

STRINDBERG'S MISOGYNY REVISITED – THE AUTHOR AND HIS FEMALE TRANSLATORS

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Abstract

This article describes the cooperation and relationship between the Swedish author August Strindberg and two of his translators, Mathilde Prager and the Baltic-German Laura Marholm. Both women were of utter importance to Strindberg's introduction to the German speaking countries as well as German literary circles. They excelled not only as translators, but acted as well as literary agents supported him enormously in situations of personal crisis. Even though their cooperation records great successes and put Strindberg on the map, they both ended less than amicable. Where money issues played a role in both cases there were significant differences in how the relationships ended. In Prager's case the feminist's reluctance to translate some of Strindberg's more directly misogynist plays led to amongst others to the Authors decision to grant his sole authorisation to a younger German translator. In case of Laura Marholm the friendly relationship turned in a big disappointment for her and even into deep hatred on Strindberg's side. Marholm herself was a very extrovert and energetic woman used to handle all her husband's affairs. So when she tried to help Strindberg in the same way the paranoid author considered it ill-willing and dominating meddling and broke all relations to her.

Keywords

Cultural transmission, Scandinavian literature, translators, fin-de-siècle, women writers

Introduction

In my recently finished PhD-research I dealt with female transmitters of modern Scandinavian literature and culture. (Jiresch, 2013) Those women played an important part in spreading various societal and cultural ideas from the countries in the Northern periphery throughout Europe in the 19th century. Those agents of transmission embodied various professions like translators, literary critics, literary agents, reviewers, editors, language teachers, journalists etc. However these cultural transmitters lived and worked predominantly in the shadow of famous authors and are often overlooked in literary or cultural historical works.

This article aims to shed light on the cooperation and relationship between the Swedish author August Strindberg (1849-1912) and two of his translators, the Austrian Mathilde Prager (1844-1921) and the Baltic-German Laura Marholm (1854-1928). The main question to be answered is in how far Strindberg's alleged misogyny plays an influential role in the relationship with his female translators.

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Mathilde Prager

Prager lived with her husband Moritz Josef Prager for the main part of her life in Vienna. 37 years Prager devoted mainly to the transmission of Scandinavian literature and culture – the longest period amongst her colleagues I researched. She always wrote under her pseudonym Erich Holm. Prager translated 229 pieces (including 30 monographs) of which 193 were articles by Georg Brandes (1842-1927). Concerning literary criticism she wrote 36 items and one monograph. She also translated political articles and even a great number of pieces of literary criticism. Prager acquired a reputation as an excellent translator and expert on Scandinavian literature. Although financial insecurity was a recurring issue in her life, she still only translated the literature of her choice and spared no efforts in promoting especially progressive works, of which the German public was still suspicious. (Jiresch, 2013, 312)

Prager was very committed to the Austrian women's movement. She was a member of the General Austrian Women's Association which fought for the political rights of women in Austria. She was also a member of the Association of female writers and artists. Furthermore she contributed to the public discussion of marital problems and the gender inequality in several articles with very progressive feminist views. (Jiresch, 2013, 330 et seqq.)

In the German literary scene she certainly had an extensive network, consisting mainly of publishers and magazine editors. Her most important professional as well as personal contacts that lasted over decades were Georg Brandes and August Strindberg. Introducing Strindberg in the German-speaking area can be seen as a pioneering work of transmission. Their correspondence revolved around other Scandinavian writers and Prager's own literary critical work. She also provided information about the Viennese literary scene.

Prager and Strindberg

The cooperation of Prager and August Strindberg lasted over sixteen years. Prager proved herself to be a true pioneer, she was in fact the first person who introduced Strindberg in the German-speaking countries. (Ahlström, 1979, 46) Prager translated fifteen different works of Strindberg that were published as monographs and articles. In addition, she wrote ten articles about the Swede and his work, including a highly personal document, namely her own experience with Strindberg. (Prager, 1915, 14-17)

1885 she read *Röda rummet* (1879), which had meant the breakthrough of the realistic novel in Sweden. The work and the author, however, had been entirely unknown in German-speaking countries by then. In May 1885 Prager wrote a review of *Röda rummet* for *Das Magazin* and sent a letter about it to Strindberg to inform him about her endeavor. This turned out to be the beginning of an intensive and fruitful collaboration that lasted until the end of 1901. (Ahlström, 1979, 46) The Swedish author was very impressed by her work and decided to include Prager in his next project. He planned to write travel letters describing the living conditions of European farmers and Austria seemed to be an appropriate audience for that. Prager

on the other hand found both the extent of the manuscript as well as the social reformatory tendencies of Strindberg too radical for Austria. So Strindberg decided to try the Scandinavian market at first. Finally he managed to sell his travel letters to the Danish newspaper *Politiken*. After several changes the newly formed *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* accepted Prager's German translation part one in June 1886. Strindberg was so pleased that he told Prager she would not need to send him any fee for it. When she sent him a small amount anyway Strindberg turned out to be quite ungrateful about it later. This actually happened concerning his plans to publish the travel letters as a book after publication in journals. The new editor of the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* was not interested though and so Strindberg had to pay Prager himself. His anger he expressed in letters to the Swedish publisher Albert Bonnier, whom he even asked for another German translator and inquired about his rights:

Now the French Peasant is finished and the end is translated into German in Vienna by a woman who initially kept 2/3 of the fee from Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung and now even demands continuing royalties of the German book edition. This is a nice concept of fairness! (Eklund, 1964, 101, 1334)

Apparently Strindberg had “forgotten” that it was thanks to Prager's generosity that he had received anything at all and she had not even been paid for the second part. Bonnier on the other hand realised that very well and pointed out her engagement in finding a publisher to the author. (Bang, 2006, 76) This anecdote shows already that Prager was not always treated very well by Strindberg.

Often Strindberg reported about his new writings and suggested translations which Prager not always accepted though, if she personally disliked it or felt it to be offensive for the German speaking audience, as in the case of *Fadren* (1887). Strindberg had already expected that and sent her therefore *Hemsöborna* (1887), which he thought suitable because harmless. Prager agreed what pleased the Swede, however, he could not refrain from adding: “[...] This means little honor for your nation, by the way, that just the worst and meaningless will come through.” (Eklund, 1964, 370, 1516)

A great personal dilemma for Prager brought the case of the play *Fordringsägare* (1890) about. A group of young Viennese authors had contacted Prager while planning a liberal theatre about a Strindbergian play. Strindberg insisted she should translate his *Fordringsägare* for a production, which he regarded his most mature accomplishment to date. Purely artistically the drama did make a strong impression on Prager, but the content she found extremely offensive to women.

Aber die heftigen Ausfälle, die nicht bloß der Ehebrecherin, sondern dem weiblichen Geschlecht im allgemeinen galten, schreckten mich, wenn ich sie mir auch als psychologisch, durch den Ingrim des betrogenen Gatten begründet, zu erklären versuchte. Schließlich ließ ich mich doch bestimmen,

meine Bedenken zu überwinden, und meldete es Strindberg, ohne ihm das Widerstreben zu verschweigen, das ich dabei empfand. (Prager, 1915, 14)

One can only imagine how much of a struggle it must have been for the feminist Prager to translate his attacks on the female gender. After Prager had translated Strindberg's drama with some reluctance, she found herself once again facing problems with the piece. The planned liberal theatre could not be established after all and numerous theaters in Vienna and Berlin sent her rejections. The play with an "adulteress, a vindictive and an epileptic" seemed to be too naturalistic and unsuitable for the German audience. Invited by Ola Hansson and Laura Marholm to Berlin, Strindberg finally succeeded with this work there. The first performance was in the Berlin Residenztheater and was such a success that soon other German theaters followed and asked for further Strindberg dramas. In March 1893, the piece was then performed in Vienna. Although she success was not as undivided as in Germany. The play strongly polarized there. (Bang, 2006, 90-94)

Further difficulties in working with Strindberg appeared in times when he was not satisfied with Prager's choice of journals or the negotiations with editors or publishers. The topic of pay was, as shown above, a perennial problem. In 1894 for example Strindberg simply kept the whole fee for his Italian travel sketches, which appeared in Prager's translation in the *Neue Revue*. He assumed it to be the down payment and therefore felt not compelled to give anything to her. (Bang 2006, 83-84)

Strindberg usually occurred very polite and mild in his letters towards Prager, as opposed to an audacity, which otherwise marked his epistolary style, as John Landquist observed. This could prove that he was well aware of her tremendous commitment to his work. Nevertheless at some occasions he wrote quite derogatory about her, such in another letter to Albert Bonnier. Regarding the Nordic marriage and morality debate: "Was Madame Prager schwätzt, will ich nicht lesen." (Eklund, 1964, 152, 1673)

For a long time Mathilde Prager was Strindberg's preferred German translator. He was convinced of the quality of her work by consulting with experts, as he assured her. The cooperation found a sudden end, however, when the young German student Emil Schering appeared on the scene. Ironically, Schering was so intrigued by a performance of *Creditors* (in Prager's translation) that he immediately decided to devote himself entirely to the translation of the Swedish author. Schering pursued his goal to say the least ruthlessly. He tricked Prager into lending him some unpublished manuscripts of her translations, which he used to compare with his own. In 1899 Prager found out that Schering planned a complete edition of Strindberg plays prevented a new version of her *Creditors* to be published. Due to lack of literary conventions, she even had to give up her rights free of charge to the publisher Reclam. (Bang, 2006, 99-101)

After discussing with Schering himself about the rights to Strindberg's translations Prager received a letter by the Swede, politely informing her about his final rejection and giving all authorisations to Schering. (Eklund, 1964, 255, 4272) In

desperation Prager tried to get help from the German Writers' Union and even considered a trial which, however fell through and she had to accept the conditions.

That Strindberg chose Schering, is mainly explained by the fact that the Swede cared less for the quality of his translations Sweden than for the commitment and the desire of the young translator to transmit Strindberg's work at all cost. Prager had, for example, refused to translate *Fadren* and *Julie Fröken* because she had felt attacked as a woman by them. Thus appeared Schering, who distinguished himself by his total devotion and admiration for the author, especially suited for the international conquest. (Bang, 2006, 102) In addition, Schering stated bluntly, only a man could translate him, by appealing to Strindberg's misogyny, as Strindberg would be such a "male" author. (Nilsson, 1995, 61. Broomans, 2004,168.)

Even after the end of their cooperation Prager remained loyal to the Swede. She continued to follow his work with great interest and wrote several articles about him. Although Schering had displaced her, he could not deprive her of the great honor of introducing Strindberg to the German-speaking countries. Several of her translations also experienced new editions, which made her very proud. Despite her personal difficulties with the poet and her refusal to translate some of his works, because she perceived women as negatively described in them, she did not turn into a Strindberg-opponent. (Bang, 2006, 103-107.) On the contrary, she tried to interpret his female characters psychologically and encouraged understanding concerning his biography. In her opinion, he only became a woman-hater under the pressure of a growing distrust and his imaginings. Strindberg could not endure to admit his mistakes, whereupon he blamed others, i.e. the woman. (Holm, 1912, 1, 83-84.) His mental problems had frequently aroused her concern and were not as easy to separate from his work in her view. This she illustrated in her review of the Strindberg-memories of the Swedish author Adolf Paul (1863-1943):

Es müsste eine interessante Aufgabe für einen Kenner sein, im einzelnen zu untersuchen, inwieweit des Dichters krankhafte Anlage, wenn auch nicht auf seine mächtige Gestaltungskraft, so doch auf die Entwicklung seiner Anschauungen, seine Charakterschilderung, die Psychologie seiner Gestalten zurückgewirkt hat. (Holm, 1.8.1915, 21, 1317.)

Although most of their correspondence consisted of occupational topics, Prager also strived toward a friendly relationship, shared his concerns (such as Strindberg's first divorce when he lost contact with his three children) and supported him when in need. This is evident in the case of his stay in Paris in 1895. Strindberg was then only moderately successful with his writings and therefore in a precarious financial situation, his chemical experiments aggravated a skin disease so severely that he had to be hospitalized. Some Paris-dwelling Scandinavians began to collect money to pay for Strindberg's medical expenses. An appeal was placed in the Danish newspaper *Politiken* describing his helpless state. After Prager had read this, she was deeply concerned – in addition she had not received a letter from Strindberg in some time – and tried to sell two of his pieces, which she had translated to theatres in Vienna.

However, she failed with *Himmelrikets nycklar eller sankte by vandrar på jorden* (1892) and *Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar* (1884) due to the censorship. Worried about Strindberg's health, she tried to contact with him via Jonas Lie (1833-1908). The Norwegian writer's son Erik brought Strindberg Prager's letter, whereupon the Swede replied again. (Bang, 2006, 43-44)

In conclusion one can say that Prager was one of the most loyal translators of the Swede and distinguished herself by enormous commitment and enthusiasm. Especially at the beginning of their collaboration, when Strindberg was still unknown, Prague had not become discouraged by the many initial refusals and always continued on the search for publishers and theatres. Despite the rude "dismissal" on the part of Strindberg and some financial friction, the Swede made it clear time and again in his letters how much he appreciated the work of Prager and let her sometimes even keep the whole fee. (Bang, 2006, 106-107) The literature discussed by the two, primarily revolved around his work. Appreciating her literary critical judgment, he often permitted her to choose which piece could fit for what magazine or theatre. On the whole, one can consider the cooperation of Strindberg and Prague as an exceptional success.

Laura Marholm

Marholm was born in Riga had a Russian Passport and a Danish Father but grew up in the light of her mother's German culture. Local education provided her with a teaching diploma. But concerning European literature she can be considered an autodidact. (Brantly, 1991, 8-11. Sprengel, 1993, 711-712) She reached a certain level of fame in the literary public, not only in German-speaking countries, but also in the German elite in the Baltic States and Russia.

Concerning Marholm's activity as cultural transmitter, she worked as a translator, as a literary historian and literary critic as well. In her active time of 21 years Marholm translated 27 monographs, 140 articles, wrote 50 articles of literary criticism and two monographs.

In her youth she was mainly interested in German authors and local history, but her enthusiasm about Scandinavian literature was awakened when she in 1883 started reading Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and Georg Brandes. Inspired by Brandes' literary and social criticism, and absorbing his interpretations of Ibsen's writings, Marholm wrote a letter to the Danish critic carried by ardent enthusiasm in 1884. In the fall of 1885, she finally packed her bags and moved to Copenhagen. (Brantly, 1991, 22-25.) There Brandes acted a literary mentor to Marholm, assisted her in the procuring of Nordic literature and introduced her to literary and social circles.

Her future husband Ola Hansson (1860-1925) she also met through Brandes. Her marriage to the Swedish author in 1889 marked the beginning of a tremendously tight and successful cooperation. (Brantly, 1991, 48-49, 61-62. Witt-Brattström, 2007, 18-20.) Hansson benefited enormously from her reviews, translations, and especially from her connections in the German literature market. Germany was often visited by Scandinavian authors who felt not understood at home, Germany also meant a way to access the rest of Europe. (Witt-Brattström, 2007, 25-26.)

Marholm transmitted mainly her husband's work and that of some others like Brandes. What Marholm deemed to be valuable in modern Scandinavian, in her words "Germanic", literature revolved around themes that could be discerned as "emotion", "erotic", "psychology" and "mysticism". This is exactly in line with the currents Hansson became known for, that can be classified as psychological literature, neoromanticism, symbolism etc. (Brantly, 1991, 55-56.) Marholm explicated this in her chapter about Strindberg in *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* (1895). She even linked racial theory (suited to the spirit of the time) with literary criticism. This will be shown by examples below.

Marholm took part in a variety of networks and was particularly present, because she lived in Scandinavia thus developing especially close personal contacts. Further assets were her own hospitality, her skills in social interaction and the ability to acquire a number of personal contacts with groups and individuals of prominence (such as Brandes) which makes her an exceptional example among contemporary cultural transmitter colleagues.

Marholm's relationship with Strindberg

Marholm's contentious relationship to Strindberg was intrinsically intertwined with her husband Ola Hansson, who however, during the escalation of the conflict remained in the background. Basically two energetic, eccentric and uncompromising personalities collided with each other at this time. At the beginning this even led to great success. However, the incompatibility of the two shortly resulted in an ugly separation and led on, especially on the part of Strindberg to deep hostility.

As a cultural transmitter Marholm was exceptionally close to the "object of her interest". During her cooperation with the Dane Georg Brandes she became a close family friend. With Strindberg she even lived "together" for a short time. (Marholm, unpublished manuscript)

In the years 1888-1893 Marholm wrote several articles about the Swede and also a chapter in Holger Drachmann's (1846-1908) *En bok om Strindberg* (1894). Furthermore she devoted a chapter in her work *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* to him. She also translated (at least) four of his texts for magazines and his play *Fordringsägare*. (Witt-Brattström, 2007, 230, 259.)

Already in her first article about the author, she managed to excite his displeasure. In a sharp analysis of his play *Fadren* she complained about his misogyny, but also admired his genius. (Marholm, 1888, 4-6)

Strindberg was used to excite controversy and criticism, but Marholm made the mistake (unintentionally and in a careless manner) to bring his state of mind into the game, where to Strindberg responded extremely sensitive. Comments like: "Denn die Handlung ist von einem kranken Geist erfunden." (Marholm, 1888, 4) enraged the poet so much that he contemplated suing the *Die Gegenwart* where the article had appeared. Brandes intervened, wrote a conciliatory statement (Marholm, 26.1.1888, 1-2) and urged Marholm to sign, and the crisis was averted. Strindberg's grudge against Marholm soon turned into its opposite, when he noticed that the article

helped to spread his play in Germany. Then he himself even tried to awaken interest in the article in France. (Brantly, 1991, 46-47. Witt-Brattström, 2007, 230.)

As another example of Marholms writings about Strindberg I want to cite her chapter “Die Weiberhasser Tolstoi und Strindberg – II. Strindberg”. (Marholm, 1896, 199-143) In this critical chapter she focused particular attention in this critical article on his “Typus” according to her a full manifestation of character and racial-genetic traits. Concerning Strindberg’s character Marholm presented a detailed racial-genetic hypothesis. The conflict in Strindberg’s nature and poetry she attributed to a “Rassenmischung”. On one side stood the “oberschwedische Volkstemperament” whose fire would be more inflammatory than warming. On the other hand the inherited “Finnlappenblut” contributing to Strindberg’s “Nomad”-instinct triggering the shyness and wildness in his personality. Even stronger negative characteristics such as “hate” and “brutality” allegedly flowing through his blood Marholm ascribed to the remote Mongolian race in her extremely one-sided character testimony:

[...] mongolische Horden schweiften, gelbe Gesichter mit vorspringenden Backenknochen und nach oben ausladenden Köpfen, Gesichter mit einem Zug von Grausamkeit und Leiden, von Beschaulichkeit und Gier [...] furchtbare Eroberer [...] das nordische Blut ausrotteten und das weiche lyrische, slavische Temperament mit ihrem fürchterlichen Blut durchsetzten, diesem Blut, das seinen Siegeszug mit Denkmälern gethürmter Schädel bezeichnet. (Marholm, 1896, 213-214)

A self-destructive internal conflict would since be inherent to the Russian race, which would therefore tend to unpredictability and outbreaks of atrocities. It is this “cruel Mongolian blood” Marholm further reasoned, that travelled by nomadic tribes to northern Sweden, which would close the circle with Strindberg. (Marholm, 1896, 214)

How closely Marholm connected “Temperament” and “Physiologie” is shown in the above quote. Even Strindberg’s “unschwedisches Äußeres” was discussed in detail and fitted excellently in her race hypothesis with his “drohendem Blick”, “mächtiger Stirn”, “viereckigem Schädel” etc. “In Strindberg ist das Charakteristische das Nebeneinander von Genie und Barbarei.” (Marholm, 1896, 215) Marholm’s argument contained eloquence and a certain logic for contemporaries with an interest in race which was widespread in Wilhelmine Germany. Nevertheless it was quite harsh and without a doubt insulting to Strindberg.

Ola Hansson’s contact to Strindberg on the other hand was marked by Hansson’s enthusiasm for his colleague for a long time. Their intense correspondence (1888-1892) revolved around psychology, Nietzsche, and the relationship between literature and science. Strindberg and Marholm increased Hansson’s interest in these issues and eventually led to his essay against naturalism, which made him famous in Germany. (Brantly, 1991, 56.)

In a letter to his brother Oscar in 1891 Strindberg was proud to announce that big German publishers were interested in his work and he was extremely positive about his “German” agents “Ola Hansson who is my agent and his wife, a German who is my translator.” (Eklund, 1964, 82.) Witt-Brattström points out that the role of the agent was probably performed by Marholm. After Hansson had offered the labor of his wife to the admired Strindberg, he quickly realized her trailblazing skills.

There were several personal meetings, but one in particular is considered a key event in the relation Strindberg-Marholm-Hansson. In the fall of 1892 Strindberg complained to Hansson about financial constraints. Due to a prior successful relief operation by Arne Garborg (1851-1924) the couple decided to help the Swede. Money was collected, a letter (Strindberg, 1.10.1892, 41-42.) of complaint by Strindberg published and beyond that Hansson insisted to invite Strindberg to his home. The following month, in which Strindberg lived in the adjacent apartment to the Hansson’s in Berlin-Friedrichshagen, meant a great financial as well emotional strain for the Hanssons. Strindberg took advantage of Marholm’s hospitality and service, but never showed gratitude. On the contrary, Strindberg experienced her well-intentioned, albeit pushy, attempts to interfere in his affairs, as manipulative attacks of a domineering fury. Strindberg’s character and his extreme paranoia only reinforced this impression. After an initially peaceful farewell Strindberg held a major grudge towards Marholm for years to come. The failed co-habitation lead to Strindberg to believe Marholm planned to let him be committed to a lunatic asylum and that she had stolen his letters in order to use them against him. (Grimberg, 1924, 15) Strindberg excelled in particularly original insults for his former benefactress including “Mrs. Bluebeard” and “corpse woman”. (Brantly, 1991, 64. Witt-Brattström, 2007, 245, 248.)

Witt-Brattström suspects a rivalry for Hansson’s favor standing behind these negative feelings. Marholm on the other hand accused Strindberg to have been instrumental in the exclusion from their social and literary circles. In fact other witnesses confirmed (e.g. Adolf Paul) that some of the Hansson’s former friends joined Strindberg and the newly formed group *Zum schwarzen Ferkel* definitely wanted no contact with Marholm. That Strindberg would have driven them into leaving Berlin, in turn, seems to have been Marholm’s exaggeration, as they were by no means isolated after his departure. In letters to Arne Garborg Marholm let her anger against Strindberg run wild and compared him to Brandes by presenting both as egotistical schemers. The striking parallel is Marholm’s “talent” in upsetting powerful men not least due to her meddling, stubbornness and intransigence. (Brantly, 1991, 94-100. Witt-Brattström, 2007, 230, 236.)

Brantly and Witt-Brattström notice that Strindberg had contributed enormously to Marholm’s image as a dominant and manipulative woman that dominates the Hansson research. (Brantly, 1991, 64. Witt-Brattström, 2007, 245, 248.) Marholm’s paramount role of introducing him not only in her German circles, but also in Russia did on the other hand not find a lot of attention in Strindberg research in general. (Witt-Brattström, 2007, 226, 234.)

Ironically Strindberg seemed after the break with Marholm and despite all the hate speeches against her, still to appreciate her literary analysis. He recommended, for example, Marholm's writings to fellow country man Gustaf Fröding. (Witt-Brattström, 2007, 248) Marholm also saw Strindberg, despite their personal dislikes yet still as a literary genius, which is proven in her later writings. The finland-swedish author Karl A. Tavaststjerna even described her as the best biographer Strindberg could have wished for. Brantly even recognizes Strindberg's influence on Marholm's own artistic production. In the play *Karla Bühnung* Brantly detects traces of Strindberg's *Fröken Julie*. (Brantly, 1991, 117, 125.)

The relationship of Marholm and Strindberg was intense, professionally successful and deeply personal, resulting in stark conflict leaving an enormous imprint on each others lives.

Conclusion

Even though the convinced and active feminist Prager showed enormous efforts to get Strindberg's work sold and tried to point out the artistic value of his writings separately to the inherent attacks on women, the Swedish author ended their long lasting relationship quite abruptly when a more dedicated and male translator appeared on the scene. Nevertheless Strindberg showed much appreciation and courtesy towards Prager. Bearing in mind that Strindberg acquired quite an amount of enemies, male and female, during his life, and never held back his hatred in letters and literary works, the relationship to Prager can be considered quite positive and successful. His much ascribed misogyny was detected in his work by Prager, although in their personal encounters it did not play a role. Even after their collaboration has ended both would still express appreciation of the other.

In the case of Marholm however, the encounter and collaboration of two eccentric and uncompromising personalities ended in deep hostility on both sides. Partly successfully working together, Marholm also introduced Strindberg into her German literary circles, the German-Baltic writer's negative depiction of his character in some of her writings as well as her engagement in his affairs drove the Swede over the edge and resulted in a very unfriendly separation. In letters Strindberg would not shy away of bluntly insulting Marholm as a writer and a woman. Marholm was certainly not an innocent victim here, since she had other falling outs with several former friends as for example Brandes. Acting in a resolute and dominant way (as she was used to with her husband) – conventionally considered “masculine” attributes – seems in this case to have triggered Strindberg's misogyny indeed. Amazingly though after some time they both could show appreciation of their respective work towards others again.

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Biographical note

Ester Jiresch has studied History and Scandinavian Studies and in Vienna and Stockholm. She conducted her PhD research at the Groningen Research School for the Study of the Humanities (GRSSH) at the University of Groningen, on the role of networks in the work of female cultural transmitters of Scandinavian literature and culture in Europe around 1900 – comparing the Dutch/Flemish and the Austrian/German-speaking regions. She has published several articles and books, amongst others *Im Netzwerk der Kulturvermittlung. Sechs Autorinnen und ihre Bedeutung für die Verbreitung skandinavischer Literatur und Kultur in West- und Mitteleuropa um 1900*. (Groningen 2013: Barkhuis). Ester Jiresch is now working as a lecturer at the Department of European Languages and Cultures at the University of Groningen.