

The Camel, the Lion, and the Child: Castrated, Castrator, and Affirming

“*Laughter*— Laughter means: being *schadenfroh*, but with a good conscience.”¹

I

Laughter rings throughout Nietzsche’s works. Nietzsche unsettles the reader by exposing accidents and mistakes which shape(d) particular institutions and/or categories that are(were) believed to be essential, true ,or natural. Surely, this discomfort provides Nietzsche with a sense of delight, but it is all in good conscience. Nietzsche frequently asserts jarring, highly cynical comments concerning women through which he seems to treat these categories as if they were essential. These comments about women appear contrary to Nietzsche’s treatment of other categories such as good, evil, freedom, and Christianity, which he describes as non-essential or genealogical accidents. These polemics about women might lead many readers to consider him profoundly misogynistic. However, there is more to Nietzsche’s rhetoric than meets the eye, as for instance scholars Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall note:

While Nietzsche challenges traditional hierarchies between mind and body, reason and irrationality, nature and culture, truth and fiction— hierarchies that have been used to degrade and exclude women— his remarks about women and his use of feminine and maternal metaphors throughout his writings confound attempts simply to proclaim Nietzsche a champion of feminism or women.²

Appearance and reality hold the potential to be vastly different, even antithetical. Nietzsche intends to *play* with appearance and reality, laughing as a child does, (I expand on this notion

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 172. In a footnote, Kauffmann comments that *schadenfroh* is notoriously untranslatable yet it still signifies taking a mischievous delight in the discomfort of another person. This is a favorite quote of mine, one which I believe signifies Nietzsche’s project of exposing what was taken for granted. One ought to take delight in this discomfort, for one is in the process of reviling deeper meaning.

² Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall, “Introduction: Why Feminists Read Nietzsche” in *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP 1998), 4.

later in the paper during a discussion of the Metamorphosis Chapter in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) in his intentionally confrontational and, at times, convoluted writing. He writes, “Whatever is profound loves a mask; what is most profound even hates image and parable. Might not nothing less than the *opposite* be the proper disguise for the shame of a god?”³ Considering this, one must take extra caution when deciphering Nietzsche’s works.

In this essay, I analyze select works of Nietzsche and argue that his crudely misogynistic statements, rather than being unfortunate aberrations in an otherwise radical and emancipatory agenda, are instead an exercise in philosophic rhetoric.⁴ I evaluate, within a Derridean framework, Nietzsche’s rhetorical method and theoretical scheme pertaining to the three part metamorphosis of *free spirits* [*freie Geister*] from camel to lion to child, as expressed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I attempt to show that his criticism of “women” and gender is a framing mechanism subtly woven around his seemingly larger critique of institutions such as “Nietzsche’s Christianity.”⁵ This essentialized notion of Christianity and other institutions like it prevent *free spirits* from undergoing metamorphoses through which they can dismantle oppressive intuitions and create non-oppressive ones. I weigh my reading of Nietzsche and

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. in *Basic Writing of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 240. It is also important to note that Nietzsche sets up this quote a few paragraphs earlier as when he writes, “Our highest insights must—and should—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them.” (p.232 sec. 30)

⁴ One can contrast the rhetoric of Nietzsche’s statements on women with the crude misogynist statements of Schopenhauer’s series of aphorisms “On Women,” which are not playful in the least. Schopenhauer writes, in a section titled, *Absence of Genius*, “Nor can one expect anything else from women if one considers that the most eminent heads of the entire sex have proved incapable of a single truly great, genuine and original achievement in art, or indeed of creating anything at all of lasting value....” Arthur Schopenhauer, “On Women,” *Parerga and Paralipomena Vol. II*, trans. and ed. Sabine Roehr and Christopher Janaway (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

⁵ Nietzsche’s notions of Christianity, which he describes as platonism for the masses, is a highly historically contextualized form of Christianity, yet remains a perfect reference point throughout this essay for deciphering his masks. Nietzsche plays with his audience presenting his opinions at times transparently, and at other times through an opaque mirror of sarcasm; Christianity is among the transparent, where as his critique of gender is among the opaque.

Derrida against that of Kelly Oliver's in her study *Womanizing Nietzsche*. Oliver argues that both Nietzsche and Derrida resort to describing the most desirable woman as masculine, and that within these frameworks the feminine will always be an object of masculinity. I conclude that Nietzsche's (and Derrida's) playful rhetorical style and critique of essentialized institutions are successful in the deconstruction of this binary. Nietzsche, in this sense, is very much a *proto-feminist* and his work ought to be considered a powerful and prevalent critique of gender.

II

Nietzsche toys with his audience, putting forth masked statements which one might decipher as profundity hiding behind the mask; yet at other times, he speaks more translucently about what he is antipathetic towards: for instance nation-states and Platonism or Christianity. I hope to explicate how one may discern a mask from an apparent truth claim, yet even these *apparent* truth claims are hazy at best. To begin filtering through the haze, it is beneficial to examine Nietzsche's notion of the *free spirit*. It is safe to say that Nietzsche considers himself a *free spirit* if one takes into account the section in *Beyond Good and Evil* entitled "The Free Spirits," where he makes the reference, "...we free spirits!"⁶ Nietzsche attempts to embody the qualities he prescribes to *free spirits*. He would, however, not necessarily consider himself an *Übermensch*. An *Übermensch* is an extreme form of the *free spirit*. The *Übermensch* is more of a thought experiment whereas the *free spirit* is something Nietzsche intends to be actualized.⁷

⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 246.

⁷ Further explanation of the differences and similarities between the *Übermensch* and the *free spirit* would require another essay. *Übermensch* itself is an interesting word in German, one that predates Nietzsche's writing. For the purposes of this essay, however, the differences between these two notions are moot. Further reading on the topic can be found in Kaufmann's work, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Kaufmann explains in depth the etymology and usage of the term *Übermensch*. Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, (4th ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974.) 307-33.

The *free spirit* is a conceptual apparatus or rubric meant to legislate humanity through creative power into what Nietzsche refers to as the *highest splendor*. He posits this term near the beginning of *On The Genealogy of Morals* when discussing a lack of value within the moral framework of good and evil. He suggests:

What if a regressive trait lurked in ‘the good man’, likewise a danger, an enticement, a poison, a narcotic, so that the present *lived at the expense of the future*? Perhaps in more comfort and less danger, but also in a smaller-minded, meaner manner?... So that morality itself were to blame if man, as species, never reached his *highest potential power and splendor*[*Mächtigkeit und Pracht*]? So that morality itself was the danger of dangers?...⁸

This *splendor* is ambiguous and persistently in motion. The volatile characteristics of this *splendor* are important to note. However, even if the *splendor* is an amalgam, the course that modernity currently takes does not achieve a manifestation of *splendor*. By examining Nietzsche’s critique of ancient Greek philosophy I continue to frame the concept of *splendor* and *free spirits*.

Nietzsche critiques most ancient Greek philosophers, especially Plato, because he, considers the latter’s philosophy to have paved the way for life-denying, dogmatic values of which he attests: “[The] most dangerous of all errors so far was a dogmatist’s error- namely, Plato’s invention of the pure spirit and the good as such.”⁹ This error is so dangerous because it inhibits the possibility for *free spirits* to accomplish *splendor*. Nietzsche considers Christianity to be the “mass media” or “pop culture” form of Platonic philosophy. Christianity is easily consumed by the masses and they are made complacent, like a herd of sheep. Nietzsche continues this thought as follows: “But the fight against Plato or, to speak more clearly and for

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994) 8.

⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 193.

‘the people,’ the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia— for Christianity is Platonism for ‘the people’— has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit....”¹⁰

Nietzsche is seeking out *free spirits* to fight against Platonism for “the people.” Plato and Christianity’s transcendent notions of essentialized, necessary truths shackle “the people” to life-denying philosophies, whereas Nietzsche and his *free spirit* must fight and provide for “the people” an immanent society of higher *splendor*, one that is life-affirming.

Despite what Nietzsche might say about most ancient Greek philosophers, he holds in high regard one of the pre-Socratics, Heraclitus.¹¹ As he writes for instance in his most synoptic text, *Twilight of the Idols*:

I shall set apart, with great respect, the name of *Heraclitus*. If the rest of the philosophical populace rejected the evidence of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he[Heraclitus] rejected their evidence because they[The Socratics] showed things as if they had duration and unity...But Heraclitus will always be right that Being is an empty fiction.¹²

Heraclitus states, in one of his few surviving fragments:“...there is no being, only becoming.”

This is a crucial point to understanding the *free spirit*’s use of masks and Nietzsche’s conception of truth and *splendor*. The *free spirit*, like Heraclitus, asserts that world is in constant motion, always changing. Masks, in this sense, are a great metaphor as one can take off and put on a different mask whenever one pleases. The problem for the *free spirit* is his/her need to overcome institutions established over time that are thought to be eternal or natural. Nietzsche implores the free spirit to analyze, through genealogical deconstruction, institutions such as Christianity. By

¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 193.

¹¹ As an interesting side note, Kaufman points out that Nietzsche mentions in a note published postmortem in *Musarion*, ed. 1920-29, vol. 14, p. 109, that, “My ancestors [are]: *Heraclitus, Empedocles, Spinoza, Goethe*.”

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Trans. Duncan Large, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 17.

doing so, the *free spirit* will realize that morality, gender, and other institutions are merely products of our mistakes; that is, they are accidents and happenstances. Institutions of all kinds are constructions, not essences.

III

The *free spirit* must become a *free spirit* through a three-part experience. I will expand on this metamorphosis later. For now it should be noted that a *free spirit* cannot be taught how to be a *free spirit*. By way of his writings, Nietzsche provides an experience that enhances and nurtures the *free spirit's* ability to achieve *Machtigkeit und Pracht*. Experience is the only way in which a *free spirit* will learn its potential. In typical, provocative Nietzschean fashion he describes his work as an experience:

When Dr. Heinrich von Stein once complained very honestly that he didn't understand a word of my *Zarathustra*, I told him that this was perfectly in order: having understood six sentences from it--that is, to have really experienced them — would raise one to a higher level of existence than modern man could attain.¹³

Furthermore, in a chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil* called "Our Virtues" he provides the reader with an instance of how *free spirits* ought to conduct themselves:

Here belongs also, finally, that by no means unproblematic readiness of the spirit to deceive other spirits and to dissimulate in front of them, that continual urge and surge of a creative, form-giving, changeable force: in this the spirit enjoys the multiplicity and craftiness of its masks, it also enjoys the feeling of security behind them: after all, it is surely its Protean arts that defend and conceal it best.¹⁴

The *free spirit* practices the "Protean art." In other words, the *spirit* deceives others by assuming many "forms" (not of course to be confused with the Platonic forms) or rather by wearing many

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 715.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 350

masks. The *free spirit* must have confidence and security when using change and even deceit in order to advance values of *splendor*. That being said, Nietzsche does not intend to be agreeable nor obliging in his writing, but rather aims to create experiences within his texts that confront, bite, and gnaw on other *spirit's* and *non-spirit's* convictions. The intention is to break the binding shackles of Platonism and Christianity and encourage other *free spirits* to test their own convictions. As Nietzsche states: “*Rule as a riddle*. — If the bond shan’t burst — bite upon it first.”¹⁵ Biting, gnawing and tearing at what people take as natural or eternal is the job of the *free spirit* and Nietzsche intends to do the same in order to deconstruct essentialized notions of truth, Christianity, and gender. This is the task of the *free spirit*, yet there is a process through which a *spirit* must undergo to become *free*, a metamorphosis.

IV

In his *Zarathustra* Nietzsche describes what he calls “The Three Metamorphoses.” These metamorphoses consist of three stages: the camel, the lion, and finally the child. A spirit traverses through these three stages in order to transform its consciousness to become *free* and thereby achieve *power* and *splendor* in society. Granted, in this section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche uses the concept of the *Übermensch* or *Overman* but I still think the metamorphosis is applicable to Nietzsche’s *free spirit*. Though the two concepts are certainly distinct, there is much overlap between them. Like all authors Nietzsche’s notions and terms change over time and I am giving him the benefit of the doubt in granting that these notions are highly relatable and conducive to each other. First the spirit is a camel. The camel is a beast of burden, always

¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 278.

taking orders, never free. Nietzsche writes, "...so asks the spirit that would bear much; then it kneels down like a camel wanting to be laden."¹⁶ Carrying the burden of traditional values, the camel is unable to challenge institutions and categories such as Christianity or gender. The camel is a misguided truth seeker, a seeker of a static truth rather than the mobile, fluctuating truth Nietzsche's free spirit seeks. However, this is a necessary stage; as stated earlier, the spirit is always becoming. The camel, laden with this burden, begins to move into the second stage. The camel has a multitude of convoluted tasks that it must perform before it realizes that it may shed these traditional burdens. Nietzsche writes:

...to humiliate oneself in order to mortify one's pride? To exhibit one's folly in order to mock at one's wisdom? ...to abandon our cause when it celebrates its triumph? To climb high mountains to tempt the tempter?...to feed on the acorns and grass of knowledge, and for the sake of truth to suffer hunger of soul..."¹⁷

Among its other tasks, the camel, sickened, begins to find that the traditional search for knowledge is fleeting. In other words, that there is no essence of knowledge, no foundation. The camel exposes itself to these situations and, in doing so, begins to shed its burden. Nietzsche might be alluding to philosophers such as Pascal or Plato, who position the truth of reality into orderly categories. The camel, recognizing its vulnerability in these new situations, proceeds forth. As Nietzsche states: "All these most difficult things the spirit that would bear much takes upon itself: and like the camel, which, when laden, hastens into the desert..."¹⁸ It is in the desert where the camel, now laden with these discrepancies in thought, wrestles with this new notion of truth which lacks foundation, and becomes a lion.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Trans. Clancy Martin, (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics 2007,) 25.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 25.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 25.

Once the camel has wandered the desert and sheds the burden of a singular, essential truth the second phase commences. As Nietzsche writes:

But in the loneliest wilderness the second metamorphosis occurs: here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks his last master: he wants to fight him and his last god; for final victory he wants to fight with the great dragon.¹⁹

The great dragon can be interpreted as the burden the camel once carried, the notion of a singular grounded truth, such as Nietzsche's Christianity. The dragon's golden scales sparkle with transcendent truth. He describes the dragon, "The values of a thousand years glitter on those scales, and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons, 'All the value of all things glitters on me.'"²⁰ The camel *can* not merely shed this burden, but rather *must* become a lion in order to destroy the dragon and thereby open for itself a space of freedom in which the next stage, the child, may laugh, play, and construct. The lion is a destroyer, but not a creator. Nietzsche comments on the task of the lion as follows: "He [the camel] once loved 'thou shalt' as most sacred; now he must find illusion and arbitrariness even in the most sacred things, that he may steal his freedom from his love: the lion is needed for such prey."²¹ Nietzsche's use of "thou shalt" is one of many transparent rhetorical jabs at Christianity. The lion can see the meaningless of essentialized "thou shalt" truths, and, through the act of destroying, the dragon realizes that its former master is no more than a mere illusory truth. Upon this realization and destruction of illusory truths, the third stage of the metamorphosis for becoming (and continually becoming) a *free spirit* commences.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 25.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 26.

²¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 26.

The lion is not a true creator, but a destroyer and thus perhaps a creator, in a sense, of space for the child stage of the metamorphosis. Nietzsche explains why the lion cannot also be the creator when he writes: “The child is innocent and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred Yes-saying. Yes, for the game of creating, my brothers, a sacred Yes-saying is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been the world’s outcast now conquers his own world.”²² The child now has the capability of achieving *Mächtigkeit und Pracht* within its own creative free space. The child, having forgotten its former master, is able to affect humanity and create new values. One can think of this process as cyclical. The child does not retain the knowledge of the camel or lion, that is of anything eternal or transcendent. Now the child is absorbed in spontaneity and creative play.

Imagine a child playing with its toys, possibly building blocks, as it constructs and creates. Children sit, sometimes, in complete seriousness as they toil away creating just what they have imagined, yet at the same time complete joy and cheerfulness courses through them; unafraid to tear it all down and start anew. Nietzsche describes Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American philosopher, essayist, and poet of whom he had the utmost respect, in the following manner: “Emerson has that kindly and quick-witted cheerfulness which discourages all seriousness; he is absolutely unaware of how old he already is and how young he will yet become.”²³ It is important to note the discrepancy and counter-intuitiveness of how Nietzsche describes elderliness and youth in this quote (...unaware of how old he already is and how young he will yet become”). I think we can safely say that age can be associated with the

²² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 26. I want to note here, for later in the paper, that “the child” in German is *das Kind* a neuter noun. I propose that Nietzsche intentionally chose child, a non-gendered noun, rather than *der Übermensch*, a masculine noun.

²³Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 50.

metamorphosis in this sense. Oldness can be related to the camel, whereas youth should be equated to the child. Emerson might be thought of an example of a *spirit*, traversing through the metamorphosis, he gains youth and freedom through experiencing the metamorphosis. This experience and freedom obtained through the process of metamorphosis moves a *spirit* towards the creation of the highest *splendor* that Nietzsche seeks. The *free spirit* plays, like a child, in order to create for “the people” a society by moving, manipulating, tearing down, and rebuilding morality among other notions into new and more adept institutions necessary for *splendor*. This *splendor*, of course, is always in flux, so the *free spirit* must also not be too serious or too cheerful to imagine that he has found the answer, but instead willing to tear down what is there and begin anew. Always willing to wear a new and different mask. The *free spirit*, the higher type, must seek a different sort of truth than that of the dragon and instead seek truths in which the child plays.

V

Nietzsche equates truth(s) (certainly the “truth” to which Nietzsche is referring here his notion of ever changing “truths,” rather than static essential truth) and women in the beginning of his work *Beyond Good and Evil* as follows: “Suppose truth is a woman--what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women?”²⁴ In other words, these dogmatist philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, and Plato have been “inexpert” about truth. Derrida elaborates on Nietzsche’s hazy yet abundant *truths*:

²⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 192.

...there is no one truth of Nietzsche or of Nietzsche's text. When one reads in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "These are *my* truths," ...it is precisely in a paragraph on women. My truths, that undoubtedly implies that they are not *truth* since they are multiple, multicolored, contradictory...truth is plural...There is therefore no truth in itself of sexual difference in itself, of women or of men...²⁵

Derrida's insight further confirms the protean project of Nietzsche and his *free spirit*. Nietzsche's notions of women, or of truth(s), are yet another experience Nietzsche intends the reader to undergo. However, the question still remains: How might the philosophers become expert on truth/women, or is this even possible? Derrida provides a key insight for this discernment as well. He offers a trifold psychoanalytic technique for how one might make sense of Nietzsche's use of women:

He was and dreaded such a castrated woman.
He was and dreaded such a castrating woman.
He was and loved such affirming women.²⁶

Derrida's statements suggests that Nietzsche, *the free spirit*, occupies space in each aspect of this triad, simultaneously or successively, just as the *free spirit* must transgress through the threefold metamorphosis.

The terms 'castrated' and 'castrating' are immediately problematic because of their intimate association with masculinity and psychoanalytic notions of the Oedipal crisis and castration complex. According to Freud, the Oedipal crisis occurs in a child around the age of three to five when the child recognizes a sexual difference between himself and his mother. For the sake of clarity, I refer to a male child because a female child in Freud's scheme goes through penis-envy rather than a castration complex. These two crises do function in similar ways, yet

²⁵Jacques Derrida, "The Question of Style," trans. Ruben Berezdivin, in *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998), 64.

²⁶Derrida, "The Question of Style," 63.

there is a key, quite sexist, difference between them. Freud describes that a girl does not have the same visceral reaction as a boy does to his mother when a girl noticing the sexual differences between herself and her father. Girls then, do not develop a strong *super ego* and strong sense of morals as a boy does. The boy becomes anxious about the possible loss of his penis (or becoming feminine) and a crisis of sexual identity occurs. This identity crisis is twofold: the first part of this crisis is when his mother appears castrated to the boy, and second, a loathing and guilty desire to murder his father, whom he sees as a rival. Then there is a *symbolic castration* of the son by the father during which the boy recognizes his father's power and must submit to him. The process of repressing these incestuous desires formulates the *superego*, an authoritative version of the ego which balances both *ego* and *id*, and the *unconscious*. Upon the creation of the *superego* castration anxiety transforms into a more standard social anxiety and the boy develops the sexual identity of his father. The child will either develop fairly nominally and be able to deal with said anxiety, or will develop more complexes within their *unconscious*.²⁷

What does this say about Nietzsche's threefold metamorphosis? The camel now appears to be feminine, for it is castrated, whereas the lion might be either masculine or feminine as it is the castrator. The child seems to be beyond such a dichotomy as it is affirming. The child is no longer fearful of anxiety from the Oedipal complex. I do not find that this description captures what Nietzsche is intending. The goal of Nietzsche's analysis of gender is not to say what gender is or is not, but rather, to relate women, the feminine, and notions of gender to truth. And furthermore, use this constructed relationship ironically to imply a denial of essentialized truth claims. Derrida expands on this notion, "The styled spur traverses the veil, not only tears it to

²⁷Rosalind Minsky, *Psychoanalysis and Gender an Introductory Reader*; (Hoboken: Routledge, 2014,) 40-2.

view or produce the thing itself, but undoes the opposition to itself, the opposition folded over itself go the veiled/unveiled, truth as production, unveiling/dissimulation of the produced within presence.”²⁸ This is to say that Nietzsche is attempting to move beyond man and women, just as he intends to move beyond good and evil. Unfortunately, language is a barrier that blocks this deconstruction. People can only use words they know and understand to describe new, possibly nameless concepts. This may seem trivial, yet I think it is an important point. For example, the first automobiles were called horseless carriages. It was not until the notion of an automobile was more readily accepted that it was understood as a thing in itself. Nietzsche must use older terms such as good and evil, man and woman, to describe his innovations.

Despite this, Nietzsche’s schema is still undeniably problematic, and difficult to wield without being male-centric. Derrida, after offering his three-part, psychoanalytic categories, declares that Nietzsche’s rhetoric is irreducible to those psychoanalytic categories. Furthermore, in Nietzsche’s writings, things really cannot be castrated or not castrated, just as they are not necessarily good or evil. Instead, Derrida uses the “graphic of the hymen” to signify an “in-between” space the *free spirit* must occupy. One could think of this “in-between space” as the continual becoming of the *spirit* as they experience the threefold metamorphosis. Derrida remarks that: “...the graphic of the hymen..., that inscribes in her the effect of castration without being reducible to it, effect at work, everywhere and specifically in Nietzsche’s texts, limits without appeal the pertinence of these hermeneutic or systematic questions.”²⁹ The “graphic of the hymen” is a signification of a beyond good and evil space which Nietzsche envisions *free*

²⁸ Derrida, “The Question of Style,” 64.

²⁹ Derrida, “The Question of Style,” 62

spirits occupying. This is quite the liminal space. However, I think that without the “castrated, castrator, affirming triad” the “graphic of the hymen” would be impossible to implement. Bearing this in mind, neither of these configurations fit neatly into Nietzsche’s metaphoric and poetic texts, yet they still give us a platform to stand on when discerning whether Nietzsche is a misogynist or *proto-feminist*. And furthermore, whether his misogynistic statements actually frame his critique of Christianity and moreover essentialized truth. Kelly Oliver elaborates on this notion.

VI

Oliver claims that, similar to Freud, both Nietzsche and Derrida still address women as the object and the man as the subject. Although Nietzsche and Derrida allow a space for the feminine in their texts, unlike their predecessors (Hegel, Kant for Nietzsche and Heidegger for Derrida) who omit the feminine all together, still view women as an other, or an object. Oliver claims that: “Like Freud, Nietzsche makes women and the feminine into an object for a masculine subject. Like Freud, while Nietzsche opens philosophy onto the other, the body, he closes off the possibility of a specifically feminine other and there by eliminates the possibility of sexual difference.”³⁰ Oliver also notes how Luce Irigaray, in her work *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, comments upon a deep hypocrisy tucked away within Nietzsche’s work. Oliver elaborates on Irigaray’s point: “...Irigaray indicates that Nietzsche’s texts always promote sameness even when they sing the praises of difference, because Nietzschean difference is always merely differences as defined by the same, or is what she calls ‘the other of the same’

³⁰ Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy’s Relation to the “feminine”*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1995,) 25.

rather than ‘the other of the other.’³¹ This is to say that, Nietzsche denies sexual difference by casting aside the difference between a maternal body and a non-maternal body. By not promoting this difference, which Irigaray says must be done with the women's blood,³² Nietzsche and Derrida, as Oliver points out, continue this trend of describing the feminine as an object to a subjective male. Dissolving sexual difference along with gender difference might be considered damning to the feminine project as a whole.³³ I am inclined to think that Nietzsche and Derrida are critiquing the notion of gender rather than sex, however I admit I could be easily mistaken. Oliver continues problematizing Nietzsche’s (Derrida’s) notions of gender and possibly sex as they apply to the threefold metamorphosis.

Oliver, using Derrida’s hermeneutic, notices how well (possibly too well) this method fits with Nietzsche’s threefold manifestation of will. Oliver draws from a section of Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, where he offers an early characterization of the will:

It is an eternal phenomenon: the insatiable will always finds a way to detain its creatures in life and compel them to live on, by means of an illusion spread over things. One is chained by the Socratic love of knowledge and the delusion of being able thereby to heal the eternal wound of existence; another is ensnared by art’s seductive veil of beauty fluttering before his eyes; still another by the metaphysical comfort that beneath the whirl of phenomena eternal life flows on indestructibly- to say nothing of the more vulgar and almost more powerful illusions which the will always has at hand.³⁴

³¹ Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche*, 24.

³² Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, (New York, Columbia University Press 1991), 94.

³³ This is a classic problem for feminists, because if the deconstruction of the categories, man and woman, gender and sex go too far, then what is it that feminism is exactly fighting for, if there is no ‘real’ feminine or female sex? This of course, is a massive topic within itself and would be difficult to discuss within the confines of this paper.

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann, (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 109-10. —Nietzsche does use the term eternal which on the outset seems highly problematic. Nietzsche’s critique of modernity and institutions as not being eternal but rather mistakes and accidents does not follow that eternal phenomena do not exist. Clearly there is at least one eternal phenomena which exists, that there is always change. Nietzsche also comments in *Ecce Homo* that *Birth of Tragedy* was his least well written work.

Oliver then associates the three descriptions of will that Nietzsche provides with the psychoanalytic Derridean triad of women. She postulates that: “The castrated woman embodies truth which results from the will to truth, the castrating woman corresponds to truth as a manifestation of the will to illusion, and the affirming woman is truth as the will to power.”³⁵ As we have previously seen, illusion or deception is a powerful tool the *free spirit* uses for legislating humanity towards *splendor*. Oliver looks critically at how Nietzsche embodies each of the, now, triad of triads.

The castrated woman occupies a space of objective truth. She searches, like the camel, for the reified truth in the world. She looks to discover Plato’s forms or Kant’s noumena. Oliver dictates: “In the castrated position women suffer from the will to truth; that is, she lays claim to objective truth.”³⁶ The castrating woman or the lion battles the castrated. She defeats the dragon and uncovers a space of freedom to play with truth(s). She proposes that, “The castrating woman chooses appearance over reality, the ‘as-it-appears’ over the ‘as-it-is.’ She learns that illusion is more effective than reality...”³⁷ Finally there is the affirming woman or child who has left the very discourse of truth itself and entered one of truths. She (it³⁸) is raw power and creation. Absolute potential. Oliver continues: “She is hollow like a womb. She is the space, the womb, from which everything originates.”³⁹ It seems from the earlier description of the *free spirit* that it must occupy two aspects of the triad: castrating and affirming. However, that which must be

³⁵ Kelly Oliver, *Woman as Truth in Nietzsche's Writing*, in *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998), 67.

³⁶ Oliver, *Woman as Truth in Nietzsche's Writing*, 69.

³⁷ Oliver, *Woman as Truth in Nietzsche's Writing*, 73.

³⁸ I will explain the use of it rather than she in the conclusion of this essay.

³⁹ Oliver, *Woman as Truth in Nietzsche's Writing*, 77.

deconstructed, the Christian, life-denying, Platonist, occupies the castrated space. But, is this really the case? Has Nietzsche done no more than the metaphysicians he so adamantly critiques? Can we say that Nietzsche, like Plato, has created his own system of forms?

Oliver seems to think so, “The Christian God and the platonic forms are replaced by another supersensibile force: the will to power. Nietzsche, then, is always the castrated woman as well as the affirming women. He is as sick as the metaphysicians who prescribe a frustratingly distant ‘truth.’”⁴⁰ I disagree. I think Nietzsche is successful in his critique of antifeminism and Christianity. In a sense, to use Audre Lorde’s terminology, the camel lives in the master’s house (cave), the lion destroys the house (cave) and the tools, and the child builds a new house (cave), and the *free spirit* must at different times occupy each space of the triad.

VII

To expound upon the spaces which the *free spirit* occupies, it will be beneficial to retreat back to Plato’s writing. Plato’s allegory of the cave, with a slight change, is a fitting metaphor for how Nietzsche intends *free spirits* to act. Plato sets the scene inside of the cave with dancing lights and images held in front of chained people. Plato articulates:

Imagine human beings living in an underground, cave-like dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They’ve been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Also behind them, but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built like the screen in front of puppeteers above which they show their puppets.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Oliver, *Woman as Truth in Nietzsche's Writing*, 78.

⁴¹ Plato, “Republic VII,” in *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, ed. S. Marc. Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C Reeve, trans. G.M.A. Grube, (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2005), 514a&b.

This light of the real world is jarring at first, and difficult to make out just as the camel is sickened as it becomes the lion. However, slowly over time and inspection the one who exits the cave begins seeing the world's true essences. In other words, the world 'as-it-is.' In Plato's case this would be the realm of forms. For the free spirit this would be the realization that everything is change. Plato continues:

I suppose, then, that he'd need time to get adjusted before he could see things in the world above. At first, he'd see shadows most easily, then images of men and other things in water, then the things themselves. Of these, he'd be able to study the things in the sky and the sky itself more easily at night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than during the day, looking at the sun and the light of the sun.⁴²

This is where the difference comes into play. For the Platonist or the Christian there is an exit from the cave into reality. However, I think Nietzsche would say there is no exit into the real reality; but rather there exists merely an exit into another cave. The lion destroys one cave and the child builds the next. The only essential aspect of the world is a never-ending series of caves.

In either case, once the free spirit has taken in new information, possibly some form of truth, it is its job to return to the cave or prior cave and teach the others in bondage on what is truly happening. Plato discusses what the enlightened figure is meant to do once he/she has seen the world as it is:

Therefore each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the others and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. When you are used to it, you'll see vastly better than the people there. And because you've seen the truth about fine, just, and good things, you'll know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image. Thus for you and for us, the city will be governed not like the majority of cities nowadays, by people who fight over shadows and struggle against one another in

⁴² Plato, "Republic VII," 516a&b

order to rule—as if that were a great good—but by people who are awake rather than dreaming...⁴³

In the return to the first cave the *free spirit* would occupy the castrating woman while the Platonist would be, according to Nietzsche, would occupy the castrated women. The free spirit occupies the castrated space upon the realization that there is a continual string of caves to enter and exit. The Platonists, upon returning with the truth, would consider themselves as the affirming women. For Nietzsche however, this ‘as-it-is’ truth is a false sense of affirmation.

The act of creating the new cave is the occupation of the affirming women, or child form of the *free spirit*. Total creative potential. It should also be noted here that Derrida’s term of the affirming women is misleading. Earlier in the paper I used ‘it’ next to ‘she.’ I did this because the word child in German, *Kind*, in a neuter noun, one which has no gender. Not only is the child a good description of creative poetical, but in German a child is considered genderless. The *free spirit* at its creative peak is then genderless as well. This may be coincidental, but if not it is a strong piece of evidence towards Nietzsche being a fairly radical feminist for his time. One can think of the *free spirit* as androgynous. The *free spirit* returns to the first cave as the affirming woman with a new structure from the second cave and recounts it for the rest of the people. The affirming then becomes the castrated again once they become complacent in the new cave. The *free spirit* then, once again traverses through the metamorphosis. Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity and essentialized truth is wrapped inside his critique of antifeminism. I find that these critiques are logically consistent which hopefully relieves Nietzsche of claims of misogyny.

⁴³ Plato, “Republic VII,” 520c.

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