Suppose that an ideal reader of Nietzsche could some day exist. In affinity with Nietzsche’s lofty perspective and “his” style, this reader would have to read his writings as he himself reads texts: as an honest and veracious philologist, able to read between the lines, looking, like a Janus, prudently before and aft, with reservations, with delicate eyes and fingers, meticulously, and, like a goldsmith, taking his time: the good reader, like the good philologist, would, above all, be capable of reading lento, in complete contrast to today’s modern readers, busy and hurried, slaves to the needs that dictate the apportioning of their time. The slow reading taught by philology is the counterpart of a slow writing, which does not economize on deciphering the hieroglyphs that comprise the long past of human morality, nor on all the serious, dull work on documents, for which the “gay science” is only the reward. “Finally, one writes so slowly” because writing is a reading which, beneath all the superficial layers of varnish and the transvestisms, aims to decipher the original text of all genres, all moralities, all religions, of culture in general: homo natura.

Nietzsche—this “teacher of slow reading,” who stood aside, took his time, became slow, silent, and careful—would indeed have “merited,” in return, a “philologist” as reader of his writings. But what his own profound readings actually taught him was that there is no good fate—a kind of Providence that would ensure that “good” books fall

1. This article is a translation of “Le psychologue de l’éternel féminin [Pourquoi j’écris de si bons livres],” in Explosion II. Les enfants de Nietzsche (Paris: Galilée, 1992).

YFS 87, Another Look, Another Woman, ed. Huffer, © 1995 by Yale University.
into the hands of "good" readers; the fatum libellorum³ reserves for them, rather, the opposite fate, and the good fortune of finding an appropriate reader is never, for the author, the certain reward of virtue or merit; it is a stroke of luck. And in this epoch of hurried men, it was actually misfortune that smiled upon the man who—wanting to be the "Horace" of his century, like the Latin poet he took as his model and admired above all others—deserved to find readers who knew how to read him.⁴ Lacking a true philological reader, Nietzsche is forced to reread his own texts, to decipher them, and despite the repugnance of his proudest instincts, to present himself by posing to his own writings the question he poses to the writings of others: "Who is speaking?"

The response of the good reader (himself) is that in his writings, an unparalleled psychologist makes himself heard. A psychologist in the new sense that Nietzsche gives to this term in Beyond Good and Evil⁵: a psychologist of the depths, whose idea—which had not yet dawned upon anyone else—was to turn psychology, understood as morphology and as a general theory of the will to power, into the queen of the sciences, for whose service and preparation the other sciences exist (whether philology, which teaches how to read between the lines; physiology, which promotes the acceptance that the only reality is the body—understood as a collective of many souls; or medicine, which inaugurates a generalized symptomatology, diagnosing texts as healthy or sick). This new psychology, conceived as a path to the essential problems, should replace the old form, which has remained superficial because it is infested and corrupted by moral prejudices. It is primarily practiced by philosophers who, dismissing the prejudices of common sense, have the presumption to believe that they are free of them: "The power of moral prejudices has penetrated deeply into the most spiritual world, which would seem to be the coldest and most


4. See The Twilight of the Idols, trans. Walter Kaufman, in The Portable Nietzsche [New York: Viking Books, 1954], "What I owe to the Ancients," ¶1: “To this day, no other poet has given me the same artistic delight that a Horatian ode gave me from the first. In certain languages that which has been achieved here could not even be attempted. This mosaic of words, in which every word—as sound, as place, as concept—pours out its strength right and left and over the whole, this minimum in the extent and the number of the signs, and the maximum thereby attained in the energy of the signs—all that is Roman and, if one will believe me, noble par excellence. All the rest of poetry becomes, in contrast, something too popular—a mere garrulity of feelings.”

devoid of presuppositions, and has obviously operated in an injurious, inhibiting and blinding and distorting manner” (§ 23). Playing on the homophony of the words Hohlköpfen and Kohlköpfen, Nietzsche makes fun of the empty heads of these ham-fisted philosophers, these cabbage-heads, who, under the sway of morality, that sorceress (magicienne) who rules them without their knowing it, constantly make faux-pas and naïve mistakes. The supposed men of the Begriff keep making Fehlgriffen, to the great joy of he who, in Beyond Good and Evil, calls himself the spoilt child of philosophy.6

As a good psychologist, Nietzsche makes a list of the mille et tre most common philosophical mistakes (mishandlings),7 revered by all as truths: the belief in the opposition of values, the metaphysical prejudice par excellence (Beyond Good and Evil, § 2); for example, the belief in the opposition of egoism and nonegoism, by which behavior of the first kind is disqualified as immoral, while the latter is valued above all else. Not only is this opposition false, but the two terms, judged to be antithetical, suppose a common postulate: the existence of an ego that, in the first case, puts itself before others, and in the second, sacrifices itself in a “selfless” way. Now the “ego” is a pure, mystifying fiction, a “higher swindle” of the weak who need to believe in antithetical values, in the existence of “good” and “bad” subjects or free “egos” who are responsible for their acts. In fact, the “ego” is not an origin, but the superficial result of a certain hierarchization of forces acting in the depths. Because the “ego,” according to the “bad” grasp that the weak have on it, is a fiction, these two terms, “egoistic”/“nonegoistic,” are psychological misinterpretations.

Another mistake, which has been held to be a self-evident truth by philosophers at least since Plato, is that the end of all human endeavor is the pursuit of happiness—a misinterpretation for which, once again, the weak who raise their sickly perspective as an absolute, are responsible. Under the name “happiness,” they seek, and can only seek, the absence of suffering, repose, nothingness. Their disloyalty, upheld by the philosophers, is to “forget” that a living being who is truly living, wants not happiness, but power, the increase and surpassing of oneself.

Another prejudice, which is shared by all philosophers up to Kant,

6. On the faux-pas of the philosophers, which Nietzsche scrutinizes as a child watches the unavowed “crimes” of his parents during the primal scene, see my Nietzsche et la scène philosophique.

7. In French, there is a play on the words “méprises” and “mal prises en main,” stemming from the verb prendre, to take or grasp. [Translator’s note]
is that “happiness,” supposedly pursued by all, is the reward of virtue. Kant himself only differed from his predecessors in that he saw this proposition not as an analytical judgment, but as a synthetic a priori. The consideration that virtue and only virtue conferred, not happiness, but worthiness of happiness, led him to set forth his three postulates of practical reason: the existence of a free, responsible subject; the immortality of the soul; the existence of a just and retributive God. In fact, these postulates are nothing more than the demands of the weak, who need them to fulfil their “duties” and to frighten and give a bad conscience to the strong. The opposition of “pleasure and displeasure,” which the old “psychology” accepts as self-evident, supposes that pleasure is the satisfaction of a need whereas, of course, it is immanent to the living being’s exercise of its power. As such it is proportional to the resistance encountered and surmounted, and thus to the “displeasure,” which is not its opposite, but one of its necessary ingredients. In order to bear “suffering,” the weak individual who cannot will it, forges the fiction of “sin” for which it is a punishment, while pleasure is the reward of virtue.

Behind the “psychological” opposition of pleasure and displeasure, one can devine, once again, that of good and evil, the moral opposition, the fundamental prejudice of philosophers, which, by infecting and falsifying it, corrupted the whole of psychology and turned it on its head. Under the seductive sway of morality, this Circe of humanity and the philosophers, psychology found itself transformed with the wave of a magic wand. Whereas the Homeric Circe was able to seduce Ulysses’ companions and so turn them into swine, the philosophers’ sorceress (magicienne)8 works in the opposite direction: she idealizes everything, conferring a divine and noble origin on that which, to borrow its own terms, has its origins in the “low” which it disqualifies,  

8. See Daybreak, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Foreword, § 3: “But morality does not merely have at its command every kind of means of frightening off critical hands and torture instruments: its security reposes far more in a certain kind of enchantment it has at its disposal—it knows how to ‘inspire’. With this art it succeeds, often with no more than a single glance, in paralysing the critical will and even in enticing it over to its own side; there are even cases in which morality has been able to turn the critical will against itself, so that, like the scorpion, it drives its sting into its own body. For morality has from of old been master of every diabolical nuance of the art of persuasion. . . . For as long as there has been speech and persuasion on earth, morality has shown itself to be the greatest of all mistresses of seduction—and, so far as we philosophers are concerned, the actual Circe of the philosophers.”
by opposing it in tragic mode to the sublime world of morality which it invented.

Contaminated by this formidable seductress, by this insidious woman who was able to devise more than one strategem and more than one strategy for triumphing over the strongest victims, moralized and moralizing psychology—and for Nietzsche, this is the height of the absurdities and astounding misinterpretations it enunciates—proclaimed that love should be something “unegoistic,” that it requires oblation and sacrifice: a proposition which reveals a complete mystification and occultation of the true nature of love and the true relationship between the sexes.

Presenting himself, like Socrates, as an expert in love, as a veritable defender of women, and as the first psychologist who has been able to understand them “in truth,” countering the mistakes of the psychologists and philosophers who lacked the virility to know how to handle them, Nietzsche lingers, at greater length than over the other misinterpretations, on the one they committed in regard to the nature of love, and assigns himself the task of correcting it. The first condition of love is, of course, that one be able to love, which implies not some mad abstraction of one’s desires and impulses, of “oneself,” “being selfless” or taking refuge in the ethereal sky of a delusive ideal, walking on one’s head as if in a camera obscura, but, on the contrary, having both feet firmly planted on the ground, and sitting firmly on oneself (auf sich sitzen). In commanding disinterest, “morality” gives an imperative which no one can obey, because one must only do what one can do, and love cannot be cut off from its roots in the impulses, from all interest. Who, in any event, would want an ethereal love? Women, good little women, at least those who, by the sensitivity of their ears, are Nietzsche’s allies, would certainly send packing any lover who claimed to be objective and “disinterested”: they would probably find uninteresting a man who, like Kant or Schopenhauer’s lover of art, declared that he sought from them a pleasure that was “disinterested,” in other words, without interest for their existence and cut off from all the impulses.

Much keener psychologists than the philosophers, women share an affinity of the ear with the only true psychologist who, as a disciple of

Dionysos,¹¹ this equivocal god, both masculine and feminine, whose duplicity he has inherited, addresses them as Dionysos speaks into the little ears of his fiancée: unlike the philosophers who despise \(\text{mêpriser}\) them, or make only mistakes \(\text{mêprises}\) regarding them, he claims to be the only one who really knows them. And who loves them, as the affectionate diminutive by which he designates them on this page connotes: good little women \(\text{Weiblein}\). For, as we know,¹² the women Nietzsche loved had to be “tender little women,” full of malice and grace, affectionate and playful. Nevertheless, like all diminutives, the expression “good little women” is not without irony and ambivalence; it also “belittles” women who, for many misogynists, do not reach the same heights as men. Yet it seems that Nietzsche only adopts a superior tone toward them the better to denounce this tone of superiority. For he affirms that women are in fact more intelligent than men and far more formidable: far from wanting to belittle them, it is to defend himself against the inordinate fascination they exercise, as from their love, that he speaks of them pejoratively. For unlike the pseudopsychologists, and thanks to women, whom he was capable of hearing, Nietzsche claims to be more expert in love than anyone: he knows that it is inseparable from cruelty, from the savagery of the beast of prey, from malice and a subterranean and insinuating ruse. He defends himself against the love of women out of a fear of being torn to pieces by them, as, according to Euripides,¹³ Pentheus was torn apart

¹¹ See Beyond Good and Evil, § 295 and in Explosion I, “The last disciple of the philosopher Dionysos.”
¹² See Explosion I, “Intermezzo.”
¹³ See The Bacchae in Euripides V, Three Plays, trans. William Arrowsmith, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959) 1098–1148, particularly: “Then Agav6 cried out: ‘Maenads, make a circle about the trunk and grip it with your hands. Unless we take this climbing beast, he will reveal the secrets of the god.’ With that, thousands of hands tore the fir tree from the earth, and down, down from his high perch fell Pentheus, tumbling to the ground, sobbing and screaming as he fell, for he knew his end was near. His own mother, like a priestess with her victim, fell upon him first. But snatching off his wig and snood so she would recognize his face, she touched his cheeks, screaming, ‘No, no, Mother! I am Pentheus, your own son, the child you bore to Echion! Pity me, spare me, Mother! I have done a wrong, but do not kill your own son for my offense.’ But she was foaming at the mouth, and her crazed eyes rolling with frenzy. She was mad, stark mad, possessed by Bacchus. Ignoring his cries of pity, she seized his left arm at the wrist; then, planting her foot upon his chest, she pulled, wrenching away the arm at the shoulder—not by her own strength, for the god had put inhuman power in her hands. Ino, meanwhile, on the other side, was scratching off his flesh. Then Autonoë and the whole horde of Bacchae swarmed upon him. Shouts everywhere, he screaming with what little
by the Maenads. Indeed, in love, women become veritable Maenads, the frenzied followers of Dionysos’ cortege, who, possessed by the god, abandon themselves to the worst excesses, losing all control of themselves and ceasing to recognize the conventional, Apollonian limits dividing humanity from animality: the sway of the god or of passion brings down all the artificial barriers, permitting the return of a natural “savagery” which explodes with a violence that is all the stronger because it has long been repressed: thus Agavé tears to pieces the body of her own son, taking him in her delirium for a mountain lion.

However, unlike the Maenads whom they incarnate, when they love, women retain a civilized, amiable, and agreeable air: one must be a good psychologist, like Nietzsche, to unmask, beneath the veneer, the malice and cruelty of living beings who, when necessary, do not hesitate to satisfy their need for vengeance. Then, like birds of prey swooping down, nothing can stop them. Because she is more “natural” or more alive than man, woman is more malicious, more cunning, cleverer, gifted with a more devious intelligence (with this Klugheit, which Nietzsche—who is related to them in this—claims is one of his own characteristics). A “good” woman (not to be confused with a “good little woman,”) is a degenerate: her goodness can only be a symptom of sickness, of the weakening of the natural savagery of her instincts. A man who is wise will prefer to keep his distance from her. One must also be wary of the women whom, in distinction to those he terms degenerate or lost, Nietzsche calls well turned out: those who figure the perfect and natural type of woman, the Eternal feminine, of which, appropriating for himself a claim made by Strindberg, he claims

breath was left, they shrieking in triumph. One tore off an arm, another a foot still warm in its shoe. His ribs were clawed clean of flesh and every hand was smeared with blood as they played ball with scraps of Pentheus’ body.

The pitiful remains lie scattered, one piece among the sharp rocks, others lying lost in among the leaves in the depths of the forest. His mother, picking up his head, impaled it on her wand. She seems to think it is some mountain lion’s head which she carries in triumph through the thick of Cithaeron. Leaving her sisters at the Maenad dances, she is coming here, gloating over her grisly prize. She calls upon Bacchus: he is her ‘fellow-huntsman,’ ‘comrade of the chase, crowned with victory.’ But all the victory she carries home is her own grief.”

14. In this he is also related to Jews. Nietzsche may perhaps be borrowing from Lessing’s Nathan the Wise the two characteristics of the Jew, Weisheit (wisdom) and Klugheit (cleverness), in order to play on them in his own way [see Why I am so wise and Why I am so clever]. Unlike Nathan, who is named wise and clever by the people, Nietzsche, in a provocative gesture, attributes these “qualities” to himself.
to be the first psychologist. In an earlier version, he states that: “The judgment which he brings to bear on the ‘Eternal feminine’ is the measure and probe of a psychologist.” Nietzsche’s judgment is thus deeper, more radical, more detached than any other judgment, and notably, than that of the Parisian pseudopsychologists who, because they fail to use a typological and historical method, by a sort of generalized induction or metonymy, elevate their perspective on the nineteenth-century parisiennne to an absolute. Because she is a sick, degenerate, or lost woman, they render women “as such,” in general, the weaker sex. This claim is contested (according to Nietzsche, who puts his trust in Bachofen) by history and ethnology: “There are—or there have been—almost everywhere, forms of civilization in which it is woman who is dominant.”

“Woman” as “weaker sex” is not an essential determination of woman, but a historical event that threatens to have become definitive and to constitute henceforth the feminine “type” par excellence: “It is a significant event, it is, if you will, a decisive turning-point in the destiny of humanity that woman has definitively become the underdog, that all the instincts of submission have triumphed in her and have created the feminine type.” Thus, Nietzsche appropriates the expression “Eternal feminine” only to demystify it, since, as an unparalleled psychologist, and thanks to his genealogical and historical flair, he was able to detect, beneath this pseudo-eternity, a historical creation. It is the triumph in “woman” herself of a certain type of instincts over others that were once dominant [which nevertheless continue to exist and are ready to unleash themselves all the more savagely precisely because they have been dominated and appear to have disappeared] that signs the creation of “woman.” Woman’s ruse is to foster the belief that she is and always has been, effectively and exclusively, the weaker sex, to conceal the complexity of her instincts. Her “malice”—her sudden transformation into a Maenad—is all the more unforeseeable and frightening for men.

At this decisive turning-point—the moment in which woman becomes “Woman” in all her complexity—she also becomes, for the psychologist, an interesting being, an enigma to decipher. For, by her ruses and stratagems, characteristic of the weak, she becomes unpredictable, duplicitous, she begins using devious ways of seducing men, of tearing them up and definitively triumphing over them, the “stronger sex.” “It is only from this moment that woman becomes something enchanting, interesting, complicated, cunning, a subtle
lace of impossible psychology: in it, she ceases to be boring." The strong are uninteresting: for the keen psychologist, that nutcracker of souls, they are far too simple, too direct, too boring. "Power is boring. One need only look at the Reich." It is the "becoming-Woman" of woman that made life on earth interesting: if "God" created woman, Nietzsche says elsewhere, it was to rescue man from boredom. But God has been dead for a long while: the myth of the "creation" of Eve signifies that it is men themselves (and the women who are in league with their interests) who, at a given moment when it was entirely in their interest, created woman as the "weaker sex" or Eternal feminine, transforming her into an interesting enigma: "Would life on earth be possible if woman hadn't become a genius of conversation and grace, if she hadn't become Woman?" But for this, one must be weak, a genius of malice and even somewhat of a Maenad. Weak and malicious: the two apparently antinomic terms do not exclude each other, since feminine "malice" marks only the "return" of the strong and "virile" instincts which, though suppressed, continued to exist in her. Indeed, they seem all the more savage for having been "dissimulated" by women in the interest of their cause, their pretended weakness, and because they act deviously and by surprise. Only the Judeo-Christian perspective, maintaining that with the creation of woman, evil and sin enter into the world, condemns feminine "malice."

Nietzsche's greatest objection to the Christian heaven, is, on the contrary, that the angels in it are bereft of all malice, therefore boring, asexual. They lack "virility" or this femininity which ultimately also supposes virility, since woman is only woman in virtue of her sexual "complexity," and the victory within her of submissive instincts which dissimulate the existence of her "virile" dominating instincts. These were once in her—though no "her" as yet existed—the masters, and stealthily continue to affirm their will to power: "maliciously"—as though to "avenge" themselves for having been subjugated by the weak and reduced to acting or reacting like the weakest among them. Women should be grateful to Nietzsche for being so well understood by him, and even if he is wary of their "love," which he has been able to unmask in all its cruelty and ambivalence (for there is no sensuality without cruelty), they cannot but love, with a quite maternal tenderness, a man who is so closely related to them. For the women who have

15. Nietzsche notes that it is only when man is transformed by the ascetic ideal into a "sublime miscarriage" (Beyond Good and Evil § 62) that he becomes an extremely "interesting animal" (Genealogy of Morals, first essay, § 6).
turned out well (wohlgeraten) are, first and foremost, mothers. To be “saved,” cured of the “weakness” which has triumphed in them—to be cured of their “femininity”—they need a child, and man, as Zarathustra said, is only ever a means for them: “Everything about woman is a riddle, and everything about woman has one solution: that is pregnancy. Man is for woman a means: the end is always a child.” This is what Freud too, in different terms, would say: for woman, the child is always a child-savior who cures her of her femininity, since, in the Freudian version of things, he is the substitute for the penis which nature and her father refused to give her. But the child is the remedy, not to women’s native deficiency (as Freud would have it), but to their “acquired” weakness, the response, not to the repression of an original “virility” within an individual history of the libido, but to what will prove to be a decisive event in the destiny of humanity: the triumph in woman of the instincts of submission over those of domination. The child is the only salvation.

Nietzsche rejects all other means: for example, those preached by “feminist” women who call themselves emancipated and who, because they are completely lacking in psychological finesse, readily call him (like Freud) a misogynist. These women do not love him, but then for him, they are not really women—they are abortive (missratenen) women who lack maternal fiber. Lost women—lost as women and lost because they reject the only means of salvation at their disposal [and in this they are unlucky [verunlückten] women]: childbirth. As he says elsewhere, they prefer making books to making children, and in their case this is a symptom of perversion and degeneracy. But far from recognizing this, they call themselves progressivist, believing themselves superior to other women, while, by their perverse conduct, they seek to belittle the general condition of women out of resentment for those who have turned out well (wohlgeraten). Those who seem to be fighting for women’s liberation are actually women’s worst enemies. Their attacks on men are merely a tactic, a devious strategy on the part of those who cannot give birth, used to attack those who can. The women who play at being “beautiful souls” are simply pathological.

16. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, “Of little old and young women” and “On child and marriage.”
18. Freud makes the same critique of the emancipated woman in The Taboo of Virginity.
cases. Their claims are diagnosed by the doctor Nietzsche as symptoms of a physiological disequilibrium. However, to avoid falling into a “medi-cynism” that, with impudence and vulgarity, would revel in the idea that the true motivations of all conduct supposed to be elevated or sublime, lie in the belly—or in the womb—Nietzsche does not enter into the scabrous details, but limits himself by displacing the question from the physiological to the typological, diagnosing “ill health,” indeed, degeneracy, whenever a “woman” claims to fight against men for the salvation of women, notably by demanding equal rights. Such a demand is always a symptom of weakness, since it implies as its condition a misunderstanding of hierarchy, the negation of differences, and a will to reduce the stronger to the weak, forcing them to relinquish at least a part of their power: “Neither God nor master”19 could be the slogan of these emancipated women whom, for this reason, Nietzsche calls the “anarchists of the world of the Eternal feminine,” and whose deepest motivation lies not so much in the womb, as in the desire of the weak for vengeance against all that is strong and powerful.

The “true” woman has no interest in equal rights or indeed in the world of law at all: she knows that the state of nature, which is a state of war between the sexes, accords her, and not man, the highest rank. Contrary to what Darwin—another bad philologist and psychologist—thought, the state of “nature” guarantees without contest the victory of the “weaker sex” over the stronger. As Rousseau had already claimed in Book 5 of Emile, equality of rights between men and women could only rob those who are the real women of their power, their phantasmatic all-powerfulness. They would cease to be queens or goddesses,20 to be obeyed at the least word, the least gesture. For Nietzsche, they would lose what characterizes their strength: the enigmatic character that they gave themselves by creating the type of the Eternal feminine with its contradictory characteristics. By agreeing to enter into the world of law, and by demanding equality a fortiori, they would

19. In Beyond Good and Evil, § 22, Nietzsche demonstrates that the concept of the “law of nature” is only a physicist’s interpretation resulting from bad philology, sanctioning the democratic instincts of the modern soul. Universal equality before the law is “a fine instance of ulterior motives, in which the plebian antagonism to everything privileged and autocratic as well as a second and more refined atheism are disguised once more.” “Neither God nor master” is the wish that Nietzsche, as a good philologist, deciphers beneath all proclamations of demand for universal equality before the law.

20. In Totem and Taboo, Freud shows that it is only when women lose the power accorded them by their sons after the murder of the father of the primitive horde, that they are, in compensation, transformed into great goddesses and acquire a fearsome phantasmatic power.
cease to be cunning birds of prey who subjugate and fascinate. With
the savagery of a beast showing all her claws (hand and foot, says the
German, mit Hände und Füssen), the woman worthy of her type—
of the type she created for herself—defends herself against all ideas of
right (this masculine invention for ensuring the reciprocal respect of
the strong and, by making them relinquish some of their power, avoid-
ing a fight to the death).21

Woman, like life or nature, demands, wants war: the war between
the sexes in which she is sure to triumph. Contrary to what a naive and
superficial psychology might suppose, this war or mortal hatred be-
tween the sexes, in which each of them, by diverse, more or less de-
vious strategies, attempts to triumph over the other, is not opposed to
love, but is rather its most natural principle. The true psychologist or
philosopher, freed of moral prejudices and complicitous with the good
little women, knows that love, cut off from hatred, which is its prin-
ciple, and from war, which is its means, is a word forged by the beautiful
souls, the better to dissipulate, behind the gracious games and tender
sentiments that they push to the fore, the ambivalence and cruelty that
are inherent to it. The definition of love proposed by Nietzsche aims to
translate it back into nature, as perhaps only Mérimée, in his Carmen,
had previously done. In The Case of Wagner, Nietzsche had already
paid homage to the man who so well discerned the ambivalence of love,
and the inevitable tragic humor which is its result.

Love translated back into nature. Not the love of a “higher virgin”! No
Senta-sentimentality! But love as fatum, as fatality, cynical, innocent,
cruel—and precisely in this a piece of nature. That love which is war in
its means, and at bottom the deadly hatred of the sexes!—I know no
case where the tragic joke that constitutes the essence of love is ex-
pressed so strictly, translated with equal terror into a formula, as in Don
José’s last cry, which concludes the work:

“Yes. I have killed her
I—my adored Carmen!”22

21. See The Genealogy of Morals, second essay, ¶ 11. Nietzsche specifies there that
the laws created by the strong “can never be other than exceptional conditions, since
they constitute a partial restriction of the will to life, which is bent on power, and are
subordinate to its total goal as a single means: namely, as a means of creating greater
units of power. A legal order thought of as sovereign and universal, not as a means in the
struggle between power complexes but as a means of preventing all struggle in general—
perhaps after the communistic cliché of Dühring, that every will must consider every
other will its equal—would be a principle hostile to life. . . .”

22. The Case of Wagner, in The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner, trans.
Wagner’s Flying Dutchman.
Mérimée—and Bizet who set his *Carmen* to music—discerned in love this indissoluble union of opposites in the same (which Freud would later call ambivalence) which, far from being the dialectical reconciliation of opposites in a third term, suggests a logic of supplementarity, that of life, which admits of neither morality nor logic. All the misinterpretations of love, its idealization of “pure love,” stem from the metaphysical belief (which goes hand in hand with logic and morality) in opposites. Wagner himself did not escape the naiveté of creating heroes whose love presents itself, contrary to all “true psychology,” as disinterested (“oblative,” say the old manuals); heroes who appear even to sacrifice their own advantages for the sake of the beloved. And yet, in a symptomatic and revealing manner, they also hope to “possess” the object of their love and to be loved in return. Behind the display of disinterest, this love obeys the same mercantile logic as all other human relations, as all human “affairs”: a logic not of the free “gift,” which could be symbolized by the phrase of Goethe which Nietzsche recalls—“If I love you, is that your concern?”—but of the reciprocal gift which, as such, ceases to be a “gift.” The love of God, which men have deemed to be in the image of their own, itself obeys this mercantile logic; God becomes menacing when he is not loved in return—“in exchange.”

23. It should not be forgotten that in the final analysis, this logic refers to the will to power and *agon*. For to “weigh,” “measure,” “calculate,” establish equivalents and “exchanges,” is always also to measure oneself against the one with whom one sets up the exchange. See the second essay, ¶ 8.


25. On this problematic, see my *Don Juan ou le refus de la dette* [with Jean-Yves Masson] (Paris: Galilée, 1991). And in Nietzsche, see *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Vintage Books, 1974], ¶ 141: “Too Oriental.—What? A god who loves men, provided only that they believe in him, and who casts an evil eye and threats upon anyone who does not believe in this love? What? A love encapsuled in *if* clauses attributed to an almighty god? A love that has not even mastered the feelings of honor and vindictiveness? How Oriental this is! ‘If I love you, is that your concern?’ is a sufficient critique of the whole of Christianity.” In *The Case of Wagner*, ¶ 2, Nietzsche writes: “They [men] believe one becomes selfless in love because one desires the advantage of another human being, often against one’s own advantage. But in return for that they want to possess the other person.—Even God does not constitute an exception at this point. He is far from thinking, ‘What is it to you if I love you?’—he becomes terrible when one does not love him in return. *L’amour*—this saying remains true among gods and men—est de tous les sentiments le plus égoïste et par conséquent, lorsqu’il est blessé, le moins généreux (B. Constant)” (‘Love is the most egoistic of all sentiments, and thus, when it is wounded, the least generous).

Emmanuel Lévinas seems to respond to Nietzsche in establishing an absolute dis-symmetry between myself and another, whose correlate is the absence of all demand for reciprocity in the gift of one’s self. According to Nietzsche, if this is indeed the true “love,” then it is an illusion, since, though more or less dissimulated, the will to power is everywhere operative.
Benjamin Constant showed himself a much keener psychologist than Wagner when, behind all the declarations of "disinterested" love, he was able to read the fiercest egoism, which is exposed in the most blatant way when love is wounded and loses its outward display of generosity.

Far from being a "moral" sentiment, love is, for both sexes, a means of attaining its ends and triumphing over the other. Thus, in woman, the love of man is simply a means of having a child, her only hope for healing and salvation. On this point, once again, Wagner committed the crudest of errors, one which spells his decadence and that of the characters he created: he who, in his operas, always invents "savior" figures, and in whose work the theme of "Redemption" is one of the most recurrent leitmotivs, in *Parsifal* believed that he could "save" a woman (Kundry) by means of a chaste love (that of Parsifal, the innocent and naive knight), whereas, according to Nietzsche, it is obvious that this supposed means of redemption could only spell her downfall. Preaching chastity is a veritable crime against life, and impedes (at the same time as the salvation of women) its eternal return. Because they are impure, sexual life and sensuality are despised and ridiculed by this "virtue" preached by the ascetic ideal and the morality which stems from it. In *Parsifal*, in which the aging Wagner converts to the ascetic ideal, there is a veritable eulogy of chastity, "tragically" cut off from sensuality, whereas it should be understood that the former belongs to a strategy of life, of which it is a necessary ingredient. When the morbidity of man prevents him from being excited by that carnal animal, woman, the stratagem of chastity—the "morbidezza" of woman—furnishes her with a supplementary attraction.26 Sexual life is not criminal, but chastity, envisaged in its ascetic and tragic opposition to sensuality, certainly is. To the Christians' sin against the Holy Spirit, Nietzsche opposes a far more serious sin, the one committed against life, whose name is Baubô (to deride Demeter, in mourning for Proserpine, Baubô lifted up her skirts and showed her her belly),27 the sin committed against women and their salvation.

26. See The Genealogy of Morals, third essay §1–§5, and on all that concerns Wagner's ascetic ideal and *Parsifal*, the false opposition chastity/sensuality, see my "Nietzsche and Wagner." For a thesis which is the opposite of Nietzsche's see Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata, which one cannot read today without thinking that its virulence and misogyny were designed to provoke a complete rejection of Christianity understood in this way.

When women themselves, or the “emancipated,” “refuse” to give birth because they are incapable of it, and hold up a “higher” ideal, they are merely colluding with the ascetic ideal and, like it, they tend toward the negation of life, taking revenge on life and on those women who desire and ensure its return. By fighting for the right to vote and to an education, for equality with the other sex, whose wearing of trousers becomes emblematic, they actually seek to render women inferior to men, to make them lose, in the war of the sexes, the supremacy of which they had assured themselves. These failed women are women’s worst enemies, and it would be better if, on the subject of women, they were to remain silent. In Beyond Good and Evil, in which, parodying Napoleon, Nietzsche utters the famous “mulier taceat de muliere” (woman should be silent about woman), Nietzsche invites women to be suspicious of these famous women, the very height of absurdity, who portray themselves as their spokeswomen; by heeding them, they display the worst taste and betray the perversity of their instincts:

It betrays a corruption of the instincts—quite apart from the fact that it betrays bad taste—when a woman adduces Madame Roland or Madame de Staël or Monsieur George Sand, of all people, as if they proved anything in favor of “woman as such.” Among them these three are the three comical women as such—nothing more!—and precisely the best involuntary counterarguments against emancipation and feminine vainglory. [233]

The “type” of woman—the old maid full of resentment—who, under the cover of idealism, is pernicious to the female sex as a whole, can also be found among those who, anatomically speaking, are men, and who, as idealists, infect all that is natural and innocent in sexual love with their moralism. The typical “old maid,” the old maid par excellence, is not a woman, but the dramatist, Henrik Ibsen.28 In a posthumous fragment, Nietzsche exposes the real motivations of his apparent “idealism,” which stem from the will of the weak to establish their supremacy over the strong:

Your Henrik Ibsen has become very clear to me. For all his robust idealism and “will to truth” he did not dare to liberate himself from the illusionism of morality that speaks of “freedom” without wishing to admit to itself what freedom is: the second stage in the metamorphosis of the “will to power”—for those who lack freedom. On the first stage one demands justice from those who are in power. On the second, one

28. Nietzsche is perhaps thinking particularly of The Doll’s House, whose heroine is an emancipated woman.
speaks of "freedom"—that is, one wants to get away from those in power. On the third, one speaks of "equal rights"—that is, as long as one has not yet gained superiority one wants to prevent one's competitors from growing in power.29

Whether it is a "man" or a "woman" who appropriates this unnatural idealism for his or her own use, the Nietzschean moral code can only condemn this "person" as an idealist, vicious, perverse, and criminal, because a negator of life and of its "sanctity."

A first version of this paragraph ends the text by unmasking the most criminal of "all the idealists," the Wagner of Parsifal who, for his crimes, should suffer no lesser punishment than to be put in jail:

After committing this crime, Parsifal, Wagner should not have died in Venice, but in jail. (I recommend this for the inscription on the façade of the theater in Bayreuth—it wouldn't lack wit.) One can imagine what I felt on seeing Parsifal during the summer of 1882 when I was pregnant with Zarathustra.

In this first version he also cited Article 4 of his "Law against Christianity" which constitutes the end of the Antichrist:

**Promulgated on the day of salvation, first day of the Year I**

(30 September 1888 of the false calendar)

**All-out war against the vice:**

The vice is Christianity

Article 4: "Preaching chastity is an open incitement to anti-nature. Disdain for sexual life and sullying it with the notion of 'impurity,' such is the true sin against the Holy Spirit of life." All of the articles of this code promulgated and signed by the Antichrist should be read. In their stead, I cite Article 6, which, more than any other, underscores the transvaluation of values operated by Nietzsche in this, to say the least, revolutionary code:

One should give "holy" history the name it deserves—"accursed history"; one should use the words "God," "Messiah," "Redemption," "Saint" as insults and to designate criminals.

If some of Nietzsche's theses on women still seem shocking to the "feminists" of today, one must nevertheless recognize that they are inscribed in a general strategy which Nietzsche directs against Christian idealism and its dire consequences for sexuality, and notably femi-

nine sexuality: in this sense, Nietzsche perhaps does indeed, as he claims, "love" women, for he knows, as he states in the third essay of the Genealogy of Morals (§ 6), that they could not possibly want a disinterested and "oblative" love, one that appears to be cut off from all pulsional interest.

Moreover, to consider Nietzsche a misogynist is to forget what he always emphasizes: (1) there is no woman "as such," woman as such is herself a historical creation; (2) there are only types of women, for which he tries to establish a differential table (these types themselves being not essences but historical "creations"): perfect women [wohlgeraten], and abortive women [missgeraten] who are transformed into women; (3) furthermore, he knows that he does not state "the truth" about "woman," but expresses only "his" truths about them, recognizing that these are closely bound up with the image of the mother which he bears within him:

Whenever a cardinal problem is at stake, there speaks an unchangeable "this is I"; about man and woman, for example, a thinker cannot relearn but only finish learning—only discover ultimately how this is "settled in him".

After this abundant civility that I have just evidenced in relation to myself 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. [BGE, 231]

Everyone carries in himself an image of woman derived from the mother; by this he is determined to revere women generally, or to hold them in low esteem, or to be generally indifferent to them. [HTH, 380]

Reviewing paragraph three of "Why I am so Wise" (as I demonstrated in Explosion I), one can conclude that this image was at the very least ambivalent, since he states there that he would prefer to give up his most abysmal thought, that of the eternal return, rather than—vision of horror—bear the idea that his mother and sister, that riffraff, that dangerous vermin, should return eternally. But the very violence of his assertions about them is symptomatic of his love for these two women and for all the more or less castrating "good little women," against whom he nevertheless protects himself, by refusing all proximity to them—by keeping them at a respectful distance.

—Translated by Madeleine Dobie

30. Derrida has already made this point in Éperons (Paris: Champs-Flammarion, 1973); see also my “Baubô.”