

For the Love of Ariadne: Nietzsche's Dionysian Relationship with the Woman Question

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## ABSTRACT

For the Love of Ariadne: Nietzsche's Dionysian Relationship with the Woman Question.

Willow Verkerk

Nietzsche's illustration of the female as more perfect perfection and as having 'an instinct for a *secondary* role' reveals his multifarious scope. Through this complex vision, style and his recommendations, I examine the woman question in Nietzsche.

I explore the spectrum of Nietzsche's female: as fetish, slave, artist, creator and enigma. A major error in interpretation is to conflate women with 'woman' and the feminine. The first reference concerns living women in general, the other two pertain to the symbolic. For Nietzsche, woman exceeds duality—his work illuminates her numerous masks and the morally driven chimeras that both sexes attach to her. Thus, I confirm my contention away from Irigaray that Nietzsche cannot be situated within the dialectic. Although he admits his own tendency, as well as that of man to impose 'woman' onto women, he breaks from this habit, challenging women to search for their truth beyond phallogocentric definition.

I begin with an explication of the styles and symbols necessary for studying the woman question in Nietzsche. The second chapter is a comprehensive examination of Nietzsche's so-called misogyny through a biographical account of his relationships with women and how these, in turn, affected his philosophical work. The slave morality of woman is the topic of the third chapter. Chapter four suggests a prescription for healing woman's slave morality through Nietzsche's tools. I explore the cathartic value of Nietzsche's archetypal instruments for women.

For Lydia, Irina and Ciel

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AC	<i>The Anti-Christ</i>
BGE	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
BT	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
D	<i>Daybreak</i>
DD	<i>Dithyrambs of Dionysus</i>
EH	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
GM	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
GS	<i>The Gay Science</i>
HH	<i>Human, All Too Human</i>
TI	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i>
TSZ	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>

All references to Nietzsche's writings refer to aphorism number. Additionally, for EH title of chapter; GM essay, section; HAH volume, section; for TI chapter title; for TSZ book, part, section.

## CHAPTER 1

### READING NIETZSCHE: MASTER OF METAPHOR AND PROVOCATION

An encounter with Nietzsche involves *feeling*, not only thinking his philosophy. He inspires you to react, step back and then fall between the spaces of his words. He speaks to ‘all and none’ and to those who have the ears to listen.<sup>1</sup> Harboursing silence and mystery, Nietzsche engages in rich metaphor, and then throws out words, blunt and strong with incandescent laughter. An exercise in the convergence of words and emotion, he guides you inside, only to leave you in solitude with an open canvas. “For *the way*—that does not exist.”<sup>2</sup>

Through the tough love of enmity, Nietzsche is a friend to his *free spirits*; he writes to inspire future philosophers. Harsh and biting, but not without consideration, he bleeds emotion into his words to bring forth action in us, an angst that leads those willing into solitude and deconstruction. Nietzsche invites us into an overcoming of our ancestral inheritance through careful analysis of life-denying practices, old idols and antiquated value schemas.

Nietzsche writes of a world that is ripe for change and utilizes the mask to educate his readers about their limitations and potentials. Masks figure archetypes reflected within, act as appearances that protect our inner selves or prolong habitual enactments of unconscious herd behaviour. Dionysus, Ariadne and ‘woman’ exemplify such masks.

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<sup>1</sup> TSZ, see title.

<sup>2</sup> TSZ 3.11.2.

Nietzsche adopts myth, narrative, poem and aphorism to dance his way through philosophy. More than a philosopher, he is a philosopher/artist, a thinker whose very style is embedded with his teachings. Tragic and playful, he creates out of suffering and encourages free spirits to do the same. Nietzsche's work is a reflection of his life, an affirmation of all that is hard with a drive towards self-acceptance. He wants to live with joy for, "life is a well of joy; but for those of whom an upset stomach speaks, which is the father of all melancholy, all wells are poisoned."<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche writes to pull us out of our *ressentiment*.<sup>4</sup> His approach is a labyrinth with a golden thread, an Ariadne speaking to the silent warrior in each of us.

Reading Nietzsche is a temporal experience; he speaks directly to the reader. His dramatic tone invites, conveying the will to survive the tragedies of nihilism, decadence, culture wars and religion. Through a mirror reflecting your beauty and ugliness, he is easily personalized. His genealogical studies draw upon diverse sources; he is borrowed and appropriated for varying philosophical visions. This is part of Nietzsche's gift, to give a truth that will be taken and re-named by a student who plucks at his wreath.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, Nietzsche does not seek mere followers. Only those who take his truths and use them for their own existential reflection are considered worthy. He writes for a select audience: one that is capable of reading Nietzsche through *their* lenses. This is not to pervert him into Arian manifestos or totalitarian wills to power. Rather, one reads Nietzsche slowly in solitude, by listening to his tone, observing his style, learning about

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<sup>3</sup> TSZ 3.12.16.

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche uses the French term *ressentiment* to describe the psychological predicament of the slavish or reactive person who allows their negative emotions, such as jealousy to fester within. Of the passive-aggressive type, persons of *ressentiment* react to an external hostile world by vilifying it in the spirit of revenge. GM 1.10.

<sup>5</sup> TSZ 1.22.3.



his life and considering his works as a whole. One must, as Nietzsche advises, go into *rumination*.<sup>6</sup> David Allison explains what it is like to read Nietzsche's *Gay Science*,

...the lack of a guiding narrative structure and argument, and so forth—in fact serves to assist the reader in coming to his or her own conclusions as to the importance and relevance of the issues originally raised by the author. It is much as when, in a series of conversations with one's friends and chance acquaintances, one invariably encounters a problem from a variety of perspectives—some consistent, some inconsistent, some paradoxical and refractory—and in the end arrives at one's own *studied* solution (emphasis mine).<sup>7</sup>

Thus, when we become apprentices of Nietzsche's thinking we do more than a dry explication of his ideas. We learn how to think and feel for ourselves.

Nietzsche was well aware that a great deal of his work would be taken for wild ramblings by the majority. However, this was not of great concern to him. Nietzsche viewed human kind in different types with varying potentials. "Our highest insights must—and should—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them." Nietzsche writes esoterically for those who are able to have a distance from his writing, those who, "look down from above." He invites us to contemplate his techniques of concealment that signify in their very concealment that something else is lingering behind.<sup>8</sup>

In the Preface to *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche refers to the challenges of reading his books. Although he admits the difficulty in penetrating his work, he advises utilization of exegesis in coming to contemplate his aphoristic style.<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche employs aphorism and poem because they require consideration and, as forms of writing, reflect

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<sup>6</sup> GM Preface, 8.

<sup>7</sup> David Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), xi.

<sup>8</sup> BGE 30.

<sup>9</sup> GM Preface, 8.

the style of inquiry that he believes is important for his students. As Deleuze points out, in their very constitutions, the aphorism represents the art of interpretation and the poem the art of evaluation. In such forms, paradox, word play, metaphor and disguise invite the reader into thought. Thus, when one reads aphorism and poetry, they have no choice but to attempt an interpretation and evaluation of the words that are being said.<sup>10</sup>

Nietzsche addresses the possibility of misinterpretation and distortion of his work in “On Passing By” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Here, with the assistance of Zarathustra’s ape, Nietzsche warns his readers against following a teaching without allowing oneself sufficient time or solitude for reflection. While the ape can spout endlessly on Zarathustra’s teachings, he does so with exaggeration and error. The ape, overwhelmed by his own neuroticism, perverts the philosophies of Zarathustra. So in need of attention he fulminates endlessly, seeking reputation through his false presentation of Zarathustra’s ideas. Thus, Nietzsche cautions his students, even true and effective teachings may be distorted by a fool.<sup>11</sup>

Nietzsche’s ideal student is a free, unfettered spirit, an individual who follows their own dedicated path of inquiry over collective faith and obligation. For Nietzsche, a free spirit is a misfit, a rebel, an outsider from any background who is forced to break from their origin. “He is called a free spirit who thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him.” They question value, are incredibly curious and live *experimentally*, as Nietzsche states, if they can muster enough courage to do so. Instead of allowing morality to control their lives, they learn how to utilize it as an

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<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 31.

<sup>11</sup> TSZ 3.7.

instrument towards their higher goal. Free spirits follow their own path and as such are often charged with acting without morals or seeking to shock, sometimes with being perverse or mentally instable. As Nietzsche writes, these accusations are, however, done out of malice and envy by fettered spirits who are bound by rigid convictions and faithful to herd dogma.<sup>12</sup>

For Nietzsche fettered spirits are held down by religion, morality, culture and life in general. They are burdened by belief systems that are not theirs. Often a free spirit was formerly fettered and, "...seemed to be chained forever to its pillar and corner." It takes a "will to free will" to look beyond slave morality. This is undertaken by one who recognizes their chains and pushes far enough to seek a release from them. The realization of one's chains can be overwhelming. "It is at the same time a sickness that can destroy the man who has it."<sup>13</sup> One needs a hunger for self-mastery and patience for injustice. Ultimately a free spirit remains a wanderer in perpetual movement, strong in self love without attaching too firmly to any one external belief system.

For the benefit of free spirits, but also to rouse common spirits out of nihilistic enslavement, Nietzsche writes as a spiritual warrior inducing the reader into combat. Sometimes he appears to speak literally, but mostly his messages are cloaked in rhetorical play. Even to grasp a fragment of what Nietzsche conveys, it is imperative to begin with an understanding of his styles.

Nietzsche utilizes three styles: the metaphorical, the provocative and the performative. While he is hardly straight-forward in his writing, at times he may seem fairly literal: "Are you a slave? Then you cannot *be* a friend. Are you a tyrant? Then

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<sup>12</sup> HAH 1.5.225-226.

<sup>13</sup> HAH 1 Preface, 3.

you cannot *have* friends.”<sup>14</sup> Although the role of friendship, the ‘slave’ and ‘tyrant’ are more complex in Nietzsche’s work than this statement initially suggests, a preliminary message here is easily graspable. For example, one may suppose that Nietzsche is correlating our failures in friendship to our culturally stagnant power roles. He is connoting that as long as we seek dominance or relegate ourselves to service we cannot know the experience of friendship. Although this interpretation is not wrong *per se* it is exceedingly shallow and does not give adequate consideration to the greater metaphorical style he appeals to.

In general, reading Nietzsche requires an attention to his work as a whole and individual reflection. Even then, interpretation of an aphorism or section of Nietzsche’s work may reveal new insights each time it is read. When we consider the above questions Nietzsche proposes in relation to his greater texts, it is obvious that he is making specific reference to the master/slave types that he believes pervade the culture of modernity.

Nietzsche’s term ‘slave’ explains a mode of collective morality, or herd consciousness that embodies the Christian disgust for life. Poisoned by their own doctrines, slaves malign nature, the body and emotions. They revere weakness and futility. Haunted by a sense of powerlessness, they live in an atmosphere of oppression, jealousy and revenge, hateful of those who operate with self acceptance and pursue their goals.

The slave’s desire for revenge is aimed at the privileged ‘master’ who is positively self-involved, seeking out their own success. While the master type may have their own limitations such as entitlement, they do not affirm servile behaviour. The

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<sup>14</sup> TSZ 1.14.

‘tyrant,’ on the other hand, enjoys servile behaviour as a means to further his greed. He is incapable of friendship like the slave, because he views human beings as means. While the tyrant has been presented with a position of power like the master, he has become decadently selfish out of some slavish underlying fear. For Nietzsche, neither the tyrant nor the slave can know the meaning of friendship because they are troubled and pursued by fear, guilt, *ressentiment*, jealousy and a desire for revenge.

This section, “On the Friend” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* continues with an example of Nietzsche’s provocative style: that of actuating the reader into spiritual combat. Here, Nietzsche attempts to help us destroy our habituated selves. He comments upon the stagnancy of gender roles and the cultural attitudes that conserve them. Nietzsche takes on a voice of cruelty, particularly towards women, in order to stir them out of their slavish slumber.

All-too-long have a slave and a tyrant been concealed in woman. Therefore woman is not capable of friendship: she knows only love. Woman’s love involves injustice and blindness against everything she does not love. And even in the knowing love of a woman there are still assault and lightning and night along light. Woman is not yet capable of friendship: women are still cats and birds. Or at best, cows.<sup>15</sup>

Nietzsche observes that as a herd, women live out a slave morality that has been moulded upon them by a male oriented Christian/Platonic heritage and further entrenched by their own re-iterations of its iconography. Nietzsche explains that women are unable to release themselves from the pains of slavery because they do not think for themselves. They are reactive followers. In addition, they focus their love on the other, neglecting the self. Women attend to the Christian model of love as their fundamental faith in every day life, spending time serving men and children rather than seeking their own path.<sup>16</sup> As

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> TSZ 3.11.2.

Nietzsche relates, many women have forgotten their worth apart from being servants. Thus, he employs a voice of provocation to push women into self reflection. In addition, he investigates the patriarchal customs that have repressed women and made them into a formulaic typology.

As Zarathustra states, “Alas, behold your poverty, you men, and the meanness of your souls!”<sup>17</sup> Throughout his books, Nietzsche explains that man’s soul has become poor as a result of life-denying practices, a rejection of the passions and worship of the after life. The promotion of reason and capitalistic materialism in conjunction with an aim to control and deny the passions has created *ressentiment* within man. The dislocation of masculine and feminine roles has robbed men of their femininity. As such, they suffer from creative and emotional prohibitions. The consignment of emotions and sexuality to the realm of the feminine has left men with a deep sense of emptiness. Although women are demoralized as householders and mothers, they are allowed an emotional life and the profound experiences of pregnancy and birth that many men envy. According to Nietzsche, the inaccessibility of the feminine has sparked jealousy and a desire for revenge in man. ‘The meanness’ of man’s soul has expressed itself in a spiteful manner. He has constructed and maintained female roles that aim to keep her submissive.<sup>18</sup>

Besides commenting on gender roles and the difficult relationships that exist between men and women, Nietzsche is writing to incite a reaction. He wants to make us uncomfortable with our shackles. He advises us to seriously re-consider the normative character personas we have allowed ourselves to become. By poking at our weaknesses,

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<sup>17</sup> TSZ 1.14.

<sup>18</sup> GS 2.59-60.

he throws in a fishing rod, baiting us with psychological confrontations, inviting us to fight back and will ourselves into transformation.

Lastly, Nietzsche writes as a performance. He employs characters, narrative, and myth to demonstrate his teachings; even his tone exemplifies the practices that he sets forth. He recommends a way of life for free spirits, while he concurrently portrays these spiritual practices in his style. During his discussions on friendship, Nietzsche speaks through Zarathustra displaying the characteristic of a friend that he recommends. He offers both the tough love of enmity and the gift giving virtue. Zarathustra is generous in suggestion and advice: “Are you pure air and solitude and bread and medicine for your friend? Some cannot loosen their own chains and can nevertheless redeem their friends.”<sup>19</sup> Acting as a friend, Nietzsche reflects the therapeutic mood that he believes is vital for a healthy friendship. He comments upon the lack of friendship between the sexes to enact an emotional response. Nietzsche speaks with a sense of loving cruelty in order to bring growth to the underdeveloped predicament of friendship and gender roles.

Nietzsche’s provocative style, where he writes to rouse emotion, is also a call into the tragic. For Nietzsche, tragedy is a corridor into joy. By recalling our suffering, Nietzsche hopes we will be inspired to crave and will change. Such change, however, must be built upon wilful activation of the self. For Nietzsche, self-mastery is born out of acceptance and affirmation of the multiple aspects of our suffering. When we step into the deepest abysses of fear, pity and jealousy we call upon our courage and exclaim, “Was that life? Well then! Once More!”<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche baits us with his protagonist, Zarathustra, the hero who laughs and dances himself through tragedy.

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<sup>19</sup> TSZ 1.22.

<sup>20</sup> TSZ 3.2.1.

“Not by wrath does one kill, but by laughter. Come, let us kill the spirit of gravity! I have learned to walk: ever since, I let myself run. I have learned to fly: ever since, I do not want to be pushed before moving along. Now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a god dances through me.”<sup>21</sup>

In Nietzsche, the essence of the tragic is a joyous call from suffering, an affirmation of the negative, a discovery of beauty with the ill. This joy is discovered within the polyvalent forces that make up the tragic and involves an affirmation of this diversity *as such*. Thus, tragedy is a poisoned well only for those whose spirits are moralizing. For others it is a porthole into self discovery, knowledge and inspiration. For Nietzsche, the most spiritual human beings have close relationships with tragedy. “The most spiritual human beings, if we assume that they are the most courageous, also experience by far the most painful tragedies: but just for that reason they honour life because it pits its greatest opposition against them.”<sup>22</sup>

Nietzsche’s vision of the tragic embraces suffering as it is, rather than seeking justification or redemption in the after-life or in Christ. It says, “No!” to a need for another world outside of this one. Nietzsche’s way of conceptualizing the tragic is one of the spiritual methods he suggests for healing the modern malaise of nihilism. By finding joy in the tragic, one has the opportunity to remove oneself from the cycles of revenge that lie at the very foundations of our world. One accepts existence *as it is* and does not seek a higher meaning for life in religion or morality. This is what Nietzsche calls, *amor fati*, or a love of one’s fate. In the celebration of life one affirms its tragic multiplicity, moving beyond ‘good and evil’.<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche’s active symbol of the tragic is Dionysus. Nietzsche adopts the Greek God of fertility, intoxication and the theatre to represent tragic joy and artistic creation in

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<sup>21</sup> TSZ 1.7.

<sup>22</sup> TI “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 17.

<sup>23</sup> BT Preface “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” 5.



opposition to Christian morality. In “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche explains the role of Dionysus in his philosophy as one who affirms life against the Christian “will to decline,” and the moralization of life.

For, confronted with morality (especially Christian, or unconditional, morality), life *must* continually and inevitably be in the wrong, because life *is* something essentially amoral—and eventually, crushed by the weight of contempt and the eternal No, life *must* then be felt to be unworthy of desire and altogether worthless. Morality itself—how now? Might not morality be “a will to negate life,” a secret instinct of annihilation, a principle of decay, diminution, and slander—the beginning of the end? Hence, the danger of dangers?”<sup>24</sup>

With Dionysus we witness Nietzsche’s metaphorical style in all its glory: he is a warrior imbued with qualities that counter Christian values, a character of the Greek culture that he so admired, to fight the, ‘danger of dangers.’ As a God that is surrounded by mortals, maenads (mad, wild intoxicated women) as well as satyrs, sileni and centaurs (part man, part horse or donkey creatures) Dionysus is of the earth and relishes in earthly pleasures. Dionysian cults in Greek antiquity worshiped him as a god of fertility of the land and as a liberator who provided an opening through madness, wine and/or sexuality out of one’s daily life. Especially for women who lived sexually repressive lives, Dionysian cults provided an opportunity to experience their sexual fantasies in a spiritual environment without prohibition.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche juxtaposes the healthy view of sexuality that he associates with the Dionysian condition to the Christian view of sex. Nietzsche states that Dionysian sexuality provides an opportunity for transmutation out of not only Christian body denial, but also the hopelessness of the ‘last man’ who secularizes the Christian negation of life. By observing Greek antiquity, where eternal life was

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

conceived through procreation and the mysteries of sexuality, Nietzsche states that we may re-learn our connection with our bodies and renew our appreciation of life.

For it is only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, that the *basic fact* of the Hellenic instinct finds expression—its “will to life.” What was it that the Hellene guaranteed himself by means of these mysteries? *Eternal* life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change; *true* life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, of pregnancy, and of birth aroused the highest and most solemn feelings. In the doctrine of the mysteries, *pain* is pronounced holy: the pangs of the woman giving birth hallow all pain; all becoming and growing—all that guarantees a future—involves pain...All this is meant by the word Dionysus: I know no higher symbolism than this *Greek* symbolism of the Dionysian festivals. Here the most profound instinct of life, that directed towards the future of life, the eternity of life, is experienced religiously—and the way to life, procreation, as the *holy* way. It was Christianity, with its *ressentiment* against life at the bottom of its heart, which first made something unclean of sexuality: it threw *filth* on the origin, on the presupposition of our life.<sup>25</sup>

As a God who was born twice, Dionysus is an appropriate tragic hero for Nietzsche. He personifies the force of overcoming and the dynamic will towards self-artisty. In one myth, Dionysus’ mother Semele is killed, but his father Zeus implants the unborn child into his leg. In the other, Dionysus is the son of Zeus and Persephone; jealous Hera sends the Titans to tear Dionysus to shreds. All that remains is Dionysus’ heart. Zeus takes Dionysus’ heart and recreates him in the womb of Semele, where he is born for the second time. As the son of a God and mortal in one case, and Zeus and the goddess of the underworld, Persephone in another, Dionysus has dominion over the earth and the underworld. As such, his powers and attributes are related to both. Thus, he readily becomes a symbol for Nietzsche for all that is tragic and a model for going under, into and through pain to transform the self.

By emphasizing the importance of going under into Dionysian chaos to re-create the self, Nietzsche is challenging the Christian tradition of linking ascent necessarily to growth and descent to regression. In doing so, he returns to his notion of the tragic as an

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<sup>25</sup> TI “What I Owe to the Ancients,” 4.

affirmation of multiplicity, away from the dialectic. Dionysus is primal, chaotic, sensual and passionate. He is a symbol of rebellious laughter against the Church's cure to life: castration.<sup>26</sup> By invoking Dionysus, Nietzsche takes a God of antiquity and reshapes him. He employs Dionysus to replace Christ, using the shadow of one to eclipse the other. Thus, Nietzsche practices his art of interpretation drawing upon the mask of Dionysus to create a new idol. "Interpretation reveals its complexity when we realize that a new force can only appear and appropriate an object by first of all putting on a mask of the forces which are already in possession of the object."<sup>27</sup>

As initially conveyed, the mask is a very important stylistic tool in Nietzsche. One could even say it is *the* tool. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states, "Every profound spirit needs a mask: even more, around every profound spirit a mask is growing continually, owing to the constantly false, namely *shallow*, interpretation of every word, every step, every sign of life he gives."<sup>28</sup> Here, Nietzsche depicts masking even while he describes it. He declares that individuals, in general, who hold something precious within them, utilize the mask to obscure it. Nietzsche explains that deep spirits have the need to hide their most creative, novel self behind the mask. Their modesty or refined sense of shame requires it. In order to keep their creative spirit untarnished, they must remain alone with it. Thus, they veil themselves.

In s.30 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche discloses that he masks himself. His symbols carry with them an aura of shallowness, an exoteric style as well as an esoteric style; both conceal while they beckon other precious layers of depth. Of course, by admitting to wearing a mask, Nietzsche is inviting us to explore his depth, the layers of

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<sup>26</sup> TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 1.

<sup>27</sup> Deleuze, 5.

<sup>28</sup> BGE 40.

enfoldment that lie beneath. His hiding is also a revealing. Yet, at the same time he reveals in order to be hidden. As Nietzsche writes he, "...needs speech for silence...*wants* and sees to it that a mask of him roams in his place..."<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche utilizes language, words in order to disguise himself. The mask portrays a sense of presence/absence that satiates, entices us to search deeper. However, it is not what is behind the mask that is of central concern for Nietzsche *per se*, but rather the drive to curiosity, the will to explore deeper, to seek within multiple layers of enfoldment and not be satisfied with surface appearances.

Nietzsche reflects the enigma of life in the mask. Each revelation leads into a further obscurity and each obscurity into another search for meaning. Nietzsche calls us into the silence within the obscurity when he employs the mask. He allows us to consider our own silence as a place of departure into further questioning, as well as a point from which to develop and question our masks. Nietzsche himself wonders upon what he considers to be the most masked things—life, truth and wisdom—all of which he designates as female.

Throughout Nietzsche's texts, the master of the mask is the mystical woman, whether she is truth, as Baubo, the unfathomable *vita femina* (life as woman), Zarathustra's lioness, wild wisdom, or Ariadne, Nietzsche's incarnate multidimensional symbol of the female. For Nietzsche, the surface of women, 'woman' is a compilation of politically and religiously infused appearances that portray a sense of shallowness. The phallus and Christianity overlay the feminine with multiple masks that maintain the illusion of a lack of depth that many women subscribe to. While women are haunted by a feeling of emptiness at their mimicry of prefigured symbols, men struggle with the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

consignment of the feminine as exclusively female. Throughout his texts, Nietzsche encourages women and men to question their gender roles. He urges women towards an artistry that plays with 'woman,' and then advises for movement beyond her. Although Nietzsche's reverence for female creativity is often hidden in paradox and provocation, he is a great lover and seeker of all that is feminine.

## CHRONOLOGY OF NIETZSCHE'S LIFE

- 1844 Friedrich Nietzsche is born in Röcken on October 15 to Franziska Oehler and Karl Ludwig Nietzsche, the first of three children.
- 1846 Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth is born.
- 1848 His brother Joseph is born.
- 1849 On July 30 Nietzsche's father dies from a 'softening of the brain'.
- 1850 His brother, Joseph dies and the family, consisting of Friedrich, Elizabeth, Franziska, as well as the paternal grandmother, Edmuthe and her two unmarried daughters, Auguste and Rosalie move to Naumburg.
- 1858 Nietzsche begins his studies at Pforta, an elite boarding school in Germany.
- 1864 He graduates from Pforta and enters the University of Bonn, studying theology and classical philology.
- 1865 Nietzsche transfers to Leipzig as a philology student, following his teacher Friedrich Ritschl. He begins reading Schopenhauer and founds the Philology Club at Leipzig.
- 1868 Completes his one year military service in the Naumburg artillery, during which he takes a serious fall off of a horse and injures his sternum. In November he meets Richard Wagner for the first time.
- 1869 Nietzsche is appointed professor of classical philology at University of Basel with the assistance of Ritschl. His doctorate is conferred without a dissertation at the age of twenty-four. He visits the Wagners for the first time.
- 1870 He volunteers as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian War and becomes ill with dysentery and diphtheria, returning home early. Nietzsche writes "Dionysian Worldview" and gives Cosima Wagner a copy.
- 1872 *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's first book is published and negative reviews follow.
- 1873 Nietzsche suffers from illness frequently. He publishes the first *Untimely Meditation*, "David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer."
- 1874 Publishes the second and third *Untimely Meditation*, "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life" and "Schopenhauer as Educator."

In July Nietzsche votes for the admission of female doctoral students into the program at Basel. Elisabeth, his sister, comes to assist him with the household in Basel. He is still plagued with headaches and other ailments. Nietzsche discusses marriage possibilities with his sister and friends.

- 1875 Elisabeth moves in with Nietzsche in Basel to help him with household duties and care for him during his sickness.
- 1876 He becomes friends with Paul Rée in February. In April, Nietzsche proposes to Mathilde Trampedach, but is turned down. Nietzsche publishes his fourth *Meditation*, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth" and becomes disenchanted with Wagner. He takes a leave of absence, spending time in Sorrento (from October until May, 1877) at Malwida von Meysenbug's home with Rée.
- 1878 *Human, All Too Human* is published. Nietzsche is disgusted with Wagner's *Parsifal* and Wagner is shocked by *Human, All Too Human*. In June, Nietzsche moves out of his shared apartment with Elisabeth, into an apartment alone, on the outside of the city.
- 1879 Nietzsche continues to be ill and resigns from the University of Basel, receiving a small pension. He publishes, "Assorted Opinions and Maxims," the first part of volume II of *Human All Too Human*. For the summer he travels to St. Moritz and begins his period of living alone in Italian and Swiss boarding houses.
- 1880 "The Wanderer and His Shadow," part II of volume II of *Human All Too Human* is published. From March to June he is in Venice with Peter Gast; for the winter in Genoa working on *Daybreak*.
- 1881 *Daybreak* is published. Nietzsche visits Sils-Maria for the first time. He returns to Genoa in the fall and begins working on *The Gay Science*.
- 1882 *The Gay Science* is published. Malwida von Meysenbug and Paul Rée invite Nietzsche to Rome to meet Lou Salomé. In April Nietzsche meets Rée, Meysenbug and Salomé in Rome and on his way back to Germany meets Salomé in Orta where they spend some time alone. Nietzsche, Rée and Salomé meet up in Lucerne and Nietzsche arranges the famous photo with Salomé holding the whip. Plans are made for an intellectual ménage a trios for the winter in Paris. Nietzsche meets Salomé in Tautenburg, first alone and then with Elisabeth. There is tremendous tension between Elisabeth and Salomé. Nietzsche, Salomé and Rée meet up in Leipzig in the fall to discuss their winter plans, but they are never discussed. Rée and Salomé avoid Nietzsche. Nietzsche is saddened and confused. He spends the winter in Rapallo.

- 1883 Nietzsche writes and publishes the First Part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He learns of Wagner's death in February. March and April are spent in Genoa, Rome for the month of May and the summer in Sils-Maria, where he writes the Second Part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche has problems getting along with his family and continues to be ill. He spends a nomadic winter in La Spezia, Genoa and Nice where he begins writing Part Three of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
- 1884 Part Two of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is published in January. He finishes writing Part Three and publishes it in April. Nietzsche criticizes his sister for her anti-Semitism. He spends April and May in Venice and his summer in Sils-Maria where he begins writing Part Four of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He returns to Nice for the winter.
- 1885 Nietzsche completes Part Four of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and publishes it for private circulation. In May Elisabeth marries Bernhard Förster, an anti-Semitic campaigner and Nietzsche does not attend the wedding; he is in Venice enduring his repetitive physical ailments. He resides in Sils-Maria for the summer and revisits Nice for the winter. Nietzsche has problems with his publisher, Schmeitzner and looks for someone new.
- 1886 Elisabeth and Förster move to Paraguay to found an Arian colony. Nietzsche writes and publishes *Beyond Good and Evil*. He suffers psychologically from his falling out with Salomé and his sister. He goes back to his old publisher, Fritzsche and composes prefaces for new releases of books he has previously published. He is in Sils-Maria for the summer and Nice for the winter.
- 1887 Nietzsche composes the fifth book of *The Gay Science* for the new edition and writes aphorisms for *The Will to Power*. He is in Sils-Maria for the summer and writes *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which is published in November. He lives in Nice for the winter, ill as usual.
- 1888 He continues to quietly work on *The Will to Power* and writes *The Case of Wagner*. He visits Turin in the spring, spends the summer in Sils-Maria. In August Nietzsche decides to break down *The Will to Power* material into two small books: *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*. He returns to Turin for the fall and winter; publishes *The Case of Wagner* at the end of September. The Wagner community is angry. Malwida von Meysenbug expresses her frustration with the book and Nietzsche ends their friendship. Nietzsche writes the "Dionysus Dithyrambs" and *Ecce Homo* and sends the later to be printed in late December.
- 1889 In early January Nietzsche embraces a horse to prevent it from being struck by its carriage driver. After receiving some strange letters, Burckhardt alerts Overbeck, who travels to Turin to check in on Nietzsche. Finding Nietzsche



in a state of mental breakdown, Overbeck brings Nietzsche to Basel where he is placed in a psychiatric clinic for one year and is then brought to his mother's home in Naumburg. His sister takes over caring for him when their mother dies, inheriting his literary estate as well. Elisabeth moves him to Weimar where he remains until his death on August 25, 1900.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXAMINING NIETZSCHE'S MISOGYNY

“*Misogynists*.—‘Woman is our enemy’—out of the man who says that to other men there speaks an immoderate drive which hates not only itself but its means of satisfaction as well.”<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche, the solitary male in a family of women, is often charged with being a great misogynist. Regularly categorized as a hater of women, feminism and female liberty in general, Nietzsche has become, for many, a strong example of the patriarchal philosopher of the past. He represents a creative genius who fails miserably in one crucial area of his thought. Most notably, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche seems to openly express his conviction that women are indeed the inferior sex who, “have an instinct for a *secondary* role.”<sup>2</sup> In this text he includes a series of aphorisms on ‘woman’ and women that sound at the very least phallogentric.<sup>3</sup> In footnote Walter Kaufmann calls them ‘embarrassing’ and even ‘wrong.’<sup>4</sup> In fact, Kaufmann writes off almost entirely what Nietzsche has to say about women, stating he is a great thinker who unfortunately faces his culturally time dependant weakness on this topic.

Perhaps Nietzsche is at times caught up in his own cultural and personal burden concerning women. Still, what he writes about women needs to be understood in relation

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<sup>1</sup> D 346.

<sup>2</sup> BGE 145.

<sup>3</sup> Phallogentricism describes the prioritization and privileging of the masculine over the feminine whereby perspective is centered on men or on a male viewpoint, especially one held to entail the domination of women by men.

<sup>4</sup> BGE p163n23, p167n31.

to his styles and his life experience. Many commentators on Nietzsche who charge him with being a misogynist fall short in their criticisms because they fail to follow his own instructions: to read his works with patience and to read all of them. They also conflate women with 'woman' and the feminine; the first being a reference to physical living women in general and the other two being symbolic.

While 'woman' represents a sexed and gendered form to which iconography accrues, the feminine enacts a multiplicity of meanings in Nietzsche's work. The feminine is at times an opposition to 'masculine' within the phallogocentric system of truth.<sup>5</sup> In this instance, the feminine is a sign to which value is attached; she is closely linked to and at times synonymous with 'woman.' Secondly, Nietzsche identifies the feminine with particular characteristics such as creativity, passion and pregnancy, qualities open to either sex. Thirdly, she is enacted as the seemingly ineffable: as life, wisdom and truth Nietzsche's feminine deceives, seduces and torments, but also completes Zarathustra. More rarely, he employs the feminine to signify that which lies behind or beneath 'woman,' the elusive *jouissance*, or feminine joy that is distinct to the female. A failure to pay attention to such nuances in reading Nietzsche causes many misunderstandings.

Still, the feminine and 'woman' remain particularly challenging topics in Nietzsche. It can be difficult to differentiate between Nietzsche's symbolic use of the feminine and the comments that he makes about real living women. Even when we follow Nietzsche's advice and ruminate in his work, Nietzsche seems plagued by a general lack of coherency when it comes to these topics.

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<sup>5</sup> The term 'phallogocentric' coined by Derrida designates the privileging of the masculine in systems of meaning and language in general. It points to the tendency of any discourse to situate its centre in the logos (in the power of reason and the word) and the phallus.

Some scholars, such as Kaufmann, have chosen to simply ignore the woman question in Nietzsche, concluding this to be the most effective solution. It may well be, if we decide to read him literally. However, if we read him in consideration of the rhetorical play that predominates all of his writing, the woman question acquires new possibilities of interpretation. For, when Nietzsche speaks to us about the female he engages us in yet another multi-layered process of enfoldment where his treatment of the woman question reflects not only his personal struggle philosophically in this area, but also provides his readers with a model of vulnerability. He hands us a mirror. Nietzsche challenges us to consider not only his, but our difficulties with 'woman' and the misogyny she faces.

*Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are the two texts most cited for instances of Nietzsche's misogyny. When discussing 'woman' and women, here Nietzsche applies a stronger dose of cruelty than he ever has before. At times it does appear grossly unwarranted. Still, we cannot ignore the fact that Nietzsche writes provocatively, metaphorically and performatively. He occupies a voice that is not as transparent as it may appear. These are ways of speaking that he does not discard when on the subject of the female. If anything, with these two texts there is maturation in style. Nietzsche's use of metaphor has grown more intricate; his voice further removed from the range of accessibility. In order to place his misogyny, one must explore Nietzsche's layers of style when he speaks in relation to 'woman', women and the feminine. Also, it is helpful to question who inspired these comments. In order to delve into the female influences on Nietzsche, in light of his philosophical comment on 'woman', I will turn to a biographical account of his life and focus specifically on his interactions with women.

After reading any biography of Nietzsche, it is difficult to ignore his real life relationships with women. He grew up in a female household with no father after the age of four, was very close to his sister and had many female friends throughout his life, yet he never married, nor was he recorded to have a reciprocal love relationship. Although Nietzsche made a few proposals, it is likely that they were done out of pressure from his family and friends, rather than his own desire. Lou Salomé may have been the only woman Nietzsche could have imagined as a partner. Nevertheless, Nietzsche was perpetually disappointed by his relationships with women and lived his life without a wife or lover. Being surrounded by women all of his life, yet not having an intimate partner, must have been difficult to say the least.

Within his family, Friedrich Nietzsche was accustomed to being both dominated and doted on by women. His paternal grandmother, Erdmuthe and her two single daughters, Auguste and Rosalie presided over the household. Nietzsche's mother, Franziska Oehler, a young bride of seventeen, was never fully accepted by the paternal family and lived in the house where she was rightfully wife and mother as more of a young sister or guest. After Nietzsche's father died, the entire family moved out of the pastor's residence at Röcken and to the former house of Erdmuthe in Naumburg. Here, Franziska relied upon the support of her husband's family, raising her children, but not imposing upon the authority of her in-laws. It was not until a few years after Erdmuthe died when Nietzsche was fourteen that Franziska moved into her own home with her children.

Franziska was an attractive woman of limited education who placed her faith in God. Married before her older sisters and leaving the house of her father as barely a

woman to live with her husband, Franziska was impressionable and vulnerable. When her husband died and her young son, Joseph joined him one year later she leaned heavily upon her religion to get through the rough times. Friedrich and Elisabeth were disciplined and rewarded under the guise of Christian dogma. The fear of God and the rewards of the afterlife were instilled in them from a young age by their mother. Franziska's simple minded faith and her tendency to judge under its narrow scope, was especially difficult for Nietzsche when he turned away from his religious background to pursue a philosophical orientation. As is apparent throughout his writing, Nietzsche's attitude towards religion, but more specifically Christianity is extremely critical.

Nietzsche and his sister Elisabeth were very close from a young age, some suggest inordinately close. As adults, they continued to be involved with each other's lives, visiting regularly and keeping in constant correspondence. Nietzsche advised Elisabeth on her education, encouraged her to sit in at university lectures in Leipzig and study English, French and Italian. Elisabeth expressed her concern with her brother's education as well. She counselled him on his career choices and offered her opinions on his social life and romantic interests.

Both Nietzsche's sister and mother were intimately involved with his private life. This was a mark of their possessive natures, but also an expression of worry for his problematic health. During his time living in Basel, Elisabeth went to care for him frequently and in 1875 began to live with him part time, splitting her time between Basel and Naumburg. Nietzsche was under pressure from Richard Wagner as well as his family and other friends to find a wife. Although Elisabeth was a generous sister to her

brother, the closeness of their relationship likely impaired Nietzsche's chances of finding a bride.

Nietzsche proposed to Mathilde Trampedach, a refined and beautiful Dutch woman, in April 1876 after meeting her only three times. This rash proposal, made through letter, rather than face to face with her, was likely done out of pressure to marry rather than sincere interest. Nietzsche took her rejection quite easily, realizing that she was already in love with her piano teacher, the man with whom Nietzsche sent the proposal!

As a young man, Nietzsche had a number of female friends who he enjoyed spending time with, but apart from Mathilde Trampedach made no other marriage proposals until he met Lou Salomé. At this time, Nietzsche was friends with mature maternal women that he depended upon for creative support as well as a few young and beautiful women who were newly married with children. At the beginning of his scholarly life Sophie Ritschl, the wife of his philology professor Friedrich Ritschl, was a good friend and confidant. Later, there was Cosima Wagner, a significant influence on his life during the Basel years and close to his heart throughout his life. Cosima acted as a mother for Nietzsche for many years advising him on his career plans and encouraging his admiration of her husband, Richard Wagner. She was an important feminine icon for Nietzsche. He admired her regality and harboured an oedipal attraction to her. Cosima was the first to receive *Ecce Homo* from Nietzsche, long after their falling out. She remained in his heart; even after his mental breakdown. When Nietzsche was at the Jena sanatorium, he proudly announced in delusion that Cosima was his wife.

Another maternal influence in his life, Ida Overbeck, was close to Nietzsche as the wife of his good friend Franz Overbeck. Nietzsche visited the Overbeck's frequently in the 70's and stayed with them in the 80's. Ida witnessed along with her husband, Nietzsche's failing health, his personal and professional frustrations, but also his wonderfully creative mind. In times of difficulty she offered her support and tried to sympathize with his suffering. She recounts one particular instance when reading Goethe (a favourite of Nietzsche's) helped calm his torments.

We tried to console him in every way, pointing to the future, and it did him at least some good to see that we sympathized in his sufferings. Once I succeeded especially well at this, and I will never forget the grateful emotion which therefore came over him. I read aloud, as applying to him, a passage from *Truth and Poetry*, in which Goethe, on the subject of *Werther*, speaks of author and public...<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche faced ongoing frustration with his lack of popularity as a writer and was disappointed by the inability of his colleagues and friends to understand his texts. Ida Overbeck did her best to reassure him.

From 1875 until 1883, Nietzsche was in correspondence with Marie Baumgartner, a translator from German to French. Although she was thirteen years older, married with a son, she adored Nietzsche. In their letters it is quite apparent that she cared deeply for Nietzsche and may have even been in love with him. There was also Louise Ott, a beautiful woman and talented musician. Nietzsche was initially upset when he discovered she was married, but recovered by fostering a correspondence with her for about a year. Although she had affection for Nietzsche, she had to be careful not to arouse jealousy in her husband.

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<sup>6</sup>Sander L. Gilman, ed., *Conversations with Nietzsche*, trans. David J. Parent (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 113.



Besides Mathilde Trampedach, in the early part of his adult life, Nietzsche was surrounded by unavailable women who were already wives and mothers. This may have been purposeful. There is evidence that Nietzsche believed he was suffering from syphilis and may have avoided romantic relationships for this reason. Perhaps his abrupt and uncouth proposal to Trampedach was intentional in order to ensure refusal. Speculations abound when it comes to figuring Nietzsche's lack of a sexual life, some suggest he was gay. More likely, however, Nietzsche simply did not want to be married, or being the eccentric he was could not find a proper match. As he wrote to his sister in 1877 from Sorrento, he was with the assistance of Malwida von Meysenbug looking for a "good *but* rich" wife to facilitate his specific health and writing needs.<sup>7</sup>

During his years in Basel, Nietzsche accepted the assistance of his controlling sister and mother because they alleviated his day to day needs, gave him familiarity and support. Elisabeth, whom he affectionately nicknamed his 'Lama', cared for him when he was sick with an optimistic mood. Like her brother she was not eager to be married. Their simpatico relationship remained comfortable for a time, until tension began with the appearance of *Human All Too Human* in 1878 and later rose with his sister's disapproval of his relationship with Lou Salomé.

Nietzsche was introduced to Lou Salomé by his intellectual friends Malwida von Meysenbug and Paul Reé when he visited them in Rome at Malwida's home in April of 1882. Salomé had left Russia with her mother after the death of her father, a Russian general of Huguenot descent, to study in Zurich in 1880. A cultured and rich young woman, unconcerned with convention, Lou was accorded an unusual amount of freedom

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Middleton, ed., trans., *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 156.

from her widowed mother. When Malwida, a published writer and intellectual whose privileged heritage allowed her to support and cultivate young talent, took on Salomé as a student she discovered a possible match for Nietzsche. Salomé was young, beautiful, smart, and like Nietzsche, eccentric in her own way.

Nietzsche was quite impressed when he met Salomé. Salomé notes that upon their first meeting at St. Peter's he exclaimed, "From which stars did we fall to meet each other here?"<sup>8</sup> He was immediately taken with her—firstly by her beauty and then by her mind. His hopes for a woman who could meet him intellectually were fulfilled. She could not only replace, but exceed Elisabeth. For Nietzsche, Salomé represented a new and unfamiliar kind of woman, one with whom he anticipated a fruitful relationship. Nietzsche proposed to her within a few days. Although Salomé rejected Nietzsche's marriage proposal, citing economic barriers as well as her disinclination to marry, it is clear that she valued Nietzsche as a friend and did not want to insult his feelings. In order to cultivate their intellectual ménage à trois, Salomé, Reé and Nietzsche planned for the winter together in Paris. This pleased Nietzsche greatly, who strongly valued both friendships.

Returning to Germany from Rome, Salomé and Nietzsche met up at Lake Orta in Northern Italy where they had the opportunity to spend some time alone, engaging in passionate discussions and taking long walks in nature. It was during this time that Salomé and Nietzsche may have kissed. At minimum, it was a psychologically intimate time that they shared during their walks to and from Mont Sacro. Both later expressed their surprise at discovering how much they thought alike on particular subjects, and Nietzsche noted that Salomé had an uncanny ability to understand his mind.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 4, 116.

When Wagner was to perform in Bayreuth that July, Nietzsche asked his sister to escort Salomé there. As Ida Overbeck later suggested, this was bad judgment on Nietzsche's part. Elisabeth was uncomfortable and jealous around the extraverted Salomé who playfully monopolized the attention of many men. In addition, Elisabeth was perturbed by Salomé's display of the photo that Nietzsche had orchestrated amongst himself, Salomé and Reé in Lucerne in which Salomé crouches in a cart holding a whip while Reé and Nietzsche stand in front in horse harnesses. Although this risqué photo was amusing to many, for Elisabeth it symbolized the potential decay of Nietzsche's morality and reputation. Her solution was to distance Salomé from Nietzsche and prevent the dangerous charade that Elisabeth believed Salomé was drawing Nietzsche into.

Before meeting with Nietzsche in Tautenburg, Elisabeth confronted Salomé about her inappropriate behaviour, expressing her concern over Salomé's 'good name.' Salomé, however, found such concerns condescending and petty. She reacted with laughter and refused to recognize Elisabeth's distress. Their juxtaposed attitudes towards social etiquette made for an impossible friendship between the two women. While Nietzsche loved Salomé's unconventionality, Elisabeth feared it.

In Tautenburg, Nietzsche and Salomé enjoyed their time together, taking many walks and engaging in philosophical discussion. Still, they were followed by Elisabeth's disparaging eye which inevitably placed a stress on their rendezvous. Although it may have been fairly easy for Salomé to brush off Elisabeth, it was more difficult for Nietzsche who cared deeply for his sister. The sexual tension between Nietzsche and

Salomé was also a challenge; while he desired her and wanted her as a partner, she was not physically attracted to him.

To a certain extent Nietzsche blamed his falling out with Salomé on Elisabeth. Why Salomé and Reé broke off their plans with Nietzsche for their winter ménage à trois in Paris is unknown. Speculation suggests that it was due partially to Elisabeth's meddling, Reé's jealousy and Nietzsche's overzealous enthusiasm to help Salomé, "become who she is."<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche was saddened and confused by this loss, wounded by Salomé and Reé who never did provide him with an explanation about their change of mind. Although he wrote letters to both of them, neither Salomé nor Reé replied.

The situation with Salomé placed a great strain on Nietzsche and Elisabeth's relationship. Nietzsche felt he had lost the only woman who had understood him deeply. Salomé represented the free spirited woman that Nietzsche dreamt about. She was so unlike any woman he had ever known. As such, she challenged his boundaries and evoked fascination, desire and fear in Nietzsche. Losing Salomé, as well as his good friend Paul Reé, made him feel utterly alone. This was exasperated by his need to distance himself from his moralizing sister whose narrow minded values had become insufferable to Nietzsche. Out of this solitude grew Nietzsche's most widely known books, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is also here, in these works that we find the bulk of his so-called misogyny.

The "First Part" of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, written only months after his falling out with Salomé, includes one of Nietzsche's most famous quotes, "You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!"<sup>10</sup> Appearing in, "On Little Old and Young Women,"

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<sup>9</sup> Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Women: Beyond the Whip* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 53.

<sup>10</sup> TSZ 1.18.

it has been widely, but in my opinion, erroneously, used to indicate Nietzsche's sexism. Previous to Walter Kaufmann's translation, other editions of the book mistranslated this quote as "Do not forget *your* whip!" A seemingly minor error, such a representation of the text leads one to assume that the recommendation is for man to bring a whip when he goes to women. However, when we read it correctly as "*the* whip" the meaning is more ambiguous. Is this a suggestion that man needs to bring a whip, or that he should be wary of the whip that women hold, or both? Such an inquiry must be pursued in consideration of the symbology of the whip in this section and throughout the text, but also in relation to the photo that Nietzsche organized with himself, Reé and Salomé.

At the beginning of "On Little Old And Young Women" Zarathustra characterizes the truth, spoken by the old woman as, "a treasure...troublesome like a young child, and if I don't hold my hand over its mouth, it will cry overloudly." The need to conceal 'this little truth' is a suggestion of the old woman, followed by Zarathustra who reiterates it to a solitary disciple. This statement written in the narrative by Nietzsche is twice removed from him, first by Zarathustra and then by the voice of the old woman. It is placed in double quotations and finished with an exclamation mark, which gives it a tone of irony. Although Nietzsche remains the storyteller, the old woman's tone and character provides insight as to the meanings of the text. Additional clues are given by the time of the conversation (dusk) and the fact that it is not recounted to many, but to one disciple by Zarathustra. This suggests that the old woman's gift is not easily graspable and has more than one level of meaning. In order to understand it we must examine its multiple layers.

Let us begin by considering the characteristics of the woman who is speaking. She is little and old and speaks with a cynical tone when she discusses woman/women

with Zarathustra. The old woman is a product of tradition, the all too German Wilhelminian culture that Nietzsche seeks to overcome. Her smallness indicates that she lives a traditional life. Yet, at the same time, the way in which she speaks with Zarathustra is clever and manipulative; she convinces him to share his perspectives on 'woman' with her after he states that they are to be discussed only between men.<sup>11</sup>

When Zarathustra discloses his thoughts on woman/women with her, she responds by stating, "It is strange: Zarathustra knows women little, and yet he is right about them. Is this because nothing is impossible with woman?"<sup>12</sup> After acknowledging Zarathustra's speech the old woman poses an open ended question. She suggests that even though Zarathustra may be 'right,' there is much that he is missing. To fill his void she offers her little truth, a truth that in the process of sharing has much to teach. Thus, Nietzsche through Zarathustra admits his difficulties in understanding the female sex, but at the same time offers us some of his insights on the matter.

The old woman both enacts and speaks to the mystery and strength that lie beneath the seemingly shallow surface of women. She, as many other women do, hides beneath her appearance a feminine cleverness that is capable of outwitting many men, including the sage Zarathustra. Nietzsche issues a subversive warning for the careful reader: do not underestimate the power of the feminine. Regardless of how much you may think you know about the female, she may still outsmart you. According to Nietzsche, "the perfect woman is a higher type of human being than the perfect man," and although rarer, is definitely capable of using the skills of the mask to manipulate a

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<sup>11</sup> TSZ 3.5.2.

<sup>12</sup> TSZ 1.18.

trusting male.<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche believed that an eternal war between the sexes was at stake and that women had the potential to win.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the old woman acts as a mouthpiece for this warning. She alludes to the dangers that men face in their attempts to retain mastery. Can mastery be retained without the whip?

The whip, a symbol of will to power and an instrument of pain represents the need for cruelty. Yet, it is a subtle cruelty, a refined sense of discipline and intention rather than physical brutality. The use of the whip may be towards the self, or another person; it personifies resolve and willpower. The holder of the whip is not sex/gender specific. This is especially clear from observation of the photo of Salomé holding the whip. When the old woman advises Zarathustra not to forget the whip, she is not affirming the subjugation of women to men. Rather, she quietly denounces male superiority and tells Zarathustra, with an obvious sarcasm in her voice, to be cautious of his faculties of determination when in the company of women.

Elisabeth Nietzsche claimed that the old woman was a representation of her and recalls a conversation with her brother confirming this. Although it has been shown by Carol Diethe and many others that Elisabeth fabricated a narrative surrounding Friedrich for her own utility, in this instance it may be true. Elizabeth writes:

So I could not avoid reminding him by a few examples we knew that there simply happens to be female natures who are held in check only by a brutal stressing of power on the man's part, and who, as soon as they do not feel that symbolic whip over them, become impertinent and shameless and play games with the over-kindly man who adores them, indeed even trample him underfoot... At this mention, however, he leaned back on the sofa, and cried out with well-feigned astonishment, "Thus the Lama advises the man to use the whip!" "No," I answered laughingly, "of course the whip is not for Lamas and for all reasonable, virtuous women; they should be treated with consideration and love. But for the others!" We glossed over the affair with a good many jokes... A year later my brother met with me in Rome and there gave me the first part of *Zarathustra*... "O Fritz,"

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<sup>13</sup> HAH 1.7.377.

<sup>14</sup> EH "Why I Write Such Good Books," 5.

I exclaimed in alarm, "I am the old woman!" My brother laughed and said he would not betray that to anyone.<sup>15</sup>

Although I believe the character of the old woman exceeds Elisabeth and is not a literal representation of her, she does bear resemblance. Both Resa von Schirnhofen and Sebastian Hausmann, in relaying their conversations with Nietzsche on woman and the whip, imply that Elisabeth was inspiration for the old woman.<sup>16</sup> Not only does Elisabeth in her conventional values reflect the character of the old woman, she also shares her manipulative trait. Elisabeth's personification as a traditional woman does not square with her life roles. Although she lived behind her brother and her husband Bernhard Förster, she used these men as a means to fulfill her own interests. Elisabeth endeavoured to present herself as 'virtuous' and acquiescent, even though was anything but. When it came to Nietzsche's relationships with women, especially with Salomé, Elisabeth attempted to exert control over him. She was selfish, scheming and judgmental. Elisabeth was paranoid that her brother would prioritize another woman over her. Thus, it is no doubt that Salomé was considered such a woman for Elisabeth—one who needed the whip. Elisabeth advised men to use the whip against women who threatened her power; women such as Salomé who challenged the customs of 'woman' that Elisabeth relied upon. Friedrich Nietzsche, on the other hand, was content to let Salomé hold her *own* whip. He enjoyed innovation and variance away from established roles.

A careful reading of this section "On Little Old and Young Women" displays Nietzsche's enjoyment of using symbols of excess to portray much more delicate

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<sup>15</sup>Gilman, *Conversations with Nietzsche*, 124-125.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 135, 151.



inferences. As a rhetorical device, he not only masks, saving himself for worthy readers, but also fulfills his psychological need for grandiose and sometimes tragic expression. As such, we must not take it too loudly. The whip is not an invitation to misogyny. It is a mischievous warning of female power and potential coupled with a disguised critique of Elisabeth's character. It is also an observation of male and female gender roles.

A preliminary reading on this section provides us with the old woman as Elisabeth speaking to her brother and cautioning him of womanly wiles and the need of men to exert their mastery with particular types of women. In real life, however, Nietzsche found this behaviour quite offensive and meddling; he related such cautioning to narrow-mindedness. Although he may have laughed *with* Elisabeth in discussing the character of the old woman, if anything he was laughing *at* her in the text, displaying Elisabeth's petty temperament and releasing some of his personal frustration with her.

When we look further into this section of *Zarathustra*, we see Nietzsche overcome with grief because of his loss of Salomé and disappointment with his sister, expressing some personal insights about women while at the same time engaging in some rhetorical play. The old woman displays a type who relies upon and promotes a traditionally virtuous woman, but underneath has another agenda. She is a contradictory female who craves a will to power but out of fear of man, accepts a submissive role. She does not question the image of 'woman' imposed upon her, but considers it natural, even though, as Nietzsche states, "...it is man who creates for himself the image of woman, and woman forms herself according to this image."<sup>17</sup> She lacks in education. Out of

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<sup>17</sup> GS 68.

personal frustration she seeks revenge, perhaps subconsciously, upon women who have rejected the image of 'woman' or have chosen to recreate it as their own.

For those women who seek an individual determination, a wielding of the whip and a move away from the proper 'woman,' the old woman offers her warning to men: "Do not forget the whip!" Thus, the old woman, as Elisabeth did, retains her strange satisfaction with an inverted will against women who threaten the coherency of 'woman'. Throughout this section and many other parts of Nietzsche's work we are presented with a critique of women who lack the courage to seek mastery, or who fool themselves into feeling comfortable with the imposed 'woman'. Although it is clear that Nietzsche grapples with 'woman' throughout his philosophy and does make some disturbing remarks, in his life the women he enjoyed most embraced the roles of wife and mother with intelligence and independence, with a flare that exceeded the normative. He also spent a lot of time with unmarried intellectual women who discarded conservative roles and lived on their own terms. This section on woman and the whip is only one example where Nietzsche provides us with a myriad of perspectives on the topic of woman/women while he, at the same time, exposes his private struggles with the women in his life.

Carol Diethe has expressed surprise that Nietzsche's well educated female friends did not express many objections to the more severe comments that he made regarding women/woman in his texts. However, Malwida von Meysenbug writes that she told Nietzsche in 1877, when compiling *Human All Too Human*, "that he knew women only superficially and still had no right to make a general judgment."<sup>18</sup> In Resa von Schirhofer's writings on her conversations with Nietzsche we are presented with a

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<sup>18</sup> Gilman, *Conversations with Nietzsche*, 88.

Nietzsche who was adamant to defend himself on this topic and explain the reasons behind his statements. As such, perhaps his female friends did object, but they did so discreetly and found sufficient justification in Nietzsche's explanations to not pursue the matters further.

Certainly, s. 144 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, one of Nietzsche's more contentious remarks on female scholars, is such an aphorism in need of contextualization. "When a woman has scholarly intentions there is usually something wrong with her sexuality. Sterility itself disposes one toward a certain masculinity of taste; for man is, if I may say so, 'the sterile animal.'" For Nietzsche, scholarship prevents one from becoming pregnant and undergoing the birthing process, not only physically, but also spiritually and creatively. "Compared to a genius—that is, to one who either *begets* or *gives birth*, taking both terms in their most elevated sense—the scholar, the scientific average man, always rather resembles an old maid."<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche associates the scholar who has never written or created anything from his own spirit, who has never "written with his blood" with the old maid who has never loved or given birth to children.<sup>20</sup> The old maid and the scholar have failed to engage in any self shaping; they have submitted to the wills of others and placated themselves with herd ideologies. Such sterility belongs to the, 'spiritual middle class.'<sup>21</sup> "The scholar is the herd animal in the realm of knowledge—who inquires because he is ordered to and because others have done so before him." Nietzsche situates scholars alongside "the weary, the exhausted"; he calls them 'the dried-up' who are incapable of giving.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> BGE 206.

<sup>20</sup> TSZ 1.7.

<sup>21</sup> GS 373.

<sup>22</sup> WP 421, 801.

Nietzsche is highly critical of the scholarly path for women because he believes it represses their natural propensity to birth children and limits their creative spirituality. He places a very high value on motherhood and the transformative potential that comes out of the birthing process. So high, that he named the creative, artistic, ‘contemplative type’ of men that he respected and likely situated himself in, ‘male mothers.’<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche felt that women who turned their back on motherhood for the opportunity to ‘enlighten’ themselves were often entering into a herd consciousness, imbued with mind numbing political and religious propaganda. Although Nietzsche’s criticisms are valid in some respects—the educational system was in need of repair—in his philosophy he does not recommend an educational alternative for women.

During Nietzsche’s time in Germany girls were not expected to study any later than sixteen years of age. It took privilege or tremendous work for a woman to pursue a higher education. As Carol Diethe points out, the legal system gave men right over women’s bodies—the husband could insist on his conjugal rights and even decide on whether his wife should breastfeed or not. In Germany, women did not have the right to vote, join unions or have autonomy over their bodies. The education of girls was oriented towards preparation for marriage: cooking, sewing and entertaining. Scientific or philosophical education was discouraged. Germany was behind the rest of Europe when it came to the education of women and girls and Nietzsche was aware of it.<sup>24</sup> Although he was generally opposed to the feminist emancipation movement of his time, he showed interest in bringing innovation to the educational system for both sexes.

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<sup>23</sup> GS 72.

<sup>24</sup> Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche’s Sister and the Will to Power* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 112.

Nietzsche's actions during his life exemplify a man genuinely concerned for the education of women, beyond the stifling possibilities so allowed. In 1874, when Nietzsche was working at Basel University he voted for the admittance of female students. He advised Elisabeth to sit in at university lectures and encouraged her to study languages. Malwida von Meysenbug remembers that in 1877 during a visit with Nietzsche and Reé both men reacted enthusiastically for setting up and teaching at a "missionhouse to lend young adults of both sexes a free development of the noblest intellectual life."<sup>25</sup> Meta von Salis-Marschlins notes that Nietzsche often spoke to her about women who distinguished themselves by rare talent or success. Nietzsche expressed sincere interest in the education of women and surrounded himself with the female academic elite of his cultural environment.

From 1881-1888 Nietzsche spent his summers in Sils-Maria. It became a meeting place for intellectuals, musicians and a community for the privileged. Nietzsche had many well educated women visiting him there. Although a great number of them came from Zurich as students, he also became acquainted with young women introduced to him by Malwida von Meysenbug. Malwida was twenty eight years older than Nietzsche and a motherly influence. She introduced him to the young and gifted noble women Meta von Salis, Resa von Schirnhofer and the already mentioned Lou Salomé. As a published writer, fascinated by exceptional women, Malwida went out of her way to help young female talent and foster an artistic community. She also tried to help Nietzsche find a wife. Resa von Schirnhofer was sent to meet Nietzsche in Nice by Malwida as a possible match. They enjoyed their time together, but never pursued a romantic relationship. Resa describes Nietzsche as, "So unrestrained as a thinker, Nietzsche as a person was of

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<sup>25</sup> Gilman, *Conversations with Nietzsche*, 84.

exquisite sensitivity, tenderness and refined courtesy in attitudes and manners toward the female sex, as others who knew him personally have often emphasized.”<sup>26</sup> Resa had great admiration for Nietzsche and visited him often in Sils-Maria.

Also a good friend of Malwida’s, Meta von Salis, gave up the financial assistance of her father and worked her way through school to achieve a Doctorate in Philosophy from Zurich. Meta was a champion of feminist rights. While Nietzsche encouraged her educational path, he frowned upon her activism.<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche had resentment towards women fighting for the feminist movement—this erupted in his philosophy as well as in his letters to close friends. He was torn because, although he could not stand women without an education, he objected to the educational system and the feminists who fought for their right to it.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche dedicates a number of aphorisms to the questions of equality, emancipation and education for women. Although they are rather harsh at times, a close reading of them in conjunction with a consideration of the text as a whole allows us to discover that Nietzsche is not a simple misogynist. In s.231, as a prefatory statement, he admits to his own failings when it comes to his views on ‘woman and man.’

...about man and woman, for example, a thinker cannot relearn but only finish learning—only discover ultimately how this is “settled in him.” At times we find certain solutions of problems that inspire strong faith in *us*; some call them henceforth *their* “convictions.” Later—we see them only as steps to self-knowledge, sign-posts to the problem we *are*—rather, to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual *factum*, to what is *unteachable* very “deep down”...I shall perhaps be permitted more readily to state a few truths about “woman as such”—assuming that it is now known from the outset how very much these are after all only—*my* truths.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>27</sup> Diethel, *Nietzsche’s Women*, 89.

Nietzsche recognizes that he has limited views on ‘woman’ and women, but that an exploration of his truths may bring him greater self-knowledge. He writes for personal psychological benefit. His points must be understood as open-ended, “steps to self knowledge.” As always, Nietzsche’s reflections invite others into debate; they are purposely provocative and force the reader into self questioning as well.

In s.238 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche states that one who believes men and women are equal is foolhardy. Any thinker, he states, who believes in “equal rights, equal education, equal claims and obligations...may be considered altogether suspicious...and incapable of attaining *any* depth.” For Nietzsche, men and women are different not only physically, but also psychologically and spiritually. As such, they cannot be treated the same, equally. In fact, Nietzsche believes that no one should be treated equally; “it is *immoral* to say: “what is right for one is fair for the other.””<sup>28</sup>

In Nietzsche’s eyes, the feminist movement to grant the same rights to women as men was erring terribly. It was causing a ‘defeminization,’ a degeneration of ‘woman.’ “As she thus takes possession of new rights, aspires to become ‘master’ and writes the ‘progress’ of woman upon her standards and banners, the opposite development is taking place with terrible clarity: *woman is retrogressing.*” Women were trading in their feminine instincts and talents for an imitation of masculinity a ‘manliness,’ in Nietzsche’s opinion that was very low.

To be sure, there are enough imbecilic friends and corrupters of woman among the scholarly asses of the male sex who advise woman to defeminize herself in this way and to imitate all the stupidities with which “man” in Europe, European “manliness,” is sick: they would like to reduce woman to the level of “general education...”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> BGE 221.

<sup>29</sup> BGE 239.

For Nietzsche, the female had a more natural nature, less corrupted by the normative value schemas that come with general education, politics, and mediocre scholarship. He was concerned that the move to acculturate and provide women with the same general education as men would sterilize their natural creative propensities and prevent them from fulfilling their most given talent: to birth children. “Sterility itself disposes one toward a certain masculinity of taste; for man is, if I may say so, ‘the sterile animal.’”<sup>30</sup> This is why his attack on the ‘mannish’ and/or emancipated woman is so virulent at times. Nietzsche truly believed he was fighting to save both ‘woman’ and women’s creative power. “What? And this should be the end? And the breaking of woman’s magic spell is at work?”<sup>31</sup>

Nietzsche expresses distress over the dismissal of feminine creative power: the ability to create life rejected in favour of every-day male activities. This has been a point of contention for critics who condemn Nietzsche’s prioritization of pregnancy as the most important end for women. As Nietzsche writes, “...everything about woman has one solution: that is pregnancy. Man is for woman a means: the end is always the child.”<sup>32</sup> Interestingly enough, for the remarkable man his highest aim is also pregnancy, according to Nietzsche. Although man cannot become physically pregnant, Nietzsche believes his spirit can; thus he births novel ideas and works of art.

Although Nietzsche does make quite a few disparaging remarks when it comes to women taking up so-called male roles, it is imperative to recognize that he does not have much respect for these roles in the first place. Nietzsche does not want women to belittle themselves by choosing such mediocre occupations. Pregnancy and the birthing process

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<sup>30</sup> BGE 144.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 29.

<sup>32</sup> TSZ 1.18.



on the other hand, are greatly valued by Nietzsche and require tremendous responsibility, strength and creative energy. Nietzsche associates pregnancy with artistic, spiritual and philosophical development throughout his texts. Thus when Nietzsche says “the end is always the child,” it has more than one meaning. Quite literally, it connotes that woman wants to have a child, to become physically pregnant and give birth. Nietzsche is adamant that this is the highest calling for women. Another meaning, however, is that she seeks out the child in man and guides him into rebirth, spiritual transformation. Then again, another possibility he communicates, is that woman seeks out her inner child—she wants to will herself into rebirth. Although much rarer, Nietzsche is not unaware of the possibility of women recreating themselves. He places a high value on the child and expresses tremendous admiration toward the natural faculties that women have to create and transform life.

Nietzsche is considerate of the difficult predicament that women face when it comes to their identity. “The happiness of man is: I will. The happiness of woman is: he wills...And woman must obey and find a depth for her surface.”<sup>33</sup> As Nietzsche states in *The Gay Science*, man imposes his ideology of ‘woman’ onto women, he wants to possess her in body and spirit, but she can never be possessed for what he holds is only a projection.<sup>34</sup> A projection, nevertheless, that is powerful enough for women to accept it as their own, make it a facade and in many circumstances a mask that is impenetrable to not only man, but also the woman who wears it. This projection, ironically enough, allows men to place women in places of obligation and submission where they continue

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> GS 14.

to undergo suffering in order to compensate for their debt, a debt to man that has strangely enough, been created by his ideology, the ideology of ‘woman.’<sup>35</sup>

Nietzsche articulates the fiction of ‘woman’ and the belief system that has been built up around her by man, but he confirms, at the same time, the influence that women have had on this icon. He is especially interested in preventing ‘woman’ from losing her feminine power, even if some of it has been attributed by man. Much of Nietzsche’s austere tone and critical writing towards ‘woman’ and women is directed against women who fight so emphatically against ‘woman’ that they altogether forget their femininity and the creative power that lies within. Although Nietzsche encourages self shaping and movement away from group identification, he believes these women take their fight to an unhealthy level. Instead of embracing their readily available talents, they crave the power of man, the ‘master’ in their eyes. In order to gain ‘equality’ they give up their feminine attributes to pronounce their masculine tendencies. Many become what Nietzsche calls ‘inverse cripple,’ people who sacrifice positive characteristics in order to highlight one that is justifiable under a particular herd mentality.<sup>36</sup>

At his time, Nietzsche was concerned that feminists were giving up their talents, whether artistic or natural, in order to fight for a ‘will to equality’ that would normalize and de-individualize human beings. He viewed many of these women as envious and resentful, in pursuit of a forgotten goal. Their striving to become equal, in many cases forced them to adopt the ways of man; each woman lost a part of her self in the struggle. In his writing, Nietzsche tries to convince us that instead of liberation, women who

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<sup>35</sup> The mask is a tremendous tool for an artist or an actor, however when there is no self-mastery related to the mask it may take over. One then becomes a slave to the passions, another person or some ideology. There are all kinds of masks, some profound, some mediocre, some poor and all other variations in between.

<sup>36</sup> TSZ 2.20.

blindly seek equality only entrench themselves into a new herd mentality, an empty faith that erases character. A woman who divorces herself completely from ‘woman’ would, in Nietzsche’s opinion, give up a sense of her uniqueness and personal worth, a femininity that feeds her spirit.

Although Nietzsche advises human beings to free themselves, he is cautious of the process of emancipation and the blind idealism that accompanies it. In a letter to Lou Salomé he expresses his concern: “First, one has the difficulty of emancipating oneself from one’s chains; and ultimately, one has to emancipate oneself from this emancipation too! Each of us has to suffer, though in greatly differing ways, from the chain sickness, even after he has broken the chains.”<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche is critical of feminists because he believes they fail to emancipate themselves from the process of emancipation; the process of emancipation becomes their new dogma. “...perhaps she seeks mastery...we may in the end reserve a healthy suspicion whether woman really *wants* enlightenment about herself—whether she *can* will it.”<sup>38</sup> Does she really want to find herself, or just buy into some new ideology? Nietzsche is concerned with the impulsive behaviour of women to simply reject ‘woman’ and jump onto a political bandwagon that will provide them with a new identity. Rather, he suggests through a more multifarious understanding of ‘woman,’ women may find their place within the iconography and become masters thereof.

The remainder of Nietzsche’s tough love is dedicated to those who accept the image of ‘woman’ in varying degrees, but then re-iterate the image with independence. At times, Nietzsche does express a condescending attitude towards women and questions

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<sup>37</sup> Middleton, *Letter of Nietzsche*, 191.

<sup>38</sup> BGE 232.

their self-determination. However, this is often done with the intent to provoke. Much of his so-called misogyny is sarcastic, playful or ironical. Although Nietzsche comfortably accepts the traditional image of 'woman' as the correct path for some, for those women who are able to awake from their slavish slumber, Nietzsche offers words of encouragement mixed with enmity and provocation. In doing so, he expresses not only the patriarchal attitude of many of his contemporaries (and perhaps his own) but also the fear of the feminine that underlies it. Nietzsche admits the vulnerability of men in regard to the image of 'woman,' namely their reliance upon the iconography of 'woman' and an opposite for gender definition. He criticizes the phallogocentric economy of truth for sustaining a disabling discourse of difference that robs women of their *jouissance*. At the same time, Nietzsche quietly expresses his confidence in female intelligence and his hidden affection for women who adopt, but then wilfully play with the image of 'woman' to make it their own.

## CHAPTER 3

### WOMAN'S SLAVE MORALITY

Man has created a fictional 'woman', an 'other' derived from his longing to know the opposite sex. Nietzsche explains that man has and continues to build up meaning about 'woman', subconsciously transposing his envy onto her. According to Nietzsche, 'woman' lies in paradox and women are accordingly haunted by a "psychic knot."<sup>1</sup> 'Woman' is and is not the real life expression of the feminine. She is an impossible figure whose substance has been built upon a deep-seated historical fear of her uncontrollability and mystery. Not to mention man's jealousy of her natural propensity for creativity through pregnancy. As a mode of revenge, man has fashioned 'woman' into an image of phallogocentric signification. He has forced his will to truth onto her.

Thus, in some sense women are lost. As Luce Irigaray states, women have no female speech, no voice that is their own. Women remain the other of the male, a difference that has been etched into them. Throughout his texts, Nietzsche suggests that women are plagued by a voicelessness, especially when they give into the idolatry imposed upon them by man. However, as he states, they are also powerful actors who pretend to be like the 'woman' that man desires, keeping just enough distance to mask themselves with heightened awareness. Within this dance of the male gaze, and the embodiment of 'woman,' there are elusive forces or will(s) to power women may enact to play with the form of 'woman'. Nietzsche proposes that women have the ability to close their eyes to the male gaze and the female self that has been created through it, brandish

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<sup>1</sup> GS 71.

their own dagger and be creators of an unburdened persona.<sup>2</sup> Deconstruction of ‘woman’ is the first step for women who aim to, “become what one is.”<sup>3</sup>

As Nietzsche proposes, the physiological ability of women to carry and birth children provides them with unique feminine characteristics calling for a sex/gender specific course of overcoming. Although Nietzsche believes men and women share many lessons, he asserts that each sex additionally has their own challenges to face. These are built upon their physical, spiritual and emotional differences that have arisen through biological and cultural factors. Of course, as Nietzsche is well aware, these factors are not limited to sex, but differ for each person in question. Once one understands the challenges specific to their sex/gender they can further define the process of becoming into one that relates closely to their unique personality.

Nietzsche encourages his students to treat their life as a work of art—to become their own canvas. Each movement then becomes an inscription into the flesh, affecting the quality of one’s personality. Nietzsche explicates enabling spiritual practices for overcoming into wilful activation of the self. He also suggests a renaming of virtues whereby one deconstructs the moral values that govern their life and decides whether such virtues are actually virtuous *for them*. Particularly important for women, in this respect, is Nietzsche’s attack on the Christian virtues of neighbourly love, pity and chastity.

Of interest is what form of philosophical therapy Nietzsche suggests for women. Throughout his texts, he is involved in a comprehensive analysis of ‘woman’ as an icon that has been built up by man and further entrenched by both sexes. Nietzsche examines

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<sup>2</sup> GS 69.

<sup>3</sup> EH, see title.

the multi-layered slave morality of ‘woman’. He questions the imposition of patriarchal virtue onto ‘woman’ and women and invites us to do the same. Nietzsche looks to Greek antiquity for noble perspectives on feminine sexuality in order to critique Christian anti-sex dogma. He exposes the religious, socio-historical agendas of neighbourly love and pity, the distracting and disempowering effects they have on women. Nietzsche engages in a thoughtful exploration of the specific challenges that a Christian/Platonic heritage presents to women.

In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche writes, “Man has created woman—out of what? Out of a rib of his god—of his ‘ideal.’”<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche points out that ‘woman’ is a fantastical creation of man, situated as an opposition to man’s masculinity. Man escapes from reality through her, “he flees into the ideal” because he is a coward.<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche is highly critical of man’s fearful projection onto woman and the life-denying practices of Christianity that denote the feminine as lowly or ‘evil’. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche demands that men take responsibility for their ineffective moulding of ‘woman’ and change their approach.

*Will and willingness.*—Someone took a youth to a sage and said: “Look, he is being corrupted by women.” The sage shook his head and smiled. “It is men,” said he, “that corrupt women; and all the failings of women should be atoned by and improved in men. For it is man who creates for himself the image of woman, and woman forms herself according to this image.”

“You are too kindhearted about women,” said one of those present; “you do not know them.” The sage replied: “Will is the manner of men, willingness that of women. That is the law of the sexes—truly, a hard law for women. All of humanity is innocent of its existence; but women are doubly innocent. Who could have oil and kindness enough for them?”

“Damn oil! Damn kindness!” someone else shouted out of the crowd; “women need to be educated better!”—“Men need to be educated better,” said the sage and beckoned to the youth to follow him.—The youth, however, did not follow him.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> TI “Maxims and Arrows,” 13.

<sup>5</sup> TI “What I Owe to the Ancients,” 2.

<sup>6</sup> GS 68.

Nietzsche explains that both men and women lack in education; they have an underdeveloped understanding of the feminine. Men impose an unmoving iconography onto women in order to supply a sense of stability for themselves. The image of 'woman', as opposite validates masculine identity and men depend upon its reliability for their characterization as a sex. Women follow the approach of men and reciprocate a co-dependant relationship, fostering sex specific immobile gender identities. As Nietzsche connotes, this dichotomous approach to gender difference wounds both sexes. Men suffer from a profound loss of their femininity while women are confined to one that robs them of self-definition.

Both sexes face an upward struggle of never adequately catching up with the illusory paradigms of their sex. Women follow 'the law of the sexes,' affirm and submit to 'woman.' They serve man's most underdeveloped will to power, his brute need for domination over other human beings. Under the guise of a mask, women become slave and/or fetish. Nietzsche explains that men divert themselves from the gravity of the situation and their own submittal to 'man' through the tyrannical rewards of entitlement where decadence provides one last pleasure.

As Nietzsche writes, behind every truth statement there is a will to power. Additionally, many significations are made prematurely. Certainly when it comes to 'woman', man has erred in both respects. In "The Dancing Song" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra recalls his conversation with Life, "But you men always present us with your own virtues, O you virtuous men!"<sup>7</sup>

As Nietzsche conveys, men impose a system of judgment onto women that is driven by religious egoism and a perverted will to power that has become despotic. Men

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<sup>7</sup> TSZ 2.10.



are involved in an ongoing effort to control and possess women, to reiterate the stability of their masculine identity by leaving little room for female self determination.

Confidence in a transcendental self is maintained through the stillness of an absolute other who dualistically reflects the opposite of man. In order to further entrench their masculinity, men seek ownership of the other, 'woman'.<sup>8</sup>

Nietzsche contends that man's tendency towards egoistic domination is exacerbated in sexual love relationships. "The new lover desires unconditional and sole possession of the person for whom he longs; he desires equally unconditional power over the soul and over the body of the beloved; he alone wants to be loved and desires to live and rule in the other soul as supreme and supremely desirable."<sup>9</sup> At times, according to Nietzsche, man's need to possess goes so far that he becomes hateful of nature. "When we love a woman, we easily conceive a hatred for nature on account of all the repulsive natural functions to which every woman is subject...nature seems to encroach on our possessions, and with the profanest hands at that." As Nietzsche contends, man is unable to allow what is natural; often he ignores what is right in front of him. His need to possess, name and identify creates a so-called *reality*. "We ignore what is natural. We are moonstruck and God-struck. We wander, still as death, unwearied, on heights that we do not see as heights, but as plains, as our safety."<sup>10</sup>

In man's need to possess the female, he is driven by a competition with nature and a fear of her creative power. "What inspires respect for woman, and often enough fear, is

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<sup>8</sup> Ownership or possession of another human being is one of the more blunt and desperate forms of will to power, for the hungry human being who lacks in self dominion. However, reducing Nietzsche's will to power to the domination of another human being(s) is to misread him; as Gilles Deleuze, Alphonso Lingis and others have shown, will to power is a multifarious compilation of forces that have a variety of forms.

<sup>9</sup> GS 14.

<sup>10</sup> GS 59.

her *nature* which is more “natural” than man’s...”<sup>11</sup> The Christian/Platonic man flees the profundity of woman, out of cowardliness he enforces belief systems about her. Instead of centralizing the cyclic expressions of feminine sexuality into everyday life and venerating them as the Greeks did, Nietzsche states that modern man places a distain upon sex, pregnancy and birth. In addition, he uses pity to distance himself.<sup>12</sup>

Many women “know no better way to express their deepest devotion than to offer their virtue and shame.”<sup>13</sup> Although, “women themselves always still have in the background of all personal vanity an impersonal contempt—for ‘woman’”, on the surface they accept the realities of man, including his icon of ‘woman.’<sup>14</sup> Their defence against ‘woman’ becomes quiet and they turn to “the strength of the weak” and other subtle techniques to maintain some sense of autonomy.<sup>15</sup> In many cases, women believe they have little choice but to succumb to being great impersonators of this icon.

Women load alien burdens upon themselves. As Nietzsche states, “All of us bleed at secret sacrificial altars; all of us burn and roast in honour of old idols. What is best in us is still young...”<sup>16</sup> In order to be more than a function of man, “...his purse, or his politics or his sociability,” women must stop sacrificing themselves to the paternal God of Christianity and find their own way.<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche is confident that women have this capacity. The potential of women to challenge, play with or even do away with the impossible ‘woman’ is proposed by Nietzsche when he discusses her ‘capacity for revenge.’ “Would a woman be able to hold us (or, as they say, “enthral” us) if we did not

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<sup>11</sup> BGE 239.

<sup>12</sup> TI “What I Owe to the Ancients,” 4.

<sup>13</sup> GS 65.

<sup>14</sup> BGE 86.

<sup>15</sup> GS 66.

<sup>16</sup> TSZ 3.12.6.

<sup>17</sup> GS 119.

consider it quite possible that under certain circumstances she could wield a dagger (any kind of dagger) *against us?* Or against herself—which in certain cases would be a crueller revenge.”<sup>18</sup> The wielding of the dagger by women suggests ability for both disintegration and re-creation. However, in order to change ‘woman,’ women must first deconstruct and disassociate themselves from the symbolic representation they both emulate and hate. “And is it not true that on the whole ‘woman’ has so far been despised most by woman herself—and no means by us?”<sup>19</sup> Once women realize the distrust and dislike they have for ‘woman’ they may begin to reconstruct her iconography and their personal representations of it.

As Nietzsche illustrates ‘woman’ like ‘man’ consists of a multi-layered slave morality. She is a methodology of repression that categorizes good and bad for women and teaches the meaning of feminine virtue. The slave morality of ‘woman’ and her debt to man as *his creation and possession* places women in positions of servitude and suffering. In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche discusses the debtor/creditor relationship as the origin of the ‘moral conceptual world’ of duty, guilt and suffering. As Nietzsche suggests, women are locked in a cycle of compensation where their debt is never fulfilled. Where compensation is not adequate, punishment ensues. “In ‘punishing’ the debtor, the creditor participates in a *right of the masters*: at last he, too, may experience for once the exalted sensation of being allowed to despise and mistreat someone as ‘beneath him.’”<sup>20</sup> Man punishes woman for her debt to him and pities her for her suffering. Thus, he maintains an authoritarian distance over her.

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<sup>18</sup> GS 69.

<sup>19</sup> BGE 232.

<sup>20</sup> GM 2.5.

By demoralizing women of their will to life, devaluating their procreative functions, the institutions of man 'improves' woman. As Nietzsche states, through Christianity and a patriarchal will to power, women have been moulded into submissive, acquiescent beings whose value is affirmed through acting as slaves to men, the state and/or religion. Although women hold a hidden will to power within their submission, many are not aware of it. The ascetic ideal, utilitarian principles and egalitarian moralities provide redemption and justification for their suffering as well as distraction from the productive possibilities of a masked will to power. Women unconsciously endure psychological slavery in the hope of some reward. The rare woman activates a disguised form of will to power, such as "...making oneself indispensable and useful to those in power; love, as a secret path to the heart of the more powerful—so as to dominate him."<sup>21</sup>

One of the most interesting components of the will to power is that it is flexible, always changing and creative, a compilation of active and reactive forces. For Nietzsche, absolute commanding and obeying does not exist. With dominant active forces there are also reactive forces that are sure to influence.

To what extent resistance is present even in obedience; individual power is by no means surrendered. In the same way, there is in commanding an admission that the absolute power of the opponent has not been vanquished, incorporated, disintegrated. 'Obedience' and 'commanding' are forms of struggle.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, there is no outright domination or submission, but only a continual negotiation of the reactive and active drives, the qualities that constitute the will to power. Between two individuals an exchange of reactive and active drives ensues where the quantity of force in conjunction with its affirmative or negative characteristics leads to one person

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<sup>21</sup> WP 774.

<sup>22</sup> WP 642.

prevailing. During the exchange it is inevitable that both wills to power are affected, regardless of who succeeds at that time. Such as, what seems an obvious domination by a stronger force may lead into that very force's betrayal to a weaker modality. Force is reciprocally vulnerable to its multiplicities, whether they are active or reactive. There is no stillness with will to power.

Of course, searching out power through the subversive route can be frustrating. It takes tremendous skill and discipline—Nietzsche situates women alongside diplomats, princes and priests as experts in conscious hypocrisy. He states that they use psychological clarity, self control and great acting to achieve victory.<sup>23</sup> For those exceptional women who want to understand their bind, Nietzsche provides an explanation of 'woman's slave morality. As previously specified, it involves three central components: chastity, pity and neighbourly love.

We can note early on in the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche's laughter at the Christian ideal of chastity. He associates, "...condemnation of the passions, fear of beauty and sexuality..." with the Christian "will to decline." The virtue of chastity, as part of the faith, masks itself as a good, while it demeans one of the most natural life affirming expressions of human nature. Its sex-negativity perpetrates, "...a hostility to life—a furious, vengeful antipathy to life itself..." that starves the human spirit.<sup>24</sup>

Although Nietzsche recognizes the overwhelming and sometimes dangerous power of the passions, he views the Christian attempt to expunge them altogether as ill-advised. He criticizes Christianity for its strategies in coping with them.

The Church combats the passions with excision in every sense of the word: its practice, its 'cure' is *castration*. It never asks, "How can one spiritualize, beautify, deify a

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<sup>23</sup> WP 377.

<sup>24</sup> BT Preface, 5.

desire?”—it has at all times laid the emphasis of its discipline on extirpation (of sensuality, of pride, of lust for power, of avarice, of revengefulness).—But to attack the passions at their roots means to attack life at its roots: the practice of the Church is *hostile to life*...<sup>25</sup>

For Nietzsche, pretending that the passions can be extirpated or ignored is simply ignorant and bound to have constraining, ineffective results. Instead of suggesting a helpful direction for expression or sublimation for the passions, the Christian tradition suggests that we repress and deny them. “Thus Christianity has succeeded in transforming Eros and Aphrodite—great powers capable of idealism—into diabolical kobolds and phantoms by means of the torments it introduces into the consciences of believers whenever they are excited sexually.”<sup>26</sup> As Nietzsche acknowledges, the outcomes of such denials are psychological aberrations, ‘inner misery’ and hidden perversions of the extreme. For women this involves a ‘psychic knot’ where they grapple with the contradictory personas of virgin and whore.

Nietzsche expresses his wonder at the difficult maze women endure to be considered acceptable. In order to survive under the icon of ‘woman’ and the fear and pity of man, women love as a faith and succumb to the expectations of men through being great actors.<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche states that man wants woman to love him as he is her only faith, but man does not reciprocate; he takes while she gives. The irony is, “A man who loves like a woman becomes a slave; while a woman who loves like a woman becomes *a more perfect woman*.” Total submission by the woman is expected. While she renounces unconditionally to man, as his possession, man becomes richer, “...through the accretion

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<sup>25</sup> TI “Morality as Anti-Nature,” 1.

<sup>26</sup> D 76.

<sup>27</sup> GS 361.

of strength, happiness, and faith given to him by the woman who gives herself. Woman gives herself away, man acquires more...”<sup>28</sup>

Although Nietzsche never married, he held many friendships with women and expressed progressive views on female sexuality. He acknowledges traditional roles for women and the desire of women to serve, but he also recognizes that this attitude is one of habit, “for millennia they have been accustomed to stand before everything dominant with head bowed and arms folded across their chest.”<sup>29</sup> Women submit because it is familiar. They remain shameful of their sexuality because shame is taught as an appropriate mask for desire.

Nietzsche regards Christianity as the central instigator and instiller of anti-sex dogma. Through exposure of this predicament, he hopes to bring a new health, a holistic respect for sexuality in general as a vital part of life. Nietzsche is not advocating promiscuity, but rather an acceptance of sexuality as a natural and integral part of everyday existence. He remarks on the contradictory attitude that men have towards women—while men desire and long for female companionship and sexual relationships, they also debase the experience. For Nietzsche, this represents a complex subconscious psychosis that is inimical to life and beneficial to no one. Both men and women need to question their repressed states. Nietzsche advocates a re-infusion of sex into culture as a joyful celebration of life. He expresses great admiration for the cycles of life that pass through women’s bodies. Nietzsche realigns female sexual energy and the act of sex itself

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<sup>28</sup> GS 363.

<sup>29</sup> HAH 1.7.435.

with the holy, the miraculous and the beautiful. In turn, he ridicules chastity as an overzealous campaign of the misguided, small man.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the virtue of the smallest man, according to Nietzsche, “pity makes suffering contagious.” Whether we pity ourselves, pity another or are pitied by someone else we experience feelings of misery and hopelessness towards life. “It preserves what is ripe for destruction...”<sup>31</sup> Pity prolongs the experience of negative emotions and difficult life circumstances; it encourages a will to nothingness, infusing us with doubt. Pity’s gaze faces downward. The slave’s pity fails to respect suffering as integral to life; it eats at one’s pride and independence through wallowing in pain. In this instance, pity is an obtrusive emotion that causes spiritual stagnation.

In our society, the weak are often pitied and women, as the ‘inferior’ sex are familiar with receiving pity from men.

What, in spite of all fear, elicits pity for this dangerous and beautiful cat, “woman” is that she appears to suffer more, to be more vulnerable, more in need of love, and more condemned to disappointment than any other animal. Fear and pity: with these feelings man has so far confronted woman, always with one foot in tragedy which tears to pieces as it enchants.<sup>32</sup>

As Nietzsche points out, women have learned how to profit from pity in many regards and “are inventive when it comes to weakness” in order to receive kindness from men.<sup>33</sup> Such kindness, however, can only be of superficial benefit. Nietzsche suggests that the downward gaze of pity demoralizes women. It exacerbates their impression of being perpetually in debt to man. The more she is pitied the more helpless and resigned towards service she becomes, the further she feels obligated to man. Rather than

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<sup>30</sup> GM 3.2.

<sup>31</sup> AC 7.

<sup>32</sup> BGE 239.

<sup>33</sup> GS 66.



relieving her suffering, man's pity for woman instils and prolongs it; he enjoys and maintains his distance from her.

Concurrently, the pity of a woman for a man in love places her into a submissive state where her will to power is subsumed under his. "Woe to all who love without having a height that is above their pity!"<sup>34</sup> Women who are overwhelmed with pity for their lover turn their love into an unquestionable faith, they want to suffer for him and give up themselves in the process. Such women are living examples of Christian love; they become saviour to their man, "clairvoyant in the world of suffering." So much romanticism about self sacrifice, however, leads to folly and error. Woman's pity for man often comes to desperate choices and negative consequences. "This pity deceives itself regularly about its powers; woman would like to believe that love can achieve *anything*—that is her characteristic *faith*."<sup>35</sup> Women sometimes pity men to the point of self negation: they give so much away that little is left. While such surrender may seem admirable, for Nietzsche any man who accepts it demeans himself considerably. The burden is too large for either party.

However, when pity maintains a height from the one who is suffering, an opportunity for self discovery and overcoming may arise. As always with Nietzsche, difficult emotions provide an opportunity for self reflection and movement away from personal weakness. With pity, space is placed between the self and the object of pity, inviting reflective comparison between the two. For instance, when a woman perceives the pain of her lover, but feels a disassociation from it and pities him, she distances herself from his suffering and may turn her attention inward. Where the emotion of pity

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<sup>34</sup> TSZ 2.3.

<sup>35</sup> BGE 269.

does not become overwhelming, it reminds us of our strengths and re-infuses us with an affirmative will to power.

At the same time, the object of pity may be moved through frustration of the downward gaze into a productive drive. Someone who is already dissatisfied with their slavish qualities may be pushed into a refusal of the more dominant pathos through the degrading experience of pity. Still, this requires personal honesty, an underlying self love and a warrior spirit that fights like a lion to reject the call of pity.

Although Nietzsche casts pity as a largely slavish characteristic, he also allows for a “higher and more farsighted pity” to battle its cowardly brother. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, s.225 Nietzsche admits to the prevalence of a pity that sympathizes for every small suffering and introduces its adversary, “Thus it is pity *versus* pity.” Nietzsche’s higher pity defends ‘the discipline of suffering’ from the dysfunctional pity of the slave that would attempt to abolish it in favour of ‘well-being.’ Slaves pity the ‘creature in man,’ but it is this very aspect of the human that must suffer, according to Nietzsche, for the creator in man to prevail. “And *our* pity—do you not comprehend for whom our *converse* pity is when it resists your pity as the worst of all pampering and weaknesses?”

Kin to pity for the ‘creature in man’ is neighbourly love. They work together as great distractions from attention to the self. For women, neighbourly love is a prescription of being ‘good’ as a wife, mother or generally a good woman whose maternal virtue allows her to forget herself. As traditional caretakers women are expected to put the needs of others before themselves. Although motherhood and generosity are highly regarded by Nietzsche, he does not advocate self sacrifice. For, one must first develop self love before they can care for, teach or guide another human being

adequately. Neighbourly love is one of the Christian instruments that dissuade us from self development. “Your love of the neighbour is bad love of yourselves. You flee to your neighbour from yourselves and would like to make a virtue out of that: but I see through your ‘selflessness.’”<sup>36</sup>

According to Nietzsche, we engage in neighbourly love either to escape ourselves or find an egoistic reflection of ourselves. It is a distraction from the self that prevents our slavish attributes from rebelling. A *petty pleasure* recommended by the Church,

(doing good, giving, relieving, helping, encouraging, consoling, praising, rewarding); by prescribing ‘love of the neighbour’ the ascetic priest prescribes fundamentally an excitement of the strongest, most life-affirming drives, even if in the most cautious doses—namely the *will to power*. The happiness of ‘slight superiority,’ involved in all doing good, being useful, helping and rewarding

sedates the weaker or less powerful and calms them out of rebellion.<sup>37</sup> The *ressentiment* that women inevitably face is calmed through a ploy. They feel as if they are fulfilling a station or virtue through neighbourly love when they are simply masking their personal discontent through service to the community. The creative potential of *ressentiment* is lost through the sedating effects of herd consciousness. Women follow the fiction of the herd and act ‘selflessly’ in order to serve, as Nietzsche puts it, a larger *selfishness*.

The rigid dedication to rules and obligations that some women hold prevails upon their need for authority. Asceticism in all its suppressive perspectives remains a place of refuge because it provides meaning and merit for women’s pain, guilt and pity. Women follow the socio-religious recommendations of pity, chastity and neighbourly love because these very recommendations provide them with self-value. What we must realize, according to Nietzsche is, “the belief in authorities is the source of the

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<sup>36</sup> TSZ 1.16.

<sup>37</sup> GM 3.18.

conscience: it is therefore not the voice of God in the heart of man, but the voice of some man in man.”<sup>38</sup> Women follow a belief system that is disingenuous to them on many accounts. Under a Judeo-Christian heritage mixed with a utilitarian democratic political system women are acclaimed as passive spirits; passive to the state, God and man. Their virtue remains fixed as reactive and subjugated, as external to the self. We take values as given, but “what if a symptom of regression were inherent in the ‘good?’”<sup>39</sup>

According to Nietzsche, our understanding of a “moral urge” or what we believe to be our natural ethical tendencies is really a product of socio-historical influence. In *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche provides an explication of the process of value inversion from ancient Greek and Roman aristocratic values to a Judeo-Christian democratic morality. He asserts that we have moved from a culture where active attributes were championed to one where passive or reactive characteristics are affirmed in the promise of some reward. The passive spirit is acclaimed as virtuous and used as a means for the benefit of others. Individuals disregard their needs for health, success, creativity in order to give ‘selflessly.’

While egalitarian politics of democracy and Christianity proclaim equality as an inherent right, this is by far a reality. Thus, underprivileged persons choose the vehicles available to provide self worth and definition. They turn to societal understanding of the ‘good’ instead of looking inward. Nietzsche asserts that this deadens the spirit, encourages escapism, hopelessness and cynicism—the modern malaise of the ‘last man’. Life becomes work and each deed done is tallied in the hope of compensation.

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<sup>38</sup> HAH 2.2.52.

<sup>39</sup> GM Preface, 6.

Nietzsche explains the change in value significance as a rebellion of the lower classes, a revolt moved by the emotion of *ressentiment* against the ruling bodies. While 'good', 'strong', 'happy', 'noble', etc. were formerly used to describe the ruling class, the masters, the slave revolt in morality switched significance so that 'good' became the characteristics of the slave and all passive attributes accrued this benefit. This change was first instilled by the priest who under the doctrines of Christianity saw obvious advantages to having a herd of slaves in support of his religion. For the powerless, oppressed slave, value inversion provided an outlet for their *ressentiment*; by overhauling the system of rules that governed their lives they exacted a spiritual revenge on the master who oppressed them for so long. Thus, the master, the ruling class, is vilified, made evil, and through this degradation the slave elevates himself. Nietzsche argues that the lack of activity and autonomy in the slave's formation, his former subjugation to the master remains unconsciously instilled in his morality. Thus, the slave articulates unegoistic values as the highest good, claiming virtue through the ability to subvert their will in the aim of some other external goal. The interest of the herd is placed above the individual. Submission of the individual for the needs of the majority is encouraged in the interest of equality and for the benefit of the greatest number. Nietzsche's concern is that this encourages mediocrity. It isolates and debases exceptional people who do not identify with the herd.

While men have become slaves to the church and the state, women are slaves to slaves. Nietzsche explains that the slave morality makes men and women actors of principles that misinterpret weakness for strength. A glorification of service ensues; humility, dependence and pity are relegated as aspects of the 'good'. Feelings of

powerlessness and inactivity remain forefront with the slave, even in their rebellion. While the ruling class has the ability to take revenge against one who has harmed them, to express their emotions or frustrations, the slave does not. Thus, revolt expresses itself through a veneration of the submissive spirit. The meaning for life and the worth of the self turns outward and merit is awarded on the basis of selflessness. Free will is understood through the conscience, the ability to repress one's active mind in the interest of 'virtue'. The slave claims strength through self control (refusing to act) and the subversion of the will for God, the community, or some higher aim. While Nietzsche recognizes great variations of power dynamics between the sexes, he notes that in the majority women act as slaves to men.

Still, the possibilities are limitless. Within each person there is a mix of active and reactive forces. How human beings come together is dependant upon the meeting in question. "The power of transformation, the Dionysian power, is the primary definition of activity."<sup>40</sup> Within each of us there is tremendous force waiting to be willed. As Nietzsche points out, women are natural generators of Dionysian energy— coming into connection with it and using it to challenge woman's slave morality remains the challenge.

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<sup>40</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 42.

## CHAPTER 4

### A PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALING

“You had fashioned me into a mirror but I have dipped that mirror in the waters of oblivion—that you call life.”<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche’s prescription for healing ‘woman’ is as multifarious as her malaise. It involves a fundamental questioning of identity, one that is particular to the woman’s diverse selves. Although demanding in scope, Nietzsche provides tremendous tools: *amor fati*, eternal recurrence, solitude and friendship. He also utilizes powerful symbols to lovingly re-introduce representations of the feminine to his readership. Nietzsche’s genealogical study of ‘woman’ supplies Irigaray with vital instruments from which to base her journey into *jouissance*. Additionally, Nietzsche explores suffering as a transformative tool. Thus, suffering becomes strategic and the labyrinth of ‘woman’ offers up a golden thread from which to search out difference.

The iconography of ‘woman’ and the slave morality harnessing her as fetish and servant to the discourse of the same is explored by Irigaray in her amorous dialogue with Nietzsche. Although Nietzsche proposes that women may be able to do away with ‘woman’ he also expresses his scepticism at this possibility. Irigaray provides a point of departure from Nietzsche’s cynicism towards woman’s capacity for self knowledge. Although Irigaray fails to present a concrete explication of what difference beyond the dialectics of the same might be her response to Nietzsche still reflects the process of self

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<sup>1</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 4.

discovery for women away from ‘woman’. Irigaray explains that Nietzsche is unable to discover *jouissance* and as such struggles with the possibility of its very existence. He associates woman with difficult boundary concepts, making her at times “distance itself.”<sup>2</sup> While Nietzsche explores various figures of the feminine, exposing ‘woman’ as a male truth and an Ariadne, he returns to his association with her as the ultimate outside.

Thus, it is my aim to identify the spectrum of Nietzsche’s female: as fetish, slave, artist, creator and enigma. Perhaps, Nietzsche resides within the trappings of a patriarchal philosophical system rooted in the inevitable misogyny that a difference of the same imposes upon women. Then again, his familiarity with ‘woman’ may be greater than any other male philosopher. Is Nietzsche the, “first psychologist of the eternally feminine” as he claims in *Ecce Homo*?<sup>3</sup> Either way, such an unveiling (if it is indeed possible) requires a lucid engagement with his style as a great provocateur and weaver of metaphorical allusion. For Nietzsche, woman exceeds duality—his work illustrates her numerous masks and the morally driven chimeras that both sexes attach to her. Thus, I will confirm my contention away from Irigaray that Nietzsche cannot be situated within the dialectic. He admits his own tendency, as well as that of man to impose ‘woman’ onto women, but then breaks from this habit and challenges women to search for their truth beyond phallogocentric definition.

“Women are considered profound. Why? Because one never fathoms their depths. Women aren’t even shallow.”<sup>4</sup> As Nietzsche conveys, women remain fixed in states of masking. They are figured as ‘woman’, sewn up as signs and presented as types.

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Spurs Nietzsche’s Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 49.

<sup>3</sup> EH “Why I Write Such Good Books,” 5.

<sup>4</sup> TI “Maxims and Arrows,” 27.



Man has offered up his truth of 'woman' and women submit, re-iterating it as fetish and slave.<sup>5</sup> She is as Derrida writes, "censured, debased and despised" both as a figure of truth and as a figure of falsehood. As Nietzsche portrays, man "offers truth and his phallus as his own proper credentials."<sup>6</sup> 'Woman' is that which man is not and should not become. Within the Christian framework, she is solidified into polar opposites: virgin and whore. Either way, 'woman' gives herself away through mercy and/or sexuality. Following this design, she serves the interest of the patriarch, whether he is God or man.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche points out the sense of entitlement that men have for women in love. He states that 'woman' gives herself away in love while man takes her on as a new possession, "woman gives herself away, man acquires more—"<sup>7</sup> In this instance, she gives only to be possessed, as a slave and/or a fetish. Women identify with 'woman' and are subsumed under this image. However, some may choose imitation, rather than identification: they simulate the act of giving as 'woman' and exploit the iconography for their own benefit. While both subject positions involve reactive forces within the will to power allocating subject status under the patriarchal hegemony, the later manipulation of 'woman' by women as a malleable sign involves artistry. As Nietzsche notes, women engaged in artistry become actors, learned in the art of decoy. Here there is a 'becoming-active' of the will to power, an activated awareness over self worth and an intention towards inner mastery. Once a woman mimics 'woman' with a

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<sup>5</sup> GS 68.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida *Spurs*, 97.

<sup>7</sup> GS 363.

sense of distance, she takes departure from her slave morality and enters into the artistic stage of Dionysian ‘dissimulatress’.<sup>8</sup>

Nietzsche explains that in order for the will to power to become ruled by active forces, the person in question must shift their gaze inside and seek affirmation there. Through solitude, eternal recurrence and *amor fati* women may search out their self value apart from male acknowledgement. Thus, women disengage themselves from slavery and fetish and engage in self shaping. While this process is difficult, Nietzsche introduces Dionysus and the lion as creative symbols of destruction for overcoming subjection and weakness. Both provide inspiration and psychological assistance in the deconstructive and transformative stages where attempts to create space away from former enslavements are made.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche explores three stages of spiritual development: the camel, lion and child. The lion is a move away from the unconditional belief in morality and the ‘thou shalt’ of a Christian/Platonic heritage that the camel is burdened by. Pity, neighbourly love, chastity and the self sacrificing obligations of woman’s slave morality reside in the realm of the camel who bows down and takes good and evil onto her shoulders. The lion stage of the spirit has faced the burden of the camel in solitude, moved into the desert and struggled with the temptations of nihilism only to scream out “No!” The lion replaces the will of God and man with her own will.

Through discomfort, disgust and sometimes self hatred the lion is forced to finally refuse the burden of a value system that is not her own. She attempts to have authority over her belief system, rather than being ruled by external dogma. She hungers for self-mastery and, “...asserts that there will be no value creation that does not (rightfully) have

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<sup>8</sup> Derrida, *Spurs*, 97.

its origin exclusively..." in her own will.<sup>9</sup> The lion engages in a self analysis and attempts to eradicate the slavish belief systems within; she begins to perceive God, the phallus and 'woman' as fictions. She faces the weak reactive forces of her will and attempts negation, in turn affirming her own creative powers. The lion begins to transform herself through negation, she screams No!" to the burden of the camel.

As Gooding-Williams suggests, the lion attempts to usurp God. In doing so, there is an aim to take on the shell of God, but replace it with new meaning. As such, the lion is not a creator of new values. A female lion, attempts to inhabit former icons, she manipulates fetish, engages in artistry, but cannot divorce it from its origins. While she is able to destroy the power of her camel burden, she cannot forget it. In order to pass through the lion stage of the spirit Nietzsche believes that one must completely disentangle oneself from the tyrannical forces that the lion wars against. Failure to do so may result in the plight of the 'higher man.'

The next stage of the spirit requires an innocence, a forgetting where the concerns of the camel no longer hold any meaning at all. Nietzsche's creator of new values is the child, taking part in the sacred yes of a new beginning, no longer reactive, she has forgotten the 'thou shalt.' The child is not concerned with the lion's fighting spirit because psychological irritation towards the values of the external world has been alleviated. After a lot of nay saying and negation of reactive drives, a stage of slumber and forgetting ensues. The child is awoken into pure affirmation.

Nietzsche teaches eternal recurrence and *amor fati* as meditative devices for bringing the camel through the lion stage and into the child. He gives us Dionysus to

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism*, ed. Judith Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 39.

replace Christ. Instead of shouldering the sins of humankind and becoming the ultimate camel as Christ did, Dionysus tears into the very skin of sin, he takes repressed desire to its limit, living out every passionate chaos. Through excess Dionysus exhausts the burden of Christ. In the interests of affirmation, he screams out the “No!” of the lion one hundred times over, until it is completely spent. Dionysus refuses the heavy load of the braying ass who says yes to everything—to the life denying practices of Christianity, old idols and repressive value schemas. At the same time he affirms suffering in its polyvalent forms without moralizing it. Dionysus creates and transforms through destruction so that “reactive forces do not return.”<sup>10</sup> As Deleuze explains, eternal return is the conceptual tool that aids such an overcoming.

In order to tear down the linear construction of time where life is lived in expectation of an afterlife Nietzsche provides eternal recurrence—affirmation of this life now, this life on earth. Nietzsche endeavours to release us from the metaphysics of revenge that are fed through nihilism, asceticism and various slave moralities. The spirit of gravity prevents the dislodging of repressive conventions; it inhibits flight or new heights of wisdom. Through a recognition of the fictitious nature of time and an affirmation of self love (*amor fati*), eternal recurrence transgresses the spirit of gravity and earth envy (fear and hatred of the feminine).

In “On The Vision and the Riddle” in *Zarathustra* Nietzsche provides a narrative account of the slaying of the spirit of gravity through eternal recurrence. In order to conquer his spirit of gravity, Zarathustra draws on his lion warrior spirit exclaiming, “Courage, however, is the best slayer—courage which attacks: which slays even death

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<sup>10</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 71.

itself, for it says, “Was *that* life? Well then! Once More!”<sup>11</sup> Zarathustra states that he stands with his dwarf in a ‘Moment’ or the Now. On either side of the Moment are two paths, one going into the past, the other into the future. In order to be in the Now and be released from religious guilt, Zarathustra proclaims that we must eternally recur the events of the past and realize that they exist in eternity. Through this understanding, we accept our past, learn to love it, will it and take it as our own so that we may be released from the cycles of revenge that the spirit of gravity ignites within. Once Zarathustra activates eternal recurrence and *amor fati* the spirit of gravity disappears and he is left alone to determine his fate.

Eternal recurrence allows us to rethink time and becoming: to re-conceptualize time as cyclical without a beginning or end. “All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle.”<sup>12</sup> For Nietzsche, becoming then has endless possibilities and the thought of eternal recurrence provides momentum for becoming-active of the will to power. Eternal recurrence brings ethical reflection to action: am I making a decision that is out of my own affirmation, is it in conjunction with *my* beliefs? It brings independence and confidence to decision making through self questioning: is this choice of such a nature that I could will its activity indefinitely? As Deleuze explains, eternal recurrence is a useful device for providing the will to power with an ethical rule.<sup>13</sup>

As a wilful affirmation of activity, eternal recurrence allows the actor to be released from petty pleasures or weaknesses that hinder the spirit from growth. It moves one to question the ideological motivations behind their habituated selves and then let them go. The great instrument of the lion, “Only the eternal return can complete nihilism

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<sup>11</sup> TSZ 3.2.1.

<sup>12</sup> TSZ 3.2.2.

<sup>13</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 68.

because it makes negation a negation of reactive forces themselves.”<sup>14</sup> When the lion is “an angry spectator of all that is past” and thinks, “that will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time’s covetousness...” eternal recurrence steps in and accepts the past. By willing the past instead of reconciling it with some moralizing belief system, we heal ourselves. We escape the torment of revenge, as “the will’s ill will against time and ‘it was’” and proclaim, “But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.”<sup>15</sup> By not only accepting one’s own past but even going further and proclaiming the eternity of its being, one is able to divorce her will from the spirit of gravity, to forget the relevance of its presence. Once the spirit of gravity no longer has any hold over the individual because she has rejected the conventions of time and the valuations of good and evil through eternal recurrence and *amor fati*, the camel burden disappears completely. With the assistance of these meditative devices, women can extricate themselves from ‘woman’ and will a new way of being, dependent upon a difference that is really their own.

Accordingly, “We misinterpret the expression of ‘eternal return’ if we understand it as ‘return of the same.’”<sup>16</sup> Eternal return or recurrence acts as a selective tool—it allows one to will a differentiation, to turn reactive forces on their head. As Deleuze states, when one wills a negative or reactive force that very force negates itself—reactive forces are oppositional to active willing. As such they do not return through the process of eternal recurrence. “The eternal return teaches us that becoming-reactive has no being.”<sup>17</sup> It is a movement into emptiness that cannot be brought back through affirmation because its very nature is negative.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>15</sup> TSZ 2.20.

<sup>16</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 48.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 72.

As we have seen, eternal return is a potent instrument for annihilating the camel load and the spirit of gravity. The power of Dionysian chaos is realized here: through destruction a new strength, a new becoming arises. For those who are not pulled down by their own self destruction, negation shifts its intention: it acts in the interest of affirmation.<sup>18</sup> In this sense Dionysus is Nietzsche's joyful annihilator: he ignites us in a dance of excess in order to will about the obliteration of *ressentiment*, fear, the cycles of revenge, weakness and all the reactive forces of the will to power that disable us from living in self-mastery. He is our muse for self overcoming, the holy lion that moves into the magic of the child by utilizing negation as a powerful tool for affirmative being.

The myth of Ariadne is another allegorical tool of Nietzsche's that explains his notion of spiritual development. As Lampert points out, the story of Theseus, Ariadne and Dionysus explores the birth of the divine out of the heroic.<sup>19</sup> "For this is the soul's secret: only when the hero has abandoned her, she is approached in a dream by the overhero."<sup>20</sup> When Ariadne is abandoned by Theseus she loses her hero and the 'higher' values that she was tied to through him. Such abandonment, however, is fertile because it delivers her away from the dryness of 'woman' and into the vast sea of discovery wherein lives *jouissance*.

In the myth, Ariadne defies her father and saves Theseus from the fate of the Minotaur and the maze of the labyrinth. Theseus, Nietzsche's higher man who carries the heavy weight of the camel and angry courage of the lion, is unable to love Ariadne and leaves her alone on the island of Naxos. Left in solitude, Ariadne seeks out inner strength in order to survive. Without a hero, a higher man to react to and from which to seek

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<sup>18</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 179.

<sup>19</sup> Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 122.

<sup>20</sup> TSZ 2.13.

definition, Ariadne looks to her self for meaning. Nietzsche poem “Ariadne’s Complaint” explores her time of solitude on Naxos when she suffers from Theseus’s abandonment and questions herself. The chaotic energy of Dionysus brings Ariadne into frenzy; she undergoes a state of excess where boundaries cease and the present moment is upon her. Dionysus acts as a catalyst for Ariadne to break her attachment to the values of the higher man and relieve her sorrow over Theseus. Dionysus heals Ariadne through a love for her that affirms her active feminine spirit.

As Deleuze states, Dionysus is the becoming in being. Ariadne is the second affirmation of becoming that allows being to reach a state of pure affirmation.<sup>21</sup> Dionysus activates being as multiplicity and difference. Ariadne, in turn, is a reflection of differentiation for Dionysus; she affirms being as difference and in doing so expresses both her self love and her love for Dionysus. Ariadne represents that final phase of development in the human being for Nietzsche where one is released from the ‘thou shalt’ and life is transformed.

As an effeminate male who masks himself, Dionysus is familiar to Ariadne; he enables her to reveal herself through mutual concealment. Dionysus encourages female sexual autonomy and emotional expression. As Nietzsche’s anti-Christ, he rejects pity and chastity. Unlike Theseus, Dionysus does not judge woman or try to mould her—he encourages Ariadne to find her own way through the labyrinth. He acts as a true friend, providing her with tough love and encouragement. In his relationship with Ariadne, he represents the male with the developed Anima who hopes to help woman discover herself apart from ‘woman’, to facilitate the awakening of her inner self. He loves her not as a possession or a servant but as a beautiful reflection of difference. Ariadne and Dionysus

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<sup>21</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 189.



are mirrors to one another, mirrors that reflect both variation and resemblance, but *never* sameness.

Still, for Irigaray, eternal return is wrapped up in the discourse of the same that fails to provide the necessary guidance for finding a *jouissance*. She argues that eternal recurrence rests upon the shoulders of woman's complicity to serve man and claims that Nietzsche's teaching of it implicitly assumes the subjection of women to the male will. Irigaray challenges the notion of 'forgetting' and the possibility that Nietzsche might offer a meditative tool for women to find a place outside of the male other. Additionally, she questions Nietzsche's treatment of 'woman' as enigma, implying that it is cowardliness, and his very own *ressentiment* that makes him impress such mystery on her. "But you will never have pleasure (*jouir*) in woman if you insist on being woman. If you insist in making her a stage in your process."<sup>22</sup>

Irigaray is concerned that Nietzsche's eternal recurrence is a re-articulation of sameness where only a 'deaf ear' is turned to the female. Instead of suggesting an open dialogue between man and woman, Nietzsche prescribes self inversion, a reproduction of the 'self-same', according to Irigaray. She argues that the becoming-active of will to power is a self involved process, where the outside is not considered, where the aim to obliterate reactive drives closes one's ears to the other.

In response to this charge, it is crucial that we contextualize eternal recurrence. In Nietzsche's work, the movement towards a becoming-active of force is a *stage* of eternal recurrence that necessitates solitude and introversion. The purpose of such isolation is to unburden oneself from slavery. Regardless of sex/gender, eternal recurrence requires a closing off of oneself to the other, a spiritual retreat from the world in general in order to

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<sup>22</sup> Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, 39.

develop inner strength and courage. Nietzsche does not suggest that we permanently isolate ourselves, quite the contrary. He encourages friendship as a medicine for narcissism and even confronts the lack of reciprocity between men and women.

There is no doubt that Nietzsche is hard on women. However, to assume that eternal recurrence as a meditative device is also a phallogocentric mode of revenge seems misguided to me. The purpose of eternal recurrence is to release oneself from previous ideological codes of population control: herd mentalities. Foremost, its function is to alleviate the psychological harm of Christian guilt through acceptance of the past. As a 'good European' Nietzsche does not aim to place himself over any race, culture or situate one sex as necessarily superior to the other. On the contrary, he speaks out against servitude: "... the free spirit wants not to be served and in that he discovers his happiness."<sup>23</sup>

If we considered the autological movement of eternal recurrence as simply one stage of it rather than its entirety, Irigaray's criticism does not hold. As Deleuze points out, eternal recurrence is not intended to be simply a repetition of sameness. Ariadne, as the final stage of affirmation is a reflection of open-ended difference, not a motionless mirror. Nietzsche gives us eternal recurrence as a tool of opening, to welcome change, overcoming and new beginning. The beginning that one finds, however, is particular to the person. Nietzsche is aware that the inauguration of a female centred joy, the discovery of a *jouissance* is well beyond his knowledge scope. He assumes the role of Dionysus instead offering up provocation and poetic riddles to spark curiosity and bring women into their own questioning.

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<sup>23</sup> HAH 1.7.432.

Nietzsche offers us “The Dancing Song” as an expression of both perplexity and insight on *jouissance*. In order to overcome enslavement Nietzsche advocates a remembering—this is part of the deconstructive phase of the lion. In terms of woman, however, he is well aware that the path towards unveiling her lies solely in the hands of women.

“The Dancing Song” in the Second Part of *Zarathustra* depicts a scene where Zarathustra in his search for a well (a new source of joy and/or knowledge) stumbles upon a group of girls dancing in the forest. The girls stop dancing when they see Zarathustra; they are afraid that he is there to be a ‘killjoy’ and spoil their girlish fun. Zarathustra responds to their apprehension by entering into a song that brings the girls back into dance. His song is an enchanting dialogue with life and wisdom (both considered female) where Zarathustra admits his vulnerability to the unfathomable quality of life. In doing so, Nietzsche is commenting on a number of themes: man’s poor understanding of woman, the association between the unknown and the feminine, as well as the phallogocentric economy of truth. Zarathustra sings to life,

“Into your eyes I looked recently, O life! And into the unfathomable I then seemed to be sinking. But you pulled me out with a golden fishing rod; and you laughed mockingly when I called you unfathomable.  
 “Thus runs the speech of all fish,” you said; “what *they* do not fathom is unfathomable. But I am merely changeable and wild and a woman in every way, and not virtuous—even if you men call me profound, faithful, eternal and mysterious. But you men always present us with your own virtues, O you virtuous men!”<sup>24</sup>

Here, Nietzsche suggests that men take on two modes of action when they come across something that is foreign, fearful and/or enviable to them. They call it an enigma and/or impose their own set of meaning onto the thing despite that things actual significance. The phallogocentric system of truth has made ‘woman’ into both. She is

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<sup>24</sup> TSZ 2.10.

an icon rich in typologies, but she is also the greatest simulacrum. Life, wisdom and truth are named female by Nietzsche for these very reasons. As signs that are overlaid with signification value accrues to them. Underneath rests the abyss.

Still, Nietzsche challenges us to step into the abyss, to seek out that which is the most hidden, behind the mask. Some, such as Derrida, interpret Nietzsche as saying that truth, as woman, is a process of appropriation, without a bottom, without a depth, natural meaning or essence. I am inclined, however, to construe Nietzsche's treatment of 'woman' as strategic, rather than literal. He is aiming to do a number of things: to undercut bivalent logic; to provoke us into questioning meaning as an institution of the phallus and Christianity; to trace back the self through the masks that have been overlaid upon signs. Nietzsche does not reject meaning altogether. Rather, he elucidates meaning as multi-layered and tells us that the path towards truth is ultimately through the self.

Thus, the truth of 'woman' lies within. She is slave, fetish, artist, creator and enigma, but even more than any of these woman is *jouissance*. Nietzsche, as Dionysus, rouses women out of their slavish fatigue and sings a prescription for healing to awaken their rebellious laughter. Through cruelty and generosity, he throws out a fishing rod and implores us to toss the line into our very own 'waters of oblivion.'

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