highly metaphorical, the androgynous creator begins to sprout physical androgyny through its heavy reliance on the very “feminine” qualities that Nietzsche has previously denounced in the female body. “Dass der Schaffende selber das Kind sei, das neu geboren werde, dazu muss er auch die Gebärerin sein wollen und der Schmerz der Gebärerin” (ASZ 111). Of course, the eternal/maternal feminine is now honored instead of mocked in the male body: “Denn von Grund aus liebt man nur sein Kind und Werk; und wo grosse Liebe zu sich selber ist, da ist sie der Schwangerschaft Wahrzeichen: so fand ich’s” (ASZ 204). Surely, Nietzsche denounces these qualities in the female body yet allows them to thrive in the male body—an act which, on the surface, appears to propagate sexual double standards, yet this contradictory maneuver ultimately underscores Nietzsche’s elevation of the body over the ego, the supposed doer of the body. Once again, Nietzsche illustrates a body willing its gender, but also willing its biology, for the metaphorical mother cannot exist without metaphor’s reliance on the body. Nietzsche has thus absconded with woman’s voice and now her body—but he does this to show us that we have been doing this all along.

Of course, if we accept that Nietzsche “puts on” woman’s body in an act of demonstrating her corporeal strength, we may still find plenty of reasons to consider this unsettling. First, by reducing women to the womb, Nietzsche would obviously conserve history’s harmful interpellations of the female body and hinder their chances to engage philosophical discourse. Secondly, if Nietzsche does write with woman’s hand, as Derrida suggests, then we might ask why we need female philosophers at all. I suggest a more optimistic reading of Nietzsche’s rhetorical drag. To begin with, if it had been Nietzsche’s intention to denounce the authority and cultural intelligibility of women, then we would have to acknowledge that his essentialist representations of them would implicitly constitute a digression of his thinking. Kathleen Wininger remarks: “Nietzsche was a startlingly original thinker in so many ways that one is disappointed in what looks like an unthinking re-enactment in the long European tradition of misogyny” (239). Furthermore, if Nietzsche merely uncritically affirms the opposition of the sexes that began with Aristotle and reemerged with Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, then we ought to question why he discussed women at all in his attempt to reevaluate our socio-cultural values. Lawrence J. Hatab points out that, “[if] Nietzsche were a male chauvinist, we would have to demonstrate his preference for ‘man’s world,’ and his subordination of women to their ‘place’ of subservience because of their inferiority” (339). Surely, Nietzsche’s critique of Western culture relentlessly undermined “man’s world” and this inevitably decentered the “woman” within that cultural enterprise, thus making his pervading dichotomy of the sexes suspicious. Hatab adds, “[in] all facets of his thinking, Nietzsche tried to preserve the tension of differences, because in his view the essence of reality (a process of becoming) is fueled by this tension” (335). Instead, Nietzsche shows us that “men” and “women” may in fact be partially socio-cultural inscribed bodies in drag that, according to Butler, “fully [subvert] the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively [mock] both the

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<sup>8</sup> In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche laments the defeminization of women while reinforcing her cultural worth: almost everywhere her nerves are being shattered by the most morbid and dangerous of all the varieties of music (our latest German music), and she is being rendered more and more hysterical with every day that passes and more and more incapable of her first and last profession, which is to bear strong children. (VII: 239)

expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity” (Butler, *Gender* 186). Nietzsche’s caricatures of the body illustrate that masculinity and femininity are not exclusive to sex (or the bodies identified by it) and that their historical narratives on the body indicate the fluidity of sexual difference. What is more, by appropriating the female body, Nietzsche may actually be inviting discussion with the feminine other by paradoxically reducing sexual difference in both male and female bodies. Yet reducing or extinguishing sexual difference in the body (and the text) can run the risk of once again cutting off women entirely from Nietzsche’s philosophy. Can sexual difference be reduced or de-emphasized without subduing female subjectivity?

Nietzsche’s androgynous body is alarming because it appears as though he has merely reduced the feminine other to the womb and then recklessly transposed it to the male body. “The point of Zucht [Breeding] was, as Nietzsche was at pains to point out, to strengthen the race and prepare it for the *Übermensch*. In this programme, a woman’s physical excellence was of paramount importance: it is central to Nietzsche’s thought that woman’s destiny is her biology” (Diethel 61). I suggest, however, that the androgynous *Übermensch* doesn’t confirm the destiny of women’s bodies but calls into question how bodies—male and female—and their biological and socio-cultural counterparts are constituted in the first place. The problem, Nietzsche reminds us, is that we usually don’t perceive the physical body as being made of androgynous matter; we are trained to see the body and its designated gender as one—in addition to being exclusively masculine or feminine, which gives us a false impression of the substance and function of sexed bodies. This process conditions us into recognizing and interpreting other bodies only in their relation to our own.

Sich [...] seinen Willen dem des Andern gleich setzen: dies kann in einem gewissen groben Sinne zwischen Individuen zur guten Sitte werden, wenn die Bedingungen dazu gegeben sind (nämlich deren tatsächliche Ähnlichkeit in Kraftmengen und Werthmaassen und ihre Zusammengehörigkeit innerhalb Eines Körpers). (Nietzsche, *JGB* sec. 259)

The pregnant *Übermensch* thus demonstrates that the body is an expression of androgynous gestures, textures, and language that the body itself cannot process, because the eye, the mind, and sedimented socio-cultural ideologies make us see male and female bodies as unintelligible to each other—all so that we may gain a comforting sense of our own bodies. The Nietzschean body therefore disrupts the very meaning of misogyny, for one who hates women therefore hates (his) own body. While this is possible, it is a fallacy that warrants patriarchal hegemony over the body and Darwinian conjectures moot.

We are more likely to find ourselves outside ourselves [...] There is something about our relation to others which determines the place we occupy within social relations. Hence, contrary to some postmodern formulations of a dispersed self who does not ‘other’ others, creative self-fabrication, changing places, must implicate others in some sense. (Diprose 9)

As it were, Nietzsche’s very ability to startle us with his caricature of the masculine mother reveals how we are trapped in a dialogue with the single-gendered body even if we are resistant to social ideas of gender appropriateness. This refusal to be multi-gendered, to be multi-bodied, forces us to acknowledge our inability to not name things, to not ascribe meaning to matter, and to not project our self onto our others. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s resistance to static definitions of bodies fashions a

gender play that proliferates images of bodies that are no longer singular but multiple and unnamable in their physical and cultural expressions:

Nietzsche's thinking contains an emphasis on ambiguity, on plural identity, on the affirmation of the constructed self in terms of an artistic task in which one freely gives 'style' to one's character, all of which can be useful for articulating a kind of feminist mode of thought which seeks to subvert an essentializing of human identity, whether female or male, and which would simplify and efface 'difference'(s). (Ansell-Pearson, "Woman and Political" 31)

A subject that is governed solely by the body would be a self that is virtually unknown to us; it is a self that overcomes the order of gender and is, in my opinion, part of Nietzsche's impossible *Übermensch* ideal. "[...] by exploring the identity of the "over-man" we are exploring our own identity and the possibilities of our own potential post-modern (post-"man") existence" (Ansell-Pearson, "Who is" 310). Usually translated as "overman" or "superman," the word *über* additionally implies, "above," "across," or "beyond." The latter part of the term, *Mensch*, is not only "man," but also "human," and "person." What is more, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche remarks that "Das Wort 'Übermensch' zur Bezeichnung eines Typus höchster Wohlgerathenheit, im Gegensatz zu 'modernen' Menschen, zu 'guten' Menschen, zu Christen und andren Nihilisten" ("Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe" sec. 1). I suggest that the *Übermensch* is not a doer but a doing that is beyond man, beyond woman, beyond the body, and beyond the "I" as history has defined them. Its "doing" body directs its place in the world, and it is therefore the destroyer of the "body as such" that abuses our bodies and that we use to abuse other bodies. "The body itself is a multiplicity of competing and conflicting forces, which, through the domination of one, comes to have a perspective and position, one among a number of competing, or complementary, perspectives vying for ascendancy" (Grosz, "Stomach" 61). In "Nietzsche and the Pathos of Distance," Rosalyn Diprose reminds us that, "For Nietzsche, one's [misunderstood] place in the world is determined by the concepts which govern the structure of the social world and which sculpture the body accordingly – a body which is a 'unity as an organization' and is therefore a 'work of art'" (Diprose 3). The *Übermensch* body, however, is the body that has overcome the dream of subjectivity because it has overcome its culturally bred belief in the self (and itself) as a doer. Rather than being constituted by the external world, *Übermensch* is the body that is more real than the world: it is the "doing" body whose doing constitutes the world.

Finally, I contend that because Nietzsche's *Übermensch* consciously defies Western culture's demand that bodies appear and operate as culturally intelligible subjects in a heterosexual matrix, the *Übermensch* constitutes a body that is simultaneously pre-gender and post-feminism.<sup>10</sup> To say that the *Übermensch* is pre-gender suggests a backwards movement to a moment prior to gender. To our knowledge, this moment is mythic and irretrievable, and, according to Judith Butler, when we do attempt to locate the body prior to socialization, "we discover that matter is fully sedimented with discourses on sex and sexuality that prefigure and constrain the uses to which that term can be put"

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<sup>9</sup> (WZM: 419)

<sup>10</sup> The term heterosexual matrix comes from Judith Butler; it designates "that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (*Gender* 208).

(*Bodies* 29). Nevertheless, the *Übermensch* is capable of transcending our knowledge of the body and its discourse-saturated matter by overcoming it:

Unsere Gier nach Erkenntnis; der Natur ist ein Mittel, wodurch der Leib sich vervollkommen will. Oder vielmehr: es werden hunderttausende von Experimenten gemacht, die Ernährung, Wohnart, Lebensweise des Leibes zu verändern: das Bewußtsein und die Werthschätzungen in ihm, alle Arten von Lust und Unlust sind Anzeichen dieser Veränderungen und Experimente. Zuletzt handelt es sich gar nicht um den Menschen: er soll überwunden werden. (WZM 676)

When Nietzsche favors the body over the ego, he situates his *Übermensch* along the imperceptible axis of pure body and subjugated mind; but the body is multiple, capable of successfully interpreting and communicating the diverse physiological interpellations it is contained by.

### **Conclusion**

Nietzsche's revision of the 'subject with a body' to the 'body as multiple subject' calls into question many, if not all, of the body's socio-cultural realities. "The body is a series of instincts or drives that constitute reality as they interpret it. The short circuit between reality and spirit is replaced by a detour via the body, which interposes itself between 'the world' and the conscious spirit (Blondel 206). At once, the dichotomy of man and woman is challenged, and it turns out, I suggest, that Nietzsche is making a heuristic argument that imagines male and female bodies that are no longer determined by sexual difference or even biological structures. "The body itself must be seen as a pliable and potentially infinitely diverse set of energies, whose capacities and advances can never be predicted" (Grosz, "Stomach" 55). Masculinity and femininity are present in both bodies and these bodies are both *human* bodies, making it decreasingly necessary for Nietzsche to define them as male and female.

Nietzsche's androgynous rhetoric and philosophical drag is most telling when it comes to the *Übermensch*, who overcomes the subject, body, dichotomy, science, culture, and sexual difference. Thus, the *Übermensch* is mythic, but he/she is also androgynous and it may be in that idealistic space where we can uncover knowledge of our bodies and their relation to other bodies. I would like to close this chapter with some reflections on the chapter "Vom Freunde" in *Zarathustra* in which Nietzsche once again gives men counsel on women: "In der Liebe des Weibes ist Ungerechtigkeit und Blindheit gegen Alles, was es nicht liebt. Und auch in der wissenden Liebe des Weibes ist immer noch Überfall und Blitz und Nacht neben dem Lichte". (ASZ 72-73). Sensing the shadow of an unseen, dualistic force within women, Zarathustra confesses that women's love directs the fates of men and leads to the creation of their offspring. Her volitional love is most dangerous because it has "surprise and lightning and night, along with light." Surprisingly, Nietzsche has already revealed that her "lightning" is the *Übermensch*: "Seht, ich bin ein Verkündiger des Blitzes und ein schwerer Tropfen aus der Wolke: dieser Blitz aber heisst Übermensch" (18).

More than this, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is the modern androgyne, the being that overcomes him/herself, the subject, and the body, thereby transcending man and woman. The problem is that this overcoming body traditionally appears to be only a male and masculine body; the female body is a substance that has no ground, no matter, no flesh. Her body is a metaphor on the verge of

metonymy that Nietzsche's male needs in order to overcome his own lack: a life-giving womb. Whereas Zarathustra is the man-as-woman attempting to overcome gender via appropriation, *Übermensch*, which has not yet come into being, is the body (male *and* female) overcoming the culturally constructed body (male *or* female).

Finally, I argue that Nietzsche's writing appropriates not woman—the biological female—but his simulacra of woman, the misogynized feminized ideal that is doubly veiled in his writing. In Nietzsche's text the body veiled is the idealized Woman who stands in for the biological woman that Nietzsche (and perhaps even women themselves) can never be. The capitalization is necessary for she is always Nietzsche's idol, the eternal feminine, an ambiguously acknowledged spectre no longer based in phenomenal reality. The first rhetorical veil Nietzsche places over her is misogyny; this is a dense yet transparent layer that is mistaken for woman's flesh in Nietzsche's texts, a skin of femininity that incites "Gefahr und Spiel" in his words. However, there is another veil that is even more diaphanous and suffocating, and this is the very appropriation of Woman that is cruelly draped over the first veil of misogyny: Nietzsche's Wo-Man (man-as-Woman) disguises itself and Woman twice over, becoming the very pregnant and male Zarathustra. Zarathustra and Nietzsche's words are therefore in rhetorical drag, accentuating and decorating matter with masculinity and femininity. The illusion is a caricature of gender that mocks our perception and expectation of what and where it should be. Where, then, is the female in Nietzsche's words? Nietzsche's appropriation of Woman is not auto-castration as Oliver understands it, nor does it cut off women from philosophy. Nietzsche's drag prompts women to work through his philosophy, embrace it (if she will), and take it on as her own. The female reader becomes an active reader, a philosopher, who no longer maintains "ein Schweigen vor sich selber, ein Augen-Zuschliessen vor sich selber" (*FW* II:71).

Whether an author's biological sex determines the "gender" of his or her writing will be explored in the following chapter, but that anyone sees Nietzsche as writing with a feminine style points to the notion that despite Nietzsche's notorious misogyny, there are indeed loci in his work filled with semblances of women and femininity. It also points to our own resistance to locating femininity and masculinity in the "wrong" body. We need to unbind the female from semblance, metaphor, mythology, historically *designated* femininity, and, most importantly, Nietzsche's hand. By exploring how our own perceptions of Nietzsche's maligned woman and honored woman—the latter is always hidden—are constructed, we can start to see a new figure take shape in Nietzsche's philosophy; this figure marks a bold return to the body, to the female body and its own will to power. Finally, Nietzsche's bodies question the existence of "drag" in the first place: either there is no drag or every-body is (in) drag.

## Chapter V

### “Is it Possible that We Speak with *One* Mouth?” A Feminist Narratology of Androgynous Poetry

Sei klug, Ariadne! ...  
Du hast kleine Ohren, du hast meine Ohren:  
steck ein kluges Wort hinein! -  
Muss man sich nicht erst hassen, wenn man sich lieben soll?...  
Ich bin dein Labyrinth ...<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

My study has so far attempted to refigure Edith Södergran’s writing career as one that not only critically engaged the misogynist philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, but as one that paradoxically engaged that philosophy in order to introduce radical representations of gender into the long-established tradition of Nordic lyrical poetry. In my effort to revisit and revise critical reception of Södergran’s work, I began by placing her writing in sharper historical context, not as a way to establish her biography as a decisive map with which to navigate her poems, but as a tool to re-read her poetry as groundbreaking avant-gardist literature that innovatively defied the leading artistic and socio-cultural establishments of her milieu. To conclude my study of Södergran’s progressive treatment of gender, this chapter takes a closer look at the narrative strategies that both Södergran and Nietzsche employ in their respective lyrical expression; hence, I step away from Nietzsche’s intricate philosophy and explore the more obscure terrain of his lyrical poetry. As I have attempted to show in the previous chapters, Södergran’s and Nietzsche’s first-person speakers appear to propagate traditional archetypes of gender; however, when we use narratological tools to deconstruct the poems, we may find that the very narrative acts used to construct the speakers’ subjectivity and cultural demarcations of gender may actually work to subvert them, thus initiating a defamiliarization of the narrating “I” and its sociopolitical point of view. I contend, therefore, that crossing narratology with feminist theory is a valuable way to interpret Södergran’s and Nietzsche’s modernist visions of the subject and the multiple possibilities of its gendered voice and cultural corporeality.

Collaborations between feminist theory and narratology have been the focus of recent literary criticism, and I seek to contribute to this discussion by positing that poetry, as a still somewhat underused platform for narratological analyses, can provide particularly unique perspectives from which to analyze narrative situations and, as a result, can further elucidate the possibilities and limitations that *gendered* narration creates and subsequently imposes on language and the reception of textual artifacts. A narratology of poetry, then, presupposes the notion that poems indeed can be narratives; however, I do not regard poetry as prose. According to Gerald Prince, a narrative, in its broadest definition, is the “representation (as product and process, object and act, structure and

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<sup>1</sup> “Klage der Ariadne,” (Nietzsche, *Peacock* 287).



structuration) of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two, or several (more or less overt) narratees” (Prince 58). This general definition does not intend to fully explain the loaded term, but it does require that a narrative is comprised of a narrator, narratee, and the relaying of an event. Edith Södergran’s poems, for example, all have narrators and narratees—whether explicit or implicit—and I will attempt to show that even her most highly descriptive and apparently uneventful poems do relate events.

In *A Narratological Analysis of Lyric Poetry*, Peter Hühn explains his reasons for applying narratological analysis to lyric poetry:

the legitimacy of this approach depends on the premise that narration is an anthropologically universal semiotic practice, independent of culture and period, used to structure experience and produce and communicate meaning, and is as such one of the basic operations at work even in lyric poetry. If this is so, it is reasonable to assume that the well-developed precision and explanatory potential of modern narrative analysis—narratology—can help us conceptually refine and enhance the study of lyric poetry. (Hühn 1)

My study will expand upon Hühn’s framework by analyzing free verse and the decidedly more contextual concern of gendered subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> The non-formalist techniques of free verse poetry emphasize the psychological presence and processes of the narrating subject—a speaking subject whose memories, witnessing, and desires relate events or eventfulness to hearing and non-hearing audiences and whose speech acts, moreover, often perform gender and speak to the gendered, regardless of the extent to which one may be able to reduce language to semiotic signs that isolate the text from its socio-political contexts. Ironically, it is the poetic narrator’s richly subjective mode of telling that causes the poem to seem to exchange its narrative status for an impenetrable authorial voice that speaks on its own terms, moving beyond the traditional teller-receiver narrative exchange. Poetic narratives thus:

tend to differ from those of novels in that they are concerned primarily with internal phenomena such as perceptions, thoughts, ideas, feelings, memories, desires, attitudes, and products of the imagination that the speaker or protagonist ascribes to him- or herself as a story in a monological process of mental reflection, defining his or her individual identity by means of that story. (Hühn 8)

All kinds of verse often employ this kind of isolated yet simultaneously ubiquitous first-person narrating agent who requires that the reader, in order to comprehend, must rely on the speaker’s psychological perspective and individual emotions, much more so than the events, or other less-concrete phenomena, which the poetic “I” relates. Hence, the visible/audible presence of narration is inseparable from the composition and receiving of poems. In *Fictions of Authority*, Susan S. Lanser explains this fundamental exchange between the speaker and receiver in narratological terms. “In narrative poetics (“narratology”), voice [designates] tellers—as distinct from both authors and nonnarrating characters—of narrative [...] The narrative voice and the narrated world are mutually

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<sup>2</sup> Hühn’s study required that all the texts had a speaker who is clearly self-reflexive or clearly makes him or herself a theme of the poem, for a distinctly self-reflexive speaker is found in a large proportion of English lyric poems from all periods.

constitutive; there is no tale without a teller, there is no teller without a tale [...] The narrator has no existence “outside” the text yet brings the text into existence” (5). With regard to poetry, then, the apparent lack of concrete plot or story (with the exception of narrative poems such as verse romances or ballads) has relegated the poem to an unusual text that narrates yet doesn’t tell. The abundant presentation of intangible events in poetry thus obscures the fundamental relationship between the narrator and reader, making the latter lose sight of the narrative exchange at hand. Therefore, a narratology of poetry should produce competent tools that can articulate the narrativity of a poem without superficially categorizing poetic narrative as prose. I will begin my study of the narrativity of poetry by exploring the level of plot.

Narratology traditionally posits narrative to be “a communicative act in which chains of happenings are provided with a meaningful structure by a complex of mediating entities (particularly the narrating entity)” (Hühn 3). Because poetry usually does have all of these narrative aspects, it is helpful to continue to focus on the unique exchange that occurs between narrator and narratee (and public reader) in lyrical expression. First, Hühn posits that narrativity consists of two dimensions: “*sequentiality*, or the temporal organization and linking of individual incidents to form a coherent succession, and *mediacy*, mediation being the selection presentation, and meaningful interpretation of such a succession from a particular perspective” (1). According to this premise, lyrical poetry has “the same three fundamental narratological aspects (*sequentiality*, *mediacy*, and *articulation*) as prose narratives such as novels and novellas” (1). Before proceeding with more definitions and formulations, however, it is beneficial to study one of Södergran’s apparently genderless poems, “Ljusfälten” (1918) in light of Hühn’s framework:

Jag har krafter. Jag fruktar ingenting.  
 Ljus är himlen för mig.  
 Går världen under –  
 Jag går icke under.  
 Mina ljusa horisonter stå  
 Över jordens stormande natt.  
 Träden fram ur det gåtfulla ljusfält!  
 Oböjlig väntar min kraft. (*Dikter och aforismer 81*)

Even in the highly abstract poem “Ljusfälten,” it is possible to locate the *sequentiality*, *mediacy*, and *articulation* of the poem, where *sequentiality* involves a “sequence of happenings (which are usually mental or psychological, but can be external, for example social in nature)”;*mediacy* creates “coherence and relevance by relating these happenings from a particular perspective (the act of mediation)”;*and articulation* requires “an act of expression with which the mediation finds form in a linguistic text” (Hühn 1). The happenings of “Ljusfälten” are connected and given meaning to us by the pronouns that introduce speech, (I); provide ownership, (*mina*); and with it the sense of an autonomous agent that takes up physical space, “mig.” Although not always the case, the “Jag” and “mig” mark an implicit human individual who experiences, sees, and feels the world around him or her. This speaking and sensing agent functions within the scope of *mediacy*, which operates on the presentation level of the text. Hühn therefore makes a distinction between a text’s *level of happenings* (otherwise known as *fabula*) and its *level of presentation*, the former of which describes the chronological (and only chronological) primary incidents that we take as the basic material of the

text, and the latter of which organizes the way in which this material is mediated (3).<sup>3</sup> An initial reading of “Ljusfalten” suggests a poem dominated by its mediacy, but I will now attempt to show that its sequentiality is equally as rich.

What constitutes the text’s sequentiality? Hühn describes two elements of a text’s sequentiality, its series of happenings. There is the *existent*, which is defined as “a static element or something/someone related to an action (e.g. a character and its traits, location, and so on)” and the *incident*, which describes “something dynamic (e.g. a change in properties or conditions, an occurrence, an action, and so on)” (Hühn 5). In “Ljusfalten,” then, the existents include the speaking “Jag” who declares and describes (and who simply “is” in the narrative), the earth and surrounding sky, and, of course, the field of light. The incidents are even more abstract, revealing that the most vivid actions in the poem are the declarations themselves; however, other incidents include the world (potentially) dying out, the trees springing forth from the earth, and the particularly subtle act of waiting, “Oböjlig väntar min kraft.” The speaker’s horizons are also supplied with a verb (*stå*) but this functions more as description than action, thus contributing to the uncertainty of a poem’s happenings: “Arranged in chronological order, the set off all existents and incidents constitutes the happenings that occur within the narrative world” (Hühn 5).

Regarding *mediacy* (again, the mediation being the selection, presentation, and meaningful interpretation of such a succession from a particular perspective), Hühn posits two modes of mediation: *Voice*, which is a “direct linguistic expression whose deictic (pronominal, temporal, spatial, and modal) orientation is provided by the speaking subject,” and *Focalization*, “the perpetual, psychological, cognitive, and/or ideological perspective from which incidents and existents are presented and through which they are filtered, by which they are formed, and in some cases, from which they are interpreted or evaluated” (8).<sup>4</sup> According to Hühn’s outline, there are four levels of communication embedded in one another that make up mediating entities: (1) the empirical author/producer of a text [Edith Södergran]; (2) abstract author/composing subject [implied author of “Ljusfalten”] who governs (as a construct and not as an individualized person) “the system of values, norms, and meaning implied by the formal, stylistic, rhetorical, and tropical structure of the text”; (3) the speaker/narrator [the “I” in “Ljusfalten”]<sup>5</sup>; and (4) the protagonist/character who, like the speaker, can have a speaking voice [in this case, also the “I” in “Ljusfalten”].

Now let us take a detailed look at the mediacy of “Ljusfalten,” marking the four levels of communication embedded in the text.

[(1) Södergran]>[(2) implied author]>Jag[(3) narrator]>[(4)character] (existent)  
har krafter.

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that “the relationship between happenings and presentation is one of mutual dependency. The text of a poem requires the presence of happenings, but these happenings only come into being through the words of the text. (described analytically or genetically)” (Hühn 4).

<sup>4</sup> Hühn cautions readers to “keep voice and focalization separate from one another, but this doesn’t mean that the same figure cannot be both” (8).

<sup>5</sup> “The question of the reliability of the speaker/narrator can be formulated in terms of the relationship between him or her and the abstract author: contradictions between the words of the speaker and the composition of the text (by the abstract author) point to the unreliability of the former. Just as in the narrators of narrative literature, the phenomenon of unreliability and non-omniscience can be found in the speaker of lyric poetry, although this has been the subject of little or no previous work” (Hühn 10),

Jag (3)>(4) (existent) fruktar (incident) ingenting.  
 Ljus är himlen (existent) för mig (4).  
 Går (incident) världen (existent) under –  
 Jag (existent) går icke under (incident).  
 Mina ljusa horisonter (existent) stå (incident/description)  
 Över jordens stormande natt (existent).  
 Träden fram ur (incident) det gåtfulla ljusfält! (existent)  
 Oböjlig väntar (incident) min kraft (existent).<[(2)Implied author]<[(1)Södergran]

Södergran is obviously the author (1) of the text. This information is only necessary if we want to ensure that “the meanings we associate with words would have been historically plausible when the author wrote the poem in question” (Hühn 9). Such information is usually excluded, or minimal at best, in standard narratological practices, which generally exclude as much contextual information as possible (a practice that will certainly be confronted in the next section). The abstract composing subject (2) allows us to “see what is (necessarily) excluded from the words of the speaker/narrator by his or her particular personal perspective, the level where we may find out about underlying motivations or problems, for example” (Hühn 9). This is a special form of perspective that can be described “as one of second-order observation, a source of perspective superordinate to speaker and focalizer and established, so to speak, behind their backs” (9).<sup>6</sup> The narrator (3), or narrator-I, in this poem possesses a towering voice that is reflected by the vast imagery of the poem. The narrator’s immediate surroundings are the earth, sky, and field of light, making the narrator less localized (than, say, living in a house or city) and more figurative. That the speaker still acts, moves, and senses in the physical world allows the reader to relate to the otherwise abstract, ethereal audience. Finally, the speaking character (4) in this poem is aligned with the narrator (3), a narrative situation otherwise known as a *character-bound narrator*.<sup>7</sup>

The above narratological outline of “Ljusfalten” serves as a starting point for the following feminist narratology of androgynous poetry. By locating the sequentiality and mediacy of the poem, we can begin to see the poem in a way that deemphasizes the psychological immediacy of the speaker, making the poem less performative than explicative, which illuminates the narrativity of the poem; the poem, in this light, gains a story that is otherwise overshadowed by the striking mental operations of the narrating subject. However, the point of my analysis is not to prove that lyrical poetry necessarily tells stories, but that the stories, or narratives, that constitute the sequentiality, or series of happenings of the poetic text, are told by *individual* narrators who are capable of presenting multiple and diverse points of view, focalization, and narrative situations (e.g. Hetero- or homodiegetic narration) within an author’s poetic oeuvre. In other words, with each poem, an author tells an individual story by an individual narrator who is not to be conflated with the writing subject. Specifically, when placed under a feminist lens, this narrative framework will make it possible for the reader to see that Edith Södergran and Friedrich Nietzsche both composed poetry via multiple narrators whose narratives are, at individual times, expressed by male, female, and androgynous voices. Therefore, each poem tells its own story and has its own gendered teller.

<sup>6</sup> “Distinction between abstract author and speaker is always dependent on interpretation and what we attribute to whom. We must decide what mental features and level of self-awareness we attribute to the narrator (In some cases also to narrator I) and the abstract author respectively” (Hühn 9).

<sup>7</sup> “If the ‘I’ is to be identified with a character, hence, also an actor in the fabula, we speak of a character-bound narrator, a *cn*” (Bal, *Narratology* 21).

## *A Feminist Narratology of Poetry*

What is the point of narratology? In “Poetics Today” Mieke Bal discusses the seemingly outdated status of traditional narratology, an originally structuralist effort that was often “dismissive” of historical, rhetorical, and ideological criticism as well as possibly missing the point of the “meaning” within narrative itself. Bal explains that narratology, “defined as reflection on the generically specific, narrative determinants of the production of meaning in semiotic interaction” (730) has not been developed as a “perfectly reliable model which ‘fits’ the texts” (Bal, “Poetics” 730) and that narrative “must be considered a discursive mode which affects semiotic objects in variable degrees” (730). Narratology thus needs to escape the belief in “pure” narrative and the “unwarranted claims about the generalizability of structure and the relevance of general structures for the meaning and effect of texts” (730). Fortunately, critics have successfully called upon narratologists to expand their formalist analyses to cover more contextual-based ground as a way to both sharpen narratological theories and enhance ideologically rooted criticism.

Susan S. Lanser’s influential essay “Toward a Feminist Narratology,” for instance, calls for narratology and feminist criticism, “the one scientific, descriptive, and non-ideological, the other impressionistic, evaluative, and political” to intersect in a way that can help methods of scholarship to understand narratives, narrative structures and their social and historical contexts.<sup>8</sup> Lanser’s main concern is whether “feminist criticism, and particularly the study of narratives by women, might benefit from the methods and insights of narratology, and whether narratology, in turn, might be altered by the understandings of feminist criticism and the experience of women’s texts” (“Sexual Difference” 198). Lanser argues that since no narratology has considered gender (prior to her essay), then the narratives that have provided the foundation for narratology have been men’s texts or texts treated as men’s texts. And even though “Wayne C. Boot’s dramatized narrator, Franz Stanzel’s *auktorialer Er-Erzähler* or Dorrit Cohn’s authorial mind are not being discussed with regard to gender” (Schabert 312), Western constructions of the authorial voice have made it synonymous with the male voice. This is particularly important to consider when studying narrative structures, yet

Narratologists pay (infinitely) more attention to a narrator's diegetic situation or degree of covertness than, for instance, to a narrator's sex or gender presumably because every narrator can be described as extra- or intra-, homo- or heterodiegetic and every narrator can be described as more or less overt or covert but not every narrator can be characterized in sexual or gender terms [...] (Prince 76)

The non-ideological origins of narratology have thus made it an inappropriate tool for analyzing the organization of power of gendered voices, yet this is precisely where traditional narratology has failed to study some of the most influential producers of narrative acts. Surely, plenty of linguistic research has shown “that isolating certain linguistic forms and trying to map them with “male” or “female” as correlations between devices and social meaning is, as a rule, a futile exercise” (Georgakopoulou 461). But even if it is proven that “the human mind may have no gender, as soon as it finds expression in telling a story, it gets involved in the issue of gender difference. The I who narrates

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<sup>8</sup> Warhol defines Feminist narratology as: “the study of narrative structures and strategies in the context of cultural constructions of gender” (“The Look” 5).

cannot avoid adopting viewpoints, modes of thought, styles of speech, shades of voice which are more or less firmly associated with either femininity or masculinity” (Schabert 313). Hence, if an omniscient, heterodiegetic third-person narrator is [usually] “not imagined as a full bodily presence. ‘He’ is [still the] authorial ‘mind’ (Schabert 312). Narratologies that continue to disavow the socio-cultural contexts that help to make the narratives they study possible are unwittingly producing theories of men’s narratives and not narrative in general.

Lanser, on the other hand, convincingly argues for a study of the specificity of women’s writing that would lead to “a rewriting of narratology that takes into account the contributions of women as both producers and interpreters of texts” (676). I agree with Lanser’s proposal of a feminist narratology that reevaluates and refigures the structural and formalist body of texts that have founded narratology and its implicitly androcentric method of analyzing texts, but such a narratological system should be careful not to essentialize the gendered identities of the narrative voices that a feminist reading may attempt to bring out. As Ruth E. Page states, “Lanser’s focus on the difference and specificity of women’s writing has a “tendency to conflate the narrator with the author [...] We might ask what criteria Lanser is basing her category of ‘women’s writing’ on. Is this derived from the gender of participants in the text, or of the biological sex of the author, or on some assumptions about the stylistics of ‘women’s language?’” (47).<sup>9</sup> For Page and myself, none of these provides a secure basis for a feminist narratology, for a strategic collaboration between narratology and feminist criticism would be cautious of constructing fixed categories and binary models.<sup>10</sup>

We can therefore take at an overtly “feminine” poem, Södergran’s “Vi kvinnor” (We Women), and navigate the structure and content of the poem with regard to Lanser’s method of reading women as producers of narrative texts without, however, essentializing the female authorities involved in this creative process.

Vi kvinnor, vi äro så nära den bruna jorden.  
Vi fråga göken, vad han väntar av våren,  
vi slå våra armar kring den kala furan,  
vi forska i solnedgången efter tecken och råd.  
Jag älskade en gång en man, han trodde på  
ingenting...  
Han kom en kall dag med tomma ögon,  
han gick en tung dag med glömska över pannan.  
Om mitt barn icke lever, är det hans... (*Dikter och aforismer* 41)

According to Lanser, “A narratology for feminist criticism would also have to reconcile the primarily semiotic approach of narratology with the primarily mimetic orientation of most (Anglo-American) feminist thinking about narrative (“Toward” 676). I have selected “Vi kvinnor” because of its

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<sup>9</sup> Page: “Lanser’s work [...] is clearly embedded in the priorities of second wave feminism. This is characterized by a recurring use of a binary model of gender that emphasized difference. Lanser explicitly aligns herself with the majority of US feminist critics of the period, ‘whose main interest is the “difference or specificity of women’s writing” (343).

<sup>10</sup> In Robyn Warhol’s “Persuasion,” her discussion of female focalization also contributes to gender dichotomies within a heterosexual matrix: “The feminine look, then, has the power to penetrate male desire; the masculine character must resort to words to find out what he needs to know about the woman’s desire” (13).

reliance on the concept of sex-gender, for without sex-gender, this poem could not exist. If we first mark the poem with Hühn's proposed four levels of communication, we can get an initial view of the narrativity of the poem:

[(1) Södergran]>[(2) implied author]>Vi [(3) narrator]>[(4)character] (existent)kvinnor,  
 vi (existent) äro så nära den bruna jorden (existent).  
 Vi (existent) fråga (incident) göken (existent), vad han väntar av våren,  
 vi (existent) slå (incident) våra armar kring den kala furan (existent),  
 vi (existent) forska (incident) i solnedgången (existent) efter tecken och råd.  
 Jag (existent) älskade (incident) en gång en man (existent), han (existent) trodde (incident)  
 på ingenting (non-existent)...  
 Han (existent) kom (incident) en kall dag med tomma ögon,  
 Han (existent) gick (incident) en tung dag med glömska över pannan.  
 Om mitt (existent) barn (existent) icke lever (non-incident),  
 är det hans (existent) ...<[(2)Implied author]<[(1)Södergran]

The structure of “Vi kvinnor” has several existents immediately followed by the incidents they themselves have caused. The author (1) of the text is clear and would not necessarily concern narratology; however, depending on how “women’s writing” is defined and subsequently applicable to a feminist narratology, this situation might in fact contribute substantial theoretical import.<sup>11</sup> The abstract composing subject (2) allows the reader to gain a perspective that not only immediately calls gender to the reader’s attention, but also relies on this concept to develop the narrative itself. Gender thus functions beyond the surface of this text as the texture that gives the abstract author its platform from which to derive its meaning. The implied author, here, is collective, but not a collective that demands implied readers of a particular sex, for it is sufficient that any reader is always sexed. The history of sexual difference affords us this perspective. This level (2) additionally becomes more vivid through its implicit reliance on historical context—though readers of any era can engage this implied author. The narrator (3) appears to be plural, but it is indeed a singular voice speaking as a collective. By including itself within the diegetic level (“we” acts beyond and within the level of the plot and later turns into the singular acting “I”) of the poem, the narrator establishes itself as a character [4] narrator. Interestingly, the narrator categorizes itself by naming its gender and thereby demands to be identified by gender—its gender is its identity, its means of existence. Other existents are the earth, pine tree, and a sunset, which initially appear to align the narrator and the collective “women” with nature.

How does Södergran’s poem, then, contribute to the study of women’s writing within narratology? According to Lanser, “In both its concepts and its terminology, [a feminist narratology] would reflect the mimetic as well as the semiotic experience that is the reading of literature, and it would study narrative in relation to a referential context that is simultaneously linguistic, literary, historical, biographical, social, and political” (677). “Vi kvinnor” presents several acting existents

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<sup>11</sup> “Understood as socially constructed as opposed to biologically determined, it might also be possible that cultural values of gender have some relationship with patterns of organization used in telling stories. For example, in certain situations it might be that the ability to solve problems or achieve goals is restricted to privileging one gender above another, as in stereotypically represented heroes and heroines where it is only the male characters that are allowed to follow quest-like progressions.” (Page 31)

(characters): the *we*, who acts on a more figurative level; the *cuckoo* that affirms this figurative position of the collective *we*; the singular *I* who separates *herself* from the collective group of women and grounds herself deeper in reality, into action; and *man*, whose actions spur inaction or non-existence (empty eyes, forgetfulness, non-living child). That the female existents in the poem bring the poem itself into existence (by means of subjects causing actions and subsequently narrative plot—not to be conflated with the physical author’s act of writing) and additionally cause most of the action of the plot, disrupts the long-perceived female tradition of writing and/or speaking with a “syntax of negativity” within the domain of private narration (Lanser, “Toward” 681). Lanser distinguishes public and private narration, where public narration is “(implicitly or explicitly) addressed to a narratee who is external (heterodiegetic) to the textual world and who can be equated with a public readership (analogous to historical reader)” and where private narration addresses “an explicitly designated narratee who exists only within the textual world” (683). Lanser proposes these categories, since “For women writers, as feminist criticism has long noted, the distinction between private and public contexts is a crucial and a complicated one” (684). Public and private narration styles are therefore rooted in their presentation of a gendered authorial voice: public is masculine and private is feminine.

Some linguists have argued that there is a “woman’s language” or a discourse of the powerless; speech that is “polite, emotional, enthusiastic, gossipy, talkative, uncertain, dull, and chatty” in contrast to men’s speech or powerful speech, which is “capable, direct, rational, illustrating a sense of humor, unfeeling, strong (in tone and word choice) and blunt” (Lanser, “Toward” 680-81).

To be sure, such descriptions of women’s language have indeed developed from empirical studies of “women’s texts,” yet these kinds of distinctions between women’s and men’s writing are established by an already patriarchal language. “The dichotomy of male/female, public/private is maintained by permitting women to write [...] for themselves [...] There is no contradiction in patriarchal order while women write for women and therefore remain within the limits of the private sphere; the contradiction arises only when women write for men” (Spender 192). Lanser ultimately shows that the writer of a double-constructed voice, one who writes on both the public and private sphere, consequently writes for a third audience, the literary reader, who is the “unidentified public narratee of either sex who can see beyond the immediate context of the writers’s circumstance” (683). The literary reader, then, is the intended the recipient of the abstract (implied) writing subject (2) within Hühn’s communicative order. But before the literary reader can perceive this implied narrative, he or she must read beyond the public and private texts, the latter of which voices “the [feigned] ‘feminine’ voice of self-effacement and emotionality” (681).

Södergran’s “Vi kvinnor,” however, does not speak within a private sphere; the poem’s narrator (3) declares that she is a woman, speaks for women, and publicly challenges patriarchal authority. The narrator, moreover, doesn’t need to adopt so-called “masculine” language to speak on this public sphere. And in addition, the inclusion of “We” focuses on the public nature of the poem; the bold collective voice does not intimate secrecy or shyness, and the implied author/reader relationship (2) can produce a literary reader of either sex. This at once defies the proposed categories of (masculine) public and (feminine) private writing spheres, but it also elucidates the problems of trying to dichotomize the specificity of women’s and men’s writing and their narrative



styles.

Women writers and speakers are also said to produce negative syntax in which “[t]here is not a singular verb tense in the text; every independent predication is cast in the stative or iterative mode. [...] Can one speak narratologically of plot or even story [...] or is one condemned simply to negative definitions—plotlessness, or story without plot?” (Lanser, “Toward” 687). Surely, it may seem as if the private sphere of writing (the diary, the letter) inherently produces observations and descriptions, yet it perhaps a mistake to, first, suggest that “women’s language” in the private sphere (or public, for that matter) is particularly conducive to plotless writing, and secondly, that plotlessness should be aligned with the feminine at all, or in other words, the non-existent. Critics such as Maria Brewer have even noted that plot has been understood as a “discourse of male desire recounting itself through the narrative of adventure, project, enterprise, and conquest,” the “discourse of desire as separation and mastery” (qtd. in Lanser, “Toward”: 687). A narratological analysis of women’s writing that seeks to describe the female authorial voice and the particular narrative situations it constructs should therefore avoid falling into the trap of dichotomy and narrowing already established essentialist categories.<sup>12</sup> To suggest that plot is masculine is to imply that non-eventful writing is feminine and this is only harmful to feminist readings that rely on this model. Another instance of gender essentialism occurs when traditional narratologies have reinforced phallogocentric discourse when discussing various narrative elements, especially the development of plot.<sup>13</sup> Peter Brooks, for example, describes plot as masculine:

The ambitious hero thus stands as a figure of the reader’s efforts to construct meanings in ever-larger wholes, to totalize his experience of human existence in time, to grasp past, present and future in a significant shape. This description, of course, most obviously concerns male plots of ambition. The female plot is not unrelated, but it takes a more complex stance toward ambition, the formation of an inner drive toward the assertion of selfhood in resistance to the overt and violating male plots of ambition, a counter-dynamic which, from the prototype *Clarissa* on to *Jane Eyre* and *To the Lighthouse*, is only superficially passive, and in fact a reinterpretation of the vectors of plot. (Brooks 39)

For Brooks, the plot of the hero is universal and is to be read by the universal reader, who is apparently implied as male. The “female plot” is expressive, but only in relation to the masculine “plots of ambition.” For Brooks, plot has been dichotomized, essentialized, and the female plot has become the plot of the other. “The units of anticipation and fulfillment or problem and solution that structure plot [...] assume that textual actions are based on the (intentional) deeds of protagonists; they assume a power, a possibility, that may be inconsistent with what women have experienced both historically and textually, and perhaps inconsistent even with women’s desires”

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<sup>12</sup> “Given the difference that differences make, binary models for literary analysis would seem to have no future. One strategy [...] to propose models that organize examples into three categories (such as Susan S. Lanser’s “authorial voice,” “personal voice” and “communal voice”) or four (such as Peter Rabinowitz’s rules “of notice,” “of signification,” “of configuration,” and “of coherence”) or more, to avoid being boxed into the either/or strategy [...] That does not mean, however, that binary oppositions can be eliminated from culture; nor does introducing politics into the analysis of opposing categories mean that the entire analytical project should be shut down” (Warhol 69).

<sup>13</sup> “The slippage between narrative content and plot structure results in a simplistic correlation of narrative structure and gender where it is the linguistic form itself that appears to be gendered. These problems are to a certain extent inherent in the theoretical models from which this strand of feminist narratology is derived” (Page 44).

(Lanser, "Toward" 687). Fortunately, Lanser argues against the plotlessness of women's writing, but she does so by acknowledging the female writer's lack of action and instead locates the text's "feminine" action in the act of reading by the female narratee, who becomes the *active reader*.

The confidante thus becomes an active participant not simply in narration, but in plot itself; the wish for the narratee's happiness transfers the imperatives of plot, so that the possibilities of change and fulfillment are given over to the narratee. The [private] letter thus suggests a plot behind women's "plotless" narrative, the subversive plot of sharing an experience so that the listener's life may complete the speaker's tale. ("Toward" 688)

It is initially relieving that Lanser illustrates the indirect authority of the passive female narrator; however, Lanser's method of projecting the action onto the reader seems to forget that the female narrator is indeed acting: she is writing, reporting, and witnessing. She is furthermore feeling and discerning. The very acts of the homodiegetic female narrator are interpreted as merely effects in Lanser's reading whenever she acknowledges the letter-writer's inaction. To be sure, Lanser is in fact promoting women's authorial writing, yet her rhetorical examples propagate unnecessary dichotomies. The speaker of Södergran's "We Women" on the other hand, reverses the traditional perception that the female narrator speaks privately and inactively by having the female narrator repeatedly act (ask, throw, search, love) in ways that first seem to rely on objects outside herself (the earth, cuckoo, sunset, man), yet her speaker's *positive* syntax is amplified by the collective voice that consequently reveals *man's* plotlessness: "He believed in *nothing* .../He came one cold day with *empty* eyes,/he went one heavy day with *forgetfulness* on his brow./If my child does *not live*, it is his."<sup>14</sup> This is not to suggest that Södergran's narrator is necessarily positing that men are weak or feminine (which would only further dichotomize and essentialize qualities of power), but that the female authorial voice is capable of producing plot whereas her male subject may represent the cause of her previous negative status. Södergran's speaker thus shows how the history of men's texts has also produced plotlessness, thus rendering distinctions of *gendered* negative syntax moot. The Man of "We Women" is the producer of nothing, emptiness, forgetting, and a state of non-living, whereas Woman is the interpreter of this. Finally, Ruth E. Page adds, "There is no empirical evidence to suggest that the alternative strategies of narrativity are used exclusively by women. Rather, male authors can use these forms too, without any relationship to feminist content or interpretation, and in some cases to reinforce patriarchal values [...] It is not the narratological form itself that is gendered" (41). Narrative structures are not masculine or feminine but they only function this way if the reader accepts and maintains a patriarchal reading experience. I posit that Edith Södergran's writing persistently constructs a plot that revises conventional gender relationships in a way that is more intricate than a mere reversal of traditional gender roles. Södergran's Woman and Man challenge the very categories that define them as such. I will attempt to show this in the following section.

### ***Voices of Authority***

If gendered distinctions between public and private writing prove to be less effective in modern texts, then there is still the question of whether gendered writing affects the structure,

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<sup>14</sup> My own emphasis.

themes and meaning of narratives at all. According to Gerald Prince, “If narrative poetics ought to be more alert to the implications of the corpus it privileges, it also ought to be more sensitive to the role of context--and, more specifically, say, to the possible role of sex or gender--in the production (or processing) of narrative meaning” (“On Narratology” 78). In the previous chapter, I attempted to show how Edith Södergran’s poetic “I” was multiple and that she, as a woman writer, constructed feminine, masculine, and androgynous voices; however, in the following section I will take a closer look at what these categories mean in narrative situations by reading Södergran’s and Nietzsche’s lyrical poetry through a feminist-narratological lens. I intend to show that the classifications “feminine,” “masculine,” and “androgynous” or “gender-neutral” are inescapable in the composition and reception of narratives, for every writer and every reader is gendered and gender-conscious. Yet the categories of gendered voices are only ideologically marked and can therefore be actively reevaluated and reinterpreted by the reader. In most cases, the reader’s reception of the text is compromised when she is aware of the narrative’s historical and cultural contexts that govern a narrative’s organization of the two-sex gender model—whether the narrative in question upholds or subverts it. This introduces the question of whether the reader’s reception of gender in narrative is affected by the reader’s own gender. Regarding this, I agree with Robyn Warhol’s assertion that the reader’s gender “does not preexist our repeated and habitual encounters with gendered cultural artifacts; rather, gender gets produced and reproduced through countless cultural patterns, including narrative strategies associated with texts that are marked within a given culture as ‘masculine’ (such as adventure stories) or ‘feminine’” (Warhol, “How” 182-183). It is because of the universal and inescapable production of gender that my analysis will rely on the categories “masculine” and “feminine” only as far as their historical definitions have maintained their cultural intelligibility,<sup>15</sup> for to be able to discuss and reevaluate the operations within the gender order, one must engage the language that has historically given meaning to the categories within it; even if this is the same language that has unevenly distributed the power within it. However, the more we separate culturally constructed meaning from the qualities, discourse and syntax that have historically categorized “masculine” and “feminine” writing, the less cultural dichotomies (such as strong and weak, intellectual and naïve) can be applied to the gendered body and its language. This is where narratology can effectively complement a feminist reading of the gendered writing “I” since, “[a] mutually exclusive categorization of storytelling style according to the gender of the speaker is simply untenable” (Page 90). I therefore hope to show that language of any gendered quality, emotion--or even act--can be expressed by any gender and uttered by any body, but the extent to which such language is harmful, essentializing or productive to sexual equity demands a careful redefinition and transvaluation of power.<sup>16</sup>

Do women write differently from men? Regardless of the answer, history has bestowed favor on the masculine. “[The] ‘authorial function’<sup>17</sup> that grounds Western literary authority is constructed in white, privileged-class males terms, [...] [the] female voice—a term used here simply

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<sup>15</sup> “Categories such as ‘women’ and ‘men’ have been shown to be considerably diverse, where ‘gender’ intersects in multiple ways with other variables including historical period, cultural context, age, ethnicity and academic background and could include others such as sexuality or class” (Page 176).

<sup>16</sup> Sara Mills similarly argues “If it is enough that a woman speak ‘like a woman’ to be considered to be speaking in a ‘powerless’ way, then a more complex model of the production and particularly the reception of women’s speech is necessary” (47).

<sup>17</sup> Discursive authority marks: “intellectual credibility, ideological validity, and aesthetic value claimed by or conferred upon a work, author, narrator, character or textual practice” (Lanser, *Fictions* 6).

to designate the narrator's grammatical gender—is a site of ideological tension made visible in textual practices. A quest to be heard, respected, and believed, a hope of influence” (Lanser, *Fictions* 7). Women's language is not only considered as reactive to men's language, it has suffered a mode of expression that struggles and hopes for the female subject's very existence and authority. Robyn Warhol argues that in order to achieve cultural worth, women, “having limited access to the public ear in any other forum, used fiction as a tool for ‘earnest intervention’ in social, political, and religious matters” (“Reader” 60), but they did so through the engaging narrator that “addresses a you” who is capable of identifying with the emotions, if not the actions, represented in the text” (63). Unfortunately, this intimate narrating style has conveyed the impression that women writers “pass their gender identities on to the personae who narrate their stories” (Schabert 314).<sup>18</sup> Since she was a woman writer who actively produced an engaging narrator, it is hardly surprising that Edith Södergran was read as an autobiographical writer.

Södergran certainly has numerous poems about women and womanhood, but Nietzsche has several, too: (“Mädchen-Lied”; “Mann und Weib,” etc.<sup>19</sup>). Both have written “Goddess poems” (Södergran: “Två gudinnor”; “Gryningen”; “Rosenaltaret”; Nietzsche: “Nach einem nächtlichen Gewitter”; “An die Freundschaft”). They also write poems I regard as narrated by androgynous speakers: (Södergran: “Lidandets kalk”; “Eros hemlighet”; Nietzsche: “Meine Rosen”). They both feature overtly masculine Zarathustrian poems (Nietzsche: “Aus hohen Bergen”; “Sils-Maria”; Södergran: “Grimace d'artiste”; “Världen badar i blod”; “Apokalypsens genius”; “Framtidens tåg”; “Materialism”<sup>20</sup>). This chapter, however, will focus on poems in which Södergran's narrators speak as Man<sup>21</sup> and in which Nietzsche's narrators speak as Woman.<sup>22</sup>

“Vi kvinnor” has already offered a glimpse of Södergran's poetry about and voiced by women (which was incidentally also a poem on men), so I will begin with a look at some of her “masculine” poetry. After her first collection *Dikter*, Södergran's style became aggressively Nietzschean in its imagery and ideology, expressing fierce anti-Christian views (“Guds rike börjar/Icke Kristi/tynande välde,/nej högre, ljusare”) and towering voices: “Jag skiljer mig från eder/ty jag är mer än ni”.<sup>23</sup> I contend that Södergran's “masculine” writing shows Södergran to be a producer of very public, active, and eventful writing that she ushers in with an authorial voice. The poem “Triumf att finnas till,” for example, echoes the strikingly patriarchal discourse of Nietzsche's Zarathustra:

Vad fruktar jag? Jag är en del utav oändligheten.  
 Jag är en del av alltets stora kraft,  
 en ensam värld inom miljoner världar,  
 en första gradens stjärna lik som slocknar sist.  
 Triumf att leva, triumf att andas, triumf att finnas till!

<sup>18</sup> Schabert elaborates: “The idea that the narrator's gender is one with the author's is in accordance with the naïve student's habit of imagining the narrator in a novel written by a woman as a female voice” (314).

<sup>19</sup> Other poems include “Den Kopf verloren,” “Im Süden,” and poems 52, 96, 97, 105, 106, 107 from “Umkreis der Dionysos-Dithyramben” (1882-1888).

<sup>20</sup> “Triumf att finnas till...”; “Vad är imorgon?”; “O mina solbrandsfärgade toppar...”; “Stormen”; “Först vill jag bestiga Chimborazzo...”; “Makt”; “Till de starka”; “Besvärjelsen.”

<sup>21</sup> (“Vanvettets virvel,” “Gudarnas lyra,” “Villkoret,” “Är jag en lögnare,” “Orfeus,” “Stormen (II),” and “Den starkes kropp”)

<sup>22</sup> (“Nach einem nächtlichen Gewitter,” “Die kleine Brigg, genannt ‘das Engelchen,’” “Der Halkyionier,” “Sieben Weibs-Sprüchlein,” “Die Fromme Beppa,” and “Klage der Ariadne”).

<sup>23</sup> Both lines from the poem “Rosenaltaret.” See *Dikter och aforismer* 97.

Triumf att känna tiden iskall rinna genom sina ådror  
och höra nattens tysta flod  
och stå på berget under solen.  
Jag går på sol, jag står på sol,  
jag vet av ingenting annat än sol. (*Dikter och aforismer* 71-72)

This excerpt illustrates an omnipotent voice that captures the authoritative expression for which men have been historically known, but the poem does *not* necessarily rely on traditionally masculine qualities, for the speaker of the poem mostly transcends the body. Yet the poem, I suggest, still reflects what is traditionally understood as masculine. If we read the poem under Hühn's model of embedded communication, we can see how richly eventful the poem is, which is, according to Hühn, a male quality:

[(1) Södergran]>[(2) implied author]>Vad fruktar(Incident)  
[(3) narrator]>[(4) character narrator]>jag(Existent)?  
Jag (E) är (I) en del (E) utav oändligheten(E).  
Jag (E) är (I) en del (E) av alltets stora kraft (E),  
en ensam värld (E) inom miljoner världar (E),  
en första gradens (E) stjärna (E) lik som slocknar (I) sist.  
Triumf (E) att leva (I), triumf att andas (I), triumf att finnas till (I)!  
Triumf (E) att känna (I) tiden (E) iskall rinna (I) genom sina (E) ådror (E)  
och höra (I) nattens (E) tysta flod (-E)  
och stå (I) på berget (E) under solen (E).  
Jag (E) går (I) på sol (E), jag (E) står (I) på sol (E),  
jag (+E) vet (+I) av ingenting (-E) annat än sol (+E).< [(2) implied author]<[(1) Södergran]

If we disregard that the poem was written by a female writer (1), then the reader may still be concerned with gender via the traditionally masculine language (which may or may not be noticeable for the reader) or by the implied author's (2) discussion of contextual matters behind the narrator's back. The narrator (3), if the author herself is unknown, may appear to be masculine if we of course subscribe to traditional categories of masculine and feminine. As with "Vi kvinnor," the narrator of "Triumf att finnas till" exists within the narrative world, making her a character-bound narrator (4), a narrative situation vividly reinforced throughout the poem and the title itself. Hühn's framework consequently allows us to see the narrativity of the poem, which has a narrator, abstract narratee, and the relaying of several immediate events. But how does gender contribute this model? I argue that the speaker of the poem transcends cultural constructions of the body by not declaring its gender and by not expressing corporeality to the extent that it can be defined and dictated by socio-cultural hegemonies. First, the narrating "I" is strikingly juxtaposed with superhuman existents (*oändligheten, alltets stora kraft, miljoner världar, tiden, sol*). By positioning itself in the cosmos and infinity, the narrating "I" is separating itself from the cultural body, earth, and human experience—as much as it can. But as the poem proceeds, the narrating "I" makes its descent to the earth (*natten, berget, flod*) and regains its corporeality (*ådror*), only to return to the sun, triumphantly, by physically standing and walking on it; the body has thus overcome earthly, and therefore socio-cultural, restrictions. By releasing itself from the corporeal realities of physical space, the narrator's veins of time may belong to man, woman, both, or neither at all, for this particular body is post-gender, even

post-human. That the narrating “I” seems to escape gender in my reading may initially affirm the supposedly incompatible relationship between narratology and gender; however, its ambiguous body indirectly challenges the equally inescapable assumptions readers make on the text during the reading process. Is the public audience, the universal narratee, gendered? If the author is unknown, does a female reader read a female speaker? Does a male reader, in turn, read a male speaker? Or do they both read a masculine narrator? Finally, is it possible for a reader to be unconscious of gender during narrative exchanges? I suggest that because all readers are gendered, however diverse these gender identifications may be, all narrators are marked by gender, even if the narrating “I” makes no indications of gender at all—for the reader is culturally conditioned to project gender onto a narrating subject--the reader’s other. This is particularly problematic when the narrator produces a linguistically gender-neutral text.

The universal narrating “I” of “Triumf att finnas till” sharply contrasts with the more personal and undeniably female narrator of “We Women.” If we were to ask why Södergran avoided gender in the former, we may simply recall the history of women’s struggles for a professional and cultural authorial voice: “Authorial voice has been so conventionally masculine that female authorship does not necessarily establish female voice” (Lanser, *Fictions* 18). Additionally, it is often the case that if “a writer’s sex is unknown, writer and narrator would be thought of as male, yet when readers know, or think they know, that a text has been written by a woman, the I-figure of the authorial narrator is understood as female” (Schabert 314). Therefore, despite whatever potential intentions Södergran may have had for avoiding her gender by “writing with a man’s hand,” the masculine voice of “Triumf att finnas till” may be understood as feminine by default, if “[the] noted presence of a female name on the title page signals a female narrative voice in the absence of markings to the contrary” (Lanser, *Narrative Act* 16). It is because of this title page that many early women authors adopted pseudonyms. “Since a heterodiegetic narrator<sup>24</sup> need not be identified by sex, the authorial mode has allowed women to access ‘male’ authority by separating the narrating ‘I’ from the female body; it is of course in the exploitation of this possibility that women writers have used male narrators and pseudonyms [.]” (Lanser, *Fictions* 18). In light of Lanser’s discussion, it is very likely that Södergran avoided gender in “Triumf att finnas till” since “when an authorial voice has represented itself as female, it has risked being (dis)qualified. It is possible that women’s writing has carried fuller public authority when its voice has not been marked as female” (Lanser, *Fictions* 18). However, the question of avoiding gender should perhaps not be asked in the first place. “Avoiding gender” implies a patriarchal resistance to identifying with the female other and, what is more, an inherent need to achieve cultural intelligibility via the cultural body and sexual difference. Still, it could be argued that the language of women who write in a masculine or gender-neutral fashion, “becomes not simply a vehicle for constructing a more legitimate (masculine, powerful) voice but the voice through which the more global judgment of patriarchal practices is exercised. (Lanser, “Toward” 683). Thus, if Södergran writes as a woman, her writing is marginal and disqualified (her contemporary critics certainly dismissed her); however, if she writes as a male or with a masculine voice, she is contributing to phallogentrism and patriarchal systems that govern her own gender’s cultural intelligibility. The choice between one or the other, yet *another* dichotomy, is the problem with most Södergran criticism, which has largely romanticized her “feminine” writing and trivialized her “masculine” writing as Nietzsche-crazed.

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<sup>24</sup> A narrator that is not a character in the narrative world of events.

But if we consider “We Women” again, it is evident that Södergran was not resistant to writing with a female authorial voice. To be sure, Södergran’s first collection *Dikter*, which includes the poem, was doomed to autobiographical criticism by her contemporary readers, so it could seem as if “Triumf att finnas till,” taken from her subsequent collection *Septemberlyran*, is more reactionary than a “natural” mode of the poet’s expression. “Women novelists may have avoided personal voice when they feared their work would be taken for autobiography. The use of personal voice also risks reinforcing the convenient ideology of women’s writing as “self expression,” the product of “intuition” rather than of art” (Lanser, *Fictions* 20). Again, early women writers took on greater authority when they adopted a male pseudonym that un-feminized the personal voice, for the personal mode of writing “offers no gender-neutral mask or distancing “third person,” no refuge in a generic voice that may pass as masculine” (19). But Södergran’s poetry is not so easily dichotomized. Södergran has several post-*Dikter* poems that exhibit a powerful and “masculine” Zarathustrian voice that is simultaneously female. Her poem “Till fots fick jag gå genom solsystemen illustrates bold, cosmic imagery similar to “Triumf att finnas till” yet the narrator subtly alludes to its female gender:

Till fots  
fick jag gå genom solsystemen,  
innan jag fann den första tråden av min röda dräkt.  
Jag anar ren mig själv.  
Någonstädes i rymden hänger mitt hjärta,  
gnistor strömma ifrån det, skakande luften,  
till andra måttlösa hjärtan. (*Dikter och aforismer* 100-01)

Till fots  
fick jag (E) gå (I) genom solsystemen (E),  
innan jag (E) fann (I) den första tråden (E) av min röda dräkt (E).  
Jag (E) anar (I) ren mig själv (E).  
Någonstädes i rymden (E) hänger (I) mitt hjärta (E),  
gnistor (E) strömma (I) ifrån det (E), skakande (I) luften (E),  
till andra måttlösa hjärtan (E).

Yet another of Södergran’s narrators transcends our earthly landscapes and travels to *rymden* and the *solsystemen*. But this poem does not portray a narrator separated from its biological body or its gender. Without explicitly declaring itself a woman, Södergran’s narrator is simultaneously physical and, in Zarathustrian fashion, beyond the cultural body. The narrating agent has a functioning, physical body (*till fots, gå, hjärta, “Jag anar ren mig själv”*), and moreover, this body is implicitly a female body, one that finds her “femininity” (*den första tråden av min röda dräkt*) beyond the socio-cultural institutions that have historically engendered dichotomized bodies. If we read this in light of historical context,<sup>26</sup> Södergran’s dress, though an emblem of the eternal feminine, communicates the reconciled opposition between Nietzsche’s misogyny and his philosophy of the *Übermensch*, for

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<sup>26</sup> “The narratological analysis of sequences in poems, then, attempts to reconstruct the schemata, acquired through reading or experience, that can be assumed to be (or have been) known to the author and contemporary readers and are relevant to the texts and thus help provide their meaning” (Hühn 6).

the poem exists within a Zarathustrian plane of the elevation, sublimation, and the overcoming of culture. But the narrator of the poem does not need to mimic Zarathustra's masculine discourse, for it is no longer "his" to own, nor does she need to explicitly declare her gender to gain authority or cultural (or in this case post-cultural) intelligibility. But it is important to acknowledge the feminine thread of her red dress, since "[to] be able to identify a woman in any text where there is one would allay fears that the systems of representation which are available within Western culture are so irredeemably male that a woman can only be heard if she adopts a male perspective, if she speaks as a man" (Barwell 63). The narrator of Södergran's poem thus performs Woman yet she performs Woman beyond its socio-cultural meaning, and she reinforces this by avoiding the heterosexual "I-You" pronomial exchange.

In *Esteticism och nietzscheanism i Edith Södergrans lyrik*, Olof Enckell writes that Södergran "[...] stod så främmande för varje form av kritiskt reflekterande intellektualism och ständigt i sin diktning lyckades bevara så mycket av Aladdin-naturens ögonblickslynne, lätttröliga fantasirikedom och övermodiga instinktsäkerhet" (51). I argue, of course, that Södergran did intellectually engage Nietzsche's philosophy, but rather than proceeding through each of Södergran's poems to show where Zarathustrian language and imagery is found (there are many examples),<sup>27</sup> I will attempt to demonstrate how Södergran was influenced by Nietzsche's rhetoric of the double-gendered voice that sought to disqualify Western constructions of gender through satire. By suggesting that Södergran's own narrative techniques are inspired by Nietzsche, I do not intend to claim that Södergran needed a male author to direct her writing, but as a dedicated and critical reader of Nietzsche, Södergran took part in Nietzsche's philosophical discussion of the cultural body and consequently wrote gendered and non-gendered personas on her own terms. To be sure, Södergran's poetic oeuvre can easily be read independent of Nietzsche's influence, but I make this connection as part of a testament to Södergran's contribution to the issues of women's equality of her era. I now move the discussion to her turf and analyze Nietzsche's often-overlooked poetry as an additional platform that offers challenging cases of androgynous narration.

In my second chapter I attempted to show how Nietzsche pitted the masculine ideal of the eternal feminine against the "masculinized" emancipated woman, a rhetorical technique that was riddled with contradiction and deeply ironic passages. Recall that the eternal feminine is harshly criticized by Nietzsche's male narrator (if not Nietzsche himself). But she is quickly revered when she is compared against the "manly" emancipated woman, who consequently reveals the feigned femininity of the eternal feminine (who herself gains cultural intelligibility by relinquishing her authority). Nietzsche's lyrical poetry presents a similar occurrence of double-voiced narration when Nietzsche's narrators speak *about* women and when his narrators speak *as* women. The speakers that narrate about women propagate typical Nietzschean misogyny:

Selten, daß ein Weib zu denken wagt,  
denn alte Weisheit spricht:  
"Folgen soll das Weib, nicht lenken;  
denkt sie, nun, dann folgt sie nicht."  
[...]  
Gestern sprach's in mir, wie's immer

<sup>27</sup> A thorough study of Nietzschean imagery in Södergran's poetry has been presented by Enckell's *Esteticism och nietzscheanism i Edith Södergrans lyrik*. Helsingfors, 1949. Mercators Tryckeri.



in mir sprach - nun hört mich an:  
"Schöner ist das Frauenzimmer,  
interessanter ist - der Mann!" (*Peacock* 110)

The selected stanzas from the poem "*Mädchen-Lied*" (A Girl's Melody) exhibit Nietzsche's typical phallogocentric discourse and misogynist speech; this is just one of many poems, moreover, in which Nietzsche's narrators appear to merely repeat sayings from his philosophy. The poem "Mann und Weib," for example, features the line "Raub dir das Weib, für das dein Herz fühlt!/So denkt der Mann; das Weib raubt nicht/es stiehlt"; which is strikingly similar to the way Nietzsche degrades Woman in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*: "Der Mann fürchte sich vor dem Weibe, wenn es hasst: denn der Mann ist im Grunde der Seele nur böse, das Weib aber ist dort schlecht" (ASZ 85). Other misogynistic poems include "Niedergang", in which the narrator declares to Woman: "Die Wahrheit ist: er steigt zu euch hernieder!/Sein Überglück ward ihm zum Ungemach,/Sein Überlicht geht eurem Dunkel nach/" (194). And in poem 52 from "Umkreis der Dionysos-Dithyramben," Nietzsche's narrator asserts, "Diese Zeit ist wie ein krankes Weib/laßt sie nur schreien, rasen, schimpfen/und Tisch und Teller zerbrechen!..."(342). It is painfully evident that Nietzsche did not limit misogyny to his philosophy, but like the androgynous double-voice of his philosophy, Nietzsche presents a curious figuration of Woman who counterbalances and contradicts the above judgments against her.

To begin, in the poem "Nach einem nächtlichen Gewitter," Nietzsche speaks as both man and woman:

Heute hängst du dich als Nebelhülle,  
trübe Göttin, um mein Fenster hin,  
schaurig weht der bleichen Flocken Fülle,  
schaurig tönt der volle Bach darin.

Ach! du hast bei jähem Blitzeleuchten,  
bei des Donners ungezähmtem Laut,  
bei des Tales Dampf den giftefeuchten  
Todestrank, du Zauberin, gebraut!

Schauernd hörte ich um Mitternächten  
deiner Stimme Lust und Wehgeheul,  
sah der Augen Blinken, sah der Rechten  
schneidig hingezückten Donnerkeil.

Und so tratst du an mein ödes Bette  
vollgerüstet, waffengleißend hin,  
schlugst an's Fenster mir mit erzner Kette,  
sprachst zu mir: "Nun höre, was ich bin!

Bin die große, ew'ge Amazone,  
nimmer weiblich taubenhaft und weich,

Kämpferin mit Mannes-Haß und -Hohne,  
Siegerin und Tigerin zugleich!

Rings zu Leichen tret' ich, was ich trete,  
Fackeln schleudert meiner Augen Grimm.  
Gifte denkt mein Hirn – nun kniee! bete!  
Oder modre, Wurm! Irrlicht, verglimm! (*Peacock* 90)

In the poem, the narrator is marked as male and the reader therefore receives a “masculine” text. This means the poem is focalized by the sensing, feeling, and seeing man, the man who is juxtaposed against the female agent in the poem. The male narrator is threatened not by the femininity of the *Amazon*, for she is “nimmer weiblich taubenhaft und weich” but by her raging sexuality and, most significantly, her autonomy. But the Woman in Nietzsche’s poem is perhaps not a woman but a monstrous vision of what the emancipated woman (now *Zauberin* and *Amazon*) appears to be to anyone who thrives within the patriarchal arena of the eternal feminine. In this poem, Nietzsche harshly dichotomizes sexual difference in the woman’s hostile opposition to the male, but he also demonstrates this in the poem’s structure: the male is the producer of the poem; he is composer, seer, and speaker. This is *his* story. However, the female “Zauberin” appropriates his speech, an act that reflects the threat of women’s liberation movements that were on the rise in modernity. Her speech has cut the poem in two, and one could therefore argue that her speech castrates the male narrator. However, because the male narrator began the poem, the woman’s speech is actually indirect discourse “at a higher level than that at which the words in the fabula are supposed to have been spoken” (Bal, *Narratology* 54), yet her utterances come across as direct. This subtle act of narrating from a distance has been mastered by Nietzsche, but we may also recall Kelly Oliver’s argument that Nietzsche’s attempts to speak like or as Woman locks her into phallogocentric discourse, leading to an act of *autocastration* with no real action taken by the feminine other.

How, then, can a feminist narratology contribute to a deeper understanding of this poem? The narrator-I (3) is also character (homodiegetic) narrator (4). The poem is not only psychologically dichotomized into the male persona vs. the female persona but physically divided into Man’s speech vs. Woman’s speech (via Man’s speech). The man’s authorial voice is directed to the female narratee who later responds, but his voice also reaches the implied reader of the poem, the reader who can see and hear past the narrative world and textual space. Using the personal voice, which by default holds authority for the male where there is none for the female, he addresses the female “You” who, as the poem advances, becomes less: *Göttin* to *Zauberin* to *Amazon*. Yet *he* is the one who names her *Göttin* and *Zauberin*, which are more ethereal than physical entities. That she names *herself* Amazon points to her physicality, but it is a mythical body, ironically “man’s” body as she is “vollgerüstet” with “Mannes-Haß und -Hohne.” I therefore suggest that Nietzsche is once again illustrating, ever so subtly, his belief that women mistakenly commit self-essentialism in their efforts to gain cultural intelligibility.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the emasculating Amazonian speaker of the poem distracts us from the otherwise dominant narration of the male. In this narrative, the narrating “I” produces very few events. “hörte (I)” and “sah” are the primary actions of the male narrator. The female voice, on the other hand, produces

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<sup>28</sup> In chapter two I discuss how Nietzsche anticipated that feminists would wrongly seek out cultural authority by taking on the patriarchal persona.

most of the action. “Todestrank (E), du Zauberin (E), gebraut (I)!/der Augen (E) Blinken/ Und so tratst (I) du (E)/schlugst (I) an’s Fenster (E)/mit erzner Kette (E)/ sprachst (I) zu mir/Bin (I) die große, ew’ge Amazone (E)/(bin) (I) Kämpferin (E)/(bin) (I) Siegerin (E)und Tigerin (E)/Leichen (E) tret’ (I) ich (E)/ Fackeln (E) schleudert (I) meiner (E) Augen (E) Grimm/ Gifte (E) denkt (I) mein (E) Hirn (E).” I contend that Nietzsche’s poem satirically reveals how the male voice, regardless of how meek and sparse, has more authority than a woman’s voice, regardless of how “masculine” she seeks to become. Of course, Nietzsche’s satire reveals how this situation is flawed. Both the man and woman are guilty of contributing to this particular arena of patriarchal discourse, for the man in the poem unjustly objectifies the woman (she becomes “you” whereas he never does) and the woman falls into the gender trap of attributing power to masculine authority, thereby indirectly nullifying her own authority. “Nach einem nächtlichen Gewitter” simultaneously illustrates the patriarchal male, the “weak” male, the threatening “woman,” and the self-essentializing woman. This seems hardly productive to a feminist reading of the poem, yet it is precisely in Nietzsche’s multi-layered criticism where the reader can locate his support for the feminine other. Despite the male speaker’s attempt to command her, *she* has the final command: *verglimm!*

So far Nietzsche’s poetry both degrades and idealizes the feminine Other in the manner of his philosophical rhetoric on Woman, but his lyrical expression also takes on the female persona and appropriates her poetic voice without an intervening male narrator. In the poem “Die kleine Brigg, genannt ‘das Engelchen,’”<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche’s first-person female narrator testifies:

Engelchen: so nennt man mich –  
 Jetzt ein Schiff, dereinst ein Mädchen,  
 Ach, noch immer sehr ein Mädchen!  
 Denn es dreht um Liebe sich  
 Stäts mein feines Steuerrädchen.  
 [...]  
 Engelchen: so nennt man mich –  
 Glaubt ihr wohl, dass wie ein Hündchen  
 Bell'n ich kann und dass mein Mündchen  
 Dampf und Feuer wirft um sich?  
 Ach, des Teufels ist mein Mündchen!

Engelchen: so nennt man mich –  
 Sprach ein bitterböses Wörtchen  
 Einst, dass schnell zum letzten Oertchen  
 Mein Geliebtester entwich:  
 Ja, er starb an diesem Wörtchen!

Engelchen: so nennt man mich –  
 Kaum gehört, sprang ich vom Klippchen  
 In den Grund und brach ein Rippchen,

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<sup>29</sup> “[This] is one of four poems which Nietzsche wrote early in 1882 in Genoa, Italy, after escaping a frigid Swiss winter in Sils Maria. All poems have girls as their themes and all resist cherished notions and surface appearances” (Grundlehner 88). “Mädchen-Lied,” “Campo santo di Staglieno,” and “Pia” are the companion poems.

Dass die liebe Seele wich:  
 Ja, sie wich durch dieses Rippchen!  
 [...]
   
 Engelchen: so nennt man mich –  
 Jetzt ein Schiff, dereinst ein Mädchen,  
 Ach, noch immer sehr ein Mädchen!  
 Denn es dreht um Liebe sich  
 Stäts mein feines Steuerrädchen. (*Peacock* 106)

This rather unusual poem about “a love-sick girl who, after leaping into the sea, was reincarnated in a Genoese ship” (Grundlehner 91) contributes to Nietzsche’s tireless tendency to express Woman through metaphor. For even though the speaker is “noch immer sehr ein Mädchen!”, Nietzsche’s female teller speaks as the little ship, which is historically a *feminine* object. Once again, Nietzsche’s Woman narrates from a distance. The narrator-I (3) is the same as the protagonist (4), but even though the voices are the same, the narrator speaks as both the past version (*das Engelchen*) of the present self (*die kleine Brigg*). That her voice spans past and present and human body and inanimate object provides the female narrator with an omniscient voice; which is further reinforced by her now abstract narratee. However, despite her omniscience and authority over the text, Nietzsche’s narrator is still only audible to the narratee and reader via metaphor. “The argumentative nature of the metaphor becomes apparent as soon as we consider the metaphor as implied narrative. This is one example of how narratological analysis inherently serves political or ideological critique” (Bal, *Narratology* 35). To reach the implied narrative, it is further necessary to study the plot of Nietzsche’s poem.

This plot largely takes place in the past, which is embedded into the present narrative level. The character-bound narrator is a speaking ship, but this absurd situation is quickly deemphasized by the narrator’s cool and collected speech, a speech full of authority, as she repeatedly denies her false name “*das Engelchen*” by facetiously repeating it. As a physical, biological young woman, the character-bound narrator is defiant, “Sprach ein bitterböses Wörtchen,” but she is ultimately unable to exist in man’s world. Man, in turn, cannot live in hers, as he died as a result of hearing her “Wörtchen.” The difference in this mutual destruction is that she leaves man’s world on her own terms. “Kaum gehört” to man’s valorization of her, the former “Engelchen” jumps from a cliff, breaking one rib—naturally the rib of life supplied to her by Adam. But Nietzsche shows, I suggest, that the narrator--hardly a little lovesick Angel--has already rejected the patriarchal rib, which her “liebe Seele” previously “wich.” Paradoxically, yet in accordance with Nietzsche’s irony, she becomes *die kleine Brigg* that barks and breathes fire through the devil’s mouth. Here, Nietzsche intimates that even when she is locked in metaphor, the female other is always what the male makes her to be. She is always his other, the object of his words. She is now a ship, she is still a girl, both called “*das Engelchen*.” She cannot escape her identity; hence, her cultural intelligibility is only possible through man’s authorization of her. Moreover, this process occurs despite the female other’s awareness of the situation. Nietzsche thus uses the female voice within its traditional patriarchal sphere, not as a genuine act of phallogocentrism or autocastration, but as a way to show that if Woman’s cultural body is overcome in the present, masculine memory can memorialize her back into the eternal feminine. Nietzsche thereby elucidates the harmful and untruthful discourse that governs the telling of Western narratives of all types.

Because of the oppressive history of patriarchal authority, the extent to which Nietzsche's satirical take on the Man/Woman dichotomy actually subverts phallogocentric discourse must be explored further. In chapter two I demonstrated how critics like Derrida and Irigaray regarded Nietzsche to write "with a woman's hand," but how does this idea work within a narratological framework? In "Feminist Perspectives and Narrative Points of View," Ismay Barwell claims that a narrative is feminine "if the sequence of sentences or images is a part of a pragmatic system in which it is related to points of view, and the dominant point of view, i.e. the one in terms of which the narrative selections are made, is feminine" (63). According to Barwell, then, Nietzsche's poems that speak with the feminine voice, are, indeed feminine, but this spurs the question of whether "feminine" writing means "women's writing." The answer seems obvious as Lanser suggests, "Because male writers have created female voices, the arena of personal narration may also involve a struggle over which representations of female voice are to be authorized" (Lanser, *Fictions* 19). But if narrative criticism accepts that the gender of the narrating agent marks the gender of the writing, as Barwell suggests, "then this might mean that the so-called women's writing could be authored by a man [...] On the other hand, if only women can author 'women's writing', then this implies that gender is biologically determined rather than socially constructed - an assumption that might be critiqued on essentialist grounds" (Page 47). The problem is that if men are understood to produce women's writing, then years of struggling to establish the female authoritative voice may be disqualified as Western culture always falls back into men's language. I contend, therefore, that the study of gender and narrative ought to attempt to paradoxically promote women's writing, while simultaneously acknowledging that writers of any sex can write with masculine and feminine voices. Narrative and feminist criticism should work together to present a useful tool for interpreting "masculine" and "feminine" voices without contributing to the very essentialism these categories stand for.<sup>30</sup> It is time to release "feminine" from the female body and "masculine" from the male body in recognition of the fact that these qualities, these energies, are not exclusive to gender even if the body is always sexed--mostly one or the other, but as Anne Fausto-Sterling reminds us, not even that.

In light of this, let us take a final look at Södergran's male narrator. In the poem "Är jag en lögnare" the narrator refers to itself as 'broder' (*Dikter och aforismer* 76); and in "Den starkes kropp" the narrator begins "Vad man än må nämna mig, vem som än må vänta mig, jag är framtidens stjärna" but at the end of the poem the narrator refers to its male body "mysteriet ligger i den starkes kropp är han rusblind går till handling" (*Dikter och aforismer* 151). In the poem "Orfeus," Södergran takes on the voice of the mythological male Greek poet. Södergran's narrator, as Orpheus, speaks:

Jag förvandlar ormar till änglar.  
 Höjen edra huvuden! Resen er på stjärten!  
 En sekund ... och ingen väser mer.  
 Sälla ligga de vid mina fötter  
 drömbetagna, kyssande min mantels fäll.  
 Jag rör vid lyran. Det går en vind över jorden  
 sakta, högtidligt, i tårar

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<sup>30</sup> Ruth E. Page also argues, "feminist narratology's study of texts both literary and otherwise must avoid perpetrating stereotypes and false dichotomies rooted in a metaphorical basis of unqualified 'difference'" (93).

kyssande skönhetsens livlösa, marmorvita statyer på munnen  
att de slå upp sina ögon.  
Jag är Orfeus. Jag kan sjunga hur jag vill.  
Mig är allt förlåtligt.  
Tiger, panter, puma följa mina steg  
till min klippas håll i skogen. (*Dikter och aforismer* 82)

If Nietzsche can write with the hand of a woman, and for some critics, even hypothetically produce women's writing, does Södergran's transformation into Orpheus mean that she is a producer of men's language? As previously mentioned, women have written as men via pseudonyms and as non-gendered third person narrators. But Södergran's technique of writing the poetic "I" as a male narrator disrupts the narrative exchange between the author and reader, narrator and narratee, and implied author and implied reader to a greater extent. For critics who still conflate Södergran with her poetic "I," the instances where the narrator is undoubtedly distinct from Södergran's sex is unsettling. Yet despite whatever attempts the female author may make to write with the authorial voice, her writing may still be "constrained to adopt the authorizing conventions of narrative voice in order, paradoxically, to mount an authoritative critique of the authority that the text therefore also perpetuates" (Lanser, *Fictions* 7). If this is so, then there is a double standard that allows Nietzsche to write as a woman, but deems Södergran to be the author of self-phallogocentrism. The paradox established for women writers is that when they attempt to write with the male voice in the effort to challenge or disqualify patriarchal authority, their male narrators perhaps unwittingly "endorse the [male] authority they seem to be questioning. That is, as they strive to create fictions of authority, these narrators expose fictions of authority as the Western novel has constructed it—and in exposing the fictions, they may end up re-establishing the authority (Lanser, *Fictions* 8). Thus, Nietzsche, being a man, is able to write as Woman and thereby satirize the patriarchal hegemonies of culture, whereas women writers who perform as men for the same cause are charged with androcentricism.

One reason this charge may occur is the way some feminist thinkers have conceptualized the feminine other. In *This Sex Which is Not One*, Luce Irigaray argues that there is only one sex: the masculine. She begins by claiming that the "'feminine' is never to be identified except by and for the masculine, the reciprocal proposition not being 'true'" (85). According to Irigaray, the female sex is not a sex but the product of necessary abjection by the masculine. In this instance, then, the male sex would then "not only produce the domain of intelligible bodies, but produce as well a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable [bodies]" (Butler, *Bodies* xi). Hence, the female "is not the opposite of the [male], for oppositions are, after all, part of intelligibility; the [female] is the excluded and illegible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit to intelligibility, its constitutive outside" (*Bodies* xi). In Irigaray's argument, however, the binary opposition of the sexes is paramount and sexual difference is subsequently primary to subjectivity:

Thus man and woman, woman and man are always meeting as though for the first time because they cannot be substituted one for the other. I will never be in a man's place, never will a man be in mine. Whatever identifications are possible, one will never exactly occupy the place of the other--they are irreducible one to the other...Who or what the other is, I never know. But the other who is forever unknowable is the one who differs from me

sexually. This feeling of surprise, astonishment, and wonder in the face of the unknowable ought to be returned to its locus: that of sexual difference. (*Ethics* 13)

Indeed, Irigaray produces a striking description of sexual difference, but more than that, her illustrations of male and female bodies essentialize women and men under an unshakable two-sex model within a heterosexual matrix; there is no room for other bodies, bodies that have other possibilities and linguistic expressions. It may be difficult and perhaps incorrect to deny her claim that one cannot know the place of one's other, yet to say that there is a "place" to be known suggests that all females are universally alike, that they are not distinct but part of a herd. This is not the case, of course. "Individual women do not necessarily have a single speech style; that is, they do not use one form of speech in all situations" (Mills 47).<sup>33</sup> How, then, can the language that women speak transcend the historical boundaries of Man's Language?

In *Interpretation of the Flesh: Freud and Femininity*, Teresa Brennan convincingly claims that the maternal body is necessary for the development of language (and therefore culture), which in turn creates intersubjective social relationships that have traditionally been imagined as originating from man (though not intersubjectively).<sup>34</sup> Brennan first points to Freud's notion that the ego is formed through its relationship with others, and then she proceeds to argue that the ego is not self-generating or self-contained (Oliver, *Womanizing* 181). "In utero, there is no or less delay between the sense of a need and its fulfillment. It is only after birth that the sense of time is born of the sense of delay [...] It supposes some fleshy memory of a state in which the delay between need and fulfillment did not exist or was less, and where subject and other were not differentiated" (Brennan 33). The fleshy memory is obscured by this sense of space and time while the intersubjective relationship continues ex utero, yet not as prominently. As a result, the passive infant takes on the mother's activities as its own. Eventually, this inward taking of the mother's action is actively released into masculinity while the feminine is left to identify with passivity (Oliver, *Womanizing* 183). The fleshy memory of the "in utero communication code" thus creates the path to language, which constitutes one of the earliest "model[s] for a social relationship" (185). Brennan ultimately shows that the difference between masculinity and femininity is not restricted to sexed bodies; instead this difference is simply the *direction* of energy. For Brennan, the female ego receives hostility from the masculine ego, which forgets that he ever provided this. Thus, in order to "overcome femininity" the female ego must reconnect "words to affects in a way that preserves her identity while it facilitates acting on reality" (Brennan 177). Kelly Oliver additionally points out that the female ego has "an inward turned image of herself and, more than this, she is constantly confronted with this image of herself in patriarchal culture. Insofar as she takes on the desire of the other she cannot overcome femininity on her own" (*Womanizing* 184). Oliver's argument seeks to "provide an alternate account of the pattern, logic, and structure of intersubjective relations" without

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<sup>33</sup> Dale Spender claims, "that women's language organizes the world differently than the dominant male one, because it does away with oppositional categories such as 'masculine' and 'feminine.' This new, non-dualistic language, according to Spender, will help to usher in a new, non-dualistic way for us to view the world and each other. Spender therefore suggests that we dismantle our traditional, 'man-made' language and articulate that of women instead. (Xvii of *Language and Liberation*)

<sup>34</sup> Kelly Oliver labels Brennan's theory an "intersubjective theory of drives," explaining that her theory "provides a model for reconceiving the fundamental relationship between self and other in such a way that we can at least imagine the transformation of the asymmetrical relation between masculine and feminine egos into a reciprocal exchange between two human beings who are both active and passive" (*Womanizing* 184-85).

suggesting “we need to become mothers in order to achieve this intersubjectivity. It will suffice that we all were born from the body of a mother” (187). Oliver shows that despite contemporary philosophical and political aversion to equating females with a “nature” of ethics, the female body does, in fact, engender social relationships.

Brennan’s argument posits a situation where male and female bodies may maintain identification with their respective gender while separating said bodies from their once exclusive relationship to masculinity and femininity. Without relying on a dissection of language, Brennan’s psychoanalytic explanation of the gendered energy of bodies paves a way to understand the uneven distribution of power within the two-sex model as it simultaneously affirms female authority within this phenomenon. Brennan therefore advances the discussion of masculine and feminine language in a way that does not essentialize the gendered subject.

“Du är icke man och kvinna, du är den kraft” (Södergran, *Dikter och aforismer* 148)

### **Conclusion**

If the dichotomy of gendered language can be destabilized and reassessed according the organization of masculine and feminine energy, separated from exclusive bodies, this does not mean “that postmodern feminist narratology can dismiss questions about the power that gendered norms and stereotypes continue to exert in various stories and with differing consequences. (Page 177). Therefore, a feminist narratology cannot disavow the cultural context it originally needed to justify its own purpose and function as a competent theoretical tool. The organization of power within gender cannot, then, be reassessed if the uneven distribution of power is not acknowledged. I have thus attempted to show that Södergran and Nietzsche are both capable of writing as the opposite sex, but that in order for them to successfully write with androgynous discourse, the status of language as Man’s language needs to be revised as well as the supposedly innate dichotomies of masculine and feminine qualities. What is weak is not feminine, and what is aggressive is not masculine.

In “Discourse Competence or How to Theorize Strong Women Speakers,” Sara Mills offers a theory of “discourse competence” which is “speech that is both assertive (concerned with speaker needs) and cooperative (concerned with group needs). In this way, it is possible to theorize strong women speakers without reference to a system of masculine/feminine opposition” (Mills 42). Discourse competence, furthermore, “can apply to any speaker, providing women with a way to speak strongly without speaking ‘like men’” (Hendricks and Oliver xx). Mill’s theory of discourse competence is effective because it “requires that speakers pay particular attention to the context of their language by exhibiting a concern for their audience and the response that is likely to ensure” (xx). If the reader is aware of a writer’s discourse competence, this may mean that the speaker of Södergran’s “Framtidens Tåg” is no longer a woman writing “*like* man,” or perhaps more importantly, not a sure example of Södergran writing “*as* man.”

Riven ner alla äreportar -  
äreportarna äro för låga.  
Plats för våra fantastiska tåg!  
Tung är framtiden - byggen bryggorna  
åt den gränslösa.  
Jättar, bären stenar från världens ändar! Demoner, hällen olja under kittlarna!



Vidunder, mät ut måtten med din stjärn! Resen er i himlarna, heroiska gestalter,  
ödesdigra händer - begynnen edert verk.  
Bryten ett stycke ur himmelen. Glöd gat.  
Vi skola rivas och slåss. Vi skola kämpa om framtidens manna.  
Resen er, härolder,  
underligt synliga redan ur fjärran, dagen behöver ert hanegäll. (*Dikter och aforismer* 81)

In light of Mill's and Brennan's reorganization of power, Södergran's formally "masculine" discourse is no longer masculine, but discursively competent. In addition to Mill's theory of discourse competence, I suggest that we need to move beyond the dichotomy of not only man/woman, but also the positive/negative categorizations of masculine/feminine qualities that only propagate uneven distribution of power. If Södergran were to write without assertive language, for example, and without exulting her female authority, there should be a place for this discourse that does not find itself placed in the negative sphere of the lesser, the inherently "feminine." Therefore, when Nietzsche's narrator Ariadne laments: "Wer wärmt mich, wer liebt mich noch?/Gebt heisse Hände!/gebt Herzens-Kohlenbecken!" (*Peacock* 285) the reader must recall that she is speaking, she is producing, she is feeling.

I have attempted to show that while there are similarities and dissimilarities between men's and women's writing, the gendered qualities of their narrative voices are not indicative of the writer's or even the narrator's gender. As Lanser notes, "in narrative there is no single voice--voice impinges upon voice, yielding a structure in which discourses of and for the other constitute the discourses of self" (Lanser, "Toward" 681). I argue that Nietzsche and Södergran were conscious of the struggles of the cultural body, and they used narrative to overcome it: When Nietzsche's male narrator confronts the "female" Sphinx, he asks, "wohlan, Sphinx,/Ich bin ein Fragender, gleich dir;/Dieser Abgrund ist uns gemeinsam/es wäre möglich, daß wir mit *einem* Munde redeten!" (*Peacock* 330). Södergran, for her part, narrates in the poem "Makt": "Jag följer ingen lag. Jag är lag i mig själv./Jag är människan som tager."

(*Dikter och aforismer* 136)

## Conclusion

Edith Södergran has been defined as a Finland-Swedish modernist poet, a feminist writer, a *Nietzschegale* writer, an avant-garde writer, and, implicitly and explicitly, an autobiographical writer. Truly, Södergran's poetry produces a kaleidoscope of themes, images, and narrative situations that convey intimate as well as universal expressions of the self. The diversity of her writing thus allows her voice to reach audiences from different cultures and generations; however, as a controversial female poet, Södergran's writing has been historically defined by the function of her "I," her speaking, writing *Jag*. It is this performing agent that has perhaps most troubled the trajectory of Södergran scholarship. Is Södergran's "I" truly *Södergran's* "I"? Is her "I" a consciously composing, metapoetic "I"? Or is her "I" a collective, universal "I", an "I" that speaks as and for Woman? This study has attempted to re-figure Södergran's career as one that defies all of these categorizations.

This dissertation contends that Edith Södergran's writing presents readers, in any generation, with a vivid sense of the self that is individual yet multiple—multiple in its lyrical and aesthetic expression, in its physical appearance and in its social, cultural, and existential identity. Södergran's concern with the multiplicity of aesthetic *and* socio-cultural identity is what makes her writing all the more relevant today. Therefore, part of the aim of this study has been to introduce, or reintroduce, Södergran's work in a way that de-emphasizes her compelling biography so that she may be taken seriously as an intellectually-inclined artist who was well versed in philosophy, as the citation below from her letters illustrates:

Mitt andra stora intresse är dödandet av tyngdens ande, det dionysiska, den eviga återkomsten, ondt och godt, detta som hör oskiljaktigt ihop. Undrar om tanken ensam är det gyllene, det som för över till övermänniskan, om kraften blott blir tung och ful utan den tankens mognad Nietzsche ensam ägde, om ondt och godt är den punkten där tyngdens ande övervinnes, om den eviga återkomsten är en kosmisk hemlighet? (*Brev* 159)

Because Södergran's esteem for Nietzsche has usually been dismissed and romanticized (her above comment continues: "Har älskat Nietzsche som Nietzsche ensam kan bliva älskad" [159]), my study has intentionally avoided Södergran's explicit references to Nietzsche and instead explored the way Södergran's writing was not only inspired by Nietzsche, but how her writing critically engaged his philosophy, allowing her to use it on her own terms.

In an argument that runs parallel to my analysis of Södergran's illustrations of the multiple self, I also posit that Nietzsche's construction of the *Übermensch* ideal shows us how societal norms pressure the *male* body into adopting and sustaining a heterosexual persona that in turn necessitates his feminine other. But in doing so, Nietzsche illustrates how the body is able to do the opposite: "[It] does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies" (Butler, *Gender* 9). Nietzsche's "bodies" consequently will their own gender; which is especially telling when it comes to the very "feminine" and pregnant males in his writing (Zarathustra and the *Übermensch*). Nietzsche, I suggest, constructs their identities via satire of the cultural body, and he does so, moreover, through a "masculine" text trying to pass itself and its speakers off as feminine. Nietzsche, in short, writes in drag.

Södergran's "bodies," on the other hand, have been traditionally trapped within the same young, terminally ill, feminine body: "Denn ein moralisches Korsett/Drückt mir die Brust zusammen" (*Dikter och aforismer* 292). To be sure, this study does not attempt to de-feminize Södergran's writing; on the contrary, its aim is to show the diversity of bodies, characters, and voices that her poetry constructs. Like Nietzsche, Södergran created personas that transcend the biographical body, which has historically imposed mental, physical, and socio-political limitations on the self. Speaking as Woman, Man, and Androgyne, Södergran's narrators revise the function of gender in narrative.

Södergran's *Jag*, however, potentially worked against its own rich multiplicity. As a first-person agent, Södergran's *Jag* expressed itself via personal voice, which, if read as female, "risks the reader's resistance if the act of telling, the story she tells, or the self she constructs through telling it transgresses the limits of the acceptably feminine" (Lanser, *Fictions* 19). To be sure, the presence of a feminine voice ought not to carry less weight than a masculine voice, but some female writers nevertheless develop a female subjectivity that seems to avoid expressions of self-essentialism. For example, Charlotte Brontë did not consider her writing self as female: "To you I am neither man nor woman. I come before you as an author only" (qtd. in Schabert: 322). Additionally, George Eliot has been regarded by many to write as an "honorary male"; however, Eliot herself writes: "Let the whole field of reality be laid open to woman as well as to man, and then that which is peculiar in her mental modification, instead of being, as it is now, a source of discord and repulsion between the sexes, will be found a necessary complement to the truth and beauty of life" (34). Södergran's writing, I have attempted to show, expresses femininity but in a self-aware and non-essentializing manner. She takes on masculinity for herself, but she also turns it on its head, shaking the foundations of its patriarchal origins.

Edith Södergran's poetry reaches beyond the Finnish borders of her summer home in Raivola. Whether on personal or intellectual terms, her writing speaks to the body of every reader. Bodies that are tired of trying to be other bodies. Bodies that refuse to abuse and be abused by other bodies.

Jag vet, jag vet att jag skall segra.  
Vad man än må nämna mig, vem som än må vänta mig,  
jag är framtidens stjärna.  
Jag har vaknat på en urgammal tron,  
underbara händer breda sidenslöjor under mig.  
Mysteriet går i mina ådror.  
Mysterium, jag erkänner dig, jag, antimystikern,  
spökfienden.  
Mysterier hava inga klara gränser, mysterier hava intet  
uttalat namn,  
mysteriet stiger i den starkes kropp när han rusblind går  
till handling.

("Den starkes kropp" *Dikter och aforismer* 151)

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