

Article

Contempt for the Whos? or: How to Read Nietzsche Autobiographically after the Death of the Bios

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Abstract: This paper examines French philosopher Sarah Kofman's fractured relationships to her identities as Jew and woman. Active participant in postwar debates surrounding deconstruction and psychoanalysis, acclaimed reader of Freud and Nietzsche, and interlocutor of Derrida, Kofman is today most widely remembered for her autobiographical writings about her childhood as a young Orthodox Jewish girl during the Nazi occupation of Paris. Kofman's mother sent her to pretend to be the daughter of a Christian woman, which both ensured Kofman's physical survival and led to an uncanny Freudian doubling of the maternal figure, such that both "Jew" and "Christian" became unstable, mimetic identity categories which Kofman could never again fully inhabit. The paper examines Kofman's writings on Nietzsche, suggesting that her attempt to absolve the German philosopher of the charges of antisemitism oft leveled against him functioned as a similarly failed and incomplete means of asserting control over her personal identity. If Kofman could demonstrate that Nietzsche was not in fact an antisemite, then she could write herself into the lineage of Continental philosophy and reclaim the stable ancestry she lost during the war. Yet the paper concludes that a counter-narrative running throughout Kofman's writings suggests an awareness that she could never fully absolve Nietzsche, and therefore that her attempt to claim Nietzsche as a father figure would always fail. The paper thus suggests that the illusion of control and stability epitomized by Kofman's reading of Nietzsche provides an interpretive thematic to understand the unstable figure of the post-Holocaust Jewish philosopher.

Keywords: Holocaust; Nietzsche; Freud; psychoanalysis; modern Jewish thought; France; philosophy of religion; antisemitism; self-identity; deconstruction



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1. Introduction: Who Really Feels Contempt for the Jews?

In her book *Le mépris des Juifs* (*Contempt for the Jews*), one of the very last works which French Jewish philosopher, memoirist, and literary critic Sarah Kofman published before her suicide in 1994 at the age of sixty, Kofman took up the question of the supposed anti-semitism and anti-Judaism of Friedrich Nietzsche, a thinker whom she had been reading and reflecting upon for her entire career. Not only does Kofman rebut any charges of anti-semitism leveled against Nietzsche—and indeed of racialized or nationalized essentialism of any kind—but she goes so far as to conclude that the Jew functions as a sort of model for Nietzschean thought par excellence, a promise of the arrival of a new type of human whom Nietzsche could previously only betoken. Kofman concludes, “the Jew who had become a great man, even more than the man of the Renaissance, could serve as a model for the *Übermensch* (*surhomme*), and strengthen the hope of the advent of this figure hitherto purely ‘ideal’ and fictitious, incarnated in Zarathustra alone.”¹

However, this quite definitive statement absolving Nietzsche of all antisemitism seems to conflict with other passages in Kofman's text, in which she acknowledges genuine anti-semitism present in Nietzsche's earlier work. She concedes that “the traces of antisemitism of the young Nietzsche are easily spotted in his correspondence between 1866 and 1872,”²

after which she proceeds to outline several examples of obvious anti-Jewish animus in Nietzsche's corpus, including a letter in which he described himself as glad to be "happily, rid of the smell of grit and the influx of Jews."³ Kofman's great interest in reading Nietzsche's letters—his "correspondence of the period" (Kofman 1994b, p. 51)—as part of his overall corpus in her *Explosion* texts, and thereby in exploding the difference between personal and philosophical writing and between the discursive and the confessional modes, makes it impossible for her to simply dismiss these troublingly anti-Jewish correspondences as personal writings unrelated to Nietzsche's philosophical project.⁴

Kofman's description of these early letters as "an error of youth" (Kofman 1994c, p. 76) might nonetheless tempt one to offer a progressivist reading of Nietzsche, in which the exaggerated antisemitism of these early letters and writings is superseded by Nietzsche's later thought, if not for the fact that everything in Kofman's corpus militates *against* such a systematic reading of Nietzsche, a thinker whose very literary form disallows the possibility of any stable center, who "affirms life in all its forms, multiplying and displacing his perspectives, without referring to any absolute and definitive centre" (Kofman 1993, p. 111). Kofman similarly reads Nietzsche's figural Jew as always unstable and decentered, writing that Nietzsche's diverse and multifaceted Jews cannot be reconciled into a singular figure precisely because of the nonsystematic and literary quality of his work, so that as "a sign of this aporia, from one text to another, as in the case of Socrates, Nietzsche seems to adopt the most diverse positions and give birth, before term, to more than one 'Jew'" (Kofman 1994c, p. 11). There cannot be a singular subject of the Jew in the Nietzschean corpus, because Kofman reads Nietzsche as the thinker who undoes the possibility of the singular subject as such; a thinker who "does not tell the story of an 'I,'" but rather dwells within "the digressions, recreations, and dispersals," who writes "in multiple hiding places and under multiple masks" (Kofman 1994b, p. 57).

Indeed, it is precisely on the grounds of this multiplicity and instability that Kofman castigates those thinkers who would essentialize Nietzsche as an unreconstructed anti-semitic, who would "decide in favor of the antisemitism of the philosopher" (Kofman 1994c, p. 12), even though such a decision requires that they "conclude from the absence of a systematic and definitive statement (but this would be valid for many of the questions dealt with by Nietzsche) to the inconsistency or the contradiction" (Ibid, p. 11), a conclusion that Kofman says requires "only one step and it has often been crossed inadvertently" (Ibid, pp. 11–12). Such critics are guilty of taking individual aphorisms of writings as representative of Nietzsche's corpus as a whole, texts "cut from their context, isolated from the whole corpus" (Ibid, p. 12), ignoring the fact that Nietzsche's literary style refuses to cohere into the status of a singular metaphysical truth claim, but rather traces an endlessly shifting metaphorical transformation and displacement that is always "concealing itself in the shade of the metaphysical sun and tree" (Kofman 1993, p. 110). Here, Kofman particularly singles out Heidegger for opprobrium, since he is guilty of reducing Nietzsche's multiplicity of voices down to a singular voice to master it conceptually, to unify what cannot be unified into a "single thought," an act which Kofman states makes Heidegger guilty of "repeating the metaphysical gesture *par excellence*" (Kofman 1994b, p. 67). This reduction is nothing short of "a violent gesture of interpretation", (Ibid, p. 67) since only through such an act of hermeneutic violence can Heidegger forcibly reduce the multiplicity of competing voices, individual drives which never cohere into a stable whole, into one singular expression of the will to power, to read the entire Nietzschean corpus as an expression of "'life' qua becoming (will to power)" (Heidegger 2016, p. 234). If Heidegger wants to read Nietzsche through an act of reduction in order to master what the text truly "says," Kofman instead argues for a reading that traces the text's endlessly shifting array of metaphorical transformations without attempting to delimit or decode them; a reading which revels in the play of metaphorical transformations that cannot be reduced to a singular unity and which "unmasks behind the abstraction, generality, and unity of each term the multiplicity of metaphors which it contains and their transformation over the course of time" (Kofman 1993, p. 86). If the metaphysician seeks to identify the essential roots from out of which the

tree of philosophical truth grows, Nietzsche prefers to dwell and play within a “fantastic tree” that branches endlessly, tasting its varied and multiple fruits, so that “Nietzsche’s tree is no longer really a tree: its soil is no longer secure . . . it grows in all directions and at all times” (Ibid, p. 111).

It is therefore far too simplistic and reductionist to accuse Nietzsche of a racialized antisemitism because racial essentialism itself requires a restriction of the multiplicity of drives that constitute each one of us into a stable, unified self, and this is in fact the very process of self-construction that the many voices contained within each of Nietzsche’s texts speak against. As Kofman asks, “what do nationalities matter to Nietzsche, this ‘stateless person,’ this beyond-all-borders!” (Kofman 1994b, p. 56). When Nietzsche speaks of race, it is not to establish a singular subject that can be essentialized based on biological descent, but to displace this possibility entirely; indeed, Kofman reads Nietzsche as parodically mocking the notion of a stable, essentialized biological racial typology in *Ecce Homo*, using the term *race* “to displace its meaning, and he puts it in quotes, in a citational way” (Kofman 1994c, p. 67). The invocation of citationality is here significant, as it suggests that Nietzsche speaks only through an endlessly shifting array of citations and quotes from those who preceded them; a mode of writing that points to the fractures and instabilities within the very concept of stable selfhood. Kofman sees Nietzsche speaking of race citationally, without claiming ownership of these words, without assigning a singular unified voice to speak them. Thus, the very citational literary form of Nietzsche’s texts disallows the possibility of any stable, singular figure of the Jew, or indeed the possibility of a stable figure of any racial typology.

How, then, can Kofman so definitively absolve Nietzsche of the charges of antisemitism when she herself acknowledges that there are antisemitic moments in his writing and that his texts consist of endless doublings that do not cohere into a stable whole, so that the center is always “displaced at the whim of chance in the relations between forces?” (Kofman 1993, p. 99). How can Kofman make such a definitive statement of Nietzsche’s innocence of all charges of antisemitism when this seems on the surface to be just as much of a forcing of a singular perspective upon his oeuvre as those whom Kofman, with obvious derision, castigates for their overheated rhetorical claims that Nietzsche was the “spokesperson, even the father, of Nazism . . . responsible, among others, for Auschwitz?” (Kofman 1994c, p. 12). Yet Kofman ultimately does arrive at a singular conclusion in her text, writing that “to read, as we have tried to do, Nietzsche’s texts in their plurality and their complexity, one cannot, without bad faith and indulgent blindness to their strict literality, conclude in favor of anti-Semitism by Nietzsche” (Ibid, p. 75). She seems to want to completely refute the challenge laid down by her mentor Jacques Derrida, who noted that “there is nothing absolutely contingent about the fact that the only political regimen to have *effectively* brandished his [Nietzsche’s] name as a major and official banner was Nazi.”⁵ Is Kofman’s clear exculpation of Nietzsche not an attempt to claim that such a misappropriation of Nietzsche is, contra Derrida, absolutely contingent, and thus defend Nietzsche from all allegations of antisemitism by imposing a singular reading on a thinker who should resist such singularity?

I wish to suggest that the answer to this question has to do with the conflicted notion of self-identity itself within Kofman’s work; the way in which she simultaneously tries to efface her self-identity through a citational mode of writing that can only make arguments by commenting upon the works of others, while at the same time insisting that all writing remains autobiographical, that the personal and the discursive remain implicated even within modes of philosophical and metaphysical writing that claim the status of the discursive and the universal. If all commentary on the texts of another is ultimately a form of writing about oneself, of articulating one’s own identity as an accumulation of identifications with the texts of others, then I wish to suggest that Nietzsche functions for Kofman as a way of coming to terms with her own shattered Jewish identity, and her deep ambivalence about her state of being Jewish. Thus, Kofman’s attempt to salvage a positive kernel of Jewishness within Nietzsche’s corpus, even while insisting that Nietzsche

disallows the possibility of maintaining any stable, singular identity at all, figures as a desperate means of coming to terms with her own anxieties about the impossibility of inhabiting a stable Jewish identity after the Shoah. For Kofman, to philosophize after Auschwitz must be to philosophize from out of one's own unstable identity, and Nietzsche becomes the ideal test case for working out this process.

2. The Assemblage of Citations: Autobiography as Genealogical Fantasy

Kofman's work has consistently articulated a conflicted view on the primacy of the literary genre of autobiography as such, simultaneously arguing that all texts that claim the status of the discursive and the philosophical mode of writing retain elements of the personal and disclosive, even as they attempt to disavow this mode, yet at the same time insisting on the impossibility of writing autobiographically except through an identification with the philosophical forebears whom she reads. She argues that Nietzsche represents the paradigmatic example of "what every great philosophy has been to this day: the confession of its author, a sort of involuntary memoir which wasn't taken as such."⁶ Yet even as she insists that the thinker's personal identity and drives always remain implicated within their discursive philosophical thought, even as the philosophical claims to have mastered and subordinated personal and literary modes of writing, that the personal expressions intimated through literary metaphors necessarily "constitute a secondary text within the text which undermines its authority and its seriousness by introducing an element of play into it" (Kofman 1991, p. 19), Kofman also insisted on the impossibility of articulating a stable autobiographical identity that exists outside of the texts that one comments upon; the impossibility of a textual identity that is not wholly parasitic of the texts that preceded it. There was no singular, unified self that could be denoted with the singular name *Sarah Kofman*, a name which itself was imposed upon her Jewish family by an act of a Christian Other, through "the error of a city hall employee, which . . . had distinguished *Kofman* from *Kaufmann*" (Kofman 2007d, p. 249). In a 1986 interview, she insisted on the impossibility of articulating a stable *bios* for herself except through citations of the thinkers with whom she aligned herself:

*I'm like [Hoffmann's] cat, Murr, whose autobiography is no more than an assemblage of citations of diverse authors . . . This "myself," isn't that an illusion? Isn't it an illusion to believe I have any autobiography other than that which emerges from my autobiography?*⁷

In her reading of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Kater Murr*, Kofman uses the character of Hoffmann's tomcat to embody the impossibility of maintaining a stable self-identity that is not articulated through the citational mode, so that "the cat's entire 'life,' all his experience is nothing but a vast literary citation, a repetition of what he has read in books" (Kofman 1980, p. 16). Here, Kofman could presumably be speaking of herself as much as she is of the tomcat.

This, then, is the paradox of self-identity for Kofman. Even the greatest philosophers always write in the confessional mode, even if they deny this fact, and yet they are confessing an identity which is always unstable and parasitic from its origin; a literary pastiche that could only be performed through the citations of other writers who came before one. Kofman's texts are always already necessarily autobiographical, and yet she can only articulate this autobiography by performing her personal identifications with the thinkers upon whom she commented, most notably Freud and Nietzsche. Kofman can only speak from her own drives and impulses, which makes all of her writing always already autobiographical, yet she can only express this autobiography through an act of literary ventriloquism, speaking parodically and citationally through the endlessly shifting repetition of multiple voices that never cohere into a stable, singular whole. All philosophers cannot help but be ventriloquists. All philosophy, like all writing, cannot help but take the form of citation.

In her reading of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, Kofman read the great German philosopher as the greatest of all literary ventriloquists. *Ecce Homo* becomes the paradigmatic example of Kofman's understanding of personal identity as paradoxically both inescapable and always already citational, and so Kofman notes that a central preoccupation of this Nietzschean

text was the articulation of his own self-identity in relation both to his family forebears and to the philosophers whom he read and commented upon. Kofman notes that in this text, Nietzsche traces his personal ancestry back to the court of Altenburg, in order to establish his status as “a pure-blooded Polish nobleman without a single drop of bad blood, certainly not German blood” (Nietzsche 2005, p. 77) and to distinguish himself from the German people, whom he claims have failed to understand his works due to “the complete worthlessness of our German education” (Ibid, pp. 85–86). Nietzsche self-consciously constructs an identity for himself as a philosopher of Polish and not German origins to exempt himself from complicity in the decadence of the contemporary German people, a people who “have all the great cultural crimes of the past four hundred years on their conscience” (Ibid, p. 140). In *Le mépris des Juifs*, Kofman cites Nietzsche’s deliberate disavowal of his Germanic origins as corroborating evidence for his innocence of the charge of antisemitism, noting that “Nietzsche particularly regrets having been misunderstood by the Germans, the Germans of the Reich, of which, in *Ecce Homo*, he does himself the honor of being the greatest contemptor” (Kofman 1994c, p. 14).

Nietzsche’s attempt to recast his personal genealogy to write himself out of the German people is figured as a sort of Freudian rejection of the maternal figure, as Kofman argues that Nietzsche’s “contempt for the German of the Reich led him to deny, on the maternal side, all his Germanic kinship which would risk assimilating him to this scoundrel and low instincts, and to forge a fateful genealogy, a ‘family novel,’ which electively gives it much higher and noble origins” (Ibid, p. 15). Kofman’s reference here to the “family novel” likely alludes to Freud’s 1909 essay on “family romances,” in which the psychoanalyst describes a recurring fantasy observed in neurotic patients in which the neurotic believes his parents to be impostors who usurped his true parents, who are generally fantasized to be of higher social standing, so that “the neurotic’s estrangement from his parents” (Freud 1959, p. 237) manifests itself when “the child’s imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom he has a low opinion and of replacing them by others who, as a rule, are of higher social standing” (Ibid, pp. 237–38). This Freudian concept of the “family romance” provides Kofman with a psychoanalytic lens to examine Nietzsche’s reimaginings of his own family background in *Ecce Homo*.

Kofman thereby figures Nietzsche’s intellectual genealogy in *Ecce Homo* as a means of working out his own ambivalence about his maternal figure. If Freud argues that “boys are able to keep intact their attachment to their mother . . . by directing all their hostility on to their father” (Freud 2000, p. 28), then Kofman reads Nietzsche as working out his ambivalent feelings toward his mother by projecting all of his hostility outward onto the German fatherland, leading him to “the denial of the mother and of the German stock” (Kofman 1994c, p. 16). After constructing an elaborate genealogy of himself as a Polish nobleman, a deliberate denial of his Germanic roots, Nietzsche fantasizes an intellectual genealogy of himself as an heir to the great men of history, “a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus” (Nietzsche 2005, p. 71), someone who writes such good books because he is “a world-historical monster . . . in Greek, and not just Greek, the Anti-Christ” (Ibid, p. 102). Just as Kofman can only work out her own identity in relation to the thinkers whom she comments upon, so too can Nietzsche only construct his own unstable self-identity, can only “honor his proper name” (Kofman 1994b, p. 58), in relation to the thinkers who came before him, in whose lineage he situates himself. Through the literary pastiche of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche is writing himself into the “family” of the great thinkers of European philosophy, situating himself as one of “the premier artists of the German language” (Nietzsche 2005, p. 91), and “giving himself as ancestors Zoroaster, Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, Plato, Spinoza, Heraclitus, Goethe, and Pascal, in addition to Caesar, Alexander, and Dionysus” (Kofman 1994a, p. 48).

Yet this construction of an elaborate new familial genealogy, the act of writing himself as the heir to a long line of bold and original thinkers throughout European history, may in fact constitute no more than an unstable identification which acknowledges its own contingencies, as the very act of the literary construction of this new intellectual family to

replace the rejected mother reveals the fictitious nature of the entire enterprise. Nietzsche's self-confessional mode of philosophizing requires the fantasizing of new familial relations to replace the maternal figure whom Nietzsche has rejected in a "radical rejection . . . of the mother and of everything German" (Kofman 1994b, p. 55). Yet instead of claiming the status of biological truth, this rejection of the mother initiates a fantasized familial relation that self-consciously acknowledges its own fictional status, so that "the types with which he indeed identifies are necessary fictions which owe more to what Nietzsche is or will be than to those they are supposed to figure" (Ibid, p. 58). Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* thereby constitutes an act of unstable identification with the other philosophical figures, whose family relations Nietzsche constructs in the very act of interpretation.

This means that Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* becomes a sort of intellectual autobiography that undoes the very possibility of autobiography itself; an autobiography that "in fact subverts the autobiographical 'genre' in the most radical way . . . the strangest autobiographical text ever written, 'the most depersonalized' there is" (Ibid, p. 57). *Ecce Homo* is a depersonalized autobiography because the text performs the self-disclosure of a subject that undoes the very possibility of stable subjectivity itself, a confession about the unstable center of the person doing the confessing, so that the text becomes "an autobiography of no one [*personne*]. The 'I' who speaks to himself of himself is not using a *first-person* discourse . . . for in this 'I' there is *more than one person* or there is no one [*personne*]." (Ibid, p. 61) Nietzsche writes not as a stable self, but as a collection of Freudian drives and forces that do not cohere into a singular whole, as "an accumulation of superabundant forces which explode . . . not a man, he is dynamite" (Ibid, p. 61). The text witnesses Nietzsche's deconstruction of his own stable selfhood, as a precondition for the deconstruction of all values to which he aspires, so he becomes "no longer a man but dynamite, an explosive which will shake the earth and convulse it . . . inaugurating a new era . . . the era of the overman" (Ibid, p. 52).

Insofar as Nietzsche must self-consciously reject his German mother in order to enable the deconstitution of stable selfhood and reimagining of fictional genealogies in which he engages in *Ecce Homo*, must become "my own mother" (Nietzsche 2005, pp. 74–75), it is notable that Kofman figures this genealogical rewriting as a sort of gestation, a textual displacement for the actual mother figure toward whom Nietzsche felt such deep "ambivalent feelings" (Freud 2000, p. 28). Kofman imagines that in the texts he wrote prior to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche was impregnating such thinkers as Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Socrates, writing that, "the figures, figureheads for Nietzsche, are all chimerical creations, enriched and impregnated by him . . . all *big* with Nietzsche, with the Nietzsche they will bring into the world" (Kofman 1994b, p. 58). Similarly, in *Le mépris des Juifs*, Kofman describes Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner and Schopenhauer as an act of impregnation, writing that "cutting off with antisemitism is for Nietzsche 'vital' because all those who 'shaped' it began by first impregnating it (*l'en imprégner*), he and all those of Reich Germany . . . who were fascinated by Wagner and Schopenhauer" (Kofman 1994c, pp. 77–78). Thus, Nietzsche's earlier works may be read in strikingly Freudian language as acts of forced impregnation of figures such as Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Dionysus with the seed of the figure who would be born as Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*, a birth of a figure of multiplicity who lacks a stable center. This helps to explain why Kofman describes the unstable author figure whom Nietzsche textually creates in *Ecce Homo* using the language of birthing, as an act of Nietzsche "exploding himself as a German in order to be reborn" (Kofman 1994b, p. 56). The image of rebirth and resurrection is here significant, as it hints at a way of resituating Nietzsche within a Christian cultural context from which he proclaimed himself to have broken free. Thus, Nietzsche remains umbilically attached to that which he would disavow. In *Le mépris des Juifs*, she employs the image of Nietzsche struggling to cut an umbilical cord that once joined him to such artistic and philosophical forebears as Wagner and Schopenhauer:

We saw this in our reading of Ecce Homo, the becoming 'Nietzsche' of 'Nietzsche,' the fulfillment of the 'promise' he had made to himself to conquer his own land and his secret

garden, to be born again, implying a severing of the umbilical cord with the Germany of the Reich, with his mother and his sister, and with his paternal substitutes who had been, among others, Wagner and Schopenhauer. (Kofman 1994c, p. 76)

Ecce Homo, then, is figured as the forcible severing of the umbilical cord which linked Nietzsche to both his actual mother and to the bold thinkers whom he symbolically “impregnated” in his earlier works, the act of birthing multiple selves from the seeds which Nietzsche had earlier implanted in these thinkers. *Ecce Homo* becomes the text in which Nietzsche attempts to split from his philosophical forebears and birth something new, the text in which “he attempts to make the break and cut the umbilical cord linking him to all those with whom he amorously, symbiotically coupled until he was corrupted and contaminated by them to the point of confusion” (Kofman 1994b, p. 58). This imaging of autobiography as birthing, as the creation of something new that can only be born from the impregnation of something that preceded one, constitutes for Kofman the paradox of autobiography itself, a genre of self-confession which renders stable selfhood impossible; the creation of something original and new which remains totally citational, parasitic on the texts that preceded it. Autobiography becomes an act of both birthing and death, both an act “to be reborn to himself” (Ibid, p. 58) and at the same time, “the death of the autos as a stable and substantial subject, as conceived by metaphysics . . . also the death of the ‘bios,’ if one takes this to mean that the ‘life’ of a living person has its origin in his two parents to whom he is bound by his ‘blood’” (Ibid, pp. 60–61).

This is why Nietzsche may state that he is simultaneously dead and alive at the moment of writing, that “as my father I am already dead and as my mother I am still alive and growing old” (Nietzsche 2005, pp. 74–75). Nietzsche’s proclamation of himself as both alive and dead, a proclamation that maps onto the division between his mother and father, undoes the possibility of a stable *bios* that could be written through the autobiographical text. The act of birthing a new self from the impregnation of the thinkers who came before Nietzsche is also the act of killing the possibility of stable selfhood entirely, and the text becomes an autobiography that renders autobiography impossible. When Kofman speaks of Nietzsche as “pregnant” with the other figures about whom he writes, one cannot help but suspect that she may also be describing a way of reading her own project, attributing to Nietzsche’s relationship to those impregnated thinkers who preceded him the very process that she is in fact deploying herself in relation to her own great masters, Nietzsche and Freud.

If we understand Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* as a sort of fractured Freudian family romance, as Kofman suggests we should when she describes the text as “the invention of an entirely different kinship, the fiction of a fantasmatic genealogy, a true family romance in the quasi-Freudian sense of the term” (Kofman 1994a, p. 36), then it is striking that Nietzsche focuses his own personal family romance on his rejection of his mother, rather than of his father. Nietzsche traces his supposed Polish ancestry, of which he is so proud, to his father (See: Nietzsche 2005, pp. 77–78), and states that he considers it “a great privilege to have had a father like this” (Ibid, p. 77), whereas his German mother is rejected in vitriolic terms as “my diametric opposite, an immeasurably shabby instinct” (Ibid, p. 77), and Nietzsche laments that “it would blaspheme my divinity to think that I am related to this sort of *canaille*” (Ibid, p. 77). In Freud’s theorizing of the typological family romance, in contrast, the romance focuses on the imagining of an alternate father and not a mother figure, precisely because for apparent biological reasons, the identity of the mother may always be determined with certainty, whereas there may remain some doubt about the father’s identity. Freud explains:

When presently the child comes to know the difference in the parts played by fathers and mothers in their sexual relations, and realizes that “pater semper incertus est,” while the mother is “certissima,” the family romance undergoes a curious curtailment: it contents itself with exalting the child’s father, but no longer casts any doubts on his maternal origin, which is regarded as something unalterable. (Freud 1959, p. 238)

Kofman points to this curious discrepancy between the traditional Freudian understanding of the family romance, centered both for essentialist biological and for psychoanalytic Oedipal reasons upon a rejection of the father figure, and Nietzsche's personal family romance, centered around the rejection of the mother:

At first glance, however, the element that differentiates the Nietzschean "romance" from the neurosis described by Freud is that according to Freud the boy is much more likely to have hostile feelings against his father than his mother . . . whereas Nietzsche's text—at least in what it states openly—manifests a rejection of kinship above all with the mother and the maternal side of the "family." (Kofman 1994a, p. 37)

Of course, there are obvious possible explanations for Nietzsche's idealization of his father and vituperative rejection of his mother, among them simple sexism and the biographical fact that Nietzsche's father died when he was but five years old, leaving an absence that could be filled with the idyllic memory of his father as "frail, kind, and morbid . . . more a kind memory of life than life itself" (Nietzsche 2005, p. 75). Kofman likewise offers the possible reading that "Nietzsche's family romance actually is true to Freud's understanding of the term," because it is focused upon elevating his father to a noble genealogical stock (Kofman 1994a, p. 39), just as Freud explains that because the mother's identity is fixed and unalterable, the family romance "contents itself with exalting the child's father" (Freud 1959, p. 238).

Yet perhaps the real significance of Kofman reading Nietzsche's family romance as centered around the mother and not the father figure is that it renders this romance impossible to subject to empirically falsifiable truth claims about one's actual parentage. Because the identity of the mother, unlike that of the father, is always verifiable in the act of giving birth, it was impossible for Nietzsche to literally fantasize that his maternal figure was not his biological mother; in *Ecce Homo*, even when he attacks his mother as "a source of unspeakable horror: a real time bomb" (Nietzsche 2005, p. 77), Nietzsche never goes so far as to actually deny that this maternal figure is in fact his biological mother. However, far from restricting the scope of his family romance, this inability to abjure the rote biological fact of maternity actually frees this family romance from biological essentialism entirely. While for Freud the family romance remains circumscribed by its inextricable linkage to the biological reality of the child's parentage, the "something unalterable" (Freud 1959, p. 238) of the identity of the child's mother, Kofman reads Nietzsche's family romance as free from the demands of biological verifiability entirely, so that "the important thing here obviously is not the 'reality' but the fantasy of such an origin on the paternal side, at the expense of the German side, the undeniable and intolerable 'something extremely German' in his mother" (Kofman 1994a, p. 40). Indeed, while the Freudian family romance remains overdetermined by biological essentialism, Nietzsche downplayed the importance of biology entirely; in Kofman's words, for Nietzsche, family is an act of will, and "'kinship' is not a physiological 'given' but something that rests on the will to be or not to be in a rapport of closeness or identification with those to whom one is closest physiologically" (Ibid, p. 36). The resemblance of this language of will to the Nietzschean will to power hardly seems coincidental; in Kofman's reading, Nietzsche sees family relations as an act of force, a willed act of creatively situating oneself alongside one's chosen kinship relations, and not a matter of biology at all. This is part of what saves Nietzsche from the racialized antisemitism of which he is often accused, as Kofman argues that "Nietzsche in fact slides from the issue of purity of blood to purity of instincts . . . it is precisely this sense of refinement or distance that prevents him from limiting himself to a biological perspective" (Ibid, p. 36). In the Nietzschean family romance, what is at stake is not the fact of a literal biological connection to one's imagined forebears, as would be the case for Freud, but a network of chosen forebears into whom the fractured subject might interpellate their own identity.

This imaginal prospect of a familial lineage that breaks free from the circumscription of rote biological essentialism enables Nietzsche to imagine a schism between his maternal and paternal ancestries; a "double birth, from the highest and lowest rungs on the ladder

of life" (Nietzsche 2005, p. 75), a "double thread of experiences, this means of access to two worlds that seem so far asunder" (Ibid, p. 77), which in turn becomes the possibility for the rebirth of the new kind of philosophy which Nietzsche hopes to embody through his autobiography that is not an autobiography, the possibility of the revaluation of values. Kofman describes Nietzsche as someone whose divided parentage provides access a split self, whose "double heritage . . . provides access to a double series of experiences and to two antipodal worlds" (Kofman 1994a, p. 42). Here, Kofman returns to the image of impregnation; just as Nietzsche impregnated such thinkers as Wagner and Schopenhauer, turning their thought inside out in order to birth something wholly new, so too does she read Nietzsche as being impregnated with the ascetic ideal by her pastor father, an impregnation which is necessary for Nietzsche to develop the antidote to this ideal:

Nietzsche owes to his father (who, in a certain sense, had gotten him pregnant), the fact that he had been able to bring into the world the inventor of the only counterideal sufficiently potent to combat the dominant ascetic ideal. Only someone who, like himself, had kept one foot beyond life by incorporating the father could have pushed the ascetic ideal and its moral code far enough to make them reverse direction and transform into their opposites Thus he does not owe the passion of the 'Yes' par excellence to his mother but to his father, and precisely because his father had not given it to him as such. (Ibid, p. 38)

Nietzsche had to identify with his father sufficiently to be able to reverse the ascetic values that this paternal Christian pastor represented; he had to be impregnated by his father to give birth to something wholly new, hence the importance of the double heritage bequeathed to Nietzsche by his parents. Nietzsche had to embody within himself both noble parentage and its opposite, both the father whom he idealized and the mother whom he wholly rejected, so that Nietzsche contains within himself his own antipodes (Ibid, p. 42). Nietzsche always doubles himself, always contains "at least two 'Nietzsches,' the one being the double of the other . . . capable of always maintaining within himself his 'pro' and his 'contra'" (Kofman 1994b, p. 60). Only this internal self-doubling enables him to embody the ascetic ideal to the very point of reversing it, to say "no" to life so definitively that this "no" becomes a "yes." Nietzsche embodies his own opposition within himself, and this opposition, "the double perspective he carries within him" (Ibid, p. 60), enables him to transform the ascetic ideal with which his father impregnated him into its very opposite, so that Nietzsche's own doubling becomes the possibility for him to be reborn in *Ecce Homo*, to be "reborn to himself and reappropriate himself" (Ibid, p. 58). It is this internal doubling, the split which Nietzsche attributes to his "double birth" (Nietzsche 2005, p. 75), that makes possible the fractured autobiographical project of *Ecce Homo*. The doubling of Nietzsche's parentage makes possible the reversal of his father's ascetic values, the containing of one's own opposition. Nietzsche's divided origin "marks him out as a peerless master in the art of inverting perspectives, and destines him, and him alone, for the task of inverting value" (Kofman 1994b, p. 60). Nietzsche is the master of the inversion of values, because he is the figure who already contains his own inversion within himself.

It is here, in Kofman's reading of the creative vitality and rebirth enabled by Nietzsche's inverted, doubled parentage, that it becomes so tempting to read Kofman's scholarship autobiographically, a temptation which she herself always acknowledged in her work.⁸ Here, it is important to note that Kofman's intended final scholarly statement on the question of Nietzsche's supposed antisemitism, *Le mépris des Juifs*, was published in the same year as *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, her most explicitly autobiographical and ostensibly her least scholarly work; both texts were published in 1994—not coincidentally, the year of her suicide. In the memoir *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, Kofman recounts the story of her own forcibly doubled parentage, a doubling that played itself out upon the maternal bodies of both the Jewish and the Christian mothers.

3. “The Bad Breast in Place of the Good”: Maternal Ambivalence, between Christian and Jew

Here it is important to return to Freud, who uses the term “ambivalence” to denote the presence of contradictory feelings of love and hate toward the same object; in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud describes a hypothetical relationship between a mother-in-law and son-in-law as “controlled by components which stand in sharp contrast to one another . . . the relation is really ‘ambivalent,’ that is, it is composed of conflicting feelings of tenderness and hostility” (Freud 1918, p. 24). He likewise speaks of an ambivalent relationship between mother and child, in which the child’s deification of the mother is unconsciously opposed by an equivalent force of hatred, so that “between mother and child . . . the situation of an ambivalent feeling is here realized” (Ibid, p. 83). It is significant here that Freud particularly identified this feeling of ambivalent attachment, of conflicting feelings of love and of rejection, with the image of the mother’s breast; as the baby’s growing awareness of its dependence on a foreign object which it comes to realize is out of its control leads it to feelings of ambivalence towards this object, which it simultaneously needs for survival and yet wishes it did not need. The roots of the feelings of ambivalence can be particularly traced to the child’s development during the oral stage, when the mouth of the infant is the child’s primary erogenous zone. Thus, José Brunner writes that:

Freud claimed that the baby’s growing awareness of its dependence leads it to abdicate its fantasy throne and instead to crown its parents as a supreme authority. This new awareness of dependence comes to the fore especially in the third, oral stage, in which the baby’s social relations still consist mainly of sucking at its mother nipples. In contrast to the earlier autoerotic stage, however, the baby realizes now that the mother’s breasts are not as completely under its control as it had imagined at first, because they belong to another person. Confronted with this fact of life, the baby becomes ambivalent towards the breast that feeds it. (Brunner 2001, p. 151)

Borrowing from Freud’s tracing of the emergence of the feeling of the ambivalent mixture of love and hatred, of tenderness and hostility, to the child’s oral attachment to the mother’s breast, which it both needs for nutrition and feels helpless in its inability to control, Erik Erikson describes the baby’s realization of this helpless dependency upon the body of another as a sort of trauma. In particular, Erikson identifies the Freudian oral stage as the source of an internal division within the infant that works itself out through one’s ambivalent feelings toward the mother figure, so that the trauma of self-dividedness is projected onto another:

Not even the kindest environment can save the baby from a traumatic change—one of the severest because the baby is so young and the difficulties encountered are so diffuse. I refer to the general development of impulses and mechanisms of active prehension, the eruption of the teeth and the proximity of this process to that of weaning . . . For it is here that “good” and “evil” enter the baby’s world, unless his basic trust in himself and others has already been shaken in the first stage by unduly provoked or prolonged paroxysms of rage and exhaustion. It is, of course, impossible to know what the infant feels, as his teeth “bore from within”—in the very oral cavity which until then was the main seat of pleasure, and a seat mainly of pleasure; and what kind of masochistic dilemma results from the fact that the tension and pain caused by the teeth, these inner saboteurs, can be alleviated only by biting harder. This, in turn, adds a social dilemma to a physical one . . . Our clinical work indicates that this point in the individual’s early history can be the origin of an evil dividedness. (Erikson 1963, pp. 78–79)

Thus for Erikson, the ambivalent feelings toward the mother’s breast which Freud traces to the oral stage of the child’s development acquire a self-consciously moral dimension, becoming genealogically associated with the divided moral values of good and evil, so that the child’s psychosexual development is projected from the physical onto the social world. The child’s own feelings of ambivalence about the process of weaning itself from the mother’s breast lead her to a feeling of internal division within herself, an internal

division which is projected out into the world and becomes associated with a moral division between good and evil.

Melanie Klein goes so far as to map this ambivalent division between the positive and negative feelings which the child feels towards her mother, who is simultaneously needed for nutrition and hated for the relation of impotent dependence in which the child remains trapped because of this need, onto the mother's breasts themselves, writing that, "object relations exist from the beginning of life, the first object being the mother's breast, which is split into a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast; this splitting results in a division between love and hate" (Klein 1996, p. 164). Klein argues that the infant child copes with its anxiety about its relation to its unfamiliar environment through its relation to the mother, the first and primary caregiver, and this anxiety therefore becomes associated with "the primary external object, the mother's breast" (Ibid, p. 166). The mother's breast becomes the primary means of coping with the child's anxiety, as the milk that it provides is the infant's primary source of nutrition and comfort but also becomes the child's source of anxiety and fear, insofar as the child cannot control the source of her own comfort and has to rely upon another being who is out of her control.

To cope with this bipolar experience of the mother's breast, Klein suggests that the child postulates a literal division between the "good breast" that is the source of comfort and nutrition and the "bad breast" that remains as the source of anxiety and dread; Klein writes of a "division between one good and one bad breast in the young infant's phantasy" (Ibid, p. 167). This division between the good and bad breasts becomes a way of mediating all of the child's own divided feelings about their experiences of the world and of themselves, so that the mother's divided breast becomes a way of understanding the infant's own, always already divided sense of selfhood. Thus, Klein writes that the good breast "becomes predominantly loved and admired because it contains the good parts of the self," while the bad breast becomes a way of "projecting bad parts of the self," so that both the good and bad breasts "can to some extent be explained by a deflected drive to control parts of the self" (Ibid, p. 171). The division between the good and bad breasts, which originates in an external division in the child's environment, is thereby internalized, so that the good and bad breasts become remapped onto an internal division within selfhood itself. Thus, in her reading of Melanie Klein, Julia Kristeva writes that the bad breast mediates "the redirection of hostility into the introjection of the self" (Kristeva 2001, p. 130), and the splitting of the breast is conceived by the infant as "a counterpart to the splitting of the ego" (Ibid, p. 67). The child's ambivalent relationship to the mother, as embodied in the division between the mother's two breasts, becomes a way of mediating a divided, split relationship to oneself. In a very real sense, in Kleinian theory, the division of the mother's breasts is also a division internal to selfhood itself.

I wish to suggest that in her memoir *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, Sarah Kofman performs this division between the good and bad breasts, the mother conceived as nourishing and loving and at the same time as hostile and alien, through the literal doubling of the mother figure herself, the two mothers with whom Kofman lived during her formative years. Indeed, Kofman explicitly uses the Kleinian term "bad breast" in this memoir, describing her reaction to viewing Alfred Hitchcock's 1938 film *The Lady Vanishes*, which she names as one of her favorite films (Kofman 1996, p. 65); Kofman notes that when she sees the character of Miss Froy (Miss Freud?) in this film vanish and be replaced by another woman, literally being doubled, Kofman feels a "visceral anguish" (Ibid, p. 65) at the filmic sight of "the bad breast in place of the good, the one utterly separate from the other, the one changing into the other" (Ibid, p. 66). Kofman's description of the good breast "changing into" (Ibid, p. 66) the bad is significant, as it reflects her anxiety that she will no longer be able to maintain a stable distinction between the good and bad breasts, between the mother as friendly and welcoming and as hostile and dangerous, and therefore that she will no longer be able to maintain a stable differentiation between these two competing sides of her own self. Klein writes of the "frustration and anxiety" that emerge when the infant is unable to maintain the stable "division between the good and bad breast" (Klein 1996,

p. 167); when the division that the infant creates between good and bad breast to displace its own anxiety about its divided feelings toward its external environment and internal self appears to break down. I wish to suggest that Kofman's memoir narrates just such a breaking down of the stable division between the friendly, loving, and the hostile, alien maternal figures, and that this breaking down of such a stable binary likewise renders it impossible for Kofman to maintain a stable binary division between Jew and Christian.

As is well-known, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* tells the story of Sarah Kofman's childhood as a young Jewish girl in Vichy France, opening with the arrest of her father, Rabbi Bereck Kofman, in 1942 (Kofman 1996, p. 5); shortly thereafter, the reader learns that Rabbi Kofman was murdered at Auschwitz during a literal act of prayer on Shabbat, killed for refusing to violate the Jewish law of the Sabbath by performing labor (Ibid, p. 10). Thus, Rabbi Kofman is killed in a literal act of snuffing out his Hebrew words, a death of the possibility of speech. Sarah Kofman tells us that all she has left of her father is the single fountain pen he has left her, and that all of her writing has been an attempt to write words worthy of this pen left to her by her absent father, perhaps writing to replace the words of prayer that Rabbi Kofman was unable to finish saying at Auschwitz (Ibid, p. 3). Kofman tells us that the final word she received from her father was a postcard from Drancy, written not by her father but "written in French in someone else's hand," as he had been forbidden to write in either of his two native tongues of Yiddish or Polish (Ibid, p. 9). Thus, the possibility of direct speech is both literally and figuratively foreclosed for Rabbi Kofman, and Sarah Kofman's entire project may be read as a way of restoring to him the words that were forcibly stripped from him. Yet this restoration of words, a restoration that always remains fragmentary and incomplete, cannot occur through the act of telling a linear, continuous narrative, as Kofman states in a short text on her experience of analysis that her memoir cannot be "a linear, continuous story" (Kofman 2007b, p. 250), but must always be told "in a discontinuous way, in different forms (memories, dreams, slips, repetitions)" (Ibid, p. 250). In some sense, then, this memoir is an account of the repetitions and slips that occur in Kofman's always-incomplete quest to return her father's words to him through her act of writing. This makes *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* a text that practically begs to be read analytically, even as it also resists and thwarts such simplistic readings, as though Kofman is both begging us to read her autobiographically and mocking our inability to do so in a simplistic and straightforward manner.

The entire text revolves around the absence of her father, which creates a void in Kofman's life that can never be filled. After her father's deportation, Kofman must go into hiding, but while her sisters go into hiding in the countryside, she refuses to leave her mother's side in Paris, and protests being sent to the country by "crying and refusing to eat" (Kofman 1996, p. 29). The young Kofman is later taken in by a Christian woman whom she terms Mémé, a French term of endearment for an older woman that, in an act of linguistic doubling, closely resembles the sound of the word *מאמע*, the Yiddish word for "mother." Mémé becomes a sort of surrogate mother figure for Kofman, who takes her away from Judaism and toward Christianity. In order to convincingly hide the young Sarah Kofman, Mémé must disguise her as a Christian girl, and part of this process entails teaching her to eat non-kosher food such as pork and to violate the laws of *kashrut* by mixing meat and dairy. In light of the association between breastfeeding and food, and Klein's understanding of how nourishment and its denial form the initial split between good and bad that becomes mapped onto the mother's breasts, it seems significant that food plays such a significant role in the narrative of Kofman's memoir, both through the act of feasting and the total denial of food. In another short text, Kofman tells us that even before the war, control over what food she ingested figured as a battleground for a struggle between the maternal figure and the child, as Kofman's mother "stuffed and stuffed and stuffed us . . . not a chance of being deprived of dessert with her" (Kofman 2007a, p. 247), and for this reason Kofman "had hardly any appetite and resisted with all my might the maternal categorical imperative" (Ibid, p. 247). Food therefore became an obvious site for Kofman to enact a struggle for control over body and agency once the war

broke out; when Kofman refuses to be hidden in the countryside so as to retain her identity as a Parisian Jew, she tells us that she enacted this refusal when she “refused to eat pork” (Kofman 1996, p. 29), stubbornly adhering to the Jewish dietary laws that her rabbi father had insisted upon in their home. Notably, this choice to adhere to the laws of *kashrut* even during wartime was not a decision forced on Kofman by her father, who decreed that due to the emergency deprivation, non-kosher food was “now purified by circumstances and parental authority” (Kofman 2007a, p. 247). Thus, Kofman’s choice to reject non-kosher food is a choice made entirely of her own volition, a way of enacting the preservation of her threatened Jewish identity through control over what she puts into her body; an excessive demand to be Jewish beyond even the demand made by her rabbi father. She even goes so far as to vomit to avoid consuming any non-kosher food (Kofman 1996, p. 30).

The act of vomiting is here significant, as it functions as a means of attempting to preserve a boundary between Jew and Christian through a forcible act of the mouth, the same organ that produces words of speech, and the same organ which Melanie Klein tells us the infant must use to preserve the possibility of a stable boundary between the good and bad breasts, and therefore between good and bad as such, “to suck dry, scoop out, and rob the mother’s body of its good contents” (Klein 1996, p. 168). Kofman elsewhere likens the animal act of excretion to speech, writing that “what my discourse had undoubtedly also wanted to dissimulate is that the mouth . . . can mimic the other erogenous zones of the body: that it can consecutively or simultaneously be mouth, sexual organ, anus” (Kofman 2007b, p. 250). Excretion in some sense parallels speech, becoming a way of communicating when words fail, and so the act of consuming food and of refusing to consume non-kosher food thus becomes a way of maintaining a stable boundary between good and bad breasts, and here between Jew and Christian.

Yet the very act of vomiting is also an act that destabilizes once-stable boundaries, as the physical act of excretion reinforces the animality of the human, reminding her of that material remnant that no achievement of human culture can ever fully efface. Julia Kristeva describes the emetic moment as a moment of “human beings caught flush with their animality, wallowing in their vomit” (Kristeva 1982, p. 147). Kofman uses vomiting and rejecting food as a means of reasserting her human agency, grasping at some control of a situation that seems utterly beyond control; yet vomiting is also a visible reminder of the animal excess of the human body, the physical excess that no act of agency can allow one to escape. Vomiting breaks down the very boundary that it attempts to erect. Vomiting functions here as both a substitute for speech, a way for the child Kofman to communicate her pain and discomfort without words, and a reminder that the word can never fully efface the material remnant, the body. Kofman points to the way in which vomit and excretion can serve as both a substitute for words and a displacement of them, when she writes that as an adult, “I knew that if, for instance, on a given day I was constipated, I would not be able to ‘talk’ on the couch either” (Kofman 2007b, p. 250). One single action can be invested with both the demand to remain a human being with agency and with the visible reminder of the failure of that agency, so the child Kofman’s act of vomiting could be both a means of asserting control and a nauseous, animal reminder of that very lack of control. The stable boundary Kofman wants to erect around her Jewish identity through the physical act of vomiting up non-kosher food breaks down in the very act of constructing it.

For this reason, when Sarah Kofman is sent to stay with Mémé, she ultimately finds herself unable to maintain the boundary between Kleinian good and bad breast, here enacted through Christian and Jewish maternal figures. Thus, Kofman’s initiation into Christian culture involves learning to eat non-kosher food, and almost in spite of herself, she finds that she comes to enjoy this food that she had previously refused, that while Mémé was “transforming me, detaching me from herself [the Jewish mother] and from Judaism,” Kofman “started loving rare steak cooked in butter” (Kofman 1996, p. 57). Whereas previously, Kofman associated kosher food with the nourishment of her childhood and thus with the good breast, Mémé tells her that in fact kosher food is not only dangerous due to the threat of exposing her as Jewish, but because it removes the nourishment from

the food, and “Mémé declared that the food of my childhood was unhealthy; I was pale, ‘lymphatic,’ I must change my diet. From then on it was she who would take care of me” (Ibid, p. 40). The act of eating non-kosher meat “was supposed to ‘restore my health’” (Kofman 2007a, p. 248), and the physical comfort and nourishment of healthy food is displaced from the Jewish to the Christian mother. Thus, the stable border between the good and bad breasts is violated; whereas previously, Kofman had refused to consume non-kosher food in order to maintain her connection to the good breast of her childhood, and thus to the promise of health and security, here Mémé tells her that in fact it is only non-kosher food that can provide her with nourishment, and this non-kosher food will be her new source of comfort. It is significant that the act of eating and enjoying food that violates *kashrut* laws, mixing meat with dairy, is also figured by the refusal of the words of the distinctively Jewish language spoken by Kofman’s biological mother and absent father, so that when she eats the steak cooked in butter, “I didn’t think at all any more about my father, and I couldn’t pronounce a single word in Yiddish” (Kofman 1996, p. 57).

Thus, the consumption of non-Jewish food is also the expulsion of Jewish words, and the stable boundary between good breast and bad breast breaks down. The language of Yiddish functions as a metonym for Kofman’s Jewish heritage and for the mother who embodies it, and so marks her growing distance from them, so that Kofman tells us, “When I was sick, Mémé, unlike my mother, never showed any sign of panic . . . my mother proceeds to talk very loudly, sympathizing with me in Yiddish, anxious” (Ibid, p. 43). Instead of being comforted by the Yiddish of her childhood, it is the French of Mémé that soothes Kofman and makes her stop crying, and “on that day I feel vaguely that I am detaching myself from my mother and becoming more and more attached to the other woman” (Ibid, p. 44). Here, Yiddish functions not as a source of childhood comfort, as Kofman’s mother hopes it might, but as a thinly veiled threat; Kofman’s mother’s attempt at expressing sympathy and comfort through words of Yiddish threaten to expose them as Jews, and so the words of Yiddish must be literally expelled from Kofman’s mouth so as to protect the identity that Mémé is working to fashion for her as a French Christian girl. The Yiddish language must be literally expelled to protect Sarah Kofman’s bodily integrity from harm. The association between the rejected words of language and the forced expulsion through the mouth is hard to miss; whereas one narrative moment of Kofman’s rejection of the Yiddish language occurs when she eats steak cooked in butter, this other such moment occurs when her mouth is in pain because her tonsils have been removed from her throat (Ibid, p. 43). The emetic (mimetic?) imagery is hard to miss.

As the war proceeds, Kofman finds that she becomes increasingly less confident of which figure she considers her real mother. While she began the war by refusing both to be sent to the countryside and to consume non-kosher food (Ibid, p. 29) in order to remain close to her mother and to her Judaism, and to reject the “bad breast” of Christian culture, after some months with Mémé, she comes to love and enjoy her life with Mémé, with its rich food, cultural excursions, and freedom from Jewish law, and she grows to feel “quite simply happy” (Ibid, p. 56) in this life as a young Christian girl, even dreading the end of the war and its promised return to her biological mother and to the Jewish prohibitions of her childhood home (Ibid, p. 57). The child who begins with such a determination to maintain a distinction between the good and bad breasts, the Jewish and the Christian, that she is upset about so much as kneeling on the floor because of its resemblance to a Christian gesture of prayer (Ibid, p. 21), over time grows detached from her Judaism and from the maternal figure who embodied that Judaism, so that “knowingly or not, Mémé had brought off a tour de force: right under my mother’s nose, she’d managed to detach me from her. And also from Judaism” (Ibid, p. 47). Even then, however, the transformation from Jew to Christian is not total, and Kofman continues to express the instability of her doubled state by exercising control over her bodily functions. She writes that after some time with Mémé, “put in a real double bind, I could no longer swallow anything and vomited after each meal” (Kofman 2007a, p. 248).

Kofman goes so far as to figure her happiness and fascination with a life offered by Mémé—a life lived free from the prohibitions of Jewish law—through the sight of literal breasts, an exposure of the body which Kofman’s biological mother did not permit in their home. Kofman writes that on a particularly happy night spent in a hotel room with her Christian surrogate mother:

Mémé got undressed behind a big mahogany screen, and I, curious, watched from the bed to catch sight of her when she emerged. Back on the Rue Labat, to the amazement and irritation of my mother, she routinely walked around the apartment in pajamas, her chest uncovered, and I was fascinated by her bare breasts. (Kofman 1996, p. 55)

Here the sight of Mémé’s breast literally figures the unstable border between good and bad breasts. Whereas Kofman’s mother wanted to deny her the sight of breasts and nudity in the home, Mémé flaunts this sight, visually confronting the young girl with the instability of the boundary between Kleinian good and bad breasts. Kofman’s description of the nakedness of Mémé’s physical body contains intimations of possible sexual abuse, as when she describes her later reunion with Mémé as a time when “we slept in the same bed, in her room . . . I remember the first night, when my emotion and excitement were very great. Just to feel so close to her put me into an ‘odd’ state” (Ibid, p. 67). Here the instability of the boundary between good and bad breasts, between positive and negative emotions, is figured in particularly horrifying fashion, as Kofman describes feeling “intense joy” (Ibid, p. 67) from a possible act of sexual trauma inflicted by Mémé. She leaves sufficient plausible deniability to allow the reader to question whether such sexual abuse truly took place, but from a Freudian perspective, the seductive fantasy is present whether it was in fact enacted or not. The sight of the breast, as that which both excites and repels the young Kofman, both seduces and horrifies her, welds together good and bad in one image.

The rupture between mothers can never be fully healed; the stable boundary between good and bad breasts, good and bad mother figures, can never be fully restored. By the time the war ends, it is no longer clear to Kofman which of her two mother figures embodies the Kleinian good breast and which the bad. When Kofman describes “the bad breast in place of the good . . . the one changing into the other” (Ibid, p. 66), it is not hard to imagine her using the ventriloquism allowed by commenting on a Hitchcock film to speak of her own mothers.

When France is liberated and Kofman is able to go out of hiding and return to her life as a Jew, she nonetheless finds herself unable to effect a full return to the “good breast” of her Jewish biological mother, and demands to be allowed to continue seeing Mémé. Here, we see a return to the imagery of controlling one’s food consumption as a way of dealing with anxiety about one’s environment, which Klein describes through the infant’s division between the good and bad breasts in order to maintain the possibility that consumption of the mother’s milk might still bring about “defenses against anxiety” (Klein 1996, p. 167). Whereas Kofman had previously refused to eat non-kosher food as a way of resisting being taken away from her Jewish mother, now she refuses to eat kosher food as a way of resisting the return to Judaism, telling us:

It tore me in two. Overnight I had to take leave of the woman I now loved more than my own mother.

I had to share my mother’s bed in a miserable hotel room on the Rue des Saules, where we warmed up our store-bought meals on a hotplate that burned butane gas. I refused to eat and spent my time crying until my mother consented to let me go back and see Mémé. (Kofman 1996, pp. 58–59)

This tearing in two, this division effected between the good and bad breasts, is figured through a refusal of the possibility of taking comfort through food, precisely that source of comfort which Melanie Klein describes as the infant’s first possibility of soothing this “division between love and hatred in relation to the object” which “can only be maintained by splitting the breast into its good and bad aspects” (Klein 1996, p. 168). Denied the possibility of food as a source of nourishment and comfort, the young Kofman finds that

refusing food becomes her only way of controlling her anxiety over her split self, and of negotiating the increasingly unstable boundaries between good breast and bad, between mother and Mémé, between Jew and Christian.

At first reluctant to allow her daughter to see the Christian woman, Kofman's Jewish biological mother eventually relents and allows "one hour a day . . . just to get me accustomed to the separation . . . but no more than that" (Kofman 1996, p. 59). Kofman is so determined to stay with Mémé that she accuses her mother of physically abusing her before a court, so that Mémé will be granted custody of her (Ibid, p. 60). What has happened, however, is not that the good and bad breasts have simply reversed, so the Christian Mémé has fully displaced and taken the place of the Jewish mother; rather, Kofman's relationship to both mothers remains characterized by Freudian ambivalence, so that when her mother forcibly abducts Sarah from Mémé to return her to live as a Jew, Sarah Kofman tells us that, "I struggled, cried, sobbed. Deep down, I was relieved" (Ibid, p. 61). It is not coincidental that at the moment of this violent, forced return from the Christian mother to the Jewish—a return which Sarah Kofman resists but nonetheless feels some ambivalent relief about—Sarah Kofman's mother is shouting at her in Yiddish (Ibid, p. 61).

Thus *Rue Ordener*, *Rue Labat* narrates Kofman's ambivalent relationship to a Jewishness that she rejects and moves away from, but by which she nonetheless remains marked, an identity which remains inscribed upon her body even as she must construct a new identity as a Christian to survive the Nazi occupation. It is notable that even as Mémé tries to reeducate the young Sarah Kofman in how to be a good Christian girl, that "she undertook to reform me from head to toe and to complete my education," an education which focused as much on "moral principles" as on outward behaviors such as eating non-kosher food (Ibid, p. 47), Mémé at the same time reminds Kofman of the irremissibility of her Jewish identity. Mémé "taught me that I had a Jewish nose and made me feel the little bump that was the sign of it" (Ibid, p. 47). Nor is Kofman's irremissible Jewishness merely physical, even if above all that; Mémé likewise reminds the girl that she has "been badly brought up," that she "obeyed ridiculous religious prohibitions but had no moral principles" (Ibid, p. 47). To an extent, Kofman may be reeducated in different principles, but this reeducation can never be total, and the bump on Kofman's nose remains as a physical reminder of a Jewishness that cannot be escaped. It is especially notable that Kofman tells us that Mémé "taught me what it was 'to have a Jewish nose'" (Kofman 2007a, p. 248), that Kofman was not fully, self-consciously aware of this Jewish identity marker until the Christian woman inscribed it upon her. In a very real sense, Mémé was reproducing the very Jewish identity from which she was attempting to help Sarah Kofman escape; an identity that was now reinscribed with a sense of shame and embarrassment attached to it.

Thus, the doubled maternal figure of Mémé is in fact ambivalently writing a Jewish identity upon Sarah Kofman's body, even while stealing her away from this identity, inscribing and effacing at the same time. Kofman's time with Mémé, and her effort to survive as a Jew under Nazi occupation, forced her to abjure her Jewishness, but this abjuration reinscribed her Jewish identity as much as it concealed it. The breaking down of the boundary which the child erects between good and bad breasts, here inscribed upon two separate maternal bodies, reproduces for Kofman an ambivalent relationship to her own Jewish identity, an identity reinforced in its very rejection, and this ambivalence is projected outward onto the maternal body. Kofman's ambivalent relationship to both of her mother figures, neither of whom she can feel fully comfortable living amongst after the end of the war, mirrors her divided sense of her own self, now fractured into Jewish and not Jewish, perhaps irrevocably. Kofman's continued survival in French society was thus dependent upon the rejection of a Jewish body that was nonetheless irrevocably inscribed upon her, upon expelling that which could not be expelled.

One cannot help but notice that even in her most nakedly personal piece of writing, Kofman is able to express her feelings about the doubling and fracturing of her mothers, and her horror at the thought of one mother displacing the other, only through an act of parasitism, commenting upon a favorite Alfred Hitchcock film; it is here that she explicitly

invokes the concept of the Kleinian bad breast (Kofman 1996, pp. 65–66). The displacement of Kofman’s mother, embodying an irremissible Jewishness that is reaffirmed even in its abjuration, can be figured only through the narrative of another; not through the act of Kofman speaking about the death of her biological mother herself. Indeed, it is significant that while Kofman explicitly depicts the deaths of both her father (See: Ibid, pp. 9–10) and of Mémé (Ibid, pp. 84–85) in the text, deaths that serve as bookends to the narrative that comes between them, she never definitively narrates the circumstances of her Jewish biological mother’s death at all. The closest reference to the Jewish mother’s death comes in an off-handed remark on the loss of the father, when Kofman writes, “when my mother died, it wasn’t possible to find that card, which I had reread so often and wanted to save. It was as if I had lost my father a second time” (Ibid, p. 9). Here, the loss of the mother is displaced into a commentary on the loss of the father. The absence of the Jewish mother can be figured only through speaking of another, by literary ventriloquism through the voices of others, whether that other be Rabbi Bereck Kofman or Alfred Hitchcock. The loss of the mother, and the loss of the possibility of a stable, self-contained Jewish identity which she embodies, becomes that which cannot be written in Kofman’s oeuvre, that absence which “can only hide what is unthought” (Kofman 1994b, p. 68), and this inability to write the absent Jewish mother in a stable form forced her to write this very absence through parasitic, ventriloquistic commentary upon the discourses of others.

4. “We Yids Could Be Recognized:” How to Speak of Jewishness through the Voice of a Non-Jew

At the risk of reading Kofman’s project autobiographically, a risk that she herself always tempts us toward, one might suggest that the fact that Kofman’s body was irrevocably marked by a Jewishness that was defined through its own rejection, and that she could only speak of her Jewish mother through the rejection and absence of that mother, helps to explain her desperate need to absolve Nietzsche of the charges of antisemitism leveled against him. This would serve as an absolution that would not merely absolve the German philosopher himself, but the entire tradition of European thinkers whom he impregnated. Kofman reads Nietzsche’s project in *Ecce Homo* as the deliberate construction of a Freudian family romance for himself, the fantasy of “creating a more ‘noble’ and illustrious family than the one from which one derives physiologically” (Kofman 1994a, p. 36), in order to preserve the fantasy of the “happy, vanished days when father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men” (Freud 1959, p. 240). To preserve this fantasy of nobility, Nietzsche goes so far as to literally fantasize his father as “a pure-blooded Polish nobleman” (Nietzsche 2005, p. 77), yet the very instability of the text in which this claim appears—the fact that the text does not cohere into a singular whole but rather performs through its composition “‘eccentricity,’ buffoonery, carnivalesque multiplicity” (Kofman 1994b, p. 68)—means Nietzsche is at some level self-aware of the fictional nature of the romance he is constructing for himself, that he is not literally deluding himself into believing that this is his “true” genealogy, in the sense that Freud suggests, but rather playing with the impossibility that any genealogy may claim the status of the true, organic, or natural. Perhaps in her readings of Nietzsche, Kofman is engaged in a similar project, fantasizing for herself an intellectual genealogy while acknowledging the contingencies and fractures that always render such a task impossible.

This is why it appears significant that Kofman opens one section of her reading of *Ecce Homo* by asking us to “suppose that an ideal reader of Nietzsche could some day exist” (Kofman 1995, p. 173). Though Kofman’s request that her own reader “suppose” such an ideal reader acknowledges the inherent instability and contingency in such a figure, Kofman tells us that if in fact such an ideal reader could exist, she “would have to read his writings as he himself reads texts . . . able to read between the lines” (Ibid, p. 173). It appears that Kofman, in imagining herself as just such an ideal reader, sets up a relationship to Nietzsche that parallels Nietzsche’s own relationship to the intellectual forebears whom he impregnated, implicitly saying that her own counter-reading of Nietzsche bears some

structural resemblance to Nietzsche's readings of the thinkers with whom he claims a genealogical affinity. Nietzsche himself becomes as central a figure in Kofman's personal fantastic genealogy as such figures as Dionysus, Schopenhauer, and Wagner are for Nietzsche's family romance. Kofman suggests that Nietzsche's very deconstruction of the idea of a stable *bios* in his apparently autobiographical text, with the stable parentage that such a self-contained *bios* would imply, is what "allows comprehension of the apparently incomprehensible: that Nietzsche could have Julius Caesar or Alexander (Dionysus) as a father" (Kofman 1994a, p. 49). However, if Kofman is imagining herself as an ideal reader of Nietzsche, one who reads Nietzsche's own texts in the same way in which Nietzsche reads the thinkers who preceded him, then she is apparently opening up the possibility of what is likewise "incomprehensible": that she, Sarah Kofman, Jewish woman philosopher, might take the oft-accused antisemite and misogynist Nietzsche as a father of her own. Reading Freud, Kofman argues that the successful psychoanalyst "has to transform the 'criminal' into a sick person, into a hysteric, by obtaining – through transference – his benevolent collaboration" (Kofman 2007c, p. 70). Perhaps Kofman, by imagining a relationship of transference and countertransference between herself and Nietzsche, by setting herself up as Nietzsche's ideal reader, whom Nietzsche terms "the choicest of ears" (Nietzsche 2005, p. 94) is attempting to obtain through a transference of her own the benevolent collaboration of Nietzsche, a thinker who, by aligning himself with "Zarathustra, a *destroyer* of morals" (Ibid, p. 101), practically dares us to accuse of being a criminal.

Nietzsche's oft-alleged misogyny and anti-Judaism are therefore not, for Kofman, simply obstacles to be waved away as incidental to his thought, but are rather essential to the work of claiming Nietzsche as her own fantasized father figure, for if Kofman, as a Jewish woman philosopher, is able to claim Nietzsche as her own genealogical forebear, even in a romance that acknowledges its own fantastic status, then she is claiming a space for the Jewish woman within a European philosophical lineage which has far too often been openly hostile to both of these identities. Nietzsche's texts offer Kofman an ideal site for staging her own conflicted and ambivalent encounter with her split identity: Jewish and Christian sides embodied in her own life by the two separate mothers, two separate breasts, which can never again fully cohere into a stable whole. Insofar as Kofman's unstable place within French society, and the very possibility of her surviving the Vichy period, was dependent upon her repudiating a Jewish self and a Jewish mother that were nonetheless irrevocably inscribed upon her in the very act of repudiation, Kofman was always in perpetual danger of being expelled from the European society in which Nietzsche wanted to claim a central place. Kofman's very survival was dependent upon the repeated disavowal of a Jewishness that reasserted itself through the disavowal. What is significant is that Kofman reads Nietzsche's unstable relationship to the figure of the Jew in his work in light of a similar repeated, incomplete disavowal of that which continually provoked anxieties. While Kofman and Nietzsche on the surface bore a very different relationship to Jewishness, there is a sense in which Jewishness played a structurally similar role for them both, as a site of excess into which their own anxieties about their own unstable, fractured identities could be projected. When Kofman claims that Nietzsche reads the Jew as an inherently unstable figure who stages "transformations . . . over time" (Kofman 1994c, p. 54), a figure who contains within him "different apparently contradictory elements . . . symptomatic of ambivalence, of the double face, Janus-style, of the Jew" (Ibid, p. 54), it is easy to imagine Kofman speaking as much of the role the figural Jew plays for her own life and project as it plays for her imagined father figure of Nietzsche.

This inherent instability of the figure of the Jew for Nietzsche, a figure who cannot cohere into a singular whole, paradoxically makes the antisemitic reader of Nietzsche essential for Kofman's attempt to absolve Nietzsche himself of charges of antisemitism, for the antisemitic reader, he who perhaps deliberately refuses to see that "it was only at the price of interpretive violence that we could make him [Nietzsche] the father of National Socialism and its racism" (Ibid, p. 73), functions here as an imaginal counterpart to the "ideal reader" (Kofman 1995, p. 173) which Kofman herself hopes to embody. These

antisemitic readers, whom Kofman derides as “men of a certain type (their frog perspective makes them incapable of seeing and understanding well)” (Kofman 1994c, p. 12), fail to see that the figure of the Jew—like all racial and national typologies in Nietzsche—is inherently unstable and contingent. If such readers fail to see that “if ‘race’ had a biological meaning, what Nietzsche would emphasize would be impossible: overcoming the racial limit and assimilating one ‘race’ by another to the point of making one forget its singularity, its originality, its historical specificity” (Ibid, p. 66), then these “bad” readers of Nietzsche are in fact needed to delimit the imagined “good” reader, one who recognizes the multiplicity in Nietzsche and does not attempt to repeat the metaphysical gesture by forcing the multiple voices to cohere into a fictional “unity of one native soil, one sun, one taste” (Kofman 1994b, p. 67). Though Kofman never explicitly mentions Heidegger by name in *Le Mépris des Juifs*, perhaps letting the great German philosopher’s absence speak for itself, it is not hard to imagine him standing in for this antisemitic “bad reader” of Nietzsche, a reader who forces unity on what is intrinsically multiple.

While Kofman concedes that Nietzsche—like she herself—feels ambivalent and conflicted toward the Jew, viewing the Jew as “a strange, ambivalent, paradoxical figure” (Kofman 1994c, p. 40), she reads this “enigmatic strangeness” (Ibid, p. 11) of the figure of the Jew as productive and generative for Nietzsche’s thought, as a site for confronting the fact that the Jewish question cannot be settled in Europe writ large, that “the dispute that has always separated the Jewish people from other peoples is not about to be resolved” (Ibid, p. 11). Precisely because the Jew represents the unassimilable excess within European culture, that which cannot be thematized, he functions as the staging ground for an opposition which Nietzsche sets up between Jewishness and German culture, so that “the Jews and the Germans, Nietzsche never ceases to oppose them, to make them confront one another agonally, measuring them against one another, not as two races, one of which would be superior to the other, but as two separate types” (Ibid, p. 19), and that “in this agonal fight Nietzsche continues to take sides for Jewish subtlety and malice against the heaviness” (Ibid, p. 20), that he associates with German culture. Nietzsche is not so much appropriating Jewish culture as an essential type as he is constructing an agonal Jewishness into which he can project his disgust with contemporary German culture, finding something generative and productive in precisely that remnant of Jewishness which cannot be assimilated or thematized—that same remnant of Jewishness which Sarah Kofman herself both must forsake in order to become a Christian girl, and yet cannot help but reaffirm.

Kofman reads Nietzsche as acknowledging the fictive, constructed status of his own figural Jew, that his Jew has “been able to fictionalize an ideal place outside of humanity” (Ibid, p. 41), and it is precisely this *outside* that interests Nietzsche. The Jew becomes the figure who is positioned outside of stable subjectivity, whose very performance of multiple roles that refuse to cohere into a stable, singular whole models the breaking down of stable subjectivity which Nietzsche himself performs in *Ecce Homo*. Kofman points out that Nietzsche is fascinated by the chameleonic nature of the Jew in exile, who has had to survive by learning to perform a plethora of social roles that always remain fragmentary and incomplete, constructing and destructing an identity that always fails. Kofman thus reads Nietzsche as fascinated by the way in which “the intellectual flexibility of the Jew, his power of extreme adaptation, consequence of his wandering and his appalling trials, made him gradually able to play mimetically (hysterically) all the roles, made him the very type of the actor . . . the artist and the jester *par excellence*” (Ibid, p. 45). Because the Jew’s position is always unstable, always threatened, always in exile from the possibility of inhabiting a stable selfhood, the Jew is forever in a process of becoming, and if this means that the Jew can at times be an object of hatred and disdain, he can also become the model for the protean dissolution of the *bios* which Nietzsche himself mimes through his unstable writing style. The Jew has had to “play mimetically all the roles” (Ibid, p. 45), and in so doing he exposes the fact that *everyone* is always playing mimetic roles, that identity itself is a process of mimetic reproduction of an origin that is inaccessible from its source. The exiled Jew must perform multiple roles to survive his sufferings, and in turn he comes to

realize that selfhood itself simply *is* performance, that his voices and roles never cohere into a stable center. Nietzsche's Jews, says Kofman, "have not yet said their last word, they have not finished 'becoming' what they are" (Ibid, pp. 44–45), and they thus stand as privileged bearers for the state of perpetual becoming toward which Nietzsche himself strives.

This self-conscious fictionalization of the Jew, the way the Jew performs multiple roles and standpoints which acknowledging the always failed nature of this performance, enables Nietzsche to project his own anxieties about the failings of the German culture of his day into the excessive Jewish remnant that can never fully be erased, so that "according to the texts and the needs of the cause, Nietzsche accentuates either the positive or the negative side of the figure that he has fictionalized" (Ibid, p. 54). Kofman's use of the term "fictionalize" (*fictionner*) here is significant, as it places the Jew as one among the many other fictional voices that Nietzsche adopts and impregnates in his work, a voice that speaks while acknowledging the falsity of its own words.

Thus, while it is too simplistic to condemn Nietzsche as an antisemite, it would be equally inaccurate to read him as some kind of a philosemite, for Nietzsche's Jew remains too unstable and contingent to be invested with any stable ideals that could be either disparaged or exalted. If one needs a term to characterize Nietzsche's necessarily shifting, unstable relationship to the Jewish people, one may perhaps productively borrow Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "allosemitism," which Bauman describes using strikingly Freudian language as an attitude which encompasses both sides of the ambivalent split between idealization and demonization, "an intrinsically ambivalent attitude, able to embrace everything from love and respect to outright condemnation and genocidal hatred" (Bauman 2009, p. 125). One might perhaps say that Bauman's concept of allosemitism enables the Jew to become the projection of both sides of Melanie Klein's "division between love and hatred" which "can only be maintained by splitting the breast into its good and bad aspects" (Klein 1996, p. 168). Indeed, it is crucial for Bauman's conception of allosemitism that the Jew has to be the figure who resists stable binary divisions, so that allosemitism is conceived as a form of "proteophobia," seen here as "a fear and horror of that which defies clean-cut categories" (Frojmovic et al. 2013). Allosemitism becomes the ambivalent mixture of hatred, attraction, and fascination which attaches itself to the Jew as figure of the other, "and so it faithfully reflects the endemically ambivalent phenomenon of 'the other,' the stranger—and, consequently, of the Jew who, in Europe at least, is the most radical incarnation, indeed the epitome, of the stranger" (Bauman 2009, p. 125).

Yet if the concept of allosemitism may be applied to describe the shifting, protean relationship which Kofman claims that Nietzsche bore to the figure of the Jew, a figure who served as the unassimilable excess into which Nietzsche's anxieties about German culture could be projected, then it is notable that Kofman appears to suggest that Nietzsche must impregnate himself with this very Jewishness, this very unassimilable excess, in order to reach his full potential. Kofman describes this "becoming-Jewish" as a paradigm for the revaluation of all values, for the lowest and most contemptible people on earth will be lifted to become the highest, so that "Nietzsche predicts that in a hundred years he [the Jew] will have enough aristocratic allure not to . . . become the master and lord of Europe, the shame of his subjects" (Kofman 1994c, pp. 45–46). The gestures of mastery and of shame are here tied together inextricably, as this reversal will constitute an "almost Hegelian reversal of servitude" (Ibid, p. 44) in which the Jew will embody all oppositions of value within himself, and so "the future that Nietzsche predicted for the most despised people on earth is to become the noblest, the most distinguished" (Ibid, p. 45). Though Nietzsche absolutely rejected the teleology and systematicity of Hegelianism, Kofman's invocation of Hegel here is nonetheless significant, as she reads Nietzsche's Jew as a privileged figure capable of bringing about a nearly dialectical revaluation through this Nietzschean Jew's incorporation of multiplicity and self-contradiction within himself, in the same way that she reads Nietzsche's own texts as dialectically impregnating him with both his pastor father's ascetic ideal and its opposite "counterideal" (Kofman 1994a, p. 38). Nietzsche's Jew contains his own opposition within himself, and he thereby stands as the figure who

most directly threatens stable subjectivity, who contains all multiplicity and instability within himself. It is for this reason that at various moments within Jewish history, the Jew has borne within him “the privilege of all nobility to have the right, and only they, to approach this sublime majesty by themselves . . . while at the same time they belittled themselves, despised and hated man more profoundly than any other people” (Kofman 1994c, pp. 50–51).

Kofman thus reads Nietzsche’s Jew as the figure who has been both most noble and most belittled throughout his history, and in so doing contains all oppositions within himself. The Jew has stood throughout his long history on both sides of the divide between power and weakness, both as a people “symptomatic of a desire for strong power” (Ibid, p. 86), so that “the God of the Jews, as represented by the Old Testament, is a warrior god” (Ibid, p. 86), and as the later exiled people who experience “the historical contempt of other peoples toward him” (Ibid, p. 41). The Jew, whose historical trajectory has traversed the entire path from the grandeur of the Old Testament to the lowliness and contempt of exile, embodies all binary oppositions within himself. Therefore, this Jew is a privileged figure to effect the revaluation of values, so that Nietzsche looks forward to “the true Shabbat day, when after many setbacks the Jews will regain their past glory” (Ibid, p. 50). Because the Jew is positioned as the enigmatic, unstable stranger who cannot be fully assimilated by a European culture that nonetheless can also not fully reject this Jewish remainder, so that Kofman may speak of the “strangeness, proximity to the Jewish people” (Ibid, p. 62), the Jew therefore portends the collapse of all stable binary oppositions between good and bad, good and evil. The Jew is that figure whom Europe can neither fully expel nor fully assimilate, who “has become the moral par excellence of Europe which has appropriated it by forgetting its Jewish origins” (Ibid, p. 62), just as Kofman’s own maternal Jewishness is something that she can neither expel nor fully embody within herself.

Thus, Nietzsche must himself impregnate himself with both Jewishness and anti-semitism in order to transform his own self and attain to his own destiny as a philosopher. Nietzsche’s becoming both Jewish and antisemite thus becomes a way of claiming the right to his own inconsistency, of claiming the right to exist as an accretion of contrary forces and drives which never cohere into a singular whole, so that embodying both Jew and antisemite enables Nietzsche to exist as “a combination of two ‘contradictory’ tones which tramples morality underfoot as it dances, and blows up all metaphysical oppositions” (Kofman 1994b, pp. 61–62). Kofman presents a sketch of a narrative in which Nietzsche emerges from the early antisemitism of his youth to a later incorporation of Jewishness as part of his growth toward his own destiny. Significantly, antisemitism is here aligned with Nietzsche’s despised mother and sister, whom he ultimately rejects as “my diametric opposite” (Nietzsche 2005, p. 77), and the possibility of surpassing this “most vulgar anti-semitism” (Kofman 1994c, p. 81) of Nietzsche’s youth is framed through the self-conscious rejection of the maternal and feminine figures in his own family. Kofman speaks of how Nietzsche “repudiated, on the maternal side, all his Germanic parentage” (Ibid, p. 15) and of how he necessarily had to undergo a process of “divorce with those to whom he had first symbiotically united . . . with his mother and his sister” (Ibid, p. 76), a divorce that likewise constitutes a rejection of “the frenzied antisemitism that characterizes them” (Ibid, p. 76). There is a striking symmetry here with Kofman’s own life. Nietzsche had to renounce his mother to become closer to the Jews, while Kofman had to renounce her mother to move farther away from the Jews; both, in the end, wound up with unstable yet unbreakable relationships to the figure of the Jew, even in this renunciation.

Kofman tells us that Nietzsche grew to hate his mother and sister, and the antisemitic attitudes that they held, so deeply that “of his mother and sister, who are on the side of the *canaille*, he declares to have such horror that he would prefer even to give up his most abysmal thought rather than to contemplate the possibility of their eternal return” (Ibid, pp. 15–16). This rejection of the antisemitic beliefs of his mother and sister is the only way for Nietzsche to develop into “whoever signs his texts with the unique name of Nietzsche” (Ibid, p. 76). Kofman thereby reads Nietzsche’s youthful antisemitism as a stage that

the philosopher must go through but must then ultimately reject; a rejection figured by separating himself from both his antisemitic mother and sister and from his more overtly antisemitic predecessors such as Wagner, and turning toward Jewish figures, so that “to the pseudo-genius of Wagner, who has become German, too German, Nietzsche opposes the true musical genius of the Jew Offenbach, close to the aforementioned Jew, Heinrich Heine” (Ibid, p. 21). Thus, when Nietzsche declares in *Ecce Homo* that “Heinrich Heine has provided me with the highest concept of the lyric poet . . . it will be said someday that Heine and I were by far the premier artists of the German language” (Nietzsche 2005, p. 91), he is a sense impregnating himself with the Jew, just as he had previously impregnated himself with the antisemite in the figure of Wagner, so as to contain both oppositions within himself. In this sense, just as Kofman needs the “bad” antisemitic reader of Nietzsche in order to set herself up as the good reader, so too must Nietzsche go through a stage of antisemitism, aligned with his mother, in order to surpass this stage and later align himself with the Jews. His antisemitism is not incidental, nor is it a simple mistake; rather, it is a way of containing his own oppositions and inconsistencies within himself, a way to forcibly seize hold of the antisemitic beliefs of both his mother and of Wagner and to “make them reverse direction and transform into their opposites” (Kofman 1994a, p. 38).

Paradoxically, then, the more vigorously that Nietzsche protests against the antisemitic mother figure, the more he reveals how much this maternal figure remains implicated within him, even as he moves away from her—a disavowal that reinforces that which it disavows, that cannot help but remain “closely bound up with the image of the mother which he bears within him” (Kofman 1995, p. 189). Thus, Kofman emphasizes that Nietzsche’s apparent rejection of his mother did not in fact result in him effacing this side of himself entirely, but rather reinforcing this side of himself through the very disavowal, that “the very violence of his assertions about them [his mother and sister] is symptomatic of his love for these two women . . . against whom he nevertheless protects himself, by refusing all proximity to them” (Ibid, p. 189). Here, one cannot help but think that Kofman may be speaking about her own relationship to her two maternal figures as much as she is about Nietzsche’s two feminine figures, and of how she herself protected herself against Jewishness by refusing all proximity to it, a refusal that nonetheless reinforced that very Jewish identity. The more Nietzsche turns away from his antisemitic mother and towards the Jews, the more closely antisemitism and its opposite Jewishness become bound together within him—just as the more Kofman turns away from her Jewish mother, the more she reveals just how Jewish she remains.

If we read Kofman’s own investment in speaking through the texts of Nietzsche as akin to Nietzsche’s investment with the thinkers from whom he impregnates and births himself—among them such notorious antisemites as Wagner and Schopenhauer who functioned as his “paternal substitutes” (Kofman 1994c, p. 76)—then we might perhaps suggest that Kofman is birthing herself as a Jew who had to become a Christian through her reading of Nietzsche, just as Nietzsche birthed himself as one who had to become a Jew in order to surpass the Christianity that he so vociferously rejected. Kofman writes that “explaining himself with ‘antisemitism’ is for Nietzsche part of the same ‘vital’ gesture as explaining himself, among others, with Wagner” (Ibid, p. 76). If Nietzsche must incorporate antisemitism in order to explain himself alongside of it, then perhaps for Kofman, the “vital gesture” (Ibid, p. 76) is to explain herself alongside of Nietzsche, into whom she impregnates herself.

And significantly, just as Nietzsche had to incorporate the antisemitism of his mother in order to later move beyond it toward “the renunciation of the mother and of the Germanic descent” (Ibid, p. 16), so too did Kofman have to incorporate both the Christian mother of Mémé and the Jewish biological mother in order to come to terms with her own unstable Jewish identity, in order to make peace with a collapsing distinction between the Kleinian good and bad breasts, a distinction that could not sustain itself. As previously discussed, Kofman needed to renounce her Jewish mother in order to survive the Nazi occupation, yet this renunciation could not eliminate her Jewishness but only confirm the irremissibility

of it; along the same lines, perhaps Nietzsche's fantastic genealogical renunciation of his mother's Germanic descent in *Ecce Homo* only reinscribes him within the Germanic philosophical lineage. Just as she had to renounce her Jewish biological mother, Kofman tells us that she later tried to renounce the Christian Mémé as well, that "for several years I cut off all contact with Mémé: I can't stand to hear her talk about the past all the time" (Kofman 1996, p. 84). However, just as her renunciation of her Jewishness reveals her to be irrevocably marked by it, so too does she find herself unable to escape the mark of having lived as a Christian, resistant to returning to a full Jewish identity (Ibid, p. 79), no longer capable of inhabiting either maternal identity category in a stable sense.

Thus, when Kofman returns to live with her biological mother after the war, this mother continues to stand as a maternal figure who must be renounced in order for Kofman to become who she is; Kofman tells us that her mother opposed her intellectual pursuits, and in order to curtail her ceaseless studying, "my mother would cut off my electricity early in the evening. I remember reading *Roads to Freedom* by Sartre under the sheets with a flashlight" (Ibid, p. 83). It is notable that Kofman's repudiation of her mother by studying non-Jewish literature and philosophy is also an attempted repudiation of Jewish practice itself; immediately after she describes defying her mother to read Sartre by flashlight, she notes that "at the end of those two years, I had lost twelve pounds and give up all forms of religious practice" (Ibid, p. 83). The Greco-Christian philosophical tradition is figured as a way of exiling Kofman from her Jewishness; an exile that ultimately leads her back to her Jewishness only through the non-Jewish German philosopher of Nietzsche. Only by casting herself out of Judaism and into the Greek philosophical tradition is Kofman able to return home to being Jewish, even if only in a fragmentary form.

Even this act of turning away from the Jewish religious practice of her rabbi father could therefore not fully efface Kofman's irremissible Jewishness; in the very last line of her memoir, she describes herself in clear, plain language as "a little Jewish girl" (Ibid, p. 85). Kofman comes to identify fully with neither the Jewish mother nor the Christian, neither the good breast nor the bad, and yet she remains constituted through a partial identification with both figures, neither of whom she can fully forsake—just as Nietzsche is constituted through his identification with both Wagner and Heine, both of whom are affirmed within the multiplicity of voices contained within Nietzsche himself, the "multiple 'Nietzsches'" (Kofman 1994b, p. 57) who are welded together in the work *Ecce Homo* to impregnate and birth the unstable identity of "the one who signs his texts with the unique name of Nietzsche" (Kofman 1994c, p. 76), a proper name here appended to the text to join together all of its internal self-contradictions. Kofman tells us that even late in life when he turned away from Wagner's antisemitism, "Nietzsche never ceases to love and to venerate Wagner, and manages at the moment of his death to split his figure into two, a 'bad' and a 'good' Wagner" (Ibid, p. 77). Thus, Wagner is saved at the cost of the stability of a unified figure of Wagner, just as Kofman saves Nietzsche at the cost of any possibility of a stable, singular voice that might speak through his texts. In Kofman's description of Nietzsche's splitting off of a "good Wagner" from a "bad Wagner" (Ibid, p. 77), it is hard not to hear echoes of Melanie Klein's description of "the processes of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them into objects" (Klein 1996, p. 169). Just as the child projects split parts of herself onto external objects, so too does Nietzsche project his own philosophical development onto the two sides of Wagner; a projection that enables him to embody both antisemite and Jew within his own fragmented *bios*, to contain his own opposition.

5. Conclusions: How to Become What You Hate

This, in turn, allows us to return to the question that sparked our inquiry at the beginning: the question of how—when Kofman's Nietzsche is unable to speak with any singular voice, when he writes in such a way that dissolves all subjectivity—she is able to absolve him wholly of all charges of antisemitism; to make a singular, categorical statement about Nietzsche's lack of antisemitism. I wish to suggest that the answer to that question has to do with the way in which Kofman's Nietzsche embodies both antisemite and Jew

within himself; how he impregnates himself with both Schopenhauer and Heine, both Wagner and Offenbach. As Nietzsche rejects the antisemitism of his mother, he grows ever closer to becoming Jewish himself, so that Kofman may speak of “saying ‘amen’ to this advent prophesied by him of becoming noble, master and great man, of the Jew” (Kofman 1994c, p. 47). If Nietzsche is growing ever closer to “becoming-Jew”, a becoming that is always to come and never complete, then the hatred of the Jew contained within himself—the remnant of his mother and Wagner’s antisemitism which he can never fully expunge—must be conceived not as hatred of another, not as antisemitism, but as a form of self-hatred; an anger turned back upon oneself. At the risk of making a particularly bold claim, one might even dare to suggest that Nietzsche’s remnant of repudiated antisemitism bears some resemblance to *ressentiment*, a sentiment which the philosopher, after all, states “thrives best amongst anarchists and anti-Semites today” (Nietzsche 2006, p. 48).

Kofman appears to suggest as much when she concludes *Le Mépris des Juifs* by noting that “Nietzsche suspects that so much tyrannical hatred could well be a symptom of an ignored ‘semitism’ in him [Wagner]” (Kofman 1994c, p. 84) and that “the numerous texts of Nietzsche on the Jews and their religion” (Ibid, p. 84) remain “inseparable from the personal question he had to settle if not with the Law and the torments of the flesh at least with Wagner, the venerated master” (Ibid, p. 84). Kofman thus suggests Wagner himself may contain within his multitudinous selves a self-hating Jew, and so when Nietzsche writes of Jews, he is writing of his own relationship to this “ignored ‘semitism’” (Ibid, p. 84) of Wagner, and indeed writing of himself—just as Kofman, like all thinkers, is always writing about her fragmented selves when she comments upon the texts of others. Indeed, when she describes her “imperious need to hear my words taken up and *taken*, not in order that they be given meaning, interpreted . . . but to establish an exchange” (Kofman 2007b, p. 251), she seems to invite us to take up our multiple identities through readings of her texts, just as she did through Nietzsche, and Nietzsche before her through Wagner and Schopenhauer.

Wagner’s hatred of the Jews, a hatred with which Nietzsche has impregnated himself through his early engagements with Wagner, is thus itself a form of self-hatred, and all his writing on the Jews becomes an incomplete writing of himself. Kofman speaks of how one of the great paradoxes of the Jew, one of the ways in which the Jew contains his own opposition, is that “on the one hand, he possesses of himself a very high image which allows him to tolerate by the contempt all contempt; on the other hand, he despises and hates himself more than any other people has ever done” (Kofman 1994c, p. 40). Perhaps one might dare to suggest that Nietzsche, insofar as he is ever becoming Jewish without giving up the antisemite, is himself someone who holds a higher image of himself than all others, and yet also contains within himself a remnant of self-hatred that can never be effaced—and so too, by extension, does Kofman, the intellectual daughter of Nietzsche, herself. If Nietzsche’s intellectual journey took him from the antisemitism of his mother toward a proximity to Jewishness, then Kofman’s intellectual journey was a sort of self-exiling from Jewish identity through studying the Greek philosophical tradition, only to return to Jewishness at the end of her life through a reading of Nietzsche.

Thus, if Nietzsche is not in fact an antisemite, as Kofman quite categorically states, then perhaps this statement might be read as part of the process of Kofman’s attempt to come to terms with her own identity as a Jew who has both incorporated and repudiated the Christian mother within herself, her identity as a thinker who hates even that which she cannot help but embody, who rejects the shameful body that still marks her. If Kofman can construct for herself her own fantastical genealogy in relation to Nietzsche, just as he constructed a fantastical genealogy for himself back to “Dionysus versus the crucified,” signing his own autobiography with a statement of self-opposition,⁹ then Kofman may read herself and her unstable identities as both Jew and woman back into the story of European philosophy—and so, in turn, may come to terms with her own doubling, her own internal oppositions. If Nietzsche is an antisemite, then that makes Kofman, too, an antisemite, and so her frenzied defense of Nietzsche becomes a way of warding off her own ambivalence,

of coming to terms with the remnant of self-hatred that remains within herself. Just as Nietzsche had to renounce the antisemitic mother, a renunciation that only reinforced the remnant of antisemitism within him, so too did Kofman have to renounce both Jewish and Christian mothers, renunciations which reinscribed these incomplete, failed identities upon her. If Nietzsche is not an antisemite, this is because his remnant of hatred against the Jews is directed inward, at the Jewishness that he himself is becoming, just as Kofman's renunciation of her Jewish mother becomes a renunciation of a part of herself. If this means that antisemitism becomes a form of self-hatred, that hatred of the other that cannot be embodied becomes a hatred of an unassimilable, non-thematizable part of oneself that can neither be fully embodied nor fully expelled, then this is perhaps the greatest tragedy of Kofman's project and her life. If she cannot help but love Nietzsche, she can never fully love herself.

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Notes

- ¹ (Kofman 1994c, p. 49). All English translations from the French text of this book in this essay are the author's own, insofar as anything can ever belong solely to one author.
- ² Ibid, p. 78.
- ³ Nietzsche, cited in: Ibid, p. 79.
- ⁴ See, for example: (Kofman 1994b, p. 53). Kofman cites Nietzsche's letters and personal correspondences numerous times throughout this text. For example, on page 53 of the text alone, she cites six different letters written to four separate interlocutors.
- ⁵ Derrida, Jacques, as cited and translated in: (Aschheim 1992, p. 317).
- ⁶ Kofman, as cited in: (Duroux 1999, p. 139).
- ⁷ (Kofman and Jaccard 1986) as cited and translated in: (Deutscher 1999, p. 159).
- ⁸ See, for example, her 1986 interview with Roland Jaccard in *Le Monde*.
- ⁹ See: (Nietzsche 2005, p. 151). Here, it appears particularly significant that Nietzsche signs his *Ecce Homo* not as "Dionysus and the crucified," but as "Dionysus *versus* the crucified," a signature that seems to reaffirm the self-opposition present within Nietzsche's own corpus.

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