

Zeitschrift: Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Skandinavische Studien
Band: 21 (1991)

Artikel: The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm
Autor: Brantly, Susan
Kapitel: The Remaining Years : 1906-1928
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-858349>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 22.05.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

The Remaining Years: 1906–1928

The most complete account of the Hanssons' final years was given by their son in an article from 1942. Ola Hansson, Jr. was devoted to his parents and he begins his essay with a defense of his father:

Det har skrivits och talats mycket om den ömtålighet, hypersensibilitet, retlighet, förföljelsemani o.s.v. som skulle ha varit anledningen till att han så envist höll sig borta från Sverige. Orsaken var i själva verket omöjligheten för honom att finna sin utkomst hemma. Om man talar om besynnerligheter, så måste jag framhålla att om en människa ständigt får kämpa för sitt dagliga bröd, för sin och sin familjs existens år efter år, årtionde efter årtionde, nästan hela livet igenom, utan att vara säker på den närmaste framtiden, ja, ofta utan att veta var han skall lägga sitt huvud för den kommande natten, så är det klart att en sådan människa måste lida därunder och måste bli menligt påverkad i psykiskt avseende.¹

Like a good son, Ola Hansson, Jr. holds an unresponsive society responsible for the psychic deterioration of his parents, and there is no doubt a good deal of truth in this.

The portrait that the Hanssons' only child paints of the family's final years is one of isolation, poverty, and restlessness. Ola Hansson, Jr. claims that his father had "icke alls något umgänge med utomstående under de sista 25 åren av sitt liv."² Hansson had always been inclined toward isolation, and once Marholm's gregarious spirit was broken, the entire family kept to itself. Hansson became more and more prone to bouts of moodiness; his son describes Hansson's occasional violent outbreaks of temper when an article was refused. Every day, the

¹ Ola Hansson, Jr., "Några drag ur min fars liv," *Svensk litteraturtidskrift*, 5 (1942), p. 49. "Much has been written and said about the touchiness, the hypersensitivity, the irritability, the persecution mania, etc., which was said to have been the reason why he so stubbornly stayed away from Sweden. The cause was actually the impossibility for him to support himself at home. If one speaks of oddities, then I must maintain that if a person must constantly fight for his daily bread, for his and his family's existence year after year, decade after decade, throughout almost his entire life, without being sure of the immediate future, yes, often without knowing where he will lay his head that night, then it is clear that such a person must suffer from that and must be considerably affected with respect to his psyche."

² Ibid. "no social contact whatsoever with outsiders during the last 25 years of his life."

Hanssons consumed alcoholic beverages in order, they claimed, to ward off the chill in their drafty apartments. Even so, the family remained very close and would spend the evenings reading the classics of world literature to each other.

After leaving Munich, the family lived in Austria for approximately one year and then moved to the outskirts of Paris. Despite living so close to one of Europe's most vital cultural centers, the Hanssons did not take part in the Parisian artistic circles. In 1906, Hansson was awarded the Bonniers stipend, which not only came as welcome financial assistance, but bolstered his spirits as well. In the spring of 1907, the family travelled to Riga for a month where they stayed in Marholm's old parental home. Afterwards, the Hanssons spent three months in Stockholm, where they met with August Strindberg for the last time. Hansson also paid a visit to his family farm in Skåne. The Hanssons then made their way back to France via a circuitous route which took them to Vienna, Salzburg and Munich for stays lasting about six months in each place.³ The family stayed in Meudon outside of Paris from 1909–1914.⁴ In 1911, Hansson was awarded the Fröding stipend, but initially he was disinclined to accept it. His son eventually convinced him that it was an honor to have been chosen for this prize by the students of Sweden.

Also in 1911, Marholm tried to locate her father with the help of various consulates. Judging from her inquiries, it seems possible that Fredrik Mohr had avoided his daughter altogether during her visit to Riga in 1907. Marholm learned from one source, a W. von Stürmer, that her father had been living with a woman named Miss Eiche until her death in 1909.⁵ The English consul in Riga, one A. Woodhouse, passed along the following message: "In answer to your post card I beg to inform you that I have seen your father, Captain Mohr, who wishes me to inform you that he is quite well, but requests me not to give you his address."⁶ A few weeks later, the Russian consul in Riga supplied Fredrik Mohr's address, Nikolaistraße 9:2, but there is no evidence that Marholm was ever successful in reestablishing contact with her father.

Unavoidably, World War I began to impinge upon their existence. In 1914, Hansson noted in his diary: "Och nu ströva patruler omkring överallt; man kan icke ens gå så långt som till Chalais eller Villacoublay, vilket är strängt förbjudet. Ingenting annat återstår än att vandra omkring bland sina minnen."⁷ Ola Hansson retreated into the past in order to escape the unrest of the day. His son

³ Ola Hansson, *Ur Minnet och Dagboken*, ed. Emy Ek (Stockholm: Tidens förlag, 1926), p. 107.

⁴ Ola Hansson, *Man skriver om himmelriket när man har helvetet inom sig. Valda brev*, ed. Görgen Antonsson (Lund: Bakhåll, 1990), p. 9.

⁵ W. von Stürmer to Laura Marholm, 31/13 January 1911.

⁶ A. Woodhouse to Laura Marholm, 1 May 1911.

⁷ Hansson, *Ur Minnet och Dagboken*, p. 108. "And now patrols are roaming around everywhere; one cannot even go so far as Chalais or Villacoublay, which is strictly forbidden. Nothing is left but to wander around amidst one's memories."

observes: “Under de sista åren var det uppenbart, både för min mor och mig, att han allt mer gled bort från det verkliga livet, från dess händelser och intressen. Hans liv blev helt inåtvänt, och han sysslade enbart med det förflutna och brydde sig ej det minsta om tidens frågor och behov.”⁸ Hansson seems to have been deeply affected by the war, becoming even more introspective and melancholy than usual: “I den sidste Tid af hans Liv forandrede den svære Krigstiden meget i hans Væsen [sic].”⁹ In 1915, he sent out a number of post cards to the members of the Swedish Academy demanding the Nobel prize for “mig och min hustru.”¹⁰ These notes seem to indicate a relapse into the unstable thinking that had afflicted him ten years earlier. Marholm related at his graveside that his “ljusa sinnelag [. . .] övergick efter hand i en enstörings tillslutenhet i en dysterhet, som alldeles icke var väsentlig för honom.”¹¹

In 1915, the family moved to Worb, Switzerland, but they shifted residences several times during the war, returning to Meudon in 1916, then moving on to Bern and Zürich, and returning to Worb in 1917.¹² On May 5th of that year, Marholm’s father died at the age of 95, though Marholm did not learn of this until after the war. Whereas Hansson threw himself into historical research in order to avoid the present, Marholm stayed very much in touch with current events. The tragedy of World War I, in fact, prompted her to take up her polemical pen again. Marholm, like her husband, was appalled by the war, but she responded by writing articles of a strongly leftist bent, which she scribbled down on the reverse side of a calendar. Marholm first offered her articles to Hermann Radtke and the German Social Democratic Party, but received the reply: “Werte Genossin! [. . .] Als Broschüre können wir es nicht drucken lassen, da uns Papier dazu fehlt. Auch würde eine Umarbeitung noch notwendig sein.”¹³ In a reversal of the usual way of things, Marholm was able to find a publisher for her articles in Sweden. Some of her essays were accepted by the Social Democratic paper *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, edited by Fredrik Ström, and others were printed in

⁸ Hansson, Jr., “Några drag ur min fars liv,” p. 58. “During his final years it was obvious, both to my mother and me, that he drifted more and more away from real life, from its events and interests. His life became entirely introspective and he occupied himself only with the past and did not concern himself in the least about the questions and needs of the age.”

⁹ Laura Marholm to Hjalmar Gullberg, 27 April 1928. “In the last part of his life, the difficult wartime changed much in his being.”

¹⁰ Ingvar Holm, *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttitalsromantik*. (Lund: Gleerups, 1957), pp. 176–177. “me and my wife.”

¹¹ Laura Marholm, “Ett tack,” *Skåne Årsbok 1926*, p. 60. “bright disposition [. . .] turned afterward into a recluse’s reticence, into a melancholy which was not at all characteristic of him.”

¹² My thanks to Görgen Antonsson for providing me with an unpublished chronology of the Hanssons’ movements.

¹³ Hermann Radtke to Laura Marholm, 20 January 1919.

the slightly more radical *Stormklockan: Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbundets Veckotidning*.

Marholm's life-long interest in socialism, which lay at the root of her Catholic conversion, combined with her hatred of monarchy, which had manifested itself in such a bizarre form during her breakdown, resulted in her fervent support of the Russian Revolution. Throughout her life, Marholm had remained vague on the issue of her own national loyalties. She showed a tendency to adopt the nationality which would do her the most good at the time.¹⁴ When *Stormklockan* mistakenly referred to Marholm as German, however, she had them print the following retraction: "Av mistag hade där påståtts, att fru M. vore född tyska. Hon är ryska och har fortfarande ryskt medborgarskap samt tänker förbli rysk medborgare til sin död."¹⁵

Marholm's thinking in these articles is a mixture of familiar themes and a strikingly new view of life brought about by the political developments of the preceding years. The changes in Marholm's world view can be seen most clearly in her lengthy article, "Egendom." The article was printed as a series, and it is an interesting point of historical background that the series was interrupted by the coverage of the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The articles were introduced with the following disclaimer: "Vi hava nog här och var något avvikande mening med författarinnan, men våra ärade medarbetare som skriva under 'Dagens Krönika' stå själva med sina namn för sina uppsatser, vilka alltså icke äro direkta redaktions-uttalanden."¹⁶ As usual, Marholm did not espouse any particular party line, but instead, stated her own opinions.

¹⁴ Compare, for example, these varied utterances: "At de siger, jeg er svensk paa Grund af mit Giftermaal med en Svensk, – det har jeg vist ikke noget imod, blot det ikke sker paa en Maade at jeg taber mine Originalhonorarer i Tyskland." ["That you say that I am Swedish on the basis of my marriage to a Swede, – I certainly have nothing against that, just as long as it is not done in a way, so that I lose my original honoraria in Germany," Laura Marholm to Erik Thyselius, 28 January 1896]: "Om Gernandt vil udgive Bogen, saa faaer han betragte det som svensk Original." [sic; "If Gernandt wants to publish the book, then he must consider it a Swedish original," Laura Marholm to Helena Nyblom, 28 March 1897]: "Jeg er dansk-rysk og mine nære Slægtninge er Kammerherren ved norske Hoffet Dr. Mohr og tyske Consuln i Bergen C. Mohr." [sic; "I am Danish-Russian and my close relatives are the Chamberlain at the Norwegian court, Dr. Mohr, and the German Consul in Bern, C. Mohr," Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 29 September 1900]: "Jeg er svensk medborgerinde . . . født dansk-rysk." [sic; "I am a Swedish citizen . . . born Danish-Russian," Laura Marholm to Karl Bonnier, 9 November 1900].

¹⁵ "Författarinnan Laura Marholm," *Stormklockan*, 26 April 1919. "By mistake it was claimed there, that Mrs. M. was born German. She is Russian and still has Russian citizenship and intends to remain a Russian citizen until her death."

¹⁶ Introductory note to Laura Marholm, "Egendom," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 14 January 1919. "Here and there we certainly have somewhat different opinions than the author, but our honored colleagues who write under "The Daily Chronicle" stand with their own names behind their essays, which therefore are not direct editorial comments."

In “Egendom,” Marholm divides property into two categories: material and spiritual. Under the heading of material property, Marholm rails against the Industrial Revolution and the captains of industry who had laid claim to natural resources, which properly should belong to everyone, and have made human beings into machines. Part of her argument is a plea for the preservation of natural resources: “Det går inte längre att utplundra och ödelägga jordens innandömen. Dess rikedomskällor äro inte mera outtömliga, och varje land måste tänka på att tillvarataga sina. Vi måste för första gången tänka på dem som komma efter oss.”¹⁷ In Marholm’s view, the desire for control of these resources for the purposes of exploitation and profit was one of the main causes of the war. Natural resources, however, are property which belongs not only to all the people, but also to the subsequent generations, and therefore, must be administered and protected in the interests of everyone.

Marholm blames “de borgerliga filosofernas lurendrejerier” for establishing an age of materialism and machines after 1848.¹⁸ Here she refers to philosophers from Kant to Nietzsche. Marholm is outraged at the fate of the industrial worker and protests: “Han tål icke enformigheter och oföränderligheter av samma och mestadels så ansträngande arbete. Han behöver förändring, icke blott av ort och livsvillkor, utan också av intryck, omgivning, tankar och atmosfär.”¹⁹ In *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, Marholm had made exactly this claim on behalf of women: they did not belong in the workplace since they were not suited for monotonous work. At the time, she was taken to task by her critics for her chauvinism, but in “Egendom” Marholm has broadened her perspective from the category “woman” to the category “mankind.” No longer is it the case that woman alone is unsuited to the workplace; instead, the workplace is not suitable for mankind as a whole.

In her arguments pertaining to material property, Marholm falls prey to some of her old biologically deterministic thinking. She maintains, “Såsom jorden är basen av allt, så är den ursprungliga rasen basen av ägandet av allt, vad där är i, under och över jorden.”²⁰ Marholm’s attempt to give her social arguments biological legitimacy fail and result only in racism. According to her reasoning, “den ursprungliga rasen” is composed of the workers who have been subjugated by a genetically decadent ruling class. The Jews are a race of opportunists who have always aligned themselves with the capitalists. One may hope that these are

¹⁷ Marholm, “Egendom,” 14 January 1919. “It will no longer do to plunder and devastate the bowels of the earth. Its sources of wealth are no longer inexhaustable, and every country must think about safeguarding theirs. For the first time, we must think of those who will come after us.”

¹⁸ Ibid., 15 January 1919. “the frauds of the bourgeois philosophers.”

¹⁹ Ibid. “He cannot tolerate the uniformity and monotony of the same, and for the most part strenuous, tasks. He needs variation, not only of place and living conditions, but also of impressions, surroundings, thoughts, and atmosphere.”

²⁰ Ibid., 16 January 1919. “Just as the earth is the basis of everything, so is the original race the basis of ownership of everything in it, both under and above ground.”

among the sentiments to which the editor of *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* wished to take exception.

Marholm extends her biological justifications in an interesting fashion to women. Adopting a rather Lamarckian theory of evolution, Marholm believes that the women of the bourgeoisie and the ruling class have become decadent, lazy, and stupid because they have not been able to choose their own mates, or their own fates:

Rätten för kvinnan att välja och väljas kommer att bringa en stor förändring. För första gången tillhör kvinnan sig själv och förfogar över sig själv. Det är inte längre föräldrarna, det är inte längre mannen som råvar över henne. Hon kan välja, hon behöver inte längre att taga och tacka. Därav måste ovillkorligen en betydlig förbättring av rasen framgå.²¹

Even though Marholm's biological reasoning is flawed, this statement shows a distinct change in Marholm's thinking from the days when she claimed that the content of woman was man.

The cause of this change is made clearer in another of Marholm's articles, "Kvinnornas valrätt." There, Marholm writes, "Kvinnorna hade haft det i sin hand att förhindra detta krig, om de alla hållit ihop utan åtskillnad på klass och ras."²² World War I destroyed Marholm's image of men as the proper administrators of society. In *Zur Psychologie der Frau II*, in a chapter entitled "Das Weib in der Politik," Marholm hinted darkly with specific reference to Queen Victoria, among others, that women were not capable rulers: "Denn sie waren unverantwortlicher als die unverantwortlichsten Fürsten, weil das Weib an sich schon keine Verantwortlichkeit anerkennt, – je höher und geschützter seine Stellung ist, desto weniger natürlich."²³ Now, Marholm has changed her tune completely, writing of "de stora kvinnor, som regerade länderna med visdom och moderlighet, byggde städer, anlade kanaler och vattenledningar, gjorde jorden bördig och spannmålen överrikliga, bevarade freden och – om kriget påtvangs dem – förstodo att segra genom skarpsinne och taktisk beräkning."²⁴ Marholm would gladly see the return of such legendary matriarchies. She is no longer willing to

²¹ Ibid., 15 January 1919. "The right of woman to choose and be chosen will bring about a great change. For the first time, woman belongs to herself and has control over herself. It is no longer her parents; it is no longer her husband who rule over her. She can choose; she no longer needs to accept and be grateful. This must absolutely result in a considerable improvement in the race."

²² Laura Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt," *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, 31 January 1919. "Women would have had it within their reach to prevent this war, if they had held together without regard for class or race."

²³ Laura Marholm, *Zur Psychologie der Frau II* (Berlin: Duncker Verlag, 1903), p. 215.

²⁴ Marholm, "Kvinnornas valrätt." "The great women, who ruled the countries with wisdom and maternal care, built cities, created canals and irrigation, made the earth fruitful and grain abundant, preserved the peace and – if war was forced upon them – understood to prevail through intelligence and tactical calculations."

recognize men as the creators of culture, an astonishing change from her writing of the mid-90's.

Marholm was also aware that, during the war, women had stepped into men's jobs, and, now that the war was over, Marholm observes "die rascheste Vertreibung der Frauen aus ihrem bisherigen Erwerb. Sie haben den Männern Platz zu machen – die Männer müssen Arbeit haben! Ja warum denn? Was hat denn das für Eile?"²⁵ In her eyes, women had proven themselves capable of maintaining vital services and industries while men conducted their immoral war. Marholm could not immediately see with what right men should resume their old positions in society. Once again, Marholm displays a major change in her thinking; in the mid-90's, she had argued at length against women entering the workplace and taking jobs away from men.

In the second half of "Egendom," Marholm addresses the subject of spiritual property. Whereas material property should be communal, spiritual property is individual. The ruling class, however, in its infinite greed, has sought to appropriate not only the material possessions of the oppressed, but also their spiritual possessions. The agencies through which the appropriation of a person's spirit is accomplished include the legal system, the educational system, and religion. For this reason, Marholm calls for:

1. en fullständig ombildning av rättsväsendet;
2. en fullständig ombildning av skolorna;
3. en betydlig inskränkning av universitetsstudium och universiteten;
4. religionens fullständiga frigörelse från statens förmyndarskap.²⁶

Marholm had abundant personal reasons for resenting the prevailing legal system and she names them:

Jag känner denna goda lagstiftning och dess tillämpning. Jag blev genom den plockad så naken som ett nyfött barn; och sedan jag berövats min ringa materiella och hela min andliga egendom, blev intet tillövers utan att dräpa även min ande. Jag citerades till polisen, där man meddelade mig, att jag utövade ett dåligt inflytande på min man. Jag blev med våld satt i sanitetsvagnen och förd till dårhuset.²⁷

²⁵ Laura Marholm, "Wohnung, Kleidung, Nahrung," manuscript in Lunds Universitetsbibliotek.

²⁶ Marholm, "Egendom," 17 January 1919. "1. a complete revision of the legal system, 2. a complete revision of the schools, 3. a considerable restriction of university studies and universities, 4. the complete liberation of religion from the authority of the state."

²⁷ Marholm, "Egendom," 23 January 1919. "I know that good legislation and its application. Through it, I was stripped as naked as a newborn baby; and after I had been robbed of my meager material and all of my spiritual property, there was nothing else left to do but to murder even my spirit. I was reported to the police, where they informed me that I exerted a bad influence upon my husband. I was put by force in an ambulance and driven to the madhouse."

Marholm wants to acknowledge only political reasons for her confinement to the Kreisirrenanstalt. She even gives the Russian consulate credit for having ultimately helped to free her. At the time of her arrest, there were indeed rumors that the act was political, but on the other hand, the evidence that Marholm was genuinely mentally ill is overwhelming.

Nevertheless, Marholm apparently managed to convince the editors of *Stormklockan* that she and her husband had been victims of political persecution. Thus, the editors wrote in an introduction to one of her articles: "Den skamliga hets, som från Kaiser-Tyskland i årtionden drivits mot de radikala makarna H., har tydligen hos dem mognat en social åskådning, som ställer dem helt och öppet på det revolutionära proletariats sida."²⁸ Including Hansson under the rubrik "radical" is a misrepresentation, but Hansson's name had more recognition value in Sweden, and therefore the editors gladly recruited him for their cause.

Marholm's objection to the prevailing educational system had a long history. Because of her own bad experiences in school, Marholm had always viewed schools as institutions of indoctrination, rather than education. A happy autodidact herself, she therefore recommended this path for everyone: "Jag har aldrig lärt mig något tillsammans med andra eller igenom andra. Jag gitte snart inte ens höra på. Jag har utvecklat mig själv på mitt eget sätt och själv sökt mig min egen väg."²⁹ Once again, Marholm displays her long-standing tendency to extrapolate general laws of human behavior out of her own personal experience. She maintains that the only thing children bring home from schools are: "löss, smittor och ovanor."³⁰

The third agency of spiritual theft by the ruling class is religion. Marholm was still a religious woman when she wrote "Egendom," but she objects to the way in which the state has appropriated and distorted religion to achieve its own ends. Marholm argues: "Kristus var – som vi nu skulle säga – en social revolutionär. Han var den förste som förkunnade gemensamheten av egendom. Han förkastade alla och envar, som uppsatte sig mot denna gemenskap."³¹ For more than any other reason, Marholm believes that Christ was crucified for his radical social theories. Christianity, however, was rendered harmless when it was adopted as a state religion: "Hela det översinliga [sic] och socialrevolutionära inne-

²⁸ Introduction to Laura Marholm, "Stulet arbete," *Stormklockan*, 8 March 1919. "The shameful persecution which has been conducted for decades by imperial Germany against the radical couple has apparently matured in them a social perspective which places them completely and openly on the side of the revolutionary proletariat."

²⁹ Marholm, "Egendom," 28 January 1919. "I have never learned anything together with others or from others. Soon, I could barely even manage to listen. I have educated myself in my own way and sought my own path."

³⁰ Ibid., 23 January 1919. "lice, contagions and bad habits."

³¹ Ibid., 29 January 1919. "Christ was – as we now would say – a social revolutionary. He was the first who preached community property. He denounced each and every one, who set himself up against this communality."

hållet i hans lära och i hans liv undertrycktes. Tron på den försonande kraften av det oskyldigt utgjutna blodet var allt vad där krävdes.”³² The doctrines of forgiveness and eternal life dominated, and the rich were ensured a chance to enter heaven, despite the analogy of the camel and the eye of the needle. Marholm still adheres to the social aspects of Christianity which had attracted her to the Catholic Church in 1897. However, both forms of institutionalized Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism, are suspect to her, because of their alliance with the ruling class.

Judging from her postwar articles, Marholm’s thoughts had undergone extensive development during her 14 years of silence. Even though some of Marholm’s biological and historical speculations are a bit peculiar, overall her arguments are cogent, and in many ways, more balanced than her writing before her breakdown. Marholm has not overcome her suspicion of the ruling houses of Europe, however, and in fact claims: “Jag har i fjorton år överhuvudtaget inte givit ett ljud ifrån mig, enär de tre kusinerna Ångstmask kvävde varje det minsta ljud.”³³ Nevertheless, the nature of Marholm’s suspicions had moved away from a paranoid personal vendetta toward the more acceptable concept of a class struggle.

After the war, Tidens förlag expressed an interest in publishing the collected works of Ola Hansson, and Hansson was invited to become the editor of the undertaking. The war had rendered the Hanssons’ financial need even more acute than usual, and so, the offer of the publishing house was accepted gratefully. Hansson was not only pleased at the prospect of assembling and publishing his works in Swedish, but the task would also provide a steady income for a few years. So that Hansson could be closer to the project, the family moved to Esbjerg, Denmark.

At about this time, Marholm developed a keen interest in genealogy. She had evidently heard rumors of her wealthy cousin’s, Conrad Mohr’s, establishment of a fund of one million crowns in 1917, dedicated to the support of research by authors, artists, journalists, and scholars into socialism. Perhaps out of wishful thinking, Marholm failed to understand that the fund was not meant exclusively for members of the Mohr family. A number of letters exist in which Marholm tries to establish her right to the money. She wrote to Anton Mohr Wiesener, the librarian of the Bergen Library and the Mohr family genealogist, who simply referred her to his book. She also questioned Gerhard Gran, the editor of *Samtiden* and a member of the Mohr family on his mother’s side, but he could be of no help. It took two patient notes from Conrad Mohr himself to convince Marholm

³² Ibid. “All of the spiritual and social-revolutionary content in his teaching and in his life was suppressed. The belief in the reconciling power of the innocently spilled blood was all that was demanded there.”

³³ Marholm, “Stulet arbete.” “I have for fourteen years not even made a peep, since the three cousins Ångstmask [a euphemism for the ruling houses of England, Germany and Sweden, meaning literally “worms of anxiety”] squelched every little noise.”

that she was not entitled to apply for the money. As long ago as 1900, Marholm had begun dropping Conrad Mohr's name in an effort to impress various people. Laura Marholm and Conrad Mohr were actually fourth cousins, and it seems apparent that until she wrote to him, Conrad Mohr had been oblivious of her existence. Within the same time period, Marholm also tried to track down various inheritances that she might have been entitled to from her relatives in Riga. Because of the political situation in Latvia, this proved impossible.

The Hanssons resided in Denmark for two years, followed by a short stay of nine months in Skåne. The family departed hastily from Sweden in the first months of 1922. Twenty years later, Ola Hansson, Jr. explained that the family left in order to avoid involvement in a court case. With a degree of uncertainty, the Hanssons' son describes the situation as follows: "En tysk översättare av August Strindberg hade instämt min mor såsom vittne om vem som hade att gälla som översättare av en, jag minns nu ej vilken, teaterpjäs av Strindberg."³⁴ The cryptic utterances in the Hanssons' letters indicate that they did not have a clear notion of what the case involved. In a letter to Fredrik Ström from February 1922, Marholm associates the case with Professor Carlheim-Gyllensköld who was in the midst of a dispute over the possession of Strindberg's papers.³⁵ In any event, the prospect of any legal entanglement whatsoever was sufficient to propel the family into the final journey of Ola Hansson's life – through Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey.

Hansson died in Boujouk-Déré on the Bosphorus in the fall of 1925. He had been indisposed for some time, but Marholm and her son did not immediately notice that something was amiss. Hansson was in the habit of retiring to his bed and remaining motionless and uncommunicative. His son notes "att det icke var lätt att afgöra, om det var själslig eller kroppslig indisposition."³⁶

Marholm was greatly shocked by Hansson's death: "Han kunde have levde endnu 20 Aar og hans Død var pludseligt og meget svært [sic]."³⁷ She was six years older than he and, perhaps, had not expected to survive him. She described her reaction to his death at Hansson's funeral:

Oväntat, obegripligt utan att någonsin i hela sitt liv – alla de 35 åren av vårt äktenskap – hava varit sjuk eller ens i behov av läkare rycktes han bort så oförklarligt, att jag först då han låg död, fattade, att han icke längre gick, var i rummet, kom hem, satt dagen lång på samma plats och skrev och läste, alltid uppta-

³⁴ Ola Hansson, Jr., "Några drag ur min fars liv," p. 56. "A German translator of August Strindberg had subpoenaed my mother as a witness as to who was the translator of a – I do not now remember which one – play by Strindberg."

³⁵ Laura Marholm to Fredrik Ström, 3 February 1922.

³⁶ Ola Hansson, Jr., "Ola Hanssons sjukdom och död," manuscript in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "it was not easy to determine if the indisposition was spiritual or physical."

³⁷ Laura Marholm to Upsala-Studentcorps Ordförande, 6 February 1926. "He could have lived for another 20 years and his death was sudden and very difficult."

gen, aldrig utan sysselsättning, aldrig *trött*; han hade gått ut till den vandring, från vilken man en gång *icke mera kommer tillbaka*. [original italics]³⁸

In this passage, Marholm has exaggerated Hansson's perfect health, but her exaggeration serves to accentuate her sense of loss. Hansson's death caused Marholm to retreat into the past and she spent the last years of her life seeing to it that Hansson's memory would be preserved in Sweden.

Marholm and her son were required by the Turkish authorities to remain in Turkey for six months after Hansson's death, and, in the interim, Marholm tried to arrange for Hansson's burial in his homeland. She wrote to the student body of Lund University about having Hansson buried in Lund. When they did not respond as rapidly as she would have liked, Marholm wrote to the students in Uppsala to see if they would arrange for his burial in Stockholm: "Han hør Sverige til – ikke Skåne – hans Fødestælle var en ren Tilfældighed [sic]."³⁹ In this letter, Marholm is obviously distraught with grief and blames Hansson's death on the fact that the Nobel Library refused to send 30 volumes of Saint-Simon's notes about the Jesuits to Hansson by diplomatic courier: "Og gennem denne Skuffelse blev han syg, – hvad for Slags Sygdom? Kræfterne forfaldt. Han gik meget for tidligt bort . . . [sic]"⁴⁰

At last, the students of Lund University did agree to arrange for Hansson's burial, the same students who had voted to give him the Fröding stipend in 1911, an honor which he had almost refused. The funeral took place on May 28, 1926, and a long procession of students attended in honor of the deceased; Professor Axel Herrlin and Ernst Norlind gave speeches at the graveside; and Hjalmar Gullberg composed a poem in Ola Hansson's honor. Marholm delivered a speech of thanks, but she poorly concealed a note of bitterness at the fact that the recognition Hansson had yearned for in life was shown to him only after his death. She wished to thank "alla som här ägnade honom i överflod, vad som var honom förmenat i livet."⁴¹

After Hansson's funeral, Marholm and her son moved to Riga. Marholm returned not only to her childhood home, but also to a place in which she and Hansson had shared some pleasant memories. Plans were underway to publish

³⁸ Marholm, "Ett tack," p. 60. "Unexpectedly, incomprehensibly without ever in his entire life – all of the 35 years of our marriage – having been sick or even in need of a doctor, he was taken away so inexplicably that, only when he lay dead, did I first understand that he no longer walked, was in the room, came home, sat the entire day in the same place and wrote and read, always occupied, never without something to do, never *tired*; he had left on the journey from which one *never will return*."

³⁹ Laura Marholm to Upsala-Studentcorps Ordförande, 6 February 1926. "He belongs to Sweden – not Skåne – his birthplace was accidental."

⁴⁰ Ibid. "And through that disappointment he became sick – what sort of illness? His powers degenerated. He passed away much too early . . ."

⁴¹ Marholm, "Ett tack," p. 61. "all who have given him here in excess, what he was denied in life."

Ola Hansson's papers; Marholm was in frequent contact with Emy Ek and Hjalmar Gullberg, who were working on the project. The collection of Hansson's literary remains was important to her as a monument to her husband's memory. She bequeathed Hansson's manuscripts to the Lund University Library, firm in the conviction that subsequent generations would interest themselves in the details of Hansson's genius. Marholm also wanted to have a portrait of Hansson painted by Ernst Norlind, the Scanian artist and writer, but these plans came to naught.

Marholm wrote to Emy Ek: "Nu befatter jeg mig med at samle alle Minder efterhaanden, som angaaer Ola Hanssons huslige og personlige Liv, hans Interessen, hans Sæt at arbeide, at indele sig og tilbringe Dagene och Livet paa Reiserne og i de improviserede Hem [sic]."⁴² In her final years, Marholm lost herself in a cult of Ola Hansson's memory. The result of her efforts was "Omrids til en Biografi" which exists in manuscript form in Gothenburg's University Library. The document is a moving testimony to how greatly Marholm missed her husband:

Omstændighederne, som vi ikke selv havde Magt over, gjorde vårt Egteskab under denne lange Tid saa godt som uadskilligt. I Følge deraf maatte jeg vare uvillkaarligt med paa alt, hvad der angik ham, – med paa hans Venner, som han altid holdt meget af; med paa hans litterære Afsigter og Planer; se, hvorledes hans Arbejder opstod och formede sig, – oversætte dem, – da Blækket endnu ikke var tort, – saa længe der var Mulighed at publicere dem paa tysk i all de mange og alle lige daarligt betalende Blad i Tyskland og Østerrige [sic].⁴³

During the essay, Marholm's train of thought frequently wanders and dwells upon personal details of Hansson's appearance and behavior which have meaning only for her. Nevertheless, she considered these reflections to be of general interest and wished to have them published. The editor of *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts Tidning*, Henning Söderhjelm, wrote to Marholm's friend Lars Wåhlin: "Det vore, tycker jag, enbart pinsamt att publicera fragmentariska utläggningar som dessa, vilka visa sitt upphov från ett tröttkörd och oklart psyke."⁴⁴

⁴² Laura Marholm to Emy Ek, 22 September 1926. "I am now in the process of collecting in retrospect all the memories which have to do with Ola Hansson's domestic and personal life, his interests, his manner of working, of organizing himself, and of spending days and a life on journeys and in improvised homes."

⁴³ Laura Marholm, "Omrids til en Biografi," Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "Circumstances which we ourselves had no power over made our marriage during that long time as good as inseparable. As a result, I had to be unconditionally involved in everything that had to do with him, – involved with his friends, whom he always liked very much; involved with his literary opinions and plans; see how his works arose and took shape, – translate them – when the ink was not even dry yet – as long as there was a possibility of publishing them in German in all the many and equally poorly paying papers in Germany and Austria."

⁴⁴ Henning Söderhjelm to Lars Wåhlin, 14 October 1926. Accompanies the manuscript of "Omrids til en Biografi" in Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek. "It would be, I think,

Laura Marholm-Hansson, geb. Mohr, died on October 6, 1928, in Majorenhof, a small resort town not far from Riga, and was buried in Riga on October 11.⁴⁵ Marholm once wrote of herself, “Jag undervisade mig själv, läste vad som tycktes mig värt att läsa, skrev ganska tidigt samt gav mig själv form och innehåll. Var gång det lyckades mig att bringa något i offentligheten, slogs jag brutalt till jorden.”⁴⁶ Marholm’s life can indeed be described as a series of obstacles and setbacks, which for many years, she succeeded in overcoming. Against all odds and without the help of her family, Marholm escaped from her restrictive life in Riga by means of her talent and determination. Supporting herself as a single woman in Copenhagen was another challenge she rose to meet, but her loyalty to her new husband won her the enmity of Georg Brandes. In Friedrichshagen, she was able to command the attention and the respect of the Berlin literati, until she collided with the obstacle of August Strindberg. Her inability to deviate from her principles was both a strength and a source of misfortune. Had she been willing to compromise with Samuel Fischer about her book on women, perhaps the Hanssons would not have fallen from grace with the *Freie Bühne* circle and thus would have avoided some lean years. Yet, she rose above even this setback to write a book on women which commanded the attention of Europe. Her *Buch der Frauen*, composed between translations and housekeeping chores, reached a wider audience than anything Ola Hansson ever wrote. Her brief years of fame and productivity eventually ground to a halt; she was simply too much encumbered by legal complications and poverty. Marholm’s strong spirit seemed to be finally broken, and yet she was able to collect herself for a final creative effort – her series of postwar articles. She could not recover, however, from the death of Ola Hansson.

Although Marholm’s fate was inextricably intertwined with Ola Hansson’s, she had her own story to tell. She spent her final years ensuring that Ola Hansson would be remembered, and in doing so, saw to it that her own considerable achievements would be eclipsed by those of her husband. Marholm achieved obscurity before her death. Hjalmar Gullberg wrote in her obituary: “Med Laura Marholm (pseudonym för Laura Mohr) bortgick en säregen personlighet, vars gärning varit föga känd i Sverige.”⁴⁷

merely embarrassing to publish fragmentary comments like these, which show their source in a worn-down and unclear psyche.”

⁴⁵ Hildegard Reinharde, “Laura Marholma-Hanssona,” *Filologjās materiali. Prof. J. Endzelinam sesdesmitaja dzimsanas diena veltits rakstu krajums*, Riga, 1933, p. 212.

⁴⁶ Marholm, “Kvinnornas valrätt.” “I taught myself, read what seemed to me worth reading, wrote rather early, and gave myself form and content. Every time I succeeded in bringing something out in public, I was brutally struck down to earth.”

⁴⁷ Hjalmar Gullberg, “Ola Hanssons maka död,” *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, 7 October 1928. “With Laura Marholm (pseudonym for Laura Mohr) a singular personality has passed way, whose deeds are little known in Sweden.”