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Symbolism in the works of August Strindberg

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Chapter 75

Ordalek och småkonst

Ordalek och småkonst av den uppsvenske tankebyggaren på Fagervik-Skamsund¹ (Wordplay and Small Art by the Central-Swedish Opinion-Maker on Fagervik-Skamsund) was Strindberg's third and final collection of poetry. Published in 1905, it contains poems written from 1902 to 1904. Strindberg had not written poetry since the completion of *Sömngångarnätter* in 1889. Between these two bursts of poetic activity came the Inferno crisis, and these poems are markedly different in tone from those which went earlier: gone is the bitter social satire, the gentler lyrical tone predominates, and there is a strong mystical element to many of them. The collection is most closely related among the plays to the so-called lyrical dramas, particularly *Kronbruden*, *Svanevit*, and *Ett drömspel* (all 1901). Indeed, two of the poems, "Trefaldighetsnatten" ("Trinity Sunday Night") and "Holländarn" ("The Dutchman"), were originally planned as verse dramas.²

The title *Ordalek och småkonst* is an indication of Strindberg's disdainful attitude to poetry as an art form, despite the fact that his earlier poems are cred-

¹ *Samlade verk*, LI, 85-198.

² Brandell (*Skrifter*, 442), Spens (76), Steene (143).

ited as the major impetus toward the renewal and reform of Swedish poetry which occurred during the 1890's (Spens, 77). The subtitle seems to acknowledge the irony that an author who considers poetry one of the minor literary arts has nevertheless found himself at the helm of a poetic renaissance; it is not an attempt to disguise the authorship of the poems, which were, in fact, published under Strindberg's name. The reference to Fagervik and Skamsund, versions of the Isle of the Blessed and the Isle of the Damned, is to the 1902 collection of stories of that name, in the original edition of which several of the poems were first published. The two place names remained even after the poems were detached from the stories, expanded, and added to, because many of them were written in and deal with the archipelago, where Strindberg passed many of his summers, and possibly also because their subject-matter ranges from the light to the serious.

The first poem, "Gatubilder"³ ("Street Scenes"), is, however, a city poem, describing a Stockholm street at three different times of day: early morning, evening, and night. In the first scene, the street is empty, save for a solitary figure taking an early-morning stroll. It is a peaceful scene: the city

³ Samlade verk, LI, 87-90.

sleeps, and so do the troubles that plague man's waking existence:

Inom gråbruna väggar sova
Mänskor, bidande dunkla öden.
Utanför portarne vänta Nornor
Att med nya dagen förnya
Hemska lekar med mänskoliv.⁴

The idea that the fates do not operate while mankind sleeps is an interesting one, and throws light on Strindberg's use of troubled sleep, insomnia, and sleepwalking as signs of a troubled spirit.

By far the most interesting section of this poem from the point of view of symbolism, however, is the second, where cyclical symbols combine with others to present a symbolic prospect of the fear of death and hope in the afterlife. The street becomes Skamsund, the Isle of the Damned, or, in terms of Böcklin's painting,

⁴ Samlade verk, LI, 87-88:

Behind grey-brown walls slumber
People, awaiting obscure destinies.
Outside the doors the three Norns* wait
To begin again with the new day
Grisly games with human life.

* In Scandinavian mythology, the Norns, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, the Fates (Moerae or Parcae), were three sisters who presided over the fates of both men and gods. Their names, Urd (or Urdur), Verdandi (or Verthandi), and Skuld, are sometimes rendered as Past, Present, and Future (Davidson, 26 and 112, and Benét, II, 720).

the Isle of the Living: the verdant isle in the distance is Fagervik, the Isle of the Blessed (Böcklin's Isle of the Dead):

Gränden är dunkel på höstlig afton
 Husens fönster på glänt man öppnat;
 Höstetankar gjort rummen kvava,
 Saknans suckar av flydda sommarn,
 Oro för den stundande vintern
 Ovisshet om kommande öden
 Ängest klämmer människobrösten ...
 Husen andas, luften i gränden
 Står så disig som fylld av smärtor.

Men därnere i grändens mynning,
 Strömmen syns med ankrade skutor,
 Torka seglen från sista dagsregn.
 Och därbortom, på andra stranden
 Grönskande ligger en liten holme.

Uppi kronornas högsta toppar
 Sjunkande sol lagt guld i det gröna
 Men där bortom, och ännu högre
 Hänger blånande stadskonturen
 Där är solen, kojorna lysa,
 Där är havsluft, flaggorna blåsa,
 Aldra högst är kyrkans kupoltorn
 Krönt av en jordglob i stark förgyllning
 Globen, jorden lyser som solen,
 Sänder blixtrande strålar utåt -- -- --
 Men på globen där står ett kors!⁵

⁵ Samlade verk, LI, 89:

The lane is gloomy in the autumn evening,
 The houses' windows are slightly ajar:
 Autumn thoughts have made the rooms stuffy;
 Sighs of regret for the summer now gone,
 Unrest over the coming winter,
 Anguish crushes human breasts ...
 The houses breathe; the air in the lane
 Is hazy, as if filled with woes.

But down in the entrance to the lane,
 One sees the river, with boats at anchor,
 Sails now dry from the last rainy day.
 And beyond that, on the other shore,
 Verdant lies a little isle.

Up in the tops of the highest trees
 The setting sun mingles gold with the green,
 And beyond that, and even higher,

The verdant little isle which is the central image in this section of the poem (and thus of the three-part poem as a whole) is a recurring symbol for Strindberg. He had first seen Böcklin's painting, "Die Toten-Insel", at Berlin's National Gallery in 1893, and it became one of his favorite works of art (Stockenström, 12). In 1894 (when he was living in Austria) he painted his own variation on the theme, one of his best-known paintings, "Den grönskande ön" ("The Verdant Island").⁶ Although Strindberg's island is wilder and more "natural" than Böcklin's, there is nevertheless a marked similarity in form and composition between the two. That same year he sent a description of some of his paintings,⁷ including this one, to Leopold Litmansson, an old college friend, in which each painting was given an "exoteric" and an "esoteric" description: respectively, that "which everyone can see, even though with difficulty," and that which is "for the artist and the

Hangs the city sky-line, turning blue;
 There is sunshine, the cabins gleam,
 There is sea air, the banners blow;
 Highest of all is the church's domed tower,
 Crowned by a splendidly gilded globe,
 The globe, the earth, shines like the sun,
 Sends out shimmering glints of light -- -- --
 And on top of the globe there stands a cross!

⁶ The painting is now owned by Strindbergsmuséet (The Strindberg Museum) in Stockholm.

⁷ The letter is cited in Carlson, "Unknown Painter" (37), from which the quotations in this paragraph are drawn.

initiate." The two descriptions of "Den grönskande ön" follow. The time of day is different from that in the poem (dawn rather than dusk), but symbolically (as well as visually) they are the same: the dusk of this life is the dawn of the next, just as, in the poem, the islet is "grönskande" (literally, becoming green) even though it is autumn:

Exot. The greening island. The sea tranquilly smooth before the sunrise. The sky yellow and rose-coloured. Morning mists lie on the horizon, but above them the treetops of the greening island are visible and are reflected in the sea.

Esot. Life's meridian (...); hence, the island itself veiled, in white, yellow, and rose.

The following poem, "Vid Dagens Slut"⁸ ("At the Close of Day"), has a similar theme. The poet, from his dwelling high up under the roof, looks out his window, but finds the scene painful: it reminds him of shipwrecked hopes. His window faces east (i.e., towards the past), so he cannot look in the other direction (we cannot look into the future), but he leans back and beholds the clouds, illuminated by the setting sun:

Jag vill icke se ditut
Ej dit åt!
Men drar mig tillbaks i schäslongen,
Där ser jag allenast molnen. -- -- --.
Som brasans glöd i förkolnen,
I skyar från solnedgången!
Sen hit-åt!

⁸ Samlade verk, LI, 91-92.

Här väntas också på dagens slut!⁹

Stockenström (13-15) and Hemmingsson (156-57) have pointed out the immense importance Strindberg attached to clouds, from 1900 onwards. He believed that cloud formations were projections of another level of reality (Plato's world of ideal forms, Swedenborg's higher regions, the Christian afterworld), and he spent a great deal of time recording cloud formations in sketches and trying to photograph one particular formation which, he believed, appeared in the same place regularly over a period of several years. That clouds in general and that formation in particular became associated in his mind with Den grönskande ön - Die

⁹ Samlade verk, LI, 92:

I do not want to look that way,
Not in that direction!
But lean myself back in my chaise,*
Until only the clouds I discern. -- -- --.
You clouds, to glowing embers you turn,
From the fire of the setting sun's rays!
Look in this direction!
I also wait for the close of day!

* Strindberg's word, *schäslong(en)*, is a Swedish rendering of the French *chaise-longue*. I have shortened the word to retain the poem's unusual *abcdcda* rhyme scheme. That rhyme scheme is singularly well adapted to the poem's content, reflecting the reversal of mood contained in each stanza, with the central rhyming couplet as the turning point.

Toten Insel - the Isle of the Blessed, and hence with the afterlife, there is abundant evidence. Perhaps one of the most spectacular attestations of this is a diary entry for April 24, 1904:

På aftonen såg jag i solnedgångens riktning moln, vilka bildade höjder, berg, kullar med lövträd och borgar. NB! I tre år har jag om vår, sommar och höst sett samma molnbildningar i riktning Väst och Nordväst, efter solnedgången. Jag börjar nu tro att det finns en reell grund för dessa molnbildningar efter som deras former äro konstanta; att de äro luftspeglingar, skuggprojektioner av platser på jorden som vi icke känna och der mäktiga väsen bo.¹⁰

The use of the word nu (now) in this extract (now I am beginning to believe it, whereas before I only suspected it), and the fact that the final few words are directly from Swedenborg (who talks of "högt belägna platser på jorden där mäktiga väsen bo"¹¹) are indications that Strindberg has, in fact, thought this for some time. The symbolic landscape formed by the clouds

¹⁰ Quoted in Stockenström, 13 (I have normalized the Swedish spelling):

This evening I saw, in the direction of the sunset, clouds in the shapes of hills, mountains, and cliffs, with broad-leaved trees and castles. N.B.! For three years, in spring, summer, and autumn, I have seen the same cloud-pictures, lying west-by-northwest, after sunset. I am now beginning to believe that these cloud-pictures have a basis in reality, since their shapes are constant: that they are mirages, shadow projections of places on earth that we do not know, where powerful beings dwell.

¹¹ Quoted in Hemmingsson, 156: "highly situated places on earth where powerful beings dwell".

is, of course, the Isle of the Dead, and indeed in several other places Strindberg speaks of familiar cloud formations as islands. The cloud islands are seen hovering over the monastery in *Svarta fanor*, and in *Stora landsvägen* the vision of the Land of Dreams is projected on to clouds.

In this poem the clouds have a strong Platonic association: the poet who cannot look west but sees its glory reflected in the clouds is in the position of Plato's cave-dwellers, whose only knowledge of the real world is gained from the shadows it projects on their cave wall.

Clouds also play a rôle, albeit a minor one, in "Åskregn"¹² ("Thunder Shower"), a love poem which asks the question (answered, if somewhat ambiguously, by the storm) whether the idyllic relationship pictured in the first stanza can survive adversity (perhaps even death), symbolized by darkness, thunder, and rain. The love of the poet and his beloved¹³ is symbolized by the strong-scented flowers, peonies and jasmine, and by the earthly fire of passion, which the poem skillfully combines with the danger of fire as a result of being struck by lightning, and the heavenly fire which

¹² *Samlade verk*, LI, 93-94.

¹³ Harriet Bosse, whom Strindberg married in May, 1901. The storm may be the period of forty-five days later that year during which Harriet left him. Their daughter, Anne-Marie, was born on March 25, 1902.

appears in the clouds. The unasked but palpable question is threefold: will the house be struck by lightning and go up in flames? does the fire of their passion burn so fiercely that it will destroy them both? and does the flame of their love burn brightly enough to survive the downpour of adversity, including death?

Det var i peonernas tid
Och jasminernas.
Hon satt vid mitt bord och var blid;
Det var blommornas skuld och vinernas.
Vi blandade tanke och blick.
Och ordet det kom och det gick
Ett nät omkring oss det vävde;
Vi voro ett, och vi levde
Varandras liv som vårt eget;
Vi talte med tankstreck förläget,
Och frågetecken törhända mest -- --
En själarnes bröllopfest!

Och solen så vackert sken
På jasminerna
Som blandade doft så ren
Med vinerna.

Då mörknar det plötsligt till,
Och luften blir dov och still.
Nu solen har upphört lysa,
Och blommorna slutas, träden rysa.

Vi tystnade, hon tog min hand
När skräcken helt vår tunga band;
Och endast ögat vågade en fråga
Om vi nu skulle dö av samma låga ...
Då faller sakta tunga stänk
På fönsterrutorna och blecken;
Och dropparne de krossas -- tänk!
Och täcka rutorna med utropstecken.
Nu brast det över husets tak,
Och molnen stå i eld och lågor.
Så svarar himlen med ett brak
På barnens alltför dumma frågor.¹⁴

¹⁴ Samlade verk, LI, 93-94:

It was when the peonies peak*
And the jasmine too.
She sat at my table, gentle and meek;
To the flowers and vines this was due.

"Moln-Bilder"¹⁵ ("Cloud Pictures") returns to and expands on Strindberg's fascination with cloud formations and his conviction that they are reflections of the beyond. The poem describes several landscapes suggested by cloud formations, beginning with a romantic mediaeval scene with castles, the ruins of palaces, cliffs and ravines, walled vineyards, a cathedral,

—

Our thoughts and glances were in tune.
 From time to time we used words to commune,
 Around us a cocoon was spun;
 Each experienced, since we were one,
 The other's life in his own breast;
 Our punctuation was thoughts unexpressed,
 The question mark, perhaps, not least -- --
 Our souls were at a wedding feast!

And the sun so beautifully fell
 On the jasmine flowers,
 Which mingled their immaculate smell
 With the vine bowers.

Then all of a sudden, darkness descends,
 The air grows sultry, all motion ends.
 Now the sun's rays disappear,
 Flowers close, and trees quiver with fear.

We grew silent, my hand she clasped,
 Our tongues had both by fear been grasped;
 A question was ventured only by the eye:
 If in the same flames we now would die ...
 Then gentle heavy raindrops splash
 On the window-panes, on the tin roof clatter;
 And imagine! -- the drops all smash
 And exclamation marks on the windows scatter.
 Then over the roof there was a great crash,
 And the clouds with fiery flames seemed lit.
 So answers heaven with a clash
 The children's questions, which lack all wit.

* Mid- to late June.

¹⁵ Samlade verk, LI, 100-02.

towers, bridges, etc.: very like Wagner's Valhalla, in fact. Next comes a scene suggesting an oasis scene in a desert, with palm trees, camels, and pyramids: the notions of death, eternity, and mirages are introduced. The final scene, occupying three of the poem's seven stanzas, is the verdant isle, seen from the sea. The poet has imagined himself first as a wanderer, then as a bedouin; here he is a ship-wrecked sailor adrift on the sea:

Land! Det är land som jag ser,
 När från det vilda hav
 Drivande jag föll ner,
 Bedjande om en grav.
 Grönskande stränder, skuggande alar,
 Vaggande vassar i stilla vikar
 Här är jag hemma bland likar
 Här är mitt land, mina dalar!

*

Ö, du min grönskande ö,
 Blomkorg i havets våg!
 Doftande slaget hö,
 Dig jag i drömmen såg.
 Såg jag i vänliga ängar vandra
 Ljusklädda barn med lösta lockar,
 Sjunga och leka i brokiga flockar
 Famna i frid och kärlek varandra.

*

Vänner och fränder jag ser
 Skiljdes i hat vi åt
 Ingen det minnes mer
 Vad som vållat vår gråt.
 Hemlängtan griper, dit vill jag fara,
 Lämna den trånga tråkiga jorden
 Pinande tankar, sårande orden -- -- --
 Ve! det är moln, det är skyar bara!¹⁶

¹⁶ Samlade verk, LI, 101-02:

Land! That is land that I see!
 When from the top of the stormy wave
 I foundered, drifting on the sea,

The poem goes on to say that even though the cloud formations are mirages, they nevertheless reflect something which actually exists, and for which the poet yearns. The children in the second stanza quoted remind one of the kiss-of-peace scene in "En häxa"; Erik, Thyra, and the Playmate in Advent; and the Hunter's daughter, Maria, in Stora landsvägen: children were for Strindberg not only a symbol of innocence, but a sign of the pre-existence (hence immortality) of the soul.

Praying for a grave.
Shade-giving alders on a verdant strand,
Reeds in calm bays by breezes blown:
Here I am at home with my own;
These are my valleys, this my land!

*

Oh isle, you verdant isle, my own,
Cluster of flowers in the ocean's
streams,
Smelling of hay that is freshly mown!
I saw you in my dreams.
I saw, wandering in clement leas,
Brightly-clad children with flowing locks,
Singing and playing in motley flocks,
Embracing each other in love and peace.

*

Friends and kinsmen I behold;
In hatred we ate separated;
It no longer is recalled
What cause our tears precipitated.
Homesickness grips me; thither will I pass:
Leave the sad earth's narrow stays,
Painful thoughts, words that raze -- -- --
It is clouds, it is only mist! Alas!

"Stadsresan"¹⁷("The Trip to the City") is an archipelago poem which, like the chamber plays, derives its inspiration from music, in this case Beethoven's "Appassionata" sonata. It is a narrative poem, about a poor *klockare*¹⁸ on an island in the archipelago, who, through years of hardship and sacrifice, has finally saved up enough money to travel into Stockholm and buy a piano. The third of the poem's three "Songs" describes his playing of the Appassionata on the new piano on a Sunday afternoon after church. The music seems to reflect and give expression to all of life's hardships and sufferings, the woes and sorrows of mankind, and as he plays, he reflects bitterly over his poverty and the shipwrecked promises of his youth, which seemed to assure a brilliant musical career. Under the music's influence, he even wishes for the total destruction of the world, in order that everything might begin again. The poem ends happily, however: his impassioned playing of the sonata has been overheard by a large crowd of passersby, who assemble beneath his window to listen. Their demonstrations of approval and appreciation and his wife's silent display of love fill him with greater happiness than he has ever known. The quotation marks

¹⁷ *Samlade verk*, LI, 103-20.

¹⁸ There is no English word directly corresponding to this term. It designates a position in Swedish churches, combining the offices of parish clerk and organist.

in the passage quoted indicate the words the sonata
seems to speak to him as he plays:

Allt vad som livet har beskt, det cyniskt
 gäckande livet,
 Som av vårt allvar gör narr, och hånar de
 heliga känslor
 Pockar på offer och plikt, och skrattar bak-
 efter åt offret;
 Livet som gissel ju band av de arma mänskor-
 nas öden,
 Tvingar att slå vad kärast man har att sarga
 och såra, -- -- --
 * * * * *
 " * * * * *
 Sår du i kärlek, du skördar i hat; av tro får
 du tvivel;
 När du planterar ditt hopp, du plockar fruk-
 ten elände
 Ragnarök, makternas slut, den stora världs-
 brand må komma.
 Därtill en syndaflod, en rening med eld och
 med vatten;
 Sedan må börjas på nytt; i askan och frukt-
 bara slammet
 Odlas och sås. Då nalkas de drömmares gyllene
 ålder." 19

¹⁹ Samlade verk, LI, 117-18:

All that life has that is bitter, this cyni-
cally baffling life,
Which makes sport of our gravity, and mocks
our holy feelings,
Demands duty and sacrifice, and afterwards
laughs at the victim;
Life, which out of human fates a scourge has
fashioned,
Makes one strike what one holds dearest, to
cut and wound, -- -- --
* * * * *
* * * * *
If you sow in love, you reap in hate; from
faith you get doubt;
After planting your hopes, you cull the
fruit: wretchedness.
Let Ragnarök come, when the powers of the
world end in flames.
And after that a Flood, a cleansing by fire
and water;
Then let it begin again; in ashes and fruit-
ful slime
To be tilled and sown. Then the golden age of

We can recognize Strindberg himself in the character of the klockare, reviewing the disappointments and tribulations of his life and coming to terms with all that through increasing public recognition and the love of his wife. Ragnarök will be delayed for awhile!

The next poem in the collection, "Trefaldighetsnatten"²⁰ ("Trinity Sunday Night") was originally planned as a verse drama, but became instead a poem with a loosely dramatic structure. Within the framework of a group of friends, all characters who appear in Fagervik och Skamsund, sitting in a Fagervik inn on the night of Trinity Sunday,²¹ and entertaining each other with song and story, Strindberg presents a cycle of poems, each recited by one of the celebrants. There are poems celebrating Swedish customs, cuisine, and nature, two narrative poems which have the flavour of folktales, and two extraordinary imitations of birdsong.

As might be expected, the most accomplished and noteworthy of these poems is that sung by the Poet (Skalden), a highly lyrical narrative resembling a folk-tale. Lagerkranz has explained the derivation and significance of the title of this poem, "Chrysäetos":

—

the dreamer will be near.

²⁰ Samlade verk, LI, 121-58.

²¹ The Sunday after Pentecost, usually from mid- to late May. It is celebrated in Sweden as a sort of spring festival.

Sven Nilssons Scandinavisk fauna, som fanns i hans fars bibliotek, hade följt Strindberg genom åren och spelat roll för hans prosa. Sven Nilsson trodde i sin ungdom att det fanns två slags kungsörnar i Sverige och en av dem döpte han till guldörnen och gav den det latinska namnet *Falco Chrysaëtos*. Senare blev han klokare och förstod att han räknat som en särskild art den unga kungsörnen, och guldörnen försvann ur vår zoologi.

Men hos Strindberg finns den kvar. Nilsson beskriver den svart på haka, bröst och mage men med rostbrunt inblandat som gav guldskimmer. Det stämde med Harriet Bosses färger. Strindberg hade lossat en örnfjäder ur hennes hatt i februari 1901 och gjort en penna av den och i en dikt hade han erinrat sig att hans ungdomsnamn var Örnen och lovat henne beskydd under sina starka vingar. Nu döper han henne till *Chrysaëtos*.²²

²² 374. The passage presents a translation problem. Kungsörnen --literally, the king's eagle -- is called the golden eagle in English. The Swedish name for the wrongly identified bird was guldörnen: literally, the golden eagle! To distinguish between them in English, I have allowed kungsörnen to retain its English name, golden eagle, and have called guldörnen the golden falcon (after Nilsson's Latin name for it):

Sven Nilsson's *Scandinavian Fauna*, which had been in his father's library, had accompanied Strindberg through the years, and contributed to his prose. When he was younger, Sven Nilsson believed that there were two kinds of golden eagle in Sweden, and he called one of them the golden falcon, giving it the Latin name *Falco Chrysaetos*.^{*} Later he thought better of it, realizing that he had counted the young golden eagle as a separate species, and the golden falcon disappeared from our zoology.

In Strindberg, however, it lives on. Nilsson describes it as having black throat, breast, and belly, but mingled with reddish-brown, which produced golden highlights. This corresponded to Harriet Bosse's colouring. In February 1901, Strindberg had pulled an eagle feather from her hat and made a pen of it, and in a poem he had recalled that when he was young he was called The Eagle, and promised her shelter under his strong wings. Now he christened her *Chrysaetos*.

The the poem tells of a man whose wife has died. Distraught, he nevertheless searches for her: in their apartment, on the moor nearby, and finally on the ice, where he meets death, in the form of an ice breaker. Scenes of his past happiness flash before him, and he dies. It is clearly a love poem to Harriet Bosse, with specific reference to her disappearance from Strindberg's home for forty-five days in late 1901: a poetic way of telling her he cannot live without her. The passage cited (omitting two short stanzas) occurs just past the half-way point in the poem. The distraught husband has a vision of his wife as a bride, compares her to Venus (who was born of the sea), and recalls the incident described by Lagerkranz:

Är det bröllopståg?
 Var det bruden jag såg
 Min majbrud i fjor
 I grönt och i vitt
 I siden och flor
 I grönt och i vitt
 Som den blommande hägg
 Därute med vägg?
 I solen jag satt med sol i mitt sinn ...
 Det var då! ... Chrysaëtos var min!

*

Och han sjunger:

* * * * *

* The Latin name of the golden eagle (kungsörnen) is *Aquila chrysaetos*.

När du steg ur havets sköte
Föll jag för din skönhet ner!
Väl förlåtligt om jag skröte --
Nemesis dig icke ser!

Chrysáëtos!...

Chrysaëtos, Guldörn i ditt gyllne öga
Såg jag soln gå upp den sista gång ...
När vi möttes över molnen i det höga
Lockade jag ner dig med min sång
Ur din vinge räck jag då en penna
Uti guldbläck sen jag skrev
Sångerna du känner -- från Gehenna,
Som vårt paradiset ju blev!²³

²³ Samlade verk, LI, 139-40:

A wedding train can it be?
The bride did I just see,
My May bride of last year
In green and white,
In silk and gauze most sheer,
In green and white
Like that blossoming cherry tree
In the wall's safe lee?
In the sun I sat; in my heart the sun
 did shine ...
That was the day! Chrysaetos was
 mine!

And he sings:

* * * * *

[He recalls an occasion when they went swimming together.]

When from the womb of the sea you arose,
To your beauty I fell down prostrate!
My boasts then were no sin, I suppose --
Nemesis has no claim on your fate!

Chrysaetos! ...

Chrysaetos, Golden Falcon, in your gold
eye
For the last time I saw the sunrise glow
...
When we two met above the clouds on high
I used my song to lure you down below
...
From your wing I then did pluck a pen, a
Plume which I dipped in gold ink, and
then wrote out

The green and white in which the bride was dressed are the colours of hope and innocence, respectively. That she was a May bride is another link to Harriet Bosse, who married Strindberg May 6, 1901 (the words *i fjor* -- last year -- therefore date the poem's composition). Gehenna is the New Testament name for the valley of Hinnom, surrounding Jerusalem. In the Old Testament it was called Tophet -- Strindberg's name, in *En blå bok* and *Stora landsvägen*, for Stockholm -- and became synonymous with Hell. The present instance is an example of Strindberg's theme of the redeeming power of love, a theme that perhaps finds its strongest dramatic expressions in *Gillets hemlighet* and *Till Damaskus I*.

That theme is also present in the next poem in the "Trefaldighetsnatten" cycle, "Jag drömde"²⁴ ("I Dreamt"), but with a twist. The narrator relates a dream in which he was a cripple, restored to soundness through the love of a woman. But the relationship turns sour, and eventually becomes a living hell, both for the man in the dream, and for the dreamer, who relives the experience every night!

That poem makes a good transition to the collection's other poem originally planned as a drama, "Hol-

—

Songs that you know well -- songs from
Gehenna,
For us a paradise, beyond doubt!

²⁴ *Samlade verk*, LI, 143-47.

ländarn"²⁵ ("The Dutchman"), a treatment of the legend of the Flying Dutchman in the version related by Wagner in his opera *Der Fliegende Holländer* (1843): during a violent storm a Dutch captain swears an oath to round the Cape, even if it takes him forever to do it, and as punishment for his impiety is cursed to sail the seas unceasingly, until he should find a wife willing to sacrifice everything for his sake. It is a nautical version of the Wandering Jew legend, but Wagner offers the possibility of redemption through a woman's love.

Strindberg alters this version to suit his own ends. The curse lasts only for seven years, at the end of which time the captain is able to dock his ship. After being warned by a monk that his suffering is far from over, he marries. The poem is divided into three "Songs", of which the events related so far form the first. The second song is a cosmic hymn in praise of woman, and of his wife in particular. The third song is set a year later. The marriage has turned sour, the captain and his wife have separated. He gladly returns to his ship, presumably to resume his constant wandering of the seas!

The poem's second song was written first, and is one of the earliest poems in the collection; the first and third songs, on the other hand, were the last poems

²⁵ Samlade verk, LI, 163-69.

to be written.²⁶ The love poem comes from the early period of Strindberg's marriage to Harriet Bosse, in other words; the cynical framework in which it is set from 1904, the year in which they were divorced. The seven years the Dutchman has spent wandering aimlessly on the high seas corresponds to the period between 1894, when Strindberg and his second wife, Frida Uhl, saw each other for the last time (although they were not divorced until 1897), and 1901, when he married for the third time.

In its final form, then, the central love paeon is introduced by a warning that love brings suffering as well as joy, and followed by a cynical epilogue. The powers can turn even the fairest of creatures into an avenging fury: Chrysaetos becomes Omphale! This is the tenor of the monk's warning when the captain has only barely stepped ashore after seven years of wandering:

"....
 Det ljuvaste det skönsta som jorden bär
 Skall ånyo riva ditt hjärta i blodiga trasor.

 Vad båtar tvekan? Makter ha så befallt;
 Du spottat åt havet och knutit mot himmelen
näven,
 Nu får du böta ditt högmod, och hundrafalt --
 Hos Omfale som slav skall du sitta vid
väven."²⁷

²⁶ Brandell in *Skrifter*, XIII, 442.

²⁷ *Samlade verk*, LI, 164:

"....
 The sweetest and the loveliest that earth
bears
 Will once more tear your heart in bloody tat-
ters.

The second song is remarkable for the intensity of its imagery. Strindberg ransacks geometry, astronomy, zoology, botany, lapidology, mythology, and the Bible in attempts to find adequate similes for his wife's beauty and perfection. As he does so, the love he feels for her is extended to the natural world, embracing all of nature, animate and inanimate, including all time and indeed encompassing the universe:

Vad är det? Vem är det?
Ett mänskobarn i vita slöjor,
En kör av linjers harmonier
Som under slöjan röjes.
Ett världssystem i smått,
En avbild av den Stora Kosmos!²⁸

One of the many striking aspects of the poem is the recurrence of references to motherhood. They build up slowly, until finally the beloved and the mother are one. The first of these references occurs near the

Why hesitate? The powers have commanded;
You spat at the sea and raised your fist
 against heaven's doom,
Now the price of your pride, a hundredfold
 is demanded --
A slave to Omphale, shall you sit by the
 loom."

²⁸ Samlade verk, LI, 165:

What is it? Who is it?
A mortal being veiled in white,
A chorus of the harmony of lines
Outlined beneath the veil.
A very microcosm,
An image of the Great Cosmos!

beginning of the song, where the body of the beloved is described in terms of the heavens:

Från skuldrorna till ljumsken tecknat står
 Det helga hexagrammet,
 Den härliga Orion lik på stjärnevalvet,
 Där Bältet är markerat genom naveln ...
 I vilken himmelens ekvator löper fram,
 Och vilar nedtill på den sfäriska triangeln
 Av tre konvexa bågar bildad:
 En tryckt kupol på templets tak,
 Det tempel som åt Moderskapet blivit hel-
 gat!²⁹

²⁹ Samlade verk, LI, 165:

From the shoulders to the groin can be drawn
 The holy hexagram,
 Like the glorious Orion in the starry vault
 With his Girdle at the level of the navel ...
 Along which the celestial equator runs;*
 Its base rests on the spherical triangle
 Formed of three convex curves:
 A squat dome on the roof of the temple,
 The temple consecrated to Motherhood!

* The constellation Orion is half in the northern, half in the southern sky, being bisected (at about navel level) by the celestial equator. The outline which represents the constellation in astronomical charts consists of a line running across the top of the chest, an inward-sloping line running down from that on each side, representing the torso, two outward sloping lines representing the hips, and a line across the bottom, just above the pubis. To complete the hexagram (a six-pointed star formed of two intersecting equilateral triangles, one pointing upward and the other downward, perhaps most familiar as the Star of David), it is necessary to add the "points" of the head and pubis.

The close of this extract comes close to the deification of the beloved. The apotheosis is completed in the following sixteen lines, after which she is endowed with the feminine form of the divine title All-Bountiful: "Allgiverskan, / Förutan vilken jag är tomma intet!"³⁰ The goddess is Gaea, mother-goddess, earth-goddess, who through a transformation to Judeo-Christian mythology, becomes Eve, child of the earth and mother of mankind. At the end of this extract there is a startling image of the child as vampire, feeding on its mother's life-blood, her milk:

När Uranos i ur-jord grävde
 Och Gää, Modren-jorden spann
 Det blev till dina lockar Eva,
 Den första brudens slöja
 Och den lillas svepning!
 Med dem du torkat dina tårar
 Med dem du dolt din blygsel,
 När du ur paradiset gick
 På världens törneväg.
 I skuggan av dess friska skog
 Du vilar dina stackars trötta ögon,
 När nålen ur din hand vid dagens slut du
 fällde,
 När sjuka barnet tagit dina sista krafter
 Och druckit ut ditt vita blod
 Ur bröstens alabasterskålar!³¹

³⁰ Samlade verk, LI, 166: "All-Bountiful, / Without whom I am empty nothing!"

³¹ Ibid., 167:

When Uranus burrowed in primal earth
 And Gaea, Mother-Earth, did spin,
 They created your tresses, Eve,
 The first of bridal veils
 And the baby's swaddling!
 With them you wiped away your tears,
 With them you hid your shyness,
 When out of paradise you went
 On the world's thorny path.
 In the shade of its fresh forest

Finally, in a ten-line stanza separated from the rest of the song, the mother and the mistress come together in the same image, and a tension arises which makes the relationship unbearable. Although the last six lines seem to refer to an earlier love, the references to death (the cypresses), sin (the snakes), and suffering (the hair-shirt) do not bode well for this relationship either:

Ack, även jag har vilat uti lockars skugga
 Vid moders sköte och vid makas barm --
 En gång -- de voro ljusa lätta
 Som vårbjörks späda årsskott;
 En gång, de voro svarta som cypress;
 Som gissel flätade av slanka ormar
 De slog mig i ögonen;
 Och vävdes till en tagelskjorta
 Som jag fick bära, under det jag svalt!
 O hulda gissel³²

—
 You give your poor exhausted eyes a rest;
 When you dropped the needle from your hand at
 end of day,
 When the sick child had sapped your remaining
 powers
 And drained off all of your white blood
 From the alabaster bowls, your breasts!

³² Samlade verk, LI, 167:

Oh, even I have rested in the shade of
 tresses,
 On mother's lap and on a spouse's breast --
 Once -- they were pale and tender,
 Like slender birch-shoots in the spring;
 At one time, like the cypress, they were
 black;
 Like scourges plaited out of slender snakes
 Their lashes flailed me in the eyes;
 They were woven in a shirt of hair
 I had to wear, while passions cooled!
 Oh salutary scourges

There is a possible reference here to the shirt of Nessus, a tunic which the wife of Hercules had soaked in the blood of the Centaur Nessus, in the belief that in this way she could preserve her husband's love for her; instead it caused Hercules intense agony, and eventually led to his death. The allusion would not be inappropriate in the context of the poem as a whole: the lover is elsewhere associated with Hercules' sufferings at the hands of a woman in different circumstances! At any rate, the passage provides a transition, by foreshadowing a change in the relationship, between the second and third songs of the poem.

In the third song, as the Dutchman describes the changes which occurred in this seemingly idyllic love affair, he uses symbolism common to all of Strindberg's works dealing with the dissolution of a marriage: he has become Hercules enslaved by Omphale; the dearest of friends, husband and wife, have become the bitterest of enemies; she has become a corpse, a parasite, and a vampire, growing in strength and vitality as she saps him of his virility. Love was like a dream (which is described in the second song), but now that he is awake, he is horrified by what he sees:

Jag gick till bröllopsglädjen
 Som till en barnafest;
 Jag lämnade mitt öde i hennes händer,
 Jag lade mitt huvud i hennes knä
 Som i en väns,
 Omfale! Omfale!
 Så vaknar jag ur kärlekssömnen
 Och fann att jag var fånge

Hos min värsta fiende.
 På botten av en stinkande brunn,
 Fastkedjad vid ett lik,
 Som kom min själ att ruttna
 Bit för bit.
 Var fick du makten, lilla mask,
 Att så den Starke plåga?
 Av mig och av min mannakraft
 Du fick den!
 Jag gav, du tog emot;
 Men när jag stängde av
 Och tog tillbaka mitt
 Då var din allmakt slut.³³

All that is over now, however, and the parting of the ways has come. When enemies stop tormenting each other, they can become friends again; as he prepares to leave, the Dutchman's impulse is toward peace, if not reconciliation:

Och likafullt ... -- --
 När jag är fri igen
 Och avskedsstunden äntligen nalkas,
 Nu ser jag åter fienden som vän;

³³ Samlade verk, LI, 168-69:

I went to the joys of marriage
 As to a children's party;
 I placed my destiny between her hands,
 I laid my head upon her knee
 As on a friend's,
 Omphale! Omphale!
 Then I awoke from the dream of love
 And found myself a prisoner
 Of my worst enemy.
 At the bottom of a stinking well,
 Bound firmly to a corpse,
 Which was making my soul decay
 Bit by bit.
 Where is your power from, little maggot,
 So to torment the Strong?
 From me and from my manliness
 You got it!
 I gave, and you received!
 But when I cut the supply
 And took back what was mine,
 Your omnipotence was over.

* * * * *

This does not mean that he either forgets or forgives, however; he has ceased to suffer, and he even concedes that his wife was a victim as much as he was, but his parting line drips with vitriol:

Farväl då, Omfale, min forna härskarinna,
Nu kan åt dina konster jag få le i mjugg;
Jag slaven var, men du slavinna;
Nu är jag åter man, men du är blott en liten
elak kvinna!³⁵

There follows a poem about the Wandering Jew, "Ahasverus"³⁶ ("Ahasuerus"). The final section portrays a man whose past is so far behind him that he has forgotten it, and who has lost all hope of the future. His torment is that he must live in an eternal present which, without past or future, is meaningless. The naval setting draws a connection between the Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman, who shares his fate:

Ahasverus står i stäven,

³⁴ Samlade verk, LI, 169:

And all the same ... -- --
When I am free again
And the parting moment finally nears,
I see again the enemy as a friend;
* * * * *

³⁵ Idem.:

And so, my former mistress, Omphale, god-
speed;
Now I can laugh up my sleeve at your wiles;
I was a slave, but you a bonded maid;
Now I am again a man, but a little nasty
woman you have stayed!

³⁶ Ibid., 170-73.

Spanar mot den gråa vägg,
Ögat dävet, knuten näven,
Munnen vass i vitnat skägg --
Inga syner ser han hägra,
Minnena ha slocknat ut,
Hoppet självt det synes vägra,
Leva måste han i nu't,
Detta nu som är en plåga,
Utan mening, utan mål,
Svarslöst som en galen fråga,
Dött som flintan utan stål --

Ut i gråa intet stirrar
Vandrarn fängslad på ett däck
Mattslö ner i djupet stirrar
Känner sig som dränkt i säck.³⁷

"Vargarne tjuta"³⁸ ("The Wolves Howl") is based on an actual incident: an outbreak of fire during the night in the zoo at Skansen, Stockholm's outdoor museum. Strindberg could hear the cries of the trapped animals, especially the howling of the wolves, from his apartment nearby (Lagerkranz, 375), and the howling of dogs all over the city, which answered the cries. The

³⁷ Samlade verk, LI, 173:

In the stern Ahasuerus stands;
The blank grey wall he gazes on,
With watery eyes, and knotted hands,
Behind blanched beard a mouth of stone --
No enticing visions does he spy,
His memories are now all dead,
Hope itself he seems to deny;
In the present must his life be led,
The here and now, such a travail,
Without a meaning, without an aim;
As to a foolish question, all answers fail:
A flint without steel can make no flame --

Into the cold grey void he stares;
The wanderer to a deck is bound;
Vapidly into the deep he stares,
Feels himself in a sack, and drowned .

³⁸ Ibid., 174-78.

trapped and panic-stricken animals become symbols of an enslaved and doomed humanity; the men who put them in the zoo in the first place, of the malevolent powers which guide human destiny. He imagines the wolves as howling out their anger at humanity, which has robbed them of their freedom and thus condemned them to a horrible and ignominious death. The dogs ("man's best friend") howl not in sympathy with the dying animals, but as if trying to rebut the black hatred and outrage of the wolves; they represent, then, those who defend social injustice, even though they themselves have more in common with the oppressed than with the oppressors. Strindberg's antipathy to dogs is well-known; here he turns that antipathy as well to those who keep dogs (you can judge a man by the company he keeps!):

De ha medlidande, endast de, hundarne,
Med sina vänner mänskorna
Vilken sympati!³⁹

The fire itself is seen as a warning to the city (society, mankind, the powers) that it too will one day be destroyed by fire: Ragnarök will come!

Det mörknar åter, brandkårsluren
Har vigt in tystnad över stad och land;
Ett rökmoln sträcket över stadskonturen

³⁹ Samlade verk, LI, 176-77:

They take pity, only they, the dogs,
On their friends, mankind:
What fellow-feeling!

Som bilden av en svart ofantlig hand.⁴⁰

Finally, in "Rosa Mystica"⁴¹ Strindberg explores the complex symbolism of the rose. The title comes from the symbol of the Rosicrucians, a red rose upon a cross, which combines two symbols (the rose and the point of intersection of the two arms of the cross) of the mystic centre. The rose as a symbol of the mystic centre is the Western equivalent of the lotus, and both are related to the mandala. The mystic centre which all of these symbols embody is conceived of as the unchanging and immovable centre of all time, space, and motion, the source and focus of all spiritual energy, movement away from which is disintegration, movement towards which is unification. It is that part of the universe, the world, and/or the human soul inhabited by God, and therefore a symbol of wholeness, perfection, and unity (Cirlot, 39-40).

In presenting this symbolism, Strindberg makes use of the symbolism of numbers, specifically of the number five, which shares many symbolic properties with the

⁴⁰ Samlade verk, LI, 178:

Darkness returns, the horn of the fire
Has caused a hush to fall on city and on land;
Over the city skyline a cloud of smoke is laid,
Looking like a black colossal hand.

⁴¹ Ibid., 186-88.

rose. Primarily, the number five is symbolic of man, health, and love: man has five limbs (counting the head), five digits on each hand and foot, five senses, etc.; the association with love and eroticism is mainly through the five senses. Already there is an association between the flower and the number, then: both symbolize love. Furthermore, many representations of the integration of physical and spiritual worlds take the form of the number five as it is represented on dice: an outer square (the material world: the four cardinal points), and the mystic centre, which both controls it and holds it together (just as the four outer limbs of man are directed by the head). Like the rose, it is also a symbol of union (and hence of sexuality), specifically the union of heaven (the number three, as in the Christian Trinity) and earth (the number two: positive and negative polarization, yin and yang, etc.) (Cirlot, 222, 258-59). Both the rose and the number five are closely associated with mandala symbolism, another representation of the entire material and psychic world emanating from and held together by the mystic centre (Cirlot, 192). The poem begins with an examination of correspondences between the rose and the number five, along with a few other numerological considerations:

Blommornas drottning min sång! som förr åt
hennes vasaller
Ägnat jag har! Åt Rosen min sång och åt hen-
nes mysterier.

Dem jag nu röja vill med fara begå sacrile-
 gium.
 Fem heter Rosens tal, den enklase ej att för-
 glömma.
 Fem trianglar gå ut ifrån fästets fullkomliga
 cirkel;
 Kronblad kallas de ju, samt bilda i skruvande
 stigning
 Regelrätt en spiral; hos Cartesius heter den
 virvel.
 Blomman hon går i en krets, men den vänder
 icke på spåren;
 Stiger för varje slag, och skruvar sig upp
 emot ljuset.
 (Samma metod har vår sol, och hela systemet
 för övrigt.)
 Kronbladen fem en femhörning bilda kring
 centrum --
 Så pentagonen är klar; den gömmer på frukt-
 bara gåtor:
 Binder man hop dess hörn, så syns pentagram-
 met därinne,
 Likbenta, likstora tre trianglar, som korsa
 varandra;
 Kallas pentalfa det ock, ty fem stycken alfa
 den bildar.
 Alfa är allfaders namn; för detta viker det
 onda.
 Heliga pentagram, besvärjarens mäktiga
 tecken,
 Skyddande krafter åt Rosen du gav, i brud-
 jungfrurs kransar,
 Eller på gravarnes grus att värna den heliga
 vilan.
 Nu må likvisst man märka uppå hur skönheten
 följde,
 När under linjernas lek gick fram det stela
 pentalfat.
 Se, i det gyllene snitt de tvärlinjer skära
 varandra;
 Därför är rosen så skön, ja skönast bland
 markernas blomster.
 Också de kupiga blad, som bekransa de hemliga
 delar,
 Brännspegelns former de fått, att suga de
 värmande strålar
 Ned ifrån himmelens sol, och lysa på rosornas
 bröllop.
 Ännu en hemlighet, hon gömmer, den blommornas
 Drottning.
 Rosen har löst det problem, som Dürer och
 Newton bland andra
 Fåfängt de sökte få ut; det heter: "att tre-
 dela vinkeln".

Se på vart hörn ini blommans figur, den
rosiga femsing
Diagonalerna jämnt i trenne delar de dela:
Spetsiga vinklar med sex och trettio grader
på varje,
Då polygonens hörn är själv ett hundra och
åtta --
Hundra och åtta, det tal från himlarymden är
lånat:
Venus', planetens tal; och Rosen är helgad åt
Venus!⁴²

⁴² Samlade verk, LI, 186-87:

The queen of flowers my song! which formerly
to her vassals
I dedicated! To the Rose my song, and the
Rose's mysteries:
I now reveal them, despite the danger of sac-
rilege.
Five is the Rose's number, not easy to for-
get.
Five triangles unfurl from the attachment's
perfect circle;
They are called petals, of course, and form,
in a constantly winding
Ascent, a spiral; Descartes called it a vor-
tex.
The petals form a circle, but they do not
return to the origin;
At every stage they climb, screwing upward to
the light.
(Our sun's path is the same, and that of all
the universe.)
Five petals form a five-sided figure around
the centre --
Revealing a pentagon; it holds fertile enig-
mas:
If you join its five angles, a pentagram
appears:
Three equal isosceles triangles which inter-
sect each other;
Also called a pentalpha, for alphas five are
figured.
Alpha is the name of the Father;* evil col-
lapses before it.
O holy pentagram, powerful sign of the con-
jurer,
Protective powers you gave to the Rose, both
in virgins' bridal wreathes,
And on the gravel of graves, safeguarding
holy rest.
One may likewise now relate how beauty fol-
lowed

The mention of the pentagram of the rose extending

When, through combining lines, the pentagonal-
 Behold, the transverse lines intersect in the
 golden section**;
 That is why the rose is so beautiful, yes,
 the loveliest of earth's flowers.
 Also, the convex petals, which encircle the
 secret parts,
 Took on the shape of reflectors, to draw the
 warming rays
 Down from heaven's sun, and illumine the
 roses' wedding-rites.
 She holds yet another secret, the Queen of
 the flowers:
 The Rose has solved the problem which Dürer,
 Newton, and others
 Tried in vain to work out; it is called:
 "trisecting the angle".
 Behold, in each angle of the flower, the rosy
 pentagon
 Is divided by the diagonals into three equal
 parts:
 Acute angles of thirty-six degrees each,
 While the angles of the polygon itself are a
 hundred and eight --
 A hundred and eight, a number borrowed from
 the heavens:
 The number of Venus, the planet;*** and the
 Rose is Venus' flower!

* Literally, the father of all, one of the titles of Zeus, and of Odin. The allusion, however, is to Apocalypse 1:8, where the name Alpha is assumed by the Judeo-Christian God: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega' says the Lord God...." (Jerusalem Bible).

**The golden section is the division of a line according to a particular mathematical ratio, which, applied to art and architecture, produces what are thought to be perfect proportions. According to numerologists, the golden section corresponds to the number five (Cirlot, 222).

protection over both virgin brides and the dead is a reference to one of the dual aspects of rose symbolism:

The rose can represent both time and eternity, life and death. As depicting life, it is a symbol of the Spring, resurrection, love and fecundity; as death, it typifies transitoriness, mortality and sorrow (Cooper, 80).

The pentagram, here inextricably linked with the rose, is an ancient symbol of man (a pentagram can be formed by joining man's five extremities if the arms are held outstretched with the hands at navel level⁴³), and of man's five senses. It was used by magicians in the middle ages, and (paradoxically) as a protection against sorcery, the latter use perhaps stemming from the Christian association of the pentagram with the five wounds of Christ.

Having concluded his discussion of the numerological significance of the rose with a connection between it and the planet named after Venus, the goddess of love, Strindberg goes on to discuss the rose as an

*** The mean distance of the planet Venus from the sun is approximately 108 million km.

⁴³ A pentagram so drawn has as its "mystic centre" the genitals, perhaps accounting for the association of the number five with eroticism; certainly there is a correspondence with the rose, whose "secret parts" are also at the centre.

emblem of love, pointing out many correspondences between the flower and the emotion it symbolizes:

... Rosen är helgad åt Venus!
 Kärleksgudinnan den fått med fägringen, doft-
 ten och törnet.
 Vek som en vidja han är, den busken fagrast
 av alla,
 Smidiga spön han består, med taggar som gäd-
 dornas tänder;
 Blommorna bryter du ej om icke med blodiga
 fingrar;
 Sätter du yxan till rot, hon växer igen och
 förökas;
 Elden aktar hon ej; i egen aska hon frodas,
 Trivs vid den dammiga väg, och på stenören är
 hon ju hemma,
 Blott hon får sol och får luft; det är mäk-
 tiga kärlekens blomma!
 --- 44

This is the equivalent in highly symbolic language of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, for we are dealing here not only with human love and sexual passion, but with divine love as well, as associations of the mystic cen-

⁴⁴ Samlade verk, LI, 187:

... the Rose is Venus' flower!
 To the goddess of love it was given, with its
 bloom, its scent, and its thorn.
 It is pliant as a willow, this fairest of all
 bushes,
 Pliable twigs it provides, with barbs like
 the teeth of pike;
 You cannot break off the flowers without get-
 ting bloody fingers;
 If you put the root to the axe, it grows
 again and spreads;
 It has no fear of fire; in its own ashes it
 flourishes,
 Thrives by the dusty road, is at home in the
 gravel,
 If it only gets sun and air; such is the
 flower of powerful love.

The rose's thorns are a favorite symbol for the suffering that accompanies love. They also reinforce the association of the rose and the mystic centre. One of the other symbols of the mystic centre is the enclosed garden, which is identified in the West with

—

This bird always builds its nest in the shelter of the piercing thorns,
 And loves to impale its victims, as well, on the points of the barbs:**
 Offering bloody sacrifice to Aphrodite the cruel.
 The Rose always loves to see blood; it is part of her disposition;
 Sensitive and cruel, at a kiss or a breath she crumbles;
 With suffering she cannot cope, but comforts when others suffer.
 Behold, when autumn is over, and all is dreary and bare,
 The rose-bush is red, like a fire, and every twig bears a bottle.
 Not unlike a tear-phial, which is still used in the orient --
 Signatura rerum this used to be called: it is nature's
 Eloquent hint that the plant possesses a secret power.
 Think when your eye is inflamed, is wearied by toil and tears,
 Then will the pharmacist make from roses steeped in water a balm.
 If you bathe your eyes in this, your vision soon will be clear;
 Perhaps what you just saw as black will seem now rosy red.

* Lanius collurio; the Swedish name translates literally as the thorn-magpie.

** This is, in fact, a characteristic of all shrikes, which often kill more than they can eat at the moment, and store the excess as described.

the Garden of Eden. St. Ambrose (c. 340-397) recounts an old legend, according to which the roses in Paradise had no thorns; the thorns appeared only after the Fall, to remind man of his sins, the beauty and fragrance of the flower remained, to remind him of Paradise. This legend is probably the origin of the title, *Rose Without Thorns*, bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Mary (Ferguson, 37), whose knight, Sir Gawain, also bears the pentangle.

"*Rosa Mystica*" is typical of Strindberg's approach to "natural science", with its minutely observed and recorded objective facts blended with the outpourings of a rich and fertile imagination, which sought (and usually found) correspondences and mystical significance in everything. It is also the fullest example of his own analysis of one of his recurring symbols. The layers of meaning and association which the poem suggests reverberate around every occurrence of the symbol in his works, at least in those written after the *Inferno* crisis. The poem gives an invaluable insight, for instance, into the significance of the Rose Room in *Till Damaskus I*, and the briar roses which decorate the antechamber to the bridal chamber in both the short story and dramatic versions of *Herr Bengts hustru*.

Had he written nothing else, Strindberg's poems would have assured him a place in the history of

Swedish literature, but his impact on the rest of the world would have been considerably reduced. As it is, the relatively dense form of expression demanded by poetry provides us with highly concentrated examples of themes and symbols which elsewhere are more diffuse. The world will never view Strindberg as primarily a poet, but a study of his poetry can open rich vistas on the other works.

Chapter 76

Historiska miniatyrer

*Historiska miniatyrer*¹ (*Historical Miniatures*, 1905) is Strindberg's world history. Its twenty-two inter-related sketches cover almost three and a half millenia, beginning with the birth of Moses, which Strindberg dated 1570 B.C.,² and ending in the final few days of 1799, as the bells of Paris announce the dawn of a new century.³ The individual sketches are often slight, but they are not meant to stand on their own: *Historiska miniatyrer* is an application of Strindberg's cyclical theory of history, and depends on the cumulative effect of its component elements. "Allt går igen": everything happens again. History is an unending series of repetitions of significant symbolic patterns which succeed each other regularly and cyclically. But there is more to it than that: history is not just a vicious circle, spinning round and round and getting nowhere; it is, rather, a spiral, not only revolving

¹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLII.

² *Bibliska egennamn* (*Biblical Proper Names*) (*Samlade skrifter*, LII, 25).

³ Actually, the nineteenth century did not begin until January 1, 1801, but that is another story! Strindberg (or history) makes the same mistake in the sketch "Tusenåriga riket" ("The Thousand-Year Kingdom"), where celebrations to mark the coming of the Millenium begin towards the end of the year 999 rather than the end of the year 1000.

but also rising, so that each completed cycle has advanced mankind a little farther on the course towards ... well, towards whatever one conceives as the end and aim of history.

For Strindberg in 1905 there was no doubt what this was: the perfection of human society in terms of Christianity. Obviously, the world still had a long way to go in 1905, let alone in 1799, where the book stops. That is why it is open-ended: Strindberg's aim is to show how far we have come, but he indicates that the journey is far from over:

-- Revolutionen är slut!
-- Den revolutionen!
-- Bedrövelse gör tålamod; tålamod gör förfarenhet, förfarenhet gör hopp; men hoppet låter icke komma på skam!⁴

The Revolution referred to is the French Revolution, which realized only imperfectly its goals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, but the spirit of revolution continues, leading man ever closer to achieving those goals.

This is the principle of progress, the upward direction of history. The cyclical principle is contained in Pharaoh's dream of the seven fat and seven

⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 321 ("Dome-dagar": "Days of Judgement"):

"The Revolution is over!"
"This revolution!"
"Affliction produces patience; patience produces experience, experience produces hope; and hope must come to something!"

lean cattle interpreted by the Old Testament Joseph (Genesis 41): times of prosperity are inevitably followed by times of deprivation, growth by decline, peace by war, freedom by oppression, etc. Indeed, the dream itself is mentioned in the first sketch, "Egyptiska trældomen" ("The Egyptian Bondage"), and it provides the title for the story of Voltaire and Frederick the Great, "De sju goda åren" ("The Seven Good Years"), the penultimate sketch.

In the earlier of these occurrences, the two historical patterns of repetition and progress are brought together, as Amram (Moses' father) greets a fellow Jew in captivity:

-- En välsignad morgon, Eleazar frände, hälsade Amram.

-- Kan inte säga, svarade köpmannen vresigt. Nil har stannat och börjar sjunka, det är dåliga tider.

-- Dåliga tider följas av goda tider, så förstod vår fader Abraham; och när Josef Jakobs son motsåg de sju magra åren, rådde han Farao samla i ladorna ...

-- Det må så vara, men det är glömt och gömt!

-- Ja, du har också glömt löftet, Herrens löfte till sin vän Abraham ...

-- Det där om Kanans land? Det har vi väntat på i fyra hundra år, och nu äro i dess ställe Abrahams barn vordna trälar ...

-- Abraham trodde i ont och gott, i ljust och nöd, och det vart honom räknat till rättfärdighet.⁵

⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 6-7:

"A blessed morning, cousin Eleazar," said Amram in greeting.

"Can't say," answered the merchant peevishly. "The Nile has stopped rising and begun to sink, and that means bad times."

"Bad times are followed by good times."

The promise referred to is that of Genesis 17:3-8; as it is central to Historiska miniatyrer, it bears repeating:

Abram bowed to the ground and God said this to him, 'Here now is my covenant with you: you shall become the father of a multitude of nations. You shall no longer be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I make you a father of a multitude of nations.⁶ I will make you most fruitful. I will make you into nations, and your issue shall be kings. I will establish my Covenant between myself and you, and your descendants after you, generation after generation, a Covenant in perpetuity, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land you are living in, the whole land of Canaan, to own in perpetuity, and I will be your God.' (Jerusalem Bible translation.)

Historiska miniatyrer is about the realization of this promise, which is intertwined with other promises and prophecies to form the thread that runs through all of history: the destiny of mankind. This particular

as our father Abraham knew; and when Joseph the son of Jacob expected the seven lean years, he advised Pharaoh to lay in provisions ..."

"That may well be, but that's forgotten and buried!"

"Well, have you also forgotten the promise, the Lord's promise to His friend Abraham ..."

"That business about the Land of Canaan? We've been waiting for that for four hundred years, and now instead, the children of Abraham have become slaves ..."

"Abraham believed in bad and good, in pleasure and need, and it was considered righteousness in him."

⁶ The name Abraham is similar to the Hebrew for "father of many nations" (Jerusalem Bible).

prophecy was made to the Jews. In the sketch "Alkibiades" ("Alcibiades"), another promise is introduced, this one given to Rome. The speakers are a Roman and a Jew who meet by chance in Athens just over four centuries before the birth of Christ:

-- ... Rom har en framtid, Hellas endast en forntid.
 -- Vad vet man om Roms framtid?
 -- Den Cumæiska sibyllan har siat att Rom skall besitta jorden.
 -- Vad säger du, Rom? Nej, Israel skall göra't, Israel har löftet.
 -- Det vågar jag ej förneka, men Rom har också löftet.
 -- Det givs bara ett löfte och en gud!
 -- Kanske det är samma löfte, samma gud!
 Kanske Israel skall segra genom Rom.
 -- Genom Messias, den utlovade, skall Israel segra.⁷

This is rather subtle. Over the centuries, the Jews have adapted the promise of the Messiah to the promise of the Covenant; the Cumaean sibyl's prophecies about the destiny of Rome were contained in the Sibyl-

⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 60-61:

" ... Rome has a future; Hellas only a past."
 "What does anyone know about the future of Rome?"
 "The Cumaean sibyl has prophesied that Rome will possess the earth."
 "Rome, you say? No: Israel will do that; Israel has the promise."
 "I'm not so bold as to deny that, but Rome also has the promise."
 "There's only one promise and one God!"
 "Perhaps it's the same promise, the same god! Perhaps Israel will triumph through Rome."
 "Through the Messiah, the Promised One, will Israel triumph."

line Books, a name also applied to a second-century collection of Greek poetical utterances concerning Christ. Evidently, both the Jewish and the Roman promises will be fulfilled through Christ. This is only suggested here; later in the sketch, the idea is put into the mouth of no less than Socrates:

-- Tror du på orakler, Sokrates?

-- Ja och nej! Jag har min egen daimon, som du vet, vilken varnar men aldrig manar; det råder, men befaller icke. Väl, denna inre stämma har sagt mig: Hellas skall icke erövra världen!

-- Skall Rom göra det?

-- Ja, men åt en annan!⁸

The reference to oracles links this prophecy directly to those of the Cumaean sibyl, and to the earlier exchange.

In the sketch "Flaccus och Maro" ("Flaccus and Maro"), about the Roman poets Horace ((Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65-8 B.C.) and Vergil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70-19 B.C.), a similar reference is used to indicate that another strand is being added to the thread: Vergil's prophecy, in his Fourth Eclogue, of a new age of peace for the world, to be ushered in by the birth of a

⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 64:

"Do you believe in oracles, Sokrates?"

"Yes and no! I have my own daimon, as you know, which warns but never threatens; it advises but doesn't command. Well, this inner voice has told me: 'Hellas will not conquer the world!'"

"Will Rome?"

"Yes, but for another!"

child (probably an expected child of either Mark Antony or Octavius Caesar, but widely interpreted as a prophecy of Christ):

-- Du oroar mig, Maro! -- Men vad tror du på?

-- Jag tror på sibyllan, som förutsagt att järnåldern skall ta slut och guldåldern komma igen ...

-- Du har sjungit det där i den fjärde eklogen, minns jag ... Har du feber?

-- Jag tror jag har det ... Minns du, nej, våra fäder minnas när Capitolium brann och därvid de sibyllinska böckerna. Men nu hava nya böcker kommit från Alexandria, och i dem har man läst att en ny tideräkning snart skall börja; att Rom skall förgås, men byggas upp igen, och att en guldålder ...

Här tystnade siaren.⁹

There are other links: Strindberg has Horace and Vergil meet as students in Athens (inaccurately: Horace indeed studied in Athens, but Vergil did not) in order that they might be seen as carrying history forward from the Greeks, and, like the prophecy of Socrates, this one is

⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 91:

"You worry me, Maro! -- But what do you believe in?"

"I believe in the sibyl, who prophesied that the Iron Age should end and the Golden Age return ..."

"You sang about that in your Fourth Eclogue, I recall ... Do you have a fever?"

"I think I have ... Do you remember -- no, our fathers remember -- when the Capitol burnt and with it the Sibylline Books?* But now new books have come from Alexandria, and in them one reads that a new age is soon to begin: that Rome will be destroyed but built up again, and that a Golden Age ..."

Here the prophet fell silent.

* 83 B.C.

revealed from a hemicycle: a semicircular stone bench. The terms Iron Age and Golden Age are borrowed from the *Theogony* of Hesiod (eighth century B.C.; his early *Works and Days* was the inspiration for Vergil's *Georgics*). Moses was born at the beginning of the historic Iron Age.¹⁰ Jewish, Greek, and Roman prophecies are all pointing in the same direction; in Strindberg's view, they are all variations of the same promise.

What remains is for these prophecies to be linked to Christianity. This begins in the final paragraph of "Flaccus och Maro", which refers to Vergil's treatment as a prophet of Christ by the Middle Ages:

När kristendomen kom, blev Virgilius räknad bland profeterna; Æneiden upptogs som en sibyllinsk bok och ingick i Liturgien; man vallfärdade till skaldens grav, och senare blev han, av Dante, upphöjd till mer än helgon.¹¹

This process is continued in the following sketch, "Leontopolis", with which *Historiska miniatyrer* enters the Christian era with a story about the Flight into Egypt (Egypt, where the history began: "Allt går

¹⁰ Moses' actual birth was probably during the Nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt (1350-1200 B.C.), a period coinciding with the beginning of the Iron Age there (Grun, 4).

¹¹ Ibid., 92:

When Christianity came, Vergil was counted among the prophets; the *Aeneid* was received as a sibylline book and was incorporated into the Liturgy; pilgrimages were made to his grave, and later he was elevated, by Dante, to more than a saint.

igen!"). Once again we have a meeting between a Roman and a Jew, but this Jew is the New Testament Joseph, and the Messiah is in his charge. The exchange is by now a familiar one, but it gains in significance with each recurrence, and there is a subtle difference here:

-- ... världen är Roms enligt Cumeiska sibyllans förutsägelse.

-- Väl! Men världen skall frälsas genom Israel, enligt Guds eget löfte till vår fader Abraham.¹²

Rome will possess the world, but Israel will redeem it! It is more complicated than either of these speakers imagines, however, for Vergil has predicted that Rome will first be destroyed and built again.

That destruction is described in "Vilddjuret" ("The Beast"), which reviews the reigns of the emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, culminating in the destruction of Rome by fire in 64 A.D. Again there is an encounter between a Jew and a Roman, and again they discuss the prophecies. This Roman, however, is a Christian, and he embodies previous suggestions on how the prophecies will be fulfilled:

-- Vem är lammet? frågade hebreerna.

-- Jesus Kristus, världens frälsare.

-- Tycker du världen är frälst då galningen Caligula är --

¹² Samlade skrifter, XLII, 94:

" ... the world is Rome's according to the Cumaeen sibyl's prediction."

"Good! But the world will be redeemed through Israel, according to God's own promise to our father Abraham."

-- Världen skall bli frälst, om vi äro stilla i hoppet.

-- I haven alltså tagit löftet från Israel?

-- Nej, vi ha ärvt löftet, ty Kristus var av Israels judastam.¹³

Matters are complicated by the rise of Islam, for if Christianity can be said to have inherited the promise of the Covenant through Christ by virtue of His descent from Abraham, Islam might be said to have done the same, for Mohammed was also a descendant of Abraham: the Jewish people are descended from Jacob (later called Israel) and the Arab from Ishmael, the legitimate and illegitimate sons of Abraham respectively. The following exchange is between two Spanish Jews who, persecuted by the Christians, decide to aid in the Islamic invasion of Spain (711 A.D.):

-- Du nämnde Islam; vad menar du om den läran?

-- Det är ju vår heliga tro: En enda gud, den ende och sanne: och profeten är ju Abrahams avkomling som fått ärva löftet.

¹³ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 106:

"Who is the Lamb?" asked the Hebrew.

"Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world."

"Do you think the world is saved when that madman Caligula is --"

"The world will be saved, if we're steadfast in hope."

"You have, then, taken the promise from Israel?"

"No, we've inherited the promise, for Christ was from Israel's tribe of Judah."

Ismael var ju av tjänstekvinnan, men likafullt av Abrahams säd!¹⁴

Indeed, the promise seems to have passed out of the hands of Christianity in the central sketches of *Historiska miniatyrer*, which recount the regression of Julian the Apostate, the devastation of Attila the Hun, the second destruction of Rome by flood and plague (590 A.D.), the Moslem invasion of Asia Minor, northern Africa, and part of Europe, the passing of temporal power from Roman to north European hands (the Holy Roman Empire), the Great Schism, and the corruption of the papacy. But these events represent the downswing of the cycle, and through them all the promise remains alive, even if it sometimes has to go underground, as in the days of the Roman catacombs: in the midst of these events is the pontificate of the saintly Gregory the Great. The upswing begins again with the Reformation, through which Christianity cleanses herself of the abuses acquired over the centuries.

There is little reference to the promise in the sketches dealing with the dark side of the cycle, but

¹⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, XLII, 172 ("Ismael": "Ishmael"):

"You mentioned Islam; what do you think of that faith?"

"Why, it's our holy faith: only one God, the One and True; and you know, the prophet is the offspring of Abraham who has inherited the promise. Ishmael was born of the bondswoman, to be sure, but nevertheless of the seed of Abraham!"

it surfaces again in the concluding sketch of the book, when the bloodshed of France's Reign of Terror at last is over and a new century is dawning. The exchange is between an old tower keeper in Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral (the first speaker in the extract), and a count he has sheltered from the Terror:

-- Vi skola icke sitta och vänta, utan vi skola arbeta, så går tiden. -- De lärda säga att kullen Montmartre behövt en million år för att avsätta sig ur vattnet! Nåväl, vår historia är bara tre tusen år; om tre tusen år till kan mänskligheten börja reflektera över sitt förflutna, och om sextusen kanske det märks om förbättringen inträtt! Vi äro otåliga, herre, och högmodiga. Och ändå går det fort. För tre hundra år sen upptäcktes Amerika, och nu är det europeisk republik; Afrika, Indien, Kina, Japan äro öppnade och hela jorden tillhör snart Europa! Ser ni nu Abrahamslöftet: I din säd skola all släkten välsignade varda! är ju på väg att uppfyllas, på väg, säger jag.

-- Abrahams?

-- Ja, äro icke kristne, judar och muhamdaner delaktige av löftet?

-- Kristne av Abrahams säd?

-- Genom Kristus, som var av Juda, äro vi andligen av Abraham. En tro, ett dop, en gud och allas fader!

-- Jag har hört på dig, och jag må säga: Din tro är stor, och den haver frälst dig!

-- Som den skall frälsa mänskligheten.¹⁵

¹⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 320:

"We won't sit and wait, we'll work, and the time will pass. -- The learned say it took a million years for Montmartre to rise out of the water! Well, our history is only three thousand years; three thousand years from now mankind can begin to reflect on its past, and in six thousand it will perhaps be possible to tell if there has been any improvement! We are impatient, milord, and proud. And yet things are happening quickly. Three hundred years ago America was discovered, and now it's a European republic; Africa. India. China. and Japan have been

Strindberg's view of history is, then, optimistic: despite setback and regressions, mankind is steadily progressing towards the goal of realizing God's kingdom on earth! This is not to say, however, that he ignores suffering: the wars, bloodshed, plagues, famines, oppressions, and other disasters of which history provides all too many examples. Indeed, so aware is he of human misery, which often or even usually seems unmerited, that he has the most saintly character in the book, Gregory the Great, rail against God for the injustice of it all:

-- Herre, varför straffar du de oskyldige! Varför slår du dina vänner, och låter fienderna trivas! I fem hundra år har du hämnats på dina barn för fädernas missgärningar; är det icke nog, så förgör oss med

opened up, and soon the whole world will belong to Europe! Now you can see that the promise of Abraham -- In your seed shall all nations be blessed! -- is on its way to being fulfilled. On its way, I say."

"Of Abraham?"

"Yes; aren't Christians, Jews, and Moslems sharers of the promise?"

"Christians of the seed of Abraham?"

"Through Christ, who was of Judah, we are spiritually descended from Abraham. One faith, one baptism, one God, the Father of all!"

"I have listened to you, and let me say this: Your faith is great, and it has saved you!"

"As it will save mankind."

ens alla!¹⁶

This is the traditional, Old Testament explanation of human suffering. But Strindberg looks beyond that explanation and offers another, which is a direct consequence of his theory that history progresses through recurring cycles: just as in the cycle of the seasons nature must suffer and die in order that it might be renewed in the spring, so it is in the great cycle of history. The best formulation of this pattern is perhaps that of Horace in "Flaccus och Maro":

-- Tiden är ond, det erkänner jag, men varje tid har varit en dekadens och på samma gång förberedande ett nytt tidevarv. Höstens lövskrud skall bädda till följande vårens ströbänkar, naturen, livet och historien förnyas alltid genom döden. Därför är döden för mig endast en förnyelse, en omsättning, och när jag möter ett liktåg, säger jag mig alltid: Oj! vad det är roligt att leva!¹⁷

¹⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 164-65 ("Tjänarnas tjänare": "The Servant of the Servants"):

"Lord, why do you punish the innocent! Why do you slay your friends, and let your enemies thrive! For five hundred years you have revenged yourself on your children for the sins of their fathers; if that is not enough, then destroy us all at once!"

¹⁷ Ibid., 90:

"The times are bad, I admit, but every period has been one of decadence and at the same time the preparation for a new age. The fallen autumn leaves form a blanket for the following spring's seed beds: nature, life, and history are always renewed through death. That is why for me death is only a renewal, a turnover, and when I come across a funeral procession I always say to myself: 'Oh! how good it is to be alive!'"

Nevertheless, natural though the process may be, it brings with it varying amounts of sadness, and the realization that all individual human achievement is vanity (i.e., illusion). Thus the reflection of the aged monk in "Eginhard till Emma" ("Eginhard to Emma") as he looks back on the career of the great Charlemagne, in whose service he had once been:

Tungt är emellertid att se huruledes i historien allt storverk bär förgängelsen med sig, och att höjderna alltid begränsas av fallets djup.¹⁸

This is the symbol of the Wheel of Fortune, which is but an expression of the cyclical nature of human experience and of history.

The suffering that results from the cyclical nature of history is united to the optimism that results from its forward motion through the symbol of circumcision: an experience of pain, bloodshed, and suffering, which is at the same time a token of the Covenant. The symbol is introduced in "Apostata" ("Apostate"):

Människobarnet utgöt sin moders blod vid födelsen, och omskärelsens heliga handling

¹⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 178:

It is, however, depressing to see how in history all great achievements contain the seeds of their own destruction, and the heights attained are always measured by the depth of the fall.

skulle erinra om födelsens blodiga och smärtsamma operation.¹⁹

The link between bloodshed, pain, and birth is reinforced and extended by Cardinal Wolsey's use of the circumcision symbol in the sketch "Old Merry England": the fact that Wolsey is offering an apology for his own ruthlessness does not affect the symbolic validity of what he says, as history often uses villains to achieve its ends. The second speaker in the extract is Thomas Cromwell, Wolsey's secretary:

-- Ja, alla länder äro döpta i blod, det är omskärelsens sakrament, och se vad det grönskar efter denna blomstergödning, du vet inte att äppelträden ge mesta frukt efter blodgödsel ...

-- Jo, vad jag vet det, min far brukade alltid gräva ner avfall från slakten vid fruktträdens rötter ...

Här höll han in och rodnade, ty han hade bommat. Man fick nämligen aldrig tala om slakt och sådant i kardinalens närvaro, ty han var hatad av folket och kallades ibland för slaktaren.²⁰

¹⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 130:

The human child spilled its mother's blood at birth, and the ritual of circumcision serves as a reminder of the bloody and painful operation of birth.

²⁰ Ibid., 246-47:

"Yes, all countries have been baptized in blood, that's the sacrament of circumcision, and look how green things become after this fertilization of the soil; you don't know that apple trees give most fruit when they've been fertilized with blood ..."

"Oh yes, how well I know it; my father always used to bury the refuse from butchering at the roots of the fruit trees ..."

He stopped short here and blushed, for he had made a blunder. The fact was that butchery and such were never to be mentioned

The shedding even of innocent blood (such as that of the week-old child who is circumcised) can be part, then, of the forward motion of history (the Covenant). How, then, can it be called unjust, when it is part of a process which itself leads to universal justice and happiness?

The perpetrators of violence and injustice are nevertheless still guilty of wrongdoing, and must answer to man and God, and the suffering of their victims is no less real or lamentable because part of a larger scheme. But over and above considerations of individual morality and justice is the great plan of history: the destiny of mankind rather than the fates of individual men. And that destiny draws ever closer, using even apparent setback and reversals to attain its fulfillment. Thus, the great conquerors, who left death and destruction in their wakes, are nevertheless seen as divine instruments, the Scourges of God; and natural disasters such as famine, flood, and plague also play parts in the overall plan: the destruction of pagan Rome by fire and invasion permitted the building of Christian Rome! Human and natural disasters contribute to the forward movement of history: some through the qualities called forth to combat or overcome them; some

—

in the Cardinal's presence, for he was hated by the people and was sometimes called a butcher.

by provoking a revulsion so great that humanity determines to march in the opposite direction; some merely by destroying what has outlived its usefulness in order to make room for the new. To cite but three of Strindberg's examples: the monk Gregory, who wishes only for a peaceful death, rises to meet the suffering caused by flood and plague in Rome and is thereby propelled on to become the great Christian leader, Gregory the Great; western man is so revolted by the attempts of Julian the Apostate to reintroduce blood sacrifice that it turns its back forever on this barbarity, and in the end his revolt against Christianity strengthens rather than weakens its position as the religion of the Empire; and the end of the Greek Empire makes way for the rise of the Roman.

Strindberg's world history is really a history of the progress of salvation. Although he writes from a Christian point of view, he recognizes virtue, sincerity, and true religious feeling wherever he finds it. This can be seen in his affirmation that Jews, Christians, and Moslems all believe in the one true God. But he goes beyond that, to discern a belief in the same divinity even beneath the forms of pantheism. This is evident in the first sketch, when Amram meets a Jew who has become an Egyptian priest and learns that perhaps there is not much difference between the religions of the two peoples:

-- Icke tron I själva på dessa djur, I kallen heliga?

-- Nej, de äro endast symboler. Synliga tecken, för att åskådliggöra det osynliga. Vi präster och lärda dyrka den Ende, den fördolde, under dess synliga gestalt: Solen, livgivaren och uppehållaren.²¹

"Egyptiska trældom" contains a good deal of Strindbergian mumbo-jumbo involving numerology, pyramidology, astronomy, etc. The point of it all seems to be to establish the existence of Swedenborgian correspondences between the heavenly order and the earthly, and between various phenomena which might otherwise seem to be unrelated. It is a carry-over from alchemical works like *Jardin des Plantes*, with its suggestion that God is in everything and contains everything: a conclusion that has interesting implications if applied to the multiplicity of the world's religions. The discussion in "Egyptiska trældom" leads eventually to the mystical number seven; Amram's intervention at this point leads towards a realization of the common ground of all religions:

-- I förakten Assur, I män av Egypten, som tron att Nil är jordens medelpunkt. Men det finns många medelpunkter i det oändliga. Bortom Assur vid Eufrat och Tigris

²¹ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 10:

"You yourselves don't believe in these animals you call holy?"

"No, they're only symbols: visible signs, to illustrate the invisible. We priests and scholars worship the One, the hidden one, beneath these visible forms: the Sun, the giver and maintainer of life."

finns ett annat land vid en annan flod, och det landet heter Sju-flodernas-land, emedan deras flod också löper ut i sju armar liksom Nil.

-- Nil har sju armar. Du har rätt, liksom den sjuarmade ljusastaken ...

-- Vilken betyder världens ljus, vilket skall lysa från varje land, där en flod klyver sig att gå ut i världshavet. Floderna, ser du, äro jordens blodkärl, och liksom dessa föra omväxlande blått blod och rött, så har vårt land sin blå Nil och sin blodröda. Den blå är giftig som det mörka blodet, och den röda är fruktbärande, livgivande som det röda blodet. Så har allt skapat sina motsvarigheter ovan i himlen och nere på jorden, ty allt är ett, och alltets herre är en, en och densamme!²²

²² Samlade skrifter, XLII, 14:

".... You despise Asshur [i.e., Assyria], you men of Egypt, who believe that the Nile is the centre of the earth. But there are many centres to the infinite. Beyond Asshur by the Euphrates and Tigris, there's another country by another river, and that country is called the Land of the Seven Rivers, for their river also branches out in seven arms, like the Nile."

"The Nile does have seven arms. You're right: like the seven-armed menorah ..."

"Which represents the light of the world, which will shine out from every country where a river divides to go out into the sea of the world. Rivers, you see, are the blood-vessels of the earth, and, like them they carry blue blood and red alternately;* thus our country has its blue Nile and its blood-red. The blue is poisonous, like dark blood, and the red is fructifying, life-giving, like red blood. Thus everything has its correspondences, above in the heavens and below on earth, for all is one, and the lord of all is one, one and the same!"

* Strindberg seems unaware that dark and red blood are carried by separate blood-vessels, (veins and arteries).

It is appropriate that the number which provokes this intimation is seven. Seven is a mystical number because it signifies the union of heaven (three) and earth (four); it also signifies the completion of a cycle (as in the seven days of the week): characteristics of primary concern in *Historiska miniatyrer*!

The notion that apparently opposed religions may in fact share the same truth next surfaces in the sketch "Alkibiades", in the Roman's observation to the Jew (quoted above) that perhaps Rome and Israel share one promise and one God. At the beginning of "Sokrates", the philosopher is talking with Euripides, whose uncertainty about the name of a recently imported god allows Strindberg to point out the similarities between the cult of Adonis and that of Christ (Adonai is Hebrew for Lord, a title often given to Christ):

-- Folket har infört en ny gud som heter Adonai eller Adonis. Han är från Österlandet, och hans namn betyder Herren. Vem är den nye guden?

-- Säg den som kan! Han lär skola dö och stiga upp från de döda. Men de ha fått en gudinna också. Har du hört om Kybele, gudar-nas moder, en jungfru, som i Rom dyrkas i likhet med Vesta av vestaliska präster?²³

²³ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 75-76:

".... The people have introduced a new god, whose name is Adonai or Adonis. He's from the East, and his name means Lord. Who is the new god?"

"Let him who can, say! He's supposed to have died and risen from the dead. But they have a new goddess too. Have you heard of Cybele, the mother of the gods, a virgin, who in Rome is worshipped like Vesta, by vestal priests?"*

All this in 399 B.C.!

Nevertheless, one faith supplants another, Christianity emerges triumphant in the west, and this is seen as progress. It is not a question of one faith being as good as any other, but rather of a refining through history of the truth contained in all faiths, until they reach a full and true expression of divine reality: what is true remains and grows, what is superfluous falls away. This is explained at the close of "Tusenåriga riket" by the new Pope, Sylvester II (reigned 999-1003), a Frenchman celebrated for his learning in branches of knowledge previously the province of the Arabs, Greeks, and Indians:

-- Vad nytt under solen? Säger icke kyrkofadern Augustinus till och med rörande själva vår heliga troslära som så: "Det man i våra dagar kallar kristendom förefanns redan hos de gamle och har aldrig upphört finnas sedan mänsklighetens uppkomst ända till Kristi ankomst, då man började kalla kristendom den sanna religionen, vilken existerade förut. Kristi sanningar äro icke avvikande

* Cybele was served by priests who were, in fact, eunuchs (nevertheless, a form of celibacy!), and was known in Rome as Magna Deum Mater. Socrates' (i.e., Strindberg's) attribution of virginity to her perhaps springs from the tradition that originally she was hermaphroditic. The Greeks identified her with Rhea.

från de gamle utan äro de samma mer utvecklade."²⁴

"De sju goda åren" presents another parallel between the religion of ancient Greece and the Judeo-Christian tradition, this time between Prometheus and Adam. The extract begins with a passage from a letter written by Frederick the Great to Voltaire; the priest who provides the exegesis is a frequent visitor to Voltaire in Ferney. Like Vergil, Frederick and Voltaire await the dawn of a new age, and use the same symbol: the end of the Iron Age and the return of the Golden:

".... Härom kvällen, när solen gick ner tänkte jag: 'Gud, vad din natur är skön, och vad dina människor äro rysliga.' Vi människor, menade jag, ty jag undantar icke mig, monsieur, och icke er heller! -- denna förbannade släkt (cette race maudite) är ju järnålderns av Hesiodos utmålad; och den påstås skapad efter Guds avbild! Efter djävlar avbild ville jag säga! ... Rousseau har rätt, när han tror på en Saturniålder som varit ..."

-- Vad säger ni om det, herr abbé?

-- Det är ju kyrkans lära om det förlorade paradiset och syndafallet, vilken för övrigt sammanfaller med sagan om grekernas

²⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 185:

"What's new under the sun? Doesn't even Augustine, the church father, have this to say about our holy faith itself: 'What in our days is called Christianity already existed among the ancients, and has never ceased to exist from the origins of mankind right up to the coming of Christ; the true religion, which is what Christianity began to be called, existed previously. The truths of Christ do not differ from those of the ancients, but are the same truths more developed.'"

Prometheus, vilken åt av kunskapens träd och därför ådrog människorna fallets olyckor.²⁵

This "incidental" observation of the abbé is more than incidental to *Historiska miniatyrer*, for the myth of Prometheus is one of the controlling patterns of the book. Prometheus was, in fact, a Titan, and therefore belonged to Rousseau's Age of Saturn, which is symbolically identical not only with the Judeo-Christian Paradise (Eden), but also with Hesiod's Golden Age (even though in the Prometheus myth, the Golden Age comes much later). It was Prometheus who fashioned man (from the earth) in the image of the gods, and it was his sin (stealing fire from heaven) which unleashed on man (who was punished for accepting the gift) misfortune and suffering, through Pandora, the first woman, sent by Zeus to Prometheus as a punishment. All the evils known

²⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 307:

"`.... The other evening as the sun was setting, I thought: 'God, how beautiful your nature is, and how horrible your humans.' We humans, I meant, for I don't exempt myself, monsieur, nor you either! -- this accursed breed (*cette race maudite*) is surely the people of the Iron Age described by Hesiod; and it's alleged to have been created in God's image! In the devils' image more likely! ... Rousseau is right to believe in an antecedent Age of Saturn ...'

"What do you say to that, my good abbé?"

"Why, that's the teaching of the Church about the lost Paradise and the Fall, which, incidentally, coincides with the Greeks' story of Prometheus, who ate of the Tree of Knowledge and thereby brought down on mankind the unhappy consequences of the Fall."

to mankind were released by Pandora from a container in which they were kept; she succeeded in closing it while only one quality remained within: hope (thus, hope abides through all the tribulations of man). The first age of human life (after creation was thus completed with the appearance of woman) was an age of innocence and happiness known as the Golden Age, and this was succeeded by the Silver, Brazen, and Iron Ages, the latter of which was characterized by crime, violence, war, etc. All of the gods deserted mankind, the last to depart being Themis (Justice) and Astraea (Innocence and Purity); when these two return, the Golden Age will be restored. Meanwhile, Prometheus remains chained to his rock (a further punishment for his crime), from which he could free himself simply by agreeing to submit to the authority of Zeus; his steadfast refusal to do so has made him a symbol of resistance to oppression and of "the magnanimous endurance of unmerited suffering" (Bulfinch, 19).²⁶

One can see here not only parallels between classical and biblical creation myths (a particular example of "allt går igen!"), but also the ideas of the cyclical nature of history (the return of the Golden Age); of progress (the persistence of hope); and of salvation

²⁶ The information in this paragraph is summarized from Bulfinch, 13-20 (Chapter 2: "Prometheus and Pandora."

through suffering (Prometheus on his rock, Christ on the Cross). A particularly stunning example of Strindberg's theory of the kernel of truth contained in all religions, yet presented as almost a throw-away aside.

There is another symbolic pattern discernible in *Historiska miniatyrer*, and one that is significant for Strindberg's work as a whole: that of life as a pilgrimage. *Historiska miniatyrer* presents all of history as a spiritual journey, with mankind as the pilgrim and the Promised Land as the goal. The symbol is linked, then, to the idea of progress; another familiar Strindberg symbol, the Wandering Jew, links it to the cyclical pattern of history. Mention has been made of the frequent appearances in *Historiska miniatyrer* of a Jew who turns up at critical moments of history to remind whoever will listen to him (usually a Roman) of the promise made to the Jewish people through Abraham. Sometimes he is anonymous, once he is Joseph the husband of Mary; twice he is called Kartaphilos (also spelled Cartaphilus), one of the names by which the Wandering Jew of legend is known. The first such instance, in "Hemicykeln i Athen" ("The Hemicycle in Athens") is particularly significant, since it suggests that whatever the name by which he is known, this recurring figure is, in fact, always the same man. Here he is confronted by Cleon, who is seeking evidence to bring down Socrates and his circle:

Demagogen Kleon hade ... osedd lyssnat till samtalet, men det hade även en annan man gjort. Denne hade gul hy och svart helskägg, samt tycktes tillhöra hantverkarnas klass.

....

....

-- Jag är en syrier och känner blott den ende sanne guden. Edra gudar äro icke mina.

-- Du är en hebré alltså, och heter --

-- Jag är en israelit av Levi stam, och kallar mig nu Kartafilos.²⁷

Interestingly enough, the Kartaphilos of legend once went under the name of Joseph. Most of the time, however, the recurring Jew in *Historiska miniatyrer* is named Eleazar, which in Hebrew means "God has aided".²⁸ There is a certain superficial resemblance (particularly in Swedish, which pronounces the letter z as an s) to Ahasuerus, the name of the Wandering Jew in German variations of the legend, but there are three biblical Eleazars, any or all of whom might have suggested the name to Strindberg. Two (the son of Aaron and the

²⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 35:

The demagogue Cleon had ... listened to the conversation unobserved, but so too had another man. He had a yellow complexion and a black full beard, and seemed to belong to the artisan class.

....

"I'm a Syrian, and acknowledge only the one true God. Your gods are not mine."

-- "So, you're a Hebrew, and your name is -- "

"I'm an Israelite of the tribe of Levi, and I now call myself Kartaphilos."

²⁸ Strindberg shows awareness of this in *Bibliska egennamn*, where he spells the name Eleasar and gives as its meaning Gud hjälpare (God helper) (*Samlade skrifter*, LII, 108).

son of Abinadab) were Jewish priests who had particular responsibilities for guarding the Ark of the Covenant (i.e., the promise), and the third was a champion in King David's army, of whom it is written, "... he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines until his hand was so numb that it stuck to the sword" (2 Samuel 23:10. Jerusalem Bible translation): a tireless defender of Judaism against infidels, then.

The symbolic function of this character (and that of the Roman he keeps bumping into), is further emphasized at the beginning of "Vilddjuret":

Utanför Jupiter Latiaris' tempel i Rom
råkades två män av medelklass.

-- Så råkas vi här igen, hebreiske man,
sade den ene, vilken liknade en romersk hand-
lande. Var det icke i Jaffa, vi sågos sist?

-- Joväl! svarade hebréern. Romaren
råkas överallt, är hemma överallt numera;
hebréern råkas också överallt, men är ingen-
städes hemma.²⁹

²⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 105:

Outside the temple of Jupiter Latiaris*
in Rome, two middle-class men met.

"So we meet again here, man of the
Hebrews," said one of them, who looked like a
Roman tradesman. "Wasn't it in Jaffa** that
we last saw each other?"

"I suppose so!" answered the Hebrew.
"One meets Romans everywhere, they're at home
everywhere these days; one also meets Hebrews
everywhere, but they're at home nowhere.
...."

* The emperor Caligula had a temple raised to himself,
in which he was worshipped as Jupiter Latiaris (Samlade
skrifter, LIII, 35: from Strindberg's article "Faraon-
dyrkan": "Pharaoh-Worship" in Tal till svenska

Before he descends into the catacombs, the Roman, now a Christian, leaves the Jew with another suggestion that both of them are more than just well-travelled individuals who occasionally meet by chance: "Farväl då! Vi råkas alltid, ty jorden är vår!"³⁰ The promise to Abraham and that of the Cumaean sibyl come together at the entrance to the catacombs, home of the early Christian Church. Together they comprise the Judeo-Christian tradition, and to that tradition the earth belongs!

But if these two characters are just symbolic abstractions of the peoples to which they belong, why the identification of one of them with the Wandering Jew, especially since that identification is an anachronism (the Wandering Jew legend properly begins with the trial of Christ)? The Wandering Jew is often regarded as a symbol of his people, whose long history has been comprised chiefly of wandering, from when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees right up to the modern era; according to mediaeval versions of the legend, the wandering is a consequence of rejecting Christ: perhaps that is why the Roman (who is to become the instrument of the spread of Christianity) is at home wherever he

nationen).

** Presently known as Tel Aviv.

³⁰ *Samlade skrifter*, XLII, 106: "Farewell, then! We always meet because the world is ours!"

wanders, the Jew nowhere. In Spanish and Portuguese versions of the legend, the name of the Wandering Jew translates as John Hope-in-God; this makes him a very appropriate component indeed of a work of which a principle theme is the persistence of hope through tribulation! Finally, the repeated injunctions of the Wandering Jew to call to mind one's sins and avoid the wrath of God make him a kind of world conscience. Eleazar makes his last appearance in "Eremiten Peter" ("Peter the Hermit"), where his significance as a wanderer is broadened to include all of humanity on its journey through history. In the first extract, he lists the gods that have fallen by the wayside during the journey; ironically, the passage occurs as part of a story in which Jerusalem falls into Christian hands:

-- Men, mina barn, fortfor Eleazar, det är icke Israel ensam som är flyktig och ostadig på jorden, utan alla folk äro ju stadda på vandring; men skillnaden mellan dem och oss är den, att deras gudar voro dödliga medan Israels lever. Var är Zeus, de helle-ners gud, var är de romares Jupiter, var är de egypters Isis, Osiris och Ptha? Var äro germanernas Wuotan, de gallers Teutates? Alla äro de döda, men Israels gud lever; han kan icke dö! Vi sitta ju i våra fäders land, i Kanan, fastän icke Zion mer är vårt, och vi få icke förgäta vad gott Herren oss gjort haver.³¹

³¹ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 208:

"However, my children," continued Eleazar, "it isn't Israel alone that's nomadic and unsettled on the earth, but all peoples are on the move, as we know; the difference between them and us is that their gods were mortal, whereas Israel's lives. Where is Zeus, the god of the Hellenes. where is the

Later, as Eleazar and his family are about to be slaughtered by a soldier of the First Crusade (1096-99), he quotes Job 19:25-27, one of the greatest biblical testimonies to unshakable faith in the midst of adversity:

Alla föllo på knä; men Eleazar talade alltjämt.

-- Jag vet att min förlossare lever och han skall kvarstå den siste över stoftet. Och fri från min hud och från mitt kött skall jag skåda Gud. Honom skall jag skåda och se med egna ögon; därefter längtar mitt hjärta och mitt liv.³²

Romans' Jupiter, where are the Egyptians' Isis, Osiris, and Ptah? Where are the Teutons' Wotan, the Gauls' Teutates? They're all dead, but the God of Israel lives; He cannot die! We're sitting in Canaan, in the land of our fathers, aren't we, even though Zion is no longer ours, and we must not forget the good the Lord has done for us."

³² Samlade skrifter, XLII, 210:

They all fell to their knees, but Eleazar continued speaking:

"... I know that my redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and free from my skin and from my flesh shall I look on God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes behold. Deep in my heart is this hope reposed."*

* The Swedish text given here varies considerably from any of the English versions: the above translation is a pastiche of the King James, Jerusalem Bible, and Knox translations; the underlined words are directly opposite in sense to all of the English versions, and are translated directly from Strindberg's Swedish.

These words are generally interpreted (by Christians) as a prophecy of Christ and of the Resurrection of the Flesh and the Last Judgement (see, for instance, Handel's Messiah). They are also particularly important to Strindberg, who uses a modification of the first phrase as a refrain in *Kronbruden*. They not only express the persistence of Eleazar's faith and hope right up to his death, but also embody a promise which, Christians believe, is fulfilled in Christ: another promise inherited by Christianity: history moves with both a cyclical and a forward motion!

As the first remarks of Eleazar quoted above indicate, the theme of pilgrimage is not confined to the Wandering Jew and his Roman counterpart. Towards the end of "Flaccus och Maro", when Horace and Vergil meet after many years, the former greets the latter as "vandrare" (wanderer, or pilgrim), and the sketch closes with mention of pilgrimages to Vergil's grave. "Leontopolis" depicts the Flight into Egypt, and "Lammet" ("The Lamb") points out that Christ's agony and death occurred during the festival of Passover, which commemorates the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt centuries before. "Ismael" presents the rise of Islam as a repetition of this event:

Ismaels avkomlingar, Abrahams oäkta söner,
som irrat i öknar, fortsättande ökenvand-

ringen, började samla sig under fanor och söka sig ett Kanan.³³

Gregory the Great points out the pilgrimage that is each man's life: we must forge on despite tribulations and sorrows, until we too reach the Promised Land:

-- Sådan är världen, fortfor han, sådant är livet; men när det är sådant, men när du ser att det är sådant, återstår endast att leva det, och att ta det som en hederssak att leva tills döden kommer och befriar.³⁴

But it is not only the bearers of the promise who go through life as pilgrims, for Strindberg demonstrates that even the enemies of civilization play a part in the forward movement of history. They too are pilgrims, even though they may not be aware of their destination, even Attila the Hun, the Scourge of God:

-- Har han religion, är han rädd för döden?

-- Han tror på sitt svärd och sin kal-
lelse, och döden är endast porten till det

³³ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 169:

The offspring of Ishmael, Abraham's illegitimate son, who roamed the deserts, continuing the desert wandering, began to assemble beneath banners and seek their own Canaan.

³⁴ Ibid., 161 ("Tjänarnas tjänare"):

"Such is the world," he continued, "such is life; but since it is so, and when you see that it is so, there remains only to live it, and to take it as a question of honour to live until death comes and releases you."

verkliga hemlandet. Därför lever han bara som gäst här nere, eller som en resande.³⁵

In fact, Islam may also be seen as among the forces of destruction (despite sharing in the promise), for the book identifies only two characters in all of history with the Antichrist. One is the Emperor Nero; the other is Mohammed, also referred to as "bedrägaren" ("the deceiver", or even "the fraud"). Strindberg, it seems, does not doubt the sincerity of Moslems, but has reservations about Islam!

Gregory the Great, Attila the Hun, and the Jew Eleazar, all show the same attitude to death: it is a release, the end of man's earthly pilgrimage and the gateway to the Promised Land. This was Strindberg's own attitude during the last decade and a half of his life. Elsewhere in his works, this attitude underlies his symbolism of clouds and of "den grönskande ön". Although these symbols do not appear in *Historiska miniatyrer*, a phrase often used in conjunction with them does: "andra sidan" ("the other side"). The other side is, in fact, the Isle of the Blessed. The first occurrence of the phrase is significant, for it is put on

³⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 155 ("Attila"):

"Does he have a religion; is he afraid of death?"

"He believes in his sword and his calling, and that death is only the gateway to the real native land. Therefore he lives as only a guest down here, or as a traveller."

the lips of the dying Socrates, the light of classical Greece, who hints at Strindberg's islands in the clouds, discernible in Plato's ideal forms:

-- När, Sokrates, när ... skall det ske?
 -- Du menar, när ... det skall ske, det sista? Platon, min bäste, min käre ... det hastar ... jag har nyss njutit en sömn ... jag har varit över floden, på andra sidan; jag har sett i ett ögonblick den oförgängliga skönhetens urbilder, av vilka tingen endast äro dunkla avbilder ... jag har skådat framtiden, människosläktets öden; jag har talat vid de mäktiga, höga, rena; jag lärde den visa ordning, som styrer den skenbara stora ordan; jag bävade över alltets outgrundliga hemlighet, som jag grep i en aning; och jag fattade hela vidden av min okunnighet. Platon, du skall skriva't. Du skall lära människobarnen att med måttfull ringaktning skåda på tingen, att med vördnad se upp till det osynliga, ära skönheten, odla dygderna och hoppas på förlossningen, under arbetet, i plikterna och genom försakelsen!³⁶

³⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 79-80 ("Sokrates"):

"When, Socrates, when ... will it happen?"

"You mean, when ... will the end come? Plato, my best, my dear ... it hastens ... I have just enjoyed a sleep ... I have been across the river, on the other side; I have seen in an instant the ideal forms of imperishable beauty, of which things are but dim representations ... I have looked into the future, the fates of humankind; I have spoken with the powerful, the lofty and pure; I learned the profound order that directs the seeming great disorder; I pondered the unfathomable secret of the universe, which I grasped in an instant; and I understood the full extent of my ignorance. Plato, you will write it. You will teach the children of men to view things with sober contempt, to look up with respect towards the unseen, ethereal beauty, to nourish the virtues, and to hope for redemption in work, in duty, and through self-denial!

Also notable in this vision is the implication that earthly existence is at best a dim reflection of reality (i.e., an illusion), a notion strengthened by Strindberg's reading in oriental religions.

The other reference to "the other side" appears in connection with Gregory the Great as he cares for the victims of the plague, and it also alludes to the illusory nature of earthly happiness:

--Vi frukten I döden, barn? Frukten hellre livet, ty det är den sanna döden.

Han tycktes riktigt vara hemma här, visade ett oförfärat strålande lynne, och han försökte läsa på de dödas anleten "om de hade det bra på andra sidan".³⁷

An illusion, of course, can be either pleasant or frightening: a daydream or a nightmare. It is a comforting thought that even though the pleasures of this world are insubstantial, so too are its tribulations. Thus the repulsive Mongol hordes are like the products of an over-heated imagination: they too will pass away:

-- Larver eller lemurer, vampyrer, gjorda i drömmen av en rusigs fantasier! De sakna ju ansikten; ögonen äro hål, och munnen

³⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 166 ("Tjänarnas tjänare"):

"Why do you fear death, children? Fear rather life, for that is the true death."

He seemed really to be at home here, showing a fearlessly radiant disposition, and he tried to read in the faces of the dead "whether they were comfortable on the other side".

en skorra; näsan en dödskalles och öronen
pott-hankar.³⁸

A particularly interesting aspect of the cyclical symbolism is the way in which progression through the cycle is marked by changes in dramatic fashion; rather than making a facile association between tragedy and sorrow and between comedy and joy (therefore the dark and the light sides of the cycle respectively), Strindberg the dramatist associates tragedy with the flourishing of a culture, comedy with its decline. Satire indicates that the times are bad, but that change is in the wind. The pattern is pointed out at the beginning of "Alkibiades", where, incidentally, the involvement of the Wandering Jew emphasizes the cyclical aspect of the situation:

Kartafilos, skomakaren, satt i sin bod
vid Acharnaniska porten och lagade koturner
åt Dionysosteatern som ville göra ett sista
försök att få upp tragedien vilken legat
under en tid för Aristofanes' farcer.³⁹

³⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 148 ("Attila"):

"Larvae or lemurs, vampires, dream-
figures produced by a drunkard's fantasies!
They have no faces, as you see; the eyes are
holes and the mouth a gash; the nose is that
of a skull and the ears are pot-hooks."

³⁹ Ibid., 60:

The shoemaker Kartaphilos sat in his
shop by the Acharnanean Gate and repaired
buskins for the Theatre of Dionysus, which
wanted to make a last effort to revive trag-
edy, which for awhile had been superseded by
Aristophanes' farces.

The attempt is successful, as Alcibiades points out at the end of the sketch, as he goes to meet his death after betraying the state. The second speaker is his mistress, Timandra, who has in turn betrayed him:

-- Lustspelet är slut! Vi återvända till
sorgespelet ...
-- Och satyrspelet tar vid.⁴⁰

Alcibiades died in 404 B.C. Almost four centuries later, in 19 B.C., the epic poet Vergil meets his old friend, the satirist Horace. The age just coming to an end has been peaceful in general, but Vergil knows it has nevertheless been a period of decadence, as evident in its theatrical preferences:

-- Oraklen ha förstummats, skalderna ha tystnat som sångfåglar i åskväder, tragöderna de store spelas icke mer, utan man går att se på farcer och gladiatorspel. En ruin är Hellas, och Rom skall snart vara det-samma!⁴¹

Like his own vision of a new Golden Age, however, the satires of his friend Horace are a sign that a new age is coming.

⁴⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 74:

"The comedy is over! We return to tragedy ..."
"And satire follows on."

⁴¹ Ibid., 89-90 ("Flaccus och Maro"):

".... The oracles have been stricken dumb; the skalds have grown silent, like songbirds in bad weather; the great tragedians are no longer played, but people go to see farces and gladiator games. Hellas is a ruin, and Rome will soon be the same!"

Writing at the dawn of a much later century, Strindberg hints, through this symbol, at just where in the cycle he and his contemporaries stand. For most of his life he has had to struggle for an audience against imported French farces and their imitations. He has enjoyed considerable success as a satirist. And he has given one character in *Historiska miniatyrer* more than a little resemblance to himself: the great Euripides. Strindberg's Euripides has a reputation for misogyny. When the charge is laid against him by Alcibiades, Protagoras comes to his defence: "'Vår vän Euripides har varit gift tre gånger och haft barn alla gånger; han kan således icke vara kvinnohatare.'"⁴² Aspasia, however, is not satisfied with this, and confronts Euripides with a misogynistic passage from one of his plays; his defence is supported and strengthened by Socrates himself:

-- Välan, Euripedes, försvara dig.
 -- Om jag vore sofist, som Protagoras, skulle jag svara: Detta har Hippolitos sagt, icke jag. Men jag är diktare, och talar genom mina barn. Nåväl: jag har sagt det, jag har menat det, när jag skrev det; jag menar det

⁴² Samlade skrifter, XLII, 40 ("Hemicykeln i Athen"): "'Our friend Euripides has been married three times* and had children each time; he therefore cannot be a misogynist.'"

* Strindberg alters the facts a bit in order to make Euripides resemble himself even more: Euripides was only married twice!

än! Och likafullt, jag älskar nästan alltid en kvinna, fastän jag hatar hennes kön. Förklara det, kan jag icke, ty jag var aldrig förvänd som Alkibiades. Kan Sokrates förklara det?

-- Javäl! Man kan älska en kvinna och hata henne på samma gång. Allting födes av sin motsats, kärlek av hat, hat av kärlek. Hos min maka älskar jag det goda moderliga, men jag hatar det ur-onda hos henne; alltså kan jag älska och hata henne samtidigt.⁴³

Of course, Socrates can scarcely be considered an impartial judge in this matter, since he was himself

⁴³ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 42:

"Well, Euripides, defend yourself."

"If I were a sophist like Protagoras, I'd answer: 'Hippolytus said that, not I.' But I'm a poet, and speak through my children. Well, then: I said it, I meant it when I wrote it, and I mean it still! But all the same, I'm nearly always in love with a woman, although I hate her sex. That's something I can't explain, for I've never been perverse,* like Alcibiades. Can you explain it, Socrates?"

"I think I can! One can love a woman and hate her at the same time. Everything is born of its opposite: love of hate, hate of love. I love the good, maternal qualities in my wife, but I hate the primal evil in her; and so I can love and hate her at the same time."

* Förvänd is a tricky word to translate; it could be a reference to Alcibiades' homosexual past, or it could simply mean preposterous, absurd. Since there is a tradition (based largely on Plato's *Symposium*) that Alcibiades was homosexual, and since Euripides obviously finds his own attitudes towards women paradoxical (or absurd), it is possible, even probable, that Strindberg intended both meanings.

notoriously unhappy in marriage! Indeed, he seems to go out of his way to say something good about Xantippe here; later he confides to Aspasia, "Min hustru är nog den värsta; hade hon icke fått mig till man, vore hon mördad."⁴⁴ Together the two comments seem to suggest that one can hate womankind without thereby hating individual women, and vice-versa! It is perhaps significant, however, that of the three great luminaries in the book, Socrates is unhappy in marriage, and both Gregory the Great and Voltaire shun it altogether! Indeed, Gregory's dismissal of marriage, for all its crudity, is curiously related to another of Strindberg's works. Before Gregory became pope, he was an abbot, and is here counselling a young monk who has problems with the monastic life:

-- Du ville väl icke gifta dig heller! Tertullianus säger som så: h--i och äktenskap är precis samma sak! Och Hieronymus menar det är bättre att brinna upp än att gifta sig.

-- Men Paulus ...

-- Låt Paulus vara!⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLII, 77 ("Sokrates"): "My wife is certainly the worst; if she had married anyone but me, she would have been murdered."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 160 ("Tjänarnas tjänare"):

".... You don't want to get married as well, do you? Tertullian says this: wh[ore]-dom and marriage are exactly the same thing! And Jerome says it is better to burn than to marry."

"But Paul ..."

"Forget Paul!"

St. Paul's encomium is, in fact, directly opposite to St. Jerome's, and uses the same comparison (1 Corinthians 7:9)! It is the life of St. Paul which provides the title for the *Till Damaskus* trilogy, however, in which marriage forms part of the tribulations through which the pilgrim must pass. Jerome, Gregory, and Strindberg seem to indicate that even St. Paul got it wrong occasionally!

Finally, and just by way of a footnote to another work, in "*Apostata*" Strindberg uses the name *Hierosolyma* for Jerusalem. He believed this was the original form of the name, and that it was also the origin of the name Hiroshima: a curious instance of "allt går igen", and not without significance for Strindberg's last play, *Stora landsvägen*.

Historiska miniatyrer, is perhaps not a great work of history, or even of historical fiction. But it is eminently readable, unceasingly interesting, and a valuable companion to the major post-Inferno writings.

Chapter 77

Hövdingaminnen (Nya svenska öden)

*Hövdingaminnen*¹ (*Memories of Leaders*) was written during the summer of 1905, immediately following the completion of *Historiska miniatyrer*, and published the following year under the title *Nya svenska öden* (*New Swedish Destinies*): an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of *Svenska öden och äventyr*. This title suggests more similarity between the books than there is: whereas the earlier stories deal mainly with the lives of ordinary people, the new ones deal almost exclusively with courtiers and royal personages. Strindberg described the work in the letter to Karl Otto Bonnier (September 5, 1905) which accompanied the first stories he submitted for consideration:

Det är icke kulturhistoria som *Svenska öden*, utan ett djärvt försök sätta in svenska historien i världshistoriens ram, att få nytt ljus på gamla saker, ny värdering på äldre värden.²

These stories, then, are closer to those in *Historiska miniatyrer* than to those in *Svenska öden och äventyr*,

¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII.

² Quoted *Ibid.*, 380:

It is not cultural history, like *Svenska öden*, but rather a bold attempt to place Swedish history within the frame of world history, to shed new light on old things, to reassess older values.

with the exception that all the figures dealt with are Swedish. With these considerations in mind, Landqvist reverted to the Strindberg's own title, *Hövdingaminnen*, when the work was published in *Samlade skrifter*. I retain that title.

The fourteen short stories cover Swedish history from its mythic beginnings in Nordic prehistory, to the death of Karl XI (April 5, 1697) and the destruction of Stockholm Palace on May 7 of the same year: stories about three of Karl XI's successors had appeared in *Svenska öden och äventyr*. Several of the stories deal with figures treated in the history plays, and provide additional insights into Strindberg's conception of their characters; all are much narrower in scope than the corresponding plays, giving him the opportunity for more closely observed character analysis.

According to Ohlmarks (8) the earliest Swedish king of whose existence one can be absolutely certain is Erik Segersäll (literally, Erik Blessed with Victory), who died in 995 A.D. Although the Swedish monarchy is much older than that, its origins are lost in the mists of antiquity; what survives is a mixture of legend, tradition, and, no doubt, imagination!

Strindberg opens his survey in this misty period, with a story that has, appropriately enough, all the elements of a Norse saga, "Sagan om Stig Storverks son"

("The Saga of Stig, Son of Storverk").³ The hero is a mighty warrior and poet, with whose career Strindberg symbolizes the entire prehistory of his nation.

Strindberg posits the existence of two races in prehistoric Sweden: a race of dark giants who worship the war god Odin and practice blood sacrifice, and a fairer race who worship Balder, whom Strindberg considered to have many parallels to Christ (the dominant symbolic pattern of *Historiska miniatyrer*, progress towards the Kingdom of God, is not so pronounced here, but is nevertheless present: the rise and development of Christianity in Sweden is important in most of the stories). The hero, Stig, also called Starkodd, is the offspring of a "dark" father and a "fair" mother. He is the first such child ever born, as revealed in an exchange between his paternal grandparents just after his father has seen his mother for the first time:

-- Tror du aldrig vi mörka bli ljusa?
sade Signy.

-- De ljusa männen äkta ibland mörka
kvinnor, och deras barn bli ljusa; men ännu
aldrig har en svart man fått en vit kvinna.⁴

³ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 7-53. *Storverk* translates literally as *Mighty Deed*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11:

"Do you think we dark folk will ever be fair?" asked Signy.

"The fair men sometimes marry dark women, and their children are fair, but so far no black man has ever had a white woman."

Stig's father, Nare, succeeds in impregnating Sigurlin, the priestess of Balder, through black magic. When Stig is born, he is partially fair and partially dark. So far these two qualities have been associated mainly with religious attitudes: the sun worship of the fair folk and the black magic of the dark; here they acquire the additional associations of reason (the intellect, located in the head) and instinct (the passions, centred in the genitals). The fact that Sigurlin is borne to her god rather than being punished indicates that she did not consent to the act which led to the birth, as, indeed, does the exposure of the child:

När barnet var fött blev det utsatt, ty det var ett stort gossebarn, som var ljust upptill men mörkare nedtill. Och det bars ut i vargaskogen. Sigurlin blev satt på ryggen av en vit svan som drevs ut i fjärden.

Alla jungfrurna stodo i stranden och togo avsked av sin stackars syster, liten Sigurlin.

Och de sjöngo när svanen sam ut i fjärden. Nu gällde se när fågeln skulle dyka, ty då var döden given.

Rätt ut sam han, och Sigurlin höll honom om halsen; rätt ut i stora blanka fjärden och mitt i solgatan. Då lyfte han vingarne och höjande sig med jungfrun, flög han vidare alltjämt mot solen, tills de försvunno i dess strålgans.

-- De hittade hem! sade en soljungfru.⁵

⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 13:

When the child was born, it was exposed, for it was a large boy child, who was fair above but darker below. And it was carried out into the wolf forest. Sigurlin was set on the back of a white swan, which was driven out into the bay.

All the temple virgins stood on the shore and took leave of their poor sister, little Sigurlin.

There are some rather notable parallels here: like Christ, Stig is born of a virgin (conception seems to have occurred during his father's drug-induced dream, without any physical contact), and the mention of infant exposure in a forest inhabited by wolves suggests Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of Rome. The first circumstance, common enough among heroes, strengthens the prediction of the child's grandfather: "Nare skall få henne; och hon skall föda en son, som blir sitt folks försvarare."⁶ Perhaps because of his fair qualities, the wolves will have nothing to do with him, and he is nursed by goats until found by a maid and raised with the son (Vikar) of a lord. He becomes a mighty warrior, but does not feel himself a leader, and enters the service of his adoptive brother. In keeping with his own dual nature, his success in battle entails both a charm and a curse:

And they sang as the swan swam out into the bay. Now it was a question of whether the bird would dive, for that would cause her death.

Straight out he swam, and Sigurlin held on to his neck: straight out into the large still bay, into the middle of the path made by the reflection of the sun. Then he lifted his wings and, ascending with the maiden, flew steadily on towards the sun, until they disappeared in its radiance.

"They have found their way home!" said one of the sun-maidens.

⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 11: "Nare shall have her, and she shall bear a son, who shall be the defender of his people."

Och Stig tjänade Vikar och blev hans vän. De gingo på många härtåg; och alltid segrade de, men Stig blev alltid sårad, under det Vikar oftast gick oskadd. Stig skulle dock vara med, eljes segrade de icke, varav syntes att Stig var född med segerhuva.⁷

One day their Viking ship is becalmed, and it is decided that the gods must be appeased by human sacrifice if the entire crew is not to perish. The lot falls to Vikar, and the distraught Stig flees in order to avoid witnessing the death of his master, friend, and brother. When alone, he has a vision, in which his destiny is foretold:

Nu ändrades allt, och på tolv stenar i en rundel sutto tolv sköna män. Ini ringen stod en trettonde, som var ful, med raggigt hår nere i pannan, och syntes vara av jättesläkt.

Två voro hövdingar i högbänken, den ene var enögd men ljus, den andre var mörkhyad och hade rött skägg.

Den ljuse talade först till jättemannen:

-- Storverk! sade han, din sons öde skall du veta, men själv skall han icke veta det, ty ve den människa som vet sitt öde. -- Seger giver jag honom ...

-- Och sår gav jag! inföll Rödskägg.

-- Gods och gull av mig! sade den ljuse.

-- Men aldrig nog!

⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 17:

And Stig served Vikar and became his friend. They went on many military expeditions, and they were always victorious, but Stig was always wounded, while Vikar usually went unharmed. But Stig had to be there or they were not victorious, from which it was seen that Stig had been born with a caul.*

* See the chapter on Advent for the significance of the caul.

-- Tre mansåldrar får han ...
 -- Ett nidingsdåd i varje!
 -- Skaldegåvan ger jag ...
 -- Glömskans gåva jag ...
 -- Kvinnor äga ...
 -- Kvinnor mista ...
 -- Aktad av höga ...
 -- Hatad av låga ...

Allt förvandlades igen, och Stig satt åter på sin sten vid fallet.⁸

Nare has become Storverk, honoured by men and the gods. For the twelve beautiful men are the twelve gods of Asgard (who numbered thirteen: the absent god would seem to be Balder). The fair god on the high bench is

⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 19-20:

Then everything changed, and on twelve stones arranged in a circle sat twelve beautiful men. Within the circle stood a thirteenth, who was ugly, with shaggy hair covering his forehead, and seemed to belong to the race of giants.

Two leaders sat on the high bench: one was one-eyed but fair, the other was dark-complexioned and had a red beard.

The fair one spoke to the gigantic man first:

"Storverk!" he said, "you shall know your son's destiny, but he himself shall not know it, for woe to the man who knows his own destiny. -- Victory I give him ..."

"And I gave wounds!" interjected Red-beard.

"Property and gold from me!" said the fair one.

"But never enough!"

"He will live for three generations ..."

"A violent murder in each!"

"I give the gift of poetry ..."

"I, the gift of forgetting ..."

"He will possess women ..."

"He will lose women ..."

"Respected by the high ..."

"Hated by the low ..."

Everything changed again, and once more Stig sat on his stone by the waterfall.

Odin, the one-eyed giver of victory, and his dark companion is Thor: the two chief gods of pagan Scandinavia. Odin's gifts correspond to his functions as god of war and poetry; the curses Thor attaches are in keeping with his function as enemy of giants and trolls, and are no doubt motivated by consideration of Stig's paternal ancestry. Several of these combined blessings and curses seem particularly appropriate to Strindberg's conception of the history of Sweden: that it should always have to suffer for its victories, that it should have riches but never enough, and that it should be great but unaware of its own accomplishments!

After this vision, Stig is commanded by a large fish to carry out the sacrifice of Vikar to Odin, and this he does in a passage adapted from the Icelandic *Gautreks Saga*.⁹ Vikar's death corresponds to the manner in which Odin himself lost his life. This is the first of the three violent murders foretold by Thor. It is followed immediately by Stig's first use of the poetic gift conferred by Odin. He recognizes that the fish which gave him the order was the trickster god, Loki (whom Strindberg identifies in this collection as a precursor of Satan) in disguise:

Loke, Loke, Lax,
 onda råd i goda sinnen;
 fosterbroder,

⁹ The relevant section of the saga is described and in part quoted in Davidson, 51-53.

ungdoms värn
 och vän i vemod,
 Vikar, Vikar;
 varg i veum,
 osäll, usel,
 niding nämnes
 Nares son.¹⁰

Stig's next adventure fulfills the prophecies about women. He comes across a band of female warriors, defeats them, and eventually marries their leader, Veborg. The name of this Scandinavian amazon (possibly a Valkyrie) is significant: borg is the word for castle and Ve, a brother of Odin, was one of the gods who took part in the creation of the world, his particular task having been to endow men and women with the senses (a Scandinavian equivalent to Prometheus, in other words); his name is thought to mean Holiness (Davidson, 201). But ve is also the Swedish word for woe. Veborg, then, means either Castle of Holiness or Castle of Woe, an ambiguous name which corresponds, in Strindberg's view, to the ambiguous nature both of woman and of marriage: an ambiguity also hinted at in the gifts of Odin and Thor involving women.

¹⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 21:

Loki, Loki, Salmon,
 evil counsel seeming good;
 foster brother,
 shield of youth
 and friend in sadness,
 Vikar, Vikar;
 a wolf, alas,
 damned, wretched,
 a vandal Nare's
 son is called.

Stig's opinion of woman's place is clear: after defeating Veborg's amazons, he deprives each of them of the thumb of her right hand (making it impossible for her to hold a sword thereafter), with the comment, "Nu kan ni spinna lin och koka gröt!"¹¹ As for the blood-thirsty Veborg, he is confident that motherhood will tame her: "Du är grym, men får du barn, blir du blid."¹² Ironically, however, it is he who becomes domesticated, repeating the experience of Hercules with Omphale. There is no mistaking the allusion, just as there is no mistaking the humiliation of the hero:

Stig var len i rösten, mjuk i manér, vek i känslorna, och han gjorde sin make till viljes i allt.

Men hans anlete blev mjällt som en jungfrus, och hans händer vita. Detta berömdes mycket av Veborg som älskade se sin make sådan.

Svärdet hängde i gästhuset, och Stig satt mest inne i frustugan med tärnorna, där han förtalde sagor och sjöng för dem.

En dag räckte Veborg honom garnhärvan, och bad honom hålla, medan hon nystade:

-- Så fina händer du har! sade hon.

Nästa dag gav hon honom nystanet:

-- Nu håller jag i härvan, sade hon.

Och Stig nystade utan att tänka på vad han gjorde. Om kvällen lekte de på gården; Stig blev utklädd i kjortel och kåpa; och flickorna flätade hans hår. Då ropade Veborg

¹¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 24: "Now you can spin flax and cook porridge!"

¹² Ibid., 26: "You are cruel, but when you have a child, you will become gentle."

inifrån frustugan och det lät illa. Stig skyndade dit.¹³

When Veborg bears a daughter, she taunts Stig that he is no longer man enough to father a son, and when she refuses to take an interest in the child, it is he who bathes it, dresses it, and prepares its food. His subjugation seems complete when Veborg, now left unoccupied, takes a lover (a warrior, as Stig was when she first met him), and Stig is ordered to wait on them.

Perhaps in answer to his grandmother's question (will the dark folk ever become fair?), Stig revolts against this situation. He kills Veborg's lover (the second violent murder foretold by Thor) and, in a

¹³ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 28-29:

Stig was soft-spoken, mild-mannered, and tender-hearted, and humoured his wife in everything.

But the skin of his face became translucent like a maiden's, and his hands white. This was made much of by Veborg, who loved to see her husband like that.

Stig's sword hung in the guest house, and most of the time he sat in the women's house with the bridesmaids, telling them stories and singing for them.

One day, Veborg passed him a skein of yarn, asking him to hold it while she wound it into a ball: "Such fine hands you have!" she said.

The next day she gave him the ball of yarn: "Now I'll hold the skein," she said.

And Stig wound it up, without thinking what he was doing. In the evening they were playing in the courtyard: the girls dressed Stig up in a kirtle and hood, and braided his hair. Then Veborg called from the house, and it sounded bad. Stig hastened to see what she wanted.

return to the rites of the dark race, he drinks the heart blood of his victim. "Och han fick i samma stund sin mannakraft åter...."¹⁴

To the previous associations of dark and fair, two more have been added: the masculine and feminine principles, respectively, and the qualities of roughness and gentleness.

After a couple of regressions, Stig frees himself from his enslavement to Veborg and, in the company of a young man of the fair race named Alf, he embarks on the third and final stage of his career. His full powers return when Alf kills the first man they meet and Stig again drinks a man's heart blood. Eventually, Stig takes part in the great battle of Bråvalla, in which Sigurd Ring, king in Uppsala, repulses the forces of Harald Hildetand (Harald Wartooth), king of the Danes (the story of this battle is told in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*). He accomplishes mighty deeds in this battle, and, as always, is sorely wounded. When he is returned, lacerated but still living, to Alf, he is wounded in spirit as well as body, for he has apparently slain Veborg, who had joined battle on the Danish side (a circumstance which would be consistent with her being a Valkyrie: Saxo Grammaticus tells us that Harald Hildetand was especially favoured by Odin, who never-

¹⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 31: "And in the same instant his virility returned to him...."

theless deserted him in this, his last battle). In accordance with the prophecies of both Odin and Thor, he has become a great hero, but is so consumed by grief, he is completely unaware of the fact: "... det var liksom hans norna, att han aldrig skulle veta vem han var, eller hur berömd, ty det glömde han snart."¹⁵

In his sorrow and guilt, he allows himself again to grow weak and dependent on others, until one day he returns to the battlefield. There he meets the ghost of a fallen warrior, who reveals that although Starkodd (for so he is now known) indeed wounded Veborg, it was he, Tor-Kettil Veborgs-bane, who dealt her the mortal blow. The ghost has been unable to rest because Starkodd is suffering for a crime he did not commit, and in exchange for finally being laid to rest he grants Starkodd the return of his powers.

After many years, Starkodd turns up in Uppsala. After Bråvalla, he had sent Alf there to serve King Sigurd Ring, and he now finds him in the service of Sigurd's successor, Ale Fräkne (Ali the Freckled). Alf has learned Starkodd's songs, and is claiming them and even Starkodd's achievements in battle as his own. When Starkodd tries to speak in his own behalf, an old battle wound (received from Veborg at Bråvalla) prevents

¹⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 44: "... it seemed his fate that he should never know who he was or how famous, for that he soon forgot."

him from doing so, and the laughter of the king drives him away. The dark side of his nature is aroused when he comes across a sacrificial grove, and the priest there persuades him to kill King Ale. This is the third and final violent murder foretold by Thor.

He then becomes an aimless wanderer. Alf has stolen his fame, his songs, his very soul. Wherever he goes, he is unknown, and in accordance with the prophecies, the rich and well-born treat him well and the lowly despise him. Finally, he returns to Uppsala and meets Hother, the illegitimate son of Ale Fräkne, whom he begs to kill him. He mounts a funeral pyre, and, before the fatal arrow is shot, his eloquence returns, and he sings the long saga of his life. Among the witnesses is the unfaithful Alf. Hother fires the arrow, but it does not kill him, and before himself driving it home, Starkodd has another vision; like the Captain in *Fadren* (another Hercules figure), he leaves the world in the arms of his mother:

Bålet tändes. Då såg Starkodd i en syn
en den vänaste jungfru över lågorna; hon var
ljus och fager som Balder den Gode; hon
lutade sig över honom och strök med handen
hans svettiga panna.

-- Mitt barn! sade hon.

-- Moder!¹⁶

¹⁶ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 53:

The pyre was ignited. Then, in a vision, Starkodd saw one of the fairest of maidens above the flames; she was white and comely, like Balder the Good; she leaned over him and stroked his sweaty brow with her hand.

"My child!" she said

This is Starkodd's last word. His epitaph is delivered by the treacherous Alf: "'Storverks son var du, stora verks fader var du icke.'"¹⁷ But Starkodd's fame and great deeds are restored to him as his body is consumed by the flames: Hother kicks Alf into the fire, "... och det tycktes kämparne vara gott gjort."¹⁸

Stig Starkodd, despite all the romantic trappings of the tale, has much in common with other Strindberg heroes: he is a man whose entire life is determined by an indifferent destiny (cf. the powers); he is torn between two conflicting sides of his own nature, neither of which alone can give him happiness; he is unhappy in marriage, but adores woman the mother; he suffers for crimes he has not committed; he is a wanderer; he is an artist whose talents are not recognized until just before he dies; he is Strindberg himself. In his dual nature (good and evil, divine and bestial, rational and instinctive, Christian and pagan) he is a representative of humanity itself; in the way in which his life is composed of an endless alteration between these two sides of his nature, ending in something very

—

"Mother!"

¹⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 53: "'Storkverk's son you were; the father of great deeds you were not.'"

¹⁸ Idem.: "... and it seemed to the warriors that that was well done."

close to an apotheosis, he represents the cyclical but progressive movement of history.

Starkodd's executioner's name is Hother; Balder was killed by the god Hoder, whom Saxo Grammaticus undeifies and calls Hotherus (Davidson, 233); in the first few tales in *Hövdingaminnen*, Balder is progressively identified as a precursor of Christ. Starkodd's career is far too bloody and chequered for him to be a Christ-figure, or even a Balder-figure, but he represents that period in his nation's history when its people began moving out of the darkness and into the light, not always steadily, but nonetheless surely: a virgin mother awaits to welcome him into heaven!

"Hildur horgabrud"¹⁹ ("Hildur, Blood Priestess") takes a closer look at the religion of pre-Christian Sweden. Already we are leaving the misty regions of prehistory, for (although nothing much is known about them), the two kings mentioned, Ane (i.e., Aun the Old) and Egil, are the occupants of two of the three royal burial mounds in Gamla Uppsala, which date from somewhere around the year 500 A.D. (Ohlmarks, 8). This is some three centuries before Christianity was introduced to Sweden. Nevertheless, Sweden was not closed to the world; Strindberg introduces two foreigners, a Frank and a Scythian, into his tale. The latter does not fare

¹⁹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 54-70.

well: he is sacrificed to Freyr and his blood fed to the king!

The character after whom the story is named is a priestess of Freyr. Although not one of the Aesir, Freyr was admitted into Asgard, and his cult was subordinate only to those of Odin and Thor. He was particularly popular in Sweden, which was thought to be under his protection, and in Uppsala he was worshipped side by side with Odin. Basically a fertility god,²⁰ he was also associated with burial mounds. His cult occasionally involved human sacrifice, and is believed to have been connected with the ritual sacrifice of kings. The Swedish kings of the Yngling dynasty (to which Aun and Egil belonged) were said to have descended from him. (Davidson, 92-103 et passim).

Strindberg pieces together what was known of the cult and brings it alive. The story is bloodthirsty: although Freyr was a god of peace and plenty, his rites sprang, in the symbolism of the previous story, from the dark side of human nature. The light side is represented, in pagan times, by the worship of Balder (incidentally, another fertility god). If "Sagan om Stig Storverks son" portrays a striving towards the light, "Hildur horgabrud" represents a regression. But, like

²⁰ Freyr's name in Swedish is Frö, which is also the word for seed: an indication of the relationship between the fertility god and the nation.

many of the backward steps in Historiska miniatyrer, that regression produces a revulsion so great that it advances civilization in spite of itself.

The dark side of Freyr is introduced early in the story, in a conversation between the two foreigners:

-- ... själva Gudasalen består av ett långhus med säten för konungen och hövdingarne. På golvet är en eldstad där offerdjuren kokas och stekas till gillet. Innanför är det heliga rummet, med altaret; och på altaret sitta i kroppsstorlek de tre övergudarne Odin, Tor och Frö. Framför dem på altaret står offerskålen, i vilken djurens -- eller människornas blod uppsamlas.

-- Hu! nej!

-- Detta går ännu an, ehuru väl de blodstänkta väggarna och bilderna äro mig vidriga. Men vad jag icke kan lida är guden Frös bild ...

-- Vem är Frö?

-- Ja, det skall vara fruktsamhetens gud, men borde hellre kallas vällustens ... Han är avbildad oklädd och med en oerhörd ... Romarne säga phallus ...

-- Grekerna menar du!

-- Nå grekerna ...²¹

²¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 55:

"... the main room of the temple consists of a longhouse with seats for the king and head men. On the floor is a open fireplace, where sacrificial animals are boiled and baked for the feast. Within is the sanctuary, with the altar; and on the altar stand life-size figures of the three chief gods, Odin, Thor, and Freyr. Before them on the altar rests the sacrificial bowl, in which the blood of animals -- or of men -- is collected."

"Ugh! no!"

"That still goes on, even though I find the blood-stained walls and images revolting. But what I can't bear is the image of the god Freyr ..."

"Who's Freyr?"

"Well, he's supposed to be the god of fertility, but ought rather to be called the god of lust ... He is portrayed naked, with

Freyr's priestess, Hildur, is a very exotic figure indeed:

I en blodröd släda, dragen av tre svarta hästar, kördes en kvinna som var klädd i en kåpa av svart kattskinn; på huvudet hade hon en spetsig mössa av vita katthuvan sammansatt med en röd tuppfjäder uppi, och på händerna bar hon vita kattskinnsvantar.

Hästarnes seldon voro klädda med snäckor och vitkokta ormskallar.

Kvinnan själv var målad med blod och sot i ansiktet, hennes ögon spelade mot allt manfolk hon mötte, och hon log emellanåt med ett rysligt leende.²²

Strindberg borrows this costume from the goddess Freya, Freyr's sister, who travelled in a carriage drawn by cats and wore white gloves of cat-skin (Davidson, 120). Two of the colours are those of the unredeemed world: the black of chaos and death, and the red of blood and suffering; the touches of white suggest a

an enormous ... the Romans say phallus* ..."

"The Greeks, you mean!"

"The Greeks, then"

* Strindberg prints the word in Greek characters.

²² Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 55:

In a blood-red sleigh drawn by three black horses rode a woman wearing a hooded cape of black cat fur; on her head she wore a pointed cap of white cat-skin, in the top of which was stuck a red rooster feather, and on her hands she wore gloves of white cat fur.

The harness of the horses was covered with shells and the blanched skulls of snakes.

The face of the woman herself was coloured with blood and soot, her eyes flirted with every man she met, and occasionally she smiled a horrible grin.

spiritual function (but white is also connected to death here, in the blanched skulls). The colours of the costume also recall the Plague Girl in *Folkungasagan*; the black horses suggest nightmares (night mares); and to a later observer the figure would no doubt suggest a witch. This association is strengthened by the material of which the costume is made, cats long having been considered the familiars of witches.

It is believed that ancient Swedish kings said to have been ritually sacrificed to ensure the fertility of the land may have been priests of Freya, and that when this practice ceased their role was taken over by Freyr (Davidson, 97), not only her brother but her mate. At any rate, when Hildur performs a human sacrifice, she first seduces her victim, then slaughters him, like the black widow spider; thus, her lusty glances and horrible grins at the men she flirts with on her progress.

The life of the king still seems bound up with that of the land, but he no longer has to die in order to ensure fertility and stability. On the contrary, his life, like that of Freyr himself, is maintained through the blood of the sacrificial victims. He is, in other words, a vampire. Aun is a very old, very sick man, and his vampirism is made clear even before he is served the blood of the hapless Scythian; he preys on the souls as well as the bodies of those around him, as even his daughter Ingeborg feels:

Ingeborg tystnade, ty ingen kunde länge stanna i sjukrummet utan att förlora krafterna.

Den gamle kände också att hon icke gav mera, utan började taga igen sin sundhet, och fordrade hela dagen nya människor. Han låg som en kalv och diade människor, levde på deras andedräkt, deras friskhet; och var gång han lämnades ensam, föll han i dvala, som liknade ingången till döden.

Ingeborg kände detta av erfarenhet, och när hon märkte att han sög hennes själ åt sig, drog hon undan sin hand, reste sig medan hon ännu förmådde, och gick ut innan det var för sent.²³

Later, he has one of his sons buried alive; it seems that blood need not necessarily be spilled or drunk in order to keep him alive; the burial is another connection between the king and Freyr. Hildur is his daughter, and he has a son by her; this reflects the incestuous relationship between Freyr and Freya. But Stig Starkodd left progeny on the earth, and the same man can father children of darkness and children of

²³ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 58:

Ingeborg fell silent, for nobody could stay in the sick-room for long without losing energy.

The old man also felt that she was no longer giving, but beginning to take back her soundness, and he demanded new people all day long. He lay there and suckled on people like a calf, lived on their breath, their vitality; and whenever he was left alone he fell into a lethargy which resembled the onset of death.

Ingeborg knew this from experience, and when she noticed that he was sucking her soul from her, she withdrew her hand, rose while she still could, and left the room before it was too late.

light. Such is the beautiful and innocent Ingeborg. She is repelled by the bloody rites, and worships Balder.

Ingeborg loves and has been promised in marriage to the warrior Hjalmar, who also worships Balder. One day, as they enjoy an interlude in the country, their tranquillity is shattered when Ingeborg mentions Hildur. Their revulsion at the rites of their society prepares the ground for the seed of Christianity; in the meantime, they continue in their own faith despite a foreboding that it will lead to their deaths:

-- Jag hade velat tala allt vackert och gott; jag gick här i blomsterlunden, så långt bort från det häsliga Uppsala, där onda makter bo, och nu är min håg där; jag ser blod och lik ...

-- Varför vordas endast onda makter däruppe?

-- Därför att de själva äro onda! Ett folk av tjuvar, av mördare, en drott ...

-- Det är min fader, Hjalmar!

-- Förlåt mig, Ingeborg! -- Du vet jag dyrkar den gode Balder och den hulda Nanna, såsom du, men mot ont och onda drar jag svärd ...

-- Då går du till Odin sedan ...²⁴

²⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 63-64:

".... I had wanted to talk about all that is beautiful and good; I walked here in the flowery grove, so far away from hateful Uppsala, where evil powers dwell, and now my thoughts are there; I see blood and corpses ..."

"Why are only evil powers venerated there?"

"Because they themselves are evil! A race of thieves, of murderers, a king ..."

"He's my father, Hjalmar!"

"Forgive me, Ingeborg! -- You know that I worship the good Balder and the gracious Nanna,* as you do, but against evil and those who are evil I draw my sword ..."

"Then you will go to Odin** in con-

Their fate is not long in coming. Hildur has also fallen in love with Hjalmar, and, determined that Ingeborg should not have him, has persuaded the king to give Ingeborg to another. It is decided, however, that Hjalmar will be able to battle the new suitor and his eleven brothers (Balder against the other twelve gods) for Ingeborg's hand. He succeeds in killing all of them, but is himself slain in the process, as the result of a powerful curse put on him by Hildur. When Ingeborg hears the news, she too dies, just as Nanna had done.

Hildur too is distraught over Hjalmar's death, and abandons Aun, who is subsequently killed by Tunne (their son). Egil succeeds him, kills Tunne, and is himself killed by an escaped sacrificial bull. Those who live by blood die by blood! Strindberg summarizes the remainder of the dynasty in one sentence: "Och så pågick förbannelsen över Ynglingaätten allt framgent

—
sequence ..."

* Nanna was the wife of Balder; she died at his funeral, and was burned with him (Davidson, 235).

** Those who died in battle were said to have gone to join Odin in Valhalla.

ända till den siste, som var den femte och tjugonde."²⁵

A dark period indeed in Swedish history. But it ended.

"Adelsö och Björkö"²⁶ ("Adelsö and Björkö"), deals with the fate of an early Christian at the hands of pagan Swedes. It opens with the description of a feud between the inhabitants of two islands in Lake Mälär, then narrows in to tell of two men, one from each island, who grow to hate each other so much they spend all their time hurling curses at each other across the narrow sound that separates them. Each is so obsessed with his enemy that he loses his position in the community, his family, his riches, his livelihood, and finally his health. So it goes when one is ruled by hatred rather than love. The story of the two men, Tor-kil and Ragvald, is symbolic of the spiritual state of their nation:

Gudarne ansågos vara döda, och i stället
för glada givare, som offrade för välgång,
frid och god årsväxt, växte nu ett släkte som
mutade onda dunkla makter, och manade ont
över fiender.

Konungen själv ansågs vara en hemlig
sejdare; han kunde som Odin kasta sin kropp i
dvala, under det anden gick ut på vandringar.
Han förstod även förgöra fiender på långt

²⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 70: "And so the curse on the Yngling dynasty continued all the way down to the very last one, who was the twenty-fifth."

²⁶ Ibid., 71-97. The names of the two islands translate literally as Noble's Island and Birch Island.

håll. Detta hade han lärt av finnar, och han var mycket hatad, men även mycket fruktad.²⁷

The principal settlement on Björkö was Birka, Sweden's oldest known city, a great centre of trade from the ninth to eleventh centuries. The king, a certain Erik (who died "a long time" before the founding of Sweden's first Christian church, at Birka, in 829), spent part of his time there, and when he returns after a stay in Uppsala, the Christian enters the story: a Frankish prisoner of war purchased as a slave for service in the king's household. He calls himself Folke, and the King is so impressed with his honesty, he is put in charge of the royal treasury. The King enjoys talking to him, for news of the outside world, and to satisfy his curiosity about the new religion. The King establishes another link between Balder and Christ, when he refers to the latter as "vita Krist" (the white Christ): His Nordic precursor is often referred to as "vita Balder". This meshes with the dark-light sym-

²⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 80:

The gods were thought dead, and instead of cheerful givers who made sacrifices for prosperity, peace, and a good harvest, a race now arose which offered bribes to dark evil powers and called evil down on enemies.

The king himself was thought to be a secret necromancer; like Odin, he could throw himself into a trance while his spirit left his body and wandered. He even knew how to destroy enemies from a distance. He had learned this from the Finns, and was much hated, but also much feared.

bolism, also evident in Folke's white hands.

If it is true that "allt går igen" (everything is repeated), the corollary must also be true, namely that "allt har gått förut" (everything is foreshadowed). So it is that Folke tries to explain Christianity in terms familiar to the king:

-- Nämnde icke sagorna om någon som stod
över Odin, och kallades den Fördolde, den
vars namn icke får nämnas?
-- Jo, visserligen.
-- Han kan väl icke vara död.
-- Nej, det syntes.
-- Varför dyrkar man icke honom då? Det
är honom vi dyrka. Han är fridens gud, och
frid är ju likare än strid.
-- Är det den gode Balder du menar? Den
vite Asen?
-- Svårt att säga!
Där stannade de den gången.²⁸

There is an even earlier correspondence here: the Unknown God whose altar St. Paul discovered in Athens

²⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 84-85:

"Don't the sagas tell of someone who was
above Odin and was called the Hidden One, he
whose name could not be spoken?"
"Yes, indeed."
"He can't be dead, surely."
"No, that's evident."
"Why don't you worship him, then? That's
who we worship. He's the God of Peace, and
isn't peace preferable to strife?"
"Is it the good Balder you mean: the
white Aesir?"
"Hard to say!"
They left it at that for the time being.

(Acts 17:23).²⁹

One day Folke comes across Ragvald, whose hatred for Torkil has made him literally blind. Folke gives him shelter and cures him of his blindness by confining him to a dark place for three days and making him promise to forget his hatred for Torkil, the cause of all his afflictions. The cure is a symbolic baptism, which is itself a symbolic rebirth, or death and resurrection, and a continuation of the dark-light symbolism of this group of stories:

I soluppgången på tredje dagen öppnades dörren, och Folke förde ut den blinde. Denne var vit i ansiktet, och hans händer voro rena. Han hade icke magrat, men han såg tvättad ut och sund.

-- Var har du varit med dina tankar? frågade Folke.

-- I Helhem! svarade Ragvald.

-- Då gå vi till Gimle nu!

Folke tog den blindes hand och ledde honom genom en lund. Solen var icke uppe än, men skulle strax gå. De stego uppför ett berg genom en granskog, långsamt uppåt. På bergets hjassa stannade de, och Folke vände den blinde mot öster.

-- Öppna ögonen och låtsa du såg rätt fram.

Folke lade sin hand på den blindes huvud, talade något på ett främmande språk.

Sålunda stodo de en stund.

²⁹ I can find no evidence of an unnamed Norse god superior to Odin, but Strindberg may have in mind a passage in the first section of the prose Edda, wherein a Swedish king named Gylfi journeys to Asgard to test the wisdom and power of the gods, and has his questions answered by three mysterious beings, seated one above the other, who are introduced to him as High One, Just-as-High, and Third, and are not otherwise identified (Davidson, 25). It would be possible to construe the bottom two as Odin and Thor, respectively, leaving High One as the Hidden One, or the Unknown God.

-- Et lux perpetua ei luceat! sade
Folke.³⁰

As the sun now rises, Ragvald does indeed see: first an ember glowing in a grate, then a burning light, then a burst of flame, and finally the sun in all its glory.

³⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 90-91:

At dawn on the third day, Folke opened the door and led the blind man out. The latter's face was white, and his hands were clean. He had not lost weight, and appeared washed and healthy.

"Where have you been in your thoughts?" asked Folke.

"In Hel!" answered Ragvald.

"Then we shall now go to Gimli!"*

Folke took the blind man's hand and led him through a grove. The sun had not yet risen, but soon would. They climbed a mountain, going slowly up through a spruce forest. On the crest of the mountain they stopped, and Folke turned the blind man towards the east.

"Open your eyes and look straight ahead."

Folke laid his hand on the blind man's head and said something in a foreign language.

They stood like that for awhile.

"Et lux perpetua ei luceat!" said Folke.

* In Nordic mythology, Hel was the kingdom of the dead, and Gimli a gold-roofed hall in Asgard where the righteous went after death. Hel corresponds roughly to the classical Hades, and Valhalla (reserved for those who fall in battle) to the Elysian Fields. Gimli corresponds more to the Christian Heaven, as Nastrand (the abode after death of evil-doers) is closer to the Christian Hell.

Folke warns him that if he is not careful he can lose his sight again: forgiveness of sin is no guarantee that one will not sin again! Few passages in Strindberg are so fraught with concentrated symbolism, from the morning of the third day (corresponding to Christ's resurrection) to the line from the Catholic prayer for the dead ("And let perpetual light shine upon him!") and the injunction to "Go, and sin no more!"; the scene is obviously important.

Folke has performed a miracle: not only the restoration of Ragvald's sight, but also the making of peace between two irreconcilable enemies, without even setting eyes on one of them. Individual sanctification leads to the sanctification of society:

-- Har du talat vid Torkil?
 -- Jag har aldrig sett honom; men när hans eld icke får någon näring, så slocknar den.
 -- Man har även lagt märke till en viss försonlighet mellan Adelsö och Björkö.
 -- Det följer med.
 -- Strid är ju livets öljäst, men frid är humlen.³¹

It soon proves that Folke was right to caution Ragvald against a relapse into sin: the latter has been

³¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 92-93:

"Have you spoken to Torkil?"
 "I've never seen him; but when his fire receives no fuel, it will go out."
 "People have even noticed a certain reconciliation between Adelsö and Björkö."
 "That follows naturally."
 "Strife is the yeast of life, but peace is the hops."

spying on him and reporting to the priests in Uppsala. The King has also heard the reports, and examines Folke on their meaning. Although he finds Folke's explanations acceptable and his religious practices not at all dangerous to the nation, he nevertheless warns him to be on his guard against the priests, who resent any challenge to their spiritual leadership. The most interesting part of this examination is when the king asks Folke the significance of a crucifix in his room. Remembering St. Paul's observation (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23) that to the pagan mind the notion of a crucified god is folly, and aware that losing the sympathy of the King would rob him of a powerful ally against the priests, he answers evasively:

-- Och så är det en man på ett kors?

Här tvekade Folke, ty det som var grekerna en galenskap, en korsfäst gud, det måste här hos dessa vildar bliva hans död. Han svarade därför, inläggande in folklig betydelse:

-- Det är den lidande mänskligheten.

-- Du har rätt, ty när styrkan och lyckan överge en, då är det bara ett stort lidande.³²

³² Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 93-94:

"And then there's a man on a cross?"

Here Folke hesitated, for that which was folly to the Greeks, a crucified god, must among these savages be his death. His answer, therefore, interpolated a social explanation:

"That's suffering humanity."

"You're right, for when might and fortune abandon a man, there's nothing left but great suffering."

Folke's reaction to the news that Ragvald has betrayed him is also interesting, for here he begins to become a Christ-figure, a rôle which will culminate in the circumstances of his death: Ragvald is first compared to Judas, and then Folke echoes Christ's prayer from the Cross on behalf of His tormentors (albeit Folke's plea is addressed to the King):

-- Ser du, allt det där är ju oskyldigt, men Ragvald har framställt detta för prästerna på ett skändligt sätt.

-- Ragvald? Hur vet han?

-- Han har spejat.

-- Och förrått! O Judas, Judas!

-- Litade du på honom?

-- Egentligen icke ...

-- Ja, du har gjort honom gott, botat hans syn, och han har svikt dig; men jag skall straffa honom.

-- Nej, han förstod icke bättre, förlåt honom, herre!³³

Then comes a crop failure, followed by famine and an outbreak of the plague. The Uppsala priests convince

³³ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 94:

"Look here, that's all innocent enough, but Ragvald has represented it to the priests in an nefarious manner."

"Ragvald? How does he know?"

"He has spied."

"And betrayed! Oh Judas, Judas!"

"Did you trust him?"

"Not really ..."

"Yes, you did him good, cured his sight, and he has let you down; but I'll punish him."

"No, he didn't know any better; forgive him, lord!"*

*Cf. Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." (Jerusalem Bible.)

the people that the gods must be placated with a human sacrifice: "En skall dö för folket."³⁴ The ancient rite of sacrificing kings (to Freyr) is recalled, and Erik is accordingly chosen as sacrificial victim. Folke now considers that the King is ready for the truth; his own situation will make him capable of understanding it, and it may give him some comfort in his tribulation:

-- Herre, jag har en halv osanning på samvetet. Du frågade mig en gång vem den mannen var som var hängd på kors. Jag svarade den gången: "Den lidande mänskligheten." Men sanningen är den: att det var bilden av Guds son, som dog för mänsklighetens räddning. Nu kanske du fattar det; och då du blivit utsedd till det stora försoningsoffret, så följer du endast Herren Kristus' föredöme och ger ditt liv för folket.³⁵

But the King is not willing to die, least of all for a people he despises, and in order to save his own neck he blames the country's misfortunes on Folke and his religion, which undermines the old faith and makes the people weak and cowardly. The priests leap at the

³⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, "One man shall die for the people." Cf. John 11:50: "... it is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole nation to be destroyed." (Jerusalem Bible.)

³⁵ Ibid., 95-96:

"My lord, I have a half untruth on my conscience. You once asked me who the man on the cross was. My answer then was, 'Suffering humanity.' But the truth is this: that was an image of God's Son, who died for the salvation of mankind. Perhaps you understand that now; and now that you've been chosen as the great sacrifice of atonement, you're only following the example of the Lord Christ, and giving your life for the people."

chance to get rid of Folke, and it is decided to crucify him in mockery of his god. Thus it is that Folke fulfills his mission. The cross is left standing in Birka, and is still there twenty years later, when St. Ansgar, the apostle to Sweden, arrives with his companions: "Detta tog de som ett tecken, och stego i land."³⁶ So it is that one lone light shining in the darkness became the spark from which the light spread over the whole land. As for King Erik, he went mad, raised a temple to himself, and, when nobody worshipped him as a god, committed suicide. It is he, not Ragvald, who had played the rôle of Judas.

"Vikingaliv"³⁷ ("Viking Life") is a companion piece to "Adelsö och Björkö", examining the fate of a pagan Swede who finds himself in a Christian society. Ragnarök, the death of the pagan gods, has come, and Europe is being born again as Christendom. Strindberg dealt with the very last of the Vikings in *Den fredlöse*. Here, he describes the life of a Viking family: a father and his twelve sons, one of whom eventually becomes a Christian monk. The numerological correspondence is to Odin, the father of the Aesir, and the other twelve gods, one of whom (Balder) prefigures Christ. Twelve also has a cyclical significance, as in

³⁶ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 97: "They took it as a sign, and went ashore."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 98-129.

the twelve hours of the clock, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the twelve months of the year; from this viewpoint, twelve marks the end of one cycle and the beginning of a new one. There is also a correspondence to the twelve sons of Jacob, and as with them, it is the next-youngest who redeems his family.

The father, Torwald, is a hard man who relies entirely on his own strength, calling on divine assistance only in direst need, and then only on the god after whom he is named (Torwald means Chosen of Thor). An instance of his grimness is his exposure of his thirteenth son after deciding that twelve were enough. The sons are equally hard, cruel, and uncivilized, except for one, who is much fairer than the rest, and, like Joseph, is hated by his brothers. Even his name (literally, Day) marks him as a bearer of the light:

Men det fanns en, den näst yngste, som hette Dag; han var mer människoliknande än de andra vilddjuren. Ljus och blid, veksinnad, fridsam var han föremål för de andras förakt, även därför att modren älskade honom.³⁰

The family lives by the traditional Viking profession of piracy, and much of the story is taken up with a description of their last raiding expedition. During

³⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 105:

But there was one, the next-youngest, whose name was Dag; he was more human than the other savages. Fair and gentle, tender-hearted and peaceful, he was the object of the others' contempt, also because the mother loved him.

this expedition, two of the brothers are killed, Torwald has to flee the remaining sons in fear for his life, and all but the two youngest kill each other in drunken brawling. The two survivors, Dag and Ulf (literally, Wolf: a good indication of his animal nature), eventually arrive in Denmark, a land which, when he had first caught sight of it, had seemed the Promised Land to Dag; the symbolism is that of Strindberg's *Isle of the Blessed*:

Dag satt framme i stammen, och när han fick se det blåa vattnet mellan gröna skogsstränder, då förstod han de voro komna solen närmare. De tycktes dock segla uppföre något, uppåt där vatten och himmel gingo samman, och mellan gröna molnväggar:

-- Är det moln? frågade han Ulf.

-- Nej, det är skogar.³⁹

Dag is even more excited by *Elsinor*, the radiance of which contrasts with the gloom of the Swedish forests in which he grew up. Again there is a connection between light and spirituality:

-- Det är en stad, du! Skall väl vara Halsingör.

-- Är det en stad, o! Allting är vitt här i landet, hos oss är det så svart; här

³⁹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 113:

Dag sat forward in the prow, and when he caught sight of the blue water between forested green shores, he knew that they had come closer to the sun. They seemed, however, to be sailing somewhat upwards, up towards where the water and the sky met, and between walls of green clouds:

"Is that cloud?" he asked Ulf.

"No, it's forests."

skola människorna vara godare också, annars
äro de otacksamma.⁴⁰

When at last they arrive there, they wander into a church during a Confirmation ceremony, and Dag is so impressed he decides that that is where he wants to live, especially when the new confirmands exchange the kiss of peace:

-- Här vill jag bo! upprepade Dag.
-- Det är ju ett tempel, lille bror.
-- Jag vill bo i templet.⁴¹

It is almost two centuries later than the previous story, for Harald Gormsson (died c. 985; a.k.a. Harald Bluetooth), Denmark's first Christian king, is on the throne. Internal peace has followed Christianization, but now the King plans to assist a rival claimant to the Swedish throne against Erik Segersäll. Dag and Ulf hope to return to Sweden as part of this campaign, but are thrown into prison. When it is learned that they have stolen the false money they have been using, they are sentenced to slavery as pirates.

⁴⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 114:

"It's a city, silly! Must be Elsinor."
"Is it a city? Oh! Everything in this country is white, but with us everything is so black. People must be better here also; if not, they're ungrateful."

⁴¹ Ibid., 120:

"I want to live here!" repeated Dag.
"Can't you see it's a temple, little brother?"
"I want to live in the temple."

They are both bought by the same man, but because of his less robust build, Dag is assigned to work in the garden, while Ulf has to do heavier work. Dag is subjected to the same kind of test as Adam experienced in Eden: surrounded by apple trees, he is forbidden to eat of the fruit. Unlike Adam, he stalwartly refuses to do so, despite temptations by the owner's beautiful young daughter. A pious widow has given the abbot of a nearby monastery a sum of money with which to purchase the freedom of a slave, and when Dag is chosen, he asks instead that the money be used to free Ulf. The abbot and the owner are so overwhelmed by his selflessness that he and Ulf are both freed, and the abbot grants Dag's request that he be admitted to the monastery, quite literally fulfilling his desire to live in the temple. Ulf returns to Sweden against Erik Segersäll, and is killed.

Meanwhile, when Torwald fled his sons, he swam to a nearby island. When he awakes the following morning, he believes himself in Narstrand,⁴² for the island is a leper colony. The scene in fact reminds one of depictions of the last days, when the graves give up their dead before the Last Judgement:

Runt omkring stodo ... gestalter av människor
klädda i vita och svarta dräkter, men de sågo
icke levande ut, de voro som lik, vilka legat
i jorden och stigit upp, halvt förtärda av

⁴² See footnote ³⁰, above.

maskar och förruttnelse. Näsor fattades, ögon hängde ner på kinderna, fötter saknades, händer likaså.⁴³

These are the remnants of pagan civilization. Into their midst comes a representative of the new age: a nun who cares for them. She is dressed mainly in white, with a black cowl, and is fair of countenance. When Torwald asks her if she is not afraid to live among the lepers, her answer looks forward from this, the Isle of the Living / Isle of the Damned, to the Isle of the Blessed: "Vad skulle jag frukta? Döden? Den är min vinning, min mödas lön, den goda sömnen; skulle jag frukta den?"⁴⁴ Before she leaves, a short exchange once again refers to Balder as a type of Christ and links this, the last of the prehistorical stories, with the first: the children of the light have always existed, even when the light was not seen clearly!

-- Är du en soljungfru från vite Balders land? frågade Torwald.

⁴³ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 116:

All around stood human forms dressed in white and black clothing, but they did not seem alive: they were like corpses which had lain in the ground and risen up, half consumed by worms and corruption. Noses were lacking, eyes hung down on cheeks, feet were missing, as were hands.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 119: "What have I to fear? Death? That's my reward, the wages for my labour, the good sleep; should I fear that?"

-- Du kan få tro det, svarade hon och gick.⁴⁵

Torwald is allowed to leave the island, and eventually makes it home. One day while swimming, he gets entangled in weeds, which pull him down. His wife, who could save him, refuses to do so: she has never forgiven him for exposing the thirteenth child. Thus, he who lived by the code of vengeance also dies by it. His entire family has died, except for one, who has become a child of light.

"Bjälbo-jarlen"⁴⁶ ("The Earl of Bjälbo") deals with the same figure as the later (1908) play of the same name, and may be seen as a study for that play. The story follows the same general outline, but lacks the Judit and Junker Karl subplots, while Birger jarl's second wife, Mechtild, appears in the story but not the play. One of the main themes of the play, the conflict between Birger's professed Christianity and his innate paganism, is of paramount importance here, and is the reason for the inclusion of his story in this collection: like Stig Starkodd, Birger Magnusson is half fair and half dark!

⁴⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 119:

"Are you a sun-maiden from the land of the white Balder?" asked Torwald.

"You may well believe that," she answered, and left.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 130-73.

In this he is a reflection of his nation, which is undergoing a difficult adjustment from old values to new. This is indicated at the beginning of the story. When Bishop Kol returns from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Stockholm's cathedral is under construction, and when he asks a palace guard what is being built, the guard replies, "Det blir nya bykyrkan åt Sankt Nikolaus, alla sjöfarares gud ... jag menar skyddspatron."⁴⁷ The mixture can be seen also in Birger's children, particularly in "den mörke, dystra Magnus",⁴⁸ and Bengt, who wishes to become a priest.

Birger's problem with Christianity is that he can appreciate that it is a civilizing and unifying influence, not only bringing peace and stability at home, but opening the country up to the world; but the business of governing often calls for a ruthlessness and singleness of purpose at variance with the religion of peace, love, and forgiveness. He does not know how to reconcile his faith with his instinct, meekness and humility with ambition.

The Church's (political) case is stated by Sweden's archbishop, in a speech that might come straight from the pages of *Historiska miniatyrer*:

⁴⁷ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 132: "It will be the new town church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the god -- I mean the patron saint -- of all seafarers."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 136: "the dark, sombre Magnus".

"Vad de romerska kejsarne drömt om ett världsvälde, hade nu Roms ärkebiskop förverkligat. En tro, ett dop, en gud och allas fader. Alla voro vi blivna från barbarer upptagna i Roms beskydd, och vi goter och svear hade nu sist blivit romerska medborgare -- Cives Romani."⁴⁹

Birger agrees entirely with this assessment, as he shows in a subsequent remark to Bishop Kol: "Rom har gjort oss till en nation, och när vi alla tala dess språk, så förstå vi varann till och med ryssen...."⁵⁰ But there is something about Christianity that goes against the grain. Bishop Kol and others continually remind him that he is a heathen, and he has to admit they are at least partly right: he tries to observe Christian forms, but inwardly is unregenerate. The following exchange with Bishop Kol deals with his great crime, the slaughter at Herrevad's Bridge (1251) of

⁴⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 140:

"What the Roman Caesars dreamed of a world empire, the Archbishop of Rome has realized. One faith, one baptism, One God, the Father of all. We have all been taken up out of barbarism under the protection of Rome, and we Goths and Swedes* have now at last become Roman citizens: Cives Romani."

* The two Germanic tribes that inhabited central Sweden in former times. National kings had to be proclaimed by the Swedes, the West Goths, and the East Goths; hence the three crowns on the Swedish coat-of-arms.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 145: "Rome has made us into one nation, and when we all speak her language we understand each other, even the Russian...."

rival claimants to the throne, whom he had assembled under a promise of safe conduct:

-- Icke ångrar jag att jag lät slå huvet av upprorsmakare.

-- Men meneden?

-- Jag har aldrig trott på eder och löften.

-- Du är en gammal hedning!

-- Icke fullt; jag har börjat med god vilja och god tro; jag söker och kämpar, men jag finner icke min väg. Jag iakttager fastedagar och helger, jag ber och vakar, men det blir bara utvärtes. Inom mig är jag tämligen oförändrad; mina tankar gå sin gång efter vana och natur ...⁵¹

This is the difficulty of faith; the difficulties of conscience and practicality come pouring out near the end of the story. Basically, one must be ruthless in order to survive in this world; the humble and submissive are quickly exploited by others. As Birger sees it, Christianity's failure to recognize this has caused the very faults of which he is accused: lying, perjury, and deceit. We recall, as well, the early associations of the light with gentleness (which may seem weakness)

⁵¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 144:

"I don't regret that I had troublemakers put to death."

"And the perjury?"

"I've never believed in oaths and promises."

"You're an old heathen!"

"Not entirely: I started off with good will and good faith; I search and struggle, but I can't find my way. I observe fast days and holy days, I pray and keep vigil, but it's all on the outside. Inside myself, I'm fairly unchanged; my thoughts follow the course of habit and nature ..."

and the feminine:

-- Ingen ånger, men grämelse! Jag grämer mig, att jag icke fick leva i öppen fejd, utan måste dölja min sanna natur och lisma med fiender. Men det har er kristna tro vålat. När man icke fick slå, måste man ljuga; jag har bett påven om förlåtelse för det som jag aldrig ångrat; så blev jag hycklare; förfädrens ridderlighet har jag förstått: hugg mot hugg, mod och tapperhet, seger åt den starke. Men dessa nya seder som vänt upp och ned på världsordningen, dem har jag aldrig erkänt inom mig; lejon ha blivit rävar, den friske får ställa sig sjuk och den kloke spela dåre för att kunna leva; män låta regera sig av kvinnor ...

-- Det göra de icke!

-- Nej, men de låtsas, och därför är livet förfalskat!⁵²

The realization that his life has been a lie leads to what is, to Strindberg, a very religious attitude:

⁵² Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 172:

"No regrets, but grief! I grieve that I wasn't permitted to carry on an open quarrel, but had to hide my true nature and fawn on my enemies. That was the fault of your Christian faith. When a man can't fight, he has to lie; I asked the Pope to forgive what I never regretted, and so became a hypocrite. I understood the code of our ancestors: a blow for a blow, courage and pluck, victory to the strong; but as for these new customs that have stood the world on its head, I've never inwardly accepted them. Lions have become foxes, the healthy man has to represent himself as sick and the clever one has to play the fool, in order to live; men allow themselves to be governed by women ..."

"They do not!"

"No, but they pretend to, and so life has become a lie!"

that earthly life is an illusion: "Allt är vordet lögn och bedrägeri, förställning och sken."⁵³

Birger Magnusson was never king, but performed the functions of a king for almost twenty years and was, like Shakespeare's Banquo, the father of many kings (he founded the Folkung dynasty). In the kingly function he exercised, his destiny was, like that of the priest-kings of antiquity, intimately bound up with that of his land. He therefore rejects Bishop Kol's play on the ambiguity of the word vanity:

-- Vanitas vanitatum vanitas, och se det var allt fåfänglighet, ty du verkade endast för dig själv, din makt, din ära.

-- För mig själv, ja, ty jag var mitt land, vi voro ett; och därför var min makt landets, min ära rikets, liksom Birgers huvudstad är Sveriges!⁵⁴

And it is true that this unscrupulous, proud, and ambitious man was nevertheless a wise and beneficent public administrator, whose reforms did much to civilize and stabilize his country. This is why, at the end

⁵³ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 172: "Everything has become lies and deception, dissimulation and show."

⁵⁴ Idem.:

"Vanitas vanitatum vanitas: and behold, all was vanity, for you acted only for yourself, your power, and your honour."

"For myself, yes, for I was my country: we were one; and so my power was the country's, my honour the nation's, just as Birger's city is Sweden's capital!"*

* Birger jarl is regarded as the founder of Stockholm.

of the story, when Birger has fallen from power and is about to retire to Visingö to live out his days, committing suicide if necessary, the good Bishop Kol, his friend, confessor, and sometime whipping boy, finds it impossible to condemn him:

-- Dina vägar äro icke mina; gå i frid,
Birger, dö som du vill; du har levat som du
kunnat; och vad vi båda brutit, ha vi gäldat;
jag har lidit, du har verkat; du, hedning,
har kristnat Sverige och dess gamla lagar.⁵⁵

Strindberg's own Christianity accommodated several pagan elements: a grim fatalism, belief in the powers and in signs and omens, influences from Indian and oriental mysticism, etc. Perhaps hardest to understand from a more traditional Christian viewpoint is the coexistence of a sincere spirituality with virulent attacks on personal enemies, many for very old grudges indeed: such a mixture of light and dark elements is found in *Stora landsvägen*, for instance. Strindberg's standard defence of his public carving up of personal enemies was that he acted as an *esprit correcteur*, punishing offences rather than seeking personal vengeance. This defence he puts into the mouth of Birger jarl, who even finds a biblical justification for it:

⁵⁵ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 173:

"Your ways are not mine; go in peace, Birger, die as you wish; you have lived as you were able; and what we both have offended in, we have atoned for; I have suffered, you have acted; you, a heathen, have Christianized Sweden and its ancient laws."

-- Det finns ingen som förlåter förrän straffet har gått fram. Biskop Bengt brukar översätta för mig ur Septuaginta, och ur Mose böcker har jag lärt detta språket: Du skall icke hata din broder i ditt hjärta, utan du skall straffa din nästa, på det du icke skall lida skuld för hans skuld." Detta att straffa det kallar du hämnd.⁵⁶

As Bishop Kol has indicated, Birger jarl is a man of action: a doer rather than a contemplator. In his account of him (and those of Engelbrekt and Gustav Vasa), Strindberg suggests that in times of crisis it is just such a man the nation requires; his light qualities provide him with inspiration and motivation, his dark ones with the ruthless and unscrupulous singleness of purpose to get the job done. The end may not justify the means for the individual concerned, who must atone for his crimes, but the ends of history are served by light and dark alike, and perhaps one who, like Stig

⁵⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 144:

".... Nobody forgives before punishment has been carried out. Bishop Bengt often translates from the Septuagint for me, and from the books of Moses I have learned this maxim: 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall punish your neighbour, that you might not incur guilt because of his guilt.'* This punishing is what you call revenge."

* Leviticus 19:17. I have translated the citation directly from the Swedish, as none of the English versions corresponds exactly, and all avoid the word punish (straffa).

Starkodd, combines both qualities, is best equipped to advance the course of civilization: he cannot be defeated by the powers of darkness, and whatever light he bears will spread!

"Karl Ulfsson och hans moder"⁵⁷ ("Karl Ulfsson and His Mother") deals with another figure treated elsewhere: Karl Ulfsson's mother is St. Birgitta (1303-73). As Sweden's most famous native saint, Birgitta should be the foremost representative of its spirituality, but Strindberg considers her a charlatan, an ambitious and meddlesome woman whose mystic visions were motivated by political ambition and personal aggrandizement; a woman who led a life that was far from holy, and flouted the laws of nature by desiring to found a religious order for both men and women in which (her most horrible crime in Strindberg's eyes, one suspects) the abbess was to rule over both communities! Vadstena cloister and some aspects of her private life are treated in *Svenska folket*, and *Folkungasagan* deals with her often stormy relations with the Swedish throne during the reign of Magnus Eriksson (1319-64); the present story is set in her final year, as she prepares to leave Rome (where she had gone in 1349) for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She is now old, as actively involved in Italian and papal politics as she had been in Sweden's,

⁵⁷ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 174-210.

and has gained a wider audience for her mystic visions -- and her scandalous conduct. King Magnus (to whom she is related) considers her an embarrassment to family and nation, and has sent one of her sons to bring her back to Sweden.⁵⁸ He finds her, but he does not bring her back, for Strindberg's St. Birgitta is a witch and a vampire, and she succeeds in destroying all who oppose her, including her own son! She brings about his death through supernatural means which are very much like the power of suggestion; that she does this in order to save him from mortal sin (an adulterous love affair with Joanna, Queen of Naples) is perhaps a mitigating circumstance.

Before they locate Birgitta, Karl and his companion, Laurentius, run across Boccaccio, who is at a critical point in his life: he leaves with a monk and when he is next seen has himself taken the tonsure. From him they learn of Birgitta's attempts to influence papal politics, and of her rivalry with Catherine of Sienna. He also explains courtly love to them (it is already outmoded in southern Europe but has not yet penetrated the icy regions of Scandinavia), represent-

⁵⁸ Strindberg's chronology is a bit off here: Birgitta is seventy years old in the story, which places it in 1373 (a date confirmed by the length of time it has been since Karl last saw his mother), by which time Albrekt of Mecklenburg had been King of Sweden for eight years! But it makes a good story.

ing his own Decameron (written some twenty years earlier) as a reaction to its excesses:

-- Hör nu, återupptog doktor Laurentius, kan ni säga oss vad man här i landet menar med galanterie spirituelle?

-- Jo, svarade signor Giovanni, därmed menades fordom, mest i södra Frankrike, den kappa, under vilken man dolde la galanterie charnelle.

Doktorn växlade en blick med riddaren.

-- Skulle ni vilja förklara oss lite närmare ...

-- Närmare kan jag inte komma; men ni har hört talas om dessa cours d'amour, kärlekshov, där riddare dyrkade damerna ...

-- Dyrkade?

-- Ja, de offrade åt dem på kärlekens altare, bar relikier från damernas toalettrum, av de mest otroliga partier, och så vidare; denna gynolatrie upplöste sig i en mycket naturlig desillusion, liksom riddarne, oskuldens och svaghetens försvarare, i våra dagar demaskerat sig som rövare och banditer. Det är denna återgång till ett sundare tillstånd som vi sett utvecklas vid drottning Johannas hov i Neapel, och det är under denna huldrika dames beskydd som den beryktade boken Il Decamerone uppstått.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 182-83:

"Listen," resumed Dr. Laurentius, "can you tell us what is meant in this country by galanterie spirituelle?"

"Yes," answered signor Giovanni, "that term formerly signified, mostly in southern France, the cloak under which a man hid la galanterie charnelle."

The doctor exchanged a glance with the knight.

"Would you care to explain it to us a little more precisely ..."

"More precise I can't get; but you've heard of those cours d'amour, courts of love, where the knights worshipped the ladies ..."

"Worshipped?"

"Yes, they made sacrifices to them on the altar of love, took relics of the most incredible nature from the ladies' chambers, and so on; this gynolatrie broke up into a very natural disillusion, just as in our days the knights, defenders of innocence and weak-

The passage contains several ironies. The reason Laurentius broaches the topic in the first place (and the meaning of the glance he exchanges with Karl) is that they have heard that Birgitta is living in galanterie spirituelle with a Spanish bishop; Boccaccio's explanation does nothing to set their minds at ease! At this point, they do not know the identity of "signor Giovanni" who, on the brink of renouncing the world, takes the opportunity to tout his most worldly book. Later, Karl learns that this man who is so cynical about courtly love is himself a victim of it: he has silently worshipped Queen Joanna for years! His next book was *Corbaccio* (1366), a satire against women: Strindberg has found a literary soul-mate: Boccaccio, like Euripides in *Historiska miniatyrer*, is remarkably like him!

Karl locates his mother by chance. Returning from a night of revelry in the company of a courtesan, he has to dismount to adjust the harness of her horse. Birgitta watches from the doorway of a nearby church:

Riddaren steg av för att spänna om remmen,
men hur han bar sig åt, så ville icke söljan
bita i lädret. Damen blev otålig:

—
ness, have unmasked themselves as thieves and bandits. It's this return to a healthier situation that we've seen develop at the court of Queen Joanna in Naples, and it was under the patronage of this most gracious lady that the celebrated book *Il Decamerone* came into being.

-- Skynda på då, Carlino, Carlaccio!
manade hon.

-- Det är förgjort, förhäxat, svarade
kavaljeren. Det är alldeles som om någon såge
på mig med onda ögon.

-- Jettatura! skrek courtisanen. Där
står häxan, vi känner henne väl.⁶⁰

Birgitta's celebrated spiritual powers, then, appear to ordinary mortals as witchcraft, and she is feared rather than admired. The attribution is interesting, taken in conjunction with passages in *Svenska folket* and the stories "En häxa" and "Genvägar", for it encapsulates Strindberg's assessment of Birgitta: like other witches, she is so devoid of talent and ability that she must use extraordinary means to attract attention to herself, a consuming passion which overrides all other considerations with her. Indeed, her own son says as much, when he confronts her with a litany of her faults. After listing her reputation as a witch, her unseemly conduct in the streets (begging, among other things), her allowing young men to court her daughter (St. Katarina, herself a married woman, later

⁶⁰ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 186:

The knight dismounted in order to fasten the strap, but no matter how he tried, the buckle would not grasp the leather. The lady grew impatient:

"Hurry up, then, Carlino, Carlaccio!" she exhorted.

"It's possessed, bewitched," answered the cavalier. "It's just as if someone were putting the evil eye on me."

"Curse the luck!" shrieked the courtesan. "The witch is standing over there; she's well known to us."

first abbess of Vadstena cloister; canonized 1484), her shameless theft of the ideas of Petrarch, and her scandalous (if innocent) relations with the Spanish bishop, he at last comes to her plans for Vadstena cloister:

-- Att munkar och nunnor bo tillsammans har alltid visat sig medföra olägenheter dem du känner, men du vill att abbedissan skall härska över män, och det är kärnan i hela din själviska strävan. Härska, trampa, det var hemligheten i ditt liv. Och nu bör du veta att du där hemma är misstänkt eftersträva kronan för din släkt, att du konspirerar mot konung Magnus, genom dina uppenbarelser, där du bland annat talar om hans fula frejd, då det är du som förtalat honom.

-- Jag har icke hört ett ord, svarade sierskan; mina öron äro skyddade för allt oheligt och fåvitskt tal; ty dem renom är allting rent ...

-- Nej, den smutsige kan icke se smutsen, utan finner allting rent.⁶¹

Later, Laurentius links Birgitta's desire to dominate men to the code of courtly love:

-- huvudsaken för henne synes vara att få härska över män; chevaleriets

⁶¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 193:

".... Whenever monks and nuns have lived together it has led to difficulties which you know about, but you want the abbess to rule over the men, and that's the heart of all your selfish ambition: to rule, to trample; that's the secret of your life. And now, you ought to know that back home you're suspected of seeking the throne for your own family, of conspiring against King Magnus through your revelations, where, among other things, you speak of his bad reputation, when it's you who egged him on."

"I haven't heard a word," answered the prophetess; "my ears are shielded from all unholy and foolish talk; for to the clean all things are clean ..."

"No: the dirty can't see the dirt, and so find all things clean."

kvinnokult har hon tagit på allvar och nu skall det förhatade könet bokstavligen ligga under härskarinnans fötter.⁶²

He adds a belittling reference to Birgitta's revelations, using terms which apply to Strindberg's own revelations in *Till Damaskus I*: "Om jag skulle skriva mina uppenbarelser, så skulle jag skildra världen som ett dårhus eller ett helvete ..."⁶³

Karl and Birgitta go to Naples, where he has been invited to visit the court and she is to receive passage to the Holy Land. Karl falls under the spell of the Queen, from whose palace can be seen the smoke of Vesuvius, symbol of the wrath of God, and token of what is coming:

-- Här är paradiset! utbrast den förtrollade riddaren.

-- Och där är helvetet! svarade Johanna visande på Vesuv.

-- Tror ni verkligen där är ...

-- Ja, visst är det! De gamla kände icke berget som eldsprutande, ty det började först kasta eld år 79, eller samma tid som Titus blev kejsare, han som förstörde Jerusalem.

-- Tror ni verkligen ...

⁶² Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 195:

".... For her, the most important thing seems to be the chance to rule over men; she has taken chivalry's worship of women seriously, and now the despised sex shall literally lie under the foot of the mistress."

⁶³ Ibid., 196: "If I were to write my revelations, I'd describe the world as a madhouse or a hell ..."

-- Ja visst tror jag, och dit komma alla onda människor.⁶⁴

The reformed Boccaccio makes an appearance, and through him Strindberg, who has undergone a similar conversion, expresses his own feelings about his earlier works:

-- Ångrar du då din vackra bok Decamerone, som du skrivit för mig?

-- Ångrar icke; men allt skall ha sin tid; denna bok har haft sin, och nu kommer andra böckers tid, allvarligare som mannaåldern ...⁶⁵

When he has gone, Karl and Joanna row out on the lake in the moonlight, but unsettling thoughts, sights, and events prevent their becoming more intimate. They are, however, seen by Birgitta, who becomes as concerned about a scandal as Karl had been about her own

⁶⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 198-99:

"This is paradise!" exclaimed the enchanted knight.

"And there is Hell!" answered Joanna, pointing at Vesuvius.

"Do you really think there is ..."

"Yes, of course it is! The ancients didn't know the mountain was volcanic, for it didn't begin to erupt until the year 79, the same year that Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem, became Caesar."

"Do you really believe ..."

"Yes, of course I believe, and that's where all evil people end up."

⁶⁵ Ibid., 200-01:

"Do you regret your beautiful book, Decamerone, which you wrote for me?"

"I don't regret it, but there's a time for everything; that book has had its time, and now the time for other books is coming, more serious, like adulthood ..."

conduct. She mounts a life-size representation of Calvary, and at the foot of the cross (ironically, next to a statue representing the Mater dolorosa), she prays that God will take her son's life rather than allow him to fall into sin.

Her prayer has an immediate effect: Karl is taken ill. Through the window of his sick-room he can see the tops of the orange trees in the royal garden (forbidden fruit) with smoking Vesuvius in the background. His mother appears, they are reconciled, and she regrets her hastiness, resolving to pray fervently for his restoration to health. He seems to pick up immediately: until Joanna shows up. Birgitta sees they are deeply in love and that there is therefore no hope he will "turn from his wickedness and live", and she once again prays that God will take his life. He falls into a coma, and three days later she is burying him, triumphantly. The curse of Deuteronomy is hurled at Joanna.

If Karl's death demonstrates how far Birgitta was willing to go to exert her power, it is also a remarkable testimony to that power. Or would be, had not Karl already pointed out that the power is not hers, but is only exercised through her: the words are borrowed from Christ Himself: "Du hade ingen makt över mig, vore hon

dig icke given ovanefter...."⁶⁶ Birgitta acts, then, in a capacity similar to that of Attila the Hun, as a scourge of God. She is nevertheless responsible for her actions: what is part of the divine plan can still incur guilt on the individual level, as the continuation of Christ's words ("... that is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater guilt."), referring to Judas's betrayal (also part of the divine plan), makes clear. Birgitta herself is aware of this, and during the brief interlude when she recants her prayer, shows relief:

... hon gladdes i sitt hjärta vara befriad från skuldbördan att ha dödat en människa i sina tankar. Detta kallades önskesynd eller viljesynd, och straffet var lika med det för dödssynd.⁶⁷

Although Birgitta was canonized, Strindberg takes the fate of Vadstena cloister as history's judgment on her: Pope Martin V (reigned 1417-31) issued a bull against it, forbidding the mixing of monks and nuns, and it was closed by the Reformation, subsequently

⁶⁶ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 206: "You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above...." (*Jerusalem Bible*). The words quote the first half of John 19:11, where Christ addresses them to Pilate.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 207:

... she rejoiced in her heart at having been freed from the burden of guilt for having killed a man in her thoughts. This was known as a sin of desire or a sin of the will, and the punishment was the same as for mortal sin.

becoming a hospital and madhouse.⁶⁸ The story closes with a conclusion that Strindberg obviously hopes is part of a recurring historical pattern:

Så förgicks hastigt nog det stolta företaget att upprätta kvinnoväldet i norden. -- "Vad krokigt var kunde icke bliva rätt; och si, det var allt fåfänglighet och jagande efter vind."⁶⁹

Hövdingaminnen was originally published in two volumes; "Karl Ulfsson och hans moder" ended the first of them. The stories in the second all deal with members of the Vasa dynasty, from Gustav Vasa (reigned 1523-60) to Karl XI (reigned 1660-97).

The first of these stories, "Kungshamns-gisslan"⁷⁰ ("The Kungshamn Hostages") deals with the last days of the reign of Sten Sture the Younger and the Stockholm

⁶⁸ Strindberg would no doubt be perplexed by more recent developments: the church of Vadstena cloister is once again a Catholic sanctuary, where the mortal remains of St. Birgitta are preserved and venerated; those of St. Katarina lie, paradoxically enough, in Uppsala Cathedral (now Lutheran), under the same roof as those of Emanuel Swedenborg!

⁶⁹ Ibid., 210:

So vanished with all due haste the proud attempt to establish female rule in Scandinavia: "What was twisted could not be straightened; and what vanity it all was, what chasing of the wind."*

* Ecclesiastes 1:14-15. Strindberg casts the present tense of the quotation into past, and reverses the two phrases (adapted from the Jerusalem Bible).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 213-39.

Bloodbath (November 8, 1520) under Danish King Kristian II: the same period, in other words, as the play *Siste riddaren* (1908), for which the story can be seen as a study. As in the play, the young Gustav Vasa is a major character. The major incidents of the story (Sture's charitable act of sending food to the besieging enemy forces, the trickery by which Gustav Vasa and others are persuaded to offer themselves as hostages and are then taken prisoner, and the bloodbath), while also important in the play, are examined more closely here, and one gains more insight into Sten Sture the Younger, the ruler who was too good for his times.

The dominant light and dark symbolism of *Hövdingaminnen* is introduced early, with specific reference to Sture, by Bishop Hemming Gadh, who suspects the papal envoy of spying for King Kristian:

-- Med ett ord, fienderna ligga utanför staden, men vi ha fienden mitt i staden.

-- Käre doktor, svarade nu herr Sten, ni ser då alltid det mörka ...

-- Men jag ser rätt, även i mörkret, och alltid; har alltid gjort det; men I, herr Sten, viljen alltid se ljust, därför att det är gladast....⁷¹

⁷¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 215:

".... In a word, the enemy forces lie without the city, but we have the enemy inside the city."

"Dear doctor," Lord Sten now said, "you always see the dark side ..."

"But I always see clearly, even in the dark; always have; but you, Lord Sten, always want to see light, because it's more agreeable...."

In a sense, Sture is the enemy within, for it is his goodness and disposition always to believe good of others that lead to Kristian's victory. He was impossible not to admire, but he was not the right man in the right place at the right time. In a passage which includes the title of the later play, Strindberg draws a portrait of him, emphasizing his fair appearance and the gentleness and humility symbolically linked with it in *Hövdingaminnen*:

Sveriges riksföreståndare, ännu icke trettioåring, högväxt, blond, blåögd, mera bonde än herreman, gjorde icke det starka intryck av härskare; han var alltför obevakad, lätt att påverka; hans saknad av sund misstro kunde härflyta av bristande erfarenhet; hans böjelse att tro alla om gott var nog framkommen ur begäret att njuta fred och ro, vara omtyckt; hans känslighet för andras lidanden kunde vara rotad i svagare motståndskraft mot egna plågor. Han var den siste riddaren, men i en tid då renässansens nyfödelse av hedendomens råhet utrotat den kristne riddarens ömhet för de svaga; därför kunde han endast leda Sveriges öden på öppet slagfält, under det han i rådslammaren lät besegra sig av den enklaste lögnare.⁷²

⁷² Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 225-26:

Sweden's regent, not yet thirty years old, tall, blond, blue-eyed, more farmer than gentleman, did not make a strong impression as a ruler; he was completely unguarded, easy to manipulate; his lack of healthy distrust could have originated in want of experience; his disposition to believe good of everyone apparently sprang from his desire to live in peace and tranquility, to be liked; his sensitivity to the suffering of others could have been rooted in a weak ability to withstand pain himself. He was the last knight, but at a time when the rebirth of the coarseness of heathenism in the Renaissance had uprooted the Christian knight's tenderness for the weak: that is why he could lead Swe-

Note that Strindberg does not give this as the real motivation of Sture's behaviour; he suggests, rather, how it might have appeared to the less altruistic. The story demonstrates that he was neither weak nor cowardly; just idealistic. It is a paradox that this ideal Christian knight is incapable of leading his nation into the light he so clearly represents. That will require another Stig Starkodd: Gustav Vasa, who also strives towards an ideal, but strives by realistic and practical means, not cavilling too much about the moral implications of what the situation demands.

Kristian is ripe for defeat, for he has offended against the natural order by allowing himself to be dominated by a woman: the mother of his Dutch mistress Dyveke (who died of poisoning in 1517), a woman who, moreover, is thought to be a witch. As was the case with Karl Ulfsson, Kristian's domination by this woman is part of the divine plan:

-- Dyveke är död, men mor Sigbrit lever, krögerskan-kopplerskan är riksdrots i Danmark och hundsvotterar tyrannen, ja, det är hon som skall få honom från tron och rike en gång.

-- Hur kan en sådan stark man låta regera sig av en kvinna?

-- Han låter icke, men Gud Fader tillåter det; Herren i himlen har givit despoten i satans händer. Han behövde bara öppna ett

—

den only on the open battlefield, while in the council chamber he allowed himself to be defeated by the most patent of liars.

fönster i slottet vid Amagertorg och vinka,
så skulle häxan kastas i sjön, så hatad är
hon.

-- Varför gör han icke det?

-- Han kan icke, ty han är förhäxad.⁷³

The Stockholm Bloodbath, in which Kristian had six hundred prominent Swedes executed despite a promise of safe conduct, sealed his fate.

Gustav Vasa's moral fibre is revealed in the following story, "Räfst- och rättarresan"⁷⁴ ("The Settling of Accounts"), which describes how he consolidated his position after becoming king, imposing his will on rebellious nobles and clergy, and seizing the assets of all who continued to oppose him. During the course of the story, he reveals that he feels responsible for the

⁷³ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 224:

".... Dyveke is dead, but her mother Sigbrith lives: that innkeeper-panderess is a councillor of the realm in Denmark, and hen-pecks the tyrant; yes, she's the one who will one day separate him from throne and kingdom."*

"How can such a powerful man allow himself to be governed by a woman?"

"He doesn't, but God the Father allows it: the Lord of Heaven has delivered the despot into the hands of Satan. He need only open a window in the Amager Square Palace and give a sign, and the witch would be cast into the sea, she's hated so much."

"Why doesn't he do it?"

"He can't, for he's bewitched."

* After losing Sweden to Gustav Vasa in 1521, Kristian was deposed in Denmark in 1523 and in Norway in 1532.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 240-71.

deaths of his mother and sisters, but that they were a sacrifice he felt had to be made:

-- ... Jag stod för Västerås, hade grepp på staden; den var nyckeln till upplanden och Stockholm. Då kom ett brev från Kristian, blodhunden, med innehåll: uppgiv belägringen, eller din mor och dina systrar äro dödens! -- Jag besvarade icke brevet, men upphävde belägringen, en timme! Under denna timme talade jag med Gud, jag brottades med honom för att få ett rent svar. Då tog jag Västerås! Men när jag skulle in i Stockholm, fick jag veta att mor och systrar voro döda. Jag hade dödat dem, men Sverige levde, andades och var fritt.⁷⁵

The reference to wrestling with God is significant: like Jacob, Gustav Vasa became the father of his nation; the guilt over the deaths of his mother and sisters was, like Jacob's lameness, the wound he had to carry in consequence.

As he now travels about the country visiting those who sided with Kristian and obtaining either their loyalty or their lands, he is compared to another biblical hero: Joshua, for whom the walls of Jericho (i.e., all

⁷⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 249:

" ... I stood before Västerås and had the city in my grasp; it was the key to the region and Stockholm. Then a letter arrived from Kristian, the bloodhound, the burden of which was: abandon the siege or your mother and sisters are dead! -- I sent no reply to the letter, but suspended the siege: for one hour! During that hour I talked with God; I wrestled with him, trying to get a clear answer. Then I took Västerås! But when I was ready to enter Stockholm, I learned that my mother and sisters were dead. I'd killed them, but Sweden lived, breathed, and was free."

opposition) came tumbling down; and the country he thus conquers is Canaan, the Promised Land. "Äpplet var moget, och det föll...."⁷⁶

Gustav Vasa was succeeded by his son, Erik XIV (1533-77, reigned 1560-69). The story of his life is told in Erik XIV; Hövdingaminnen's "Sorgespelet på Örbyhus"⁷⁷ ("The Tragedy at Örbyhus") concentrates on his death. After marrying his mistress, the commoner Karin Månsdotter, in 1567, he was imprisoned in 1568 and deposed (with his offspring excluded from the succession) the following year; his brother Johan, who had led the uprising against him, became king. He was imprisoned in several places, the last of which was Örbyhus, about 40 km. north of Uppsala. There he was poisoned, after nine years of imprisonment.

One of Erik's most controversial deeds as king had been the imprisonment and murder of Svante Sture (son of Sten Sture the Younger) and his two sons in 1567. Now that he is himself in prison, he has the chance to reflect on this deed, but can come to no conclusion about it, so overwhelming is his own suffering:

-- ... jag vet inte i denna stund om Sturarne voro skyldiga eller ej, och det kan vara just detsamma. Det är så många som lider

⁷⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 265: "The apple was ripe, and it fell...."

⁷⁷ Ibid., 372-87.

oskyldigt här i världen, och få människor ha lidit så mycket som jag⁷⁸

Erik's suffering consists chiefly in being separated from his wife and child; were it not for this, he would find his situation bearable. This was a torment Strindberg understood, having recently been separated from Harriet Bosse and their daughter (they were divorced the previous year). Like Strindberg, Erik seeks solace in literary activity, and like him he begins to view his whole career and indeed all of life as an illusion:

-- Emellertid, nu har jag slutat min översättning av Johannes Magnus' historia; jag undrar ibland om han ljuger eller om de andra ljuger; i förra fallet var jag aldrig Erik den fjortonde utan Erik den åttonde. Tänk dig att ingen Erik den fjortonde funnits; då har jag aldrig funnits, det är logiskt. Och om jag icke funnits, så sitter jag icke här, och ingen kan anklaga eller döma mig. Det är ett ovanligt fall, och som jäv vid domstolen är det rent av förkrossande ...⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 280:

" ... I don't know to this day if the Stures were guilty or not, and it doesn't seem to matter. There are so many who suffer innocently in this world, and few people have suffered so much as I have"

⁷⁹ Ibid., 280:

".... In the meantime, I've finished my translation of Johannes Magnus' history;* I sometimes wonder whether he's lying or the others are; in the former case, I was never Erik the Fourteenth, but Erik the Eighth. Imagine: if Erik the Fourteenth has never existed, then I've never existed; that's logical. And if I didn't exist, I wouldn't be sitting here, and nobody could accuse or judge me. It's an unusual case, and as an

Erik has been talking to Urban, the (formerly Catholic, now Lutheran) village priest. At the end of the evening, he looks forward to escaping his sorrows in happy, peaceful dreams, but he expresses this through a Strindberg symbol that charges his comment with dramatic irony:

-- God natt, mäster Urban; tack för jag fick tala; nu går jag i säng, och därifrån reser jag ut till grönskande öar där jag endast råkar vänner. God natt!⁸⁰

argument before the court it's simply overwhelming ..."

* Johannes Magnus (1488-1544) was Sweden's last Catholic archbishop. His *Historia de omnibus gothorum sueonumque regibus* was published in Rome in 1553. It traces the history of the Swedish monarchy all the way back to the Flood, making Magog, son of the biblical Japhet, the first Swedish king. Two of Gustav Vasa's sons, Erik XIV and Karl IX, used this highly imaginative chronicle to establish the ordinal number that formed part of their names as kings (Ohlmarks, 7). Strindberg lampoons the history in his story "De lycksaliges ö".

⁸⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 282:

".... Good night, Master Urban; thank you for letting me talk; now I'm going to bed, and from there I'll proceed out to verdant isles where I'll meet only friends. Good night!"

The dream is of Strindberg's *Isle of the Dead*, and Erik XIV is to die the following day!

The reign of Erik's brother Johan III (1537-92, reigned from 1569) is dealt with in the story "Apostata"⁸¹ ("Apostate"). Johan earns the (ironic) title by his attempts to reconcile Swedish Protestantism with Catholicism through a reform of the liturgy, restoring many of the rites and practices the Reformation had discarded. His instrument was "Röda boken" (the Red Book), a new edition of the Swedish prayer book; its reception among the ordinary people is indicated at the end of "Sorgespelet på Örbyhus": Mäster Urban begins using the Red Book in his church, and when the congregation hears the old (Latin) prayers they do not rise as one man and tear the church apart, as one might have expected; rather

... då steg en gammal bonde ut på stora gången ... och utbrast i Simeons lovsång:

-- Herre, nu låter du din tjänare fara i frid, ty mina ögon hava sett din härlighet. Välsignad vare konung Johan III.⁸²

⁸¹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 288-300. To avoid confusion with the story "Apostata" in *Historiska miniaturer*, the present story is identified in the index as "Apostata 2".

⁸² *Ibid.*, 283:

... then an old farmer stepped out into the main aisle ... and burst into Simeon's song of praise:*

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, [...] for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' Blessed be King Johan III."

*i.e., the *Nunc dimittis* (Luke 2:29-32): the first two

Opposition to Johan's reactionism comes from other quarters, it would seem!

"Apostata" was one of the stories written "to shed new light on old things", for it is revisionist in its conclusions. The traditional view of Johan III was that he was one of Sweden's worst kings, willing to return his nation to the idolatries of Rome in order to secure the throne for his son, Sigismund.⁸³ Strindberg presents him in a much more idealistic light, as trying to achieve reconciliation not only between Sweden and Rome, but also between the religious preferences of the Swedish people and the dogmas of their religious leaders: he wanted to change the form but not the substance of Protestant worship, although he saw the multiplication of Protestant sects as highly divisive, a weaken-

verses (with a short ellipsis) are quoted (King James translation).

⁸³ Born of Johan III and his first wife, Katarina Jagellonica (sister of the King of Poland), Sigismund was a staunch Catholic and there was considerable opposition to his succeeding to the throne of Protestant Sweden, particularly when his uncle (later Karl IX), who was seen as the defender of the Protestant faith in Sweden, married for the second time, raising hopes that a Protestant heir might be produced if Sigismund were excluded. As it turned out, Sigismund succeeded to the throne (in 1592), after promising to uphold Protestantism in Sweden, but his uncle held the real power, deposing Sigismund in his own favour in 1599. He was succeeded (1611) by his son (born of the second marriage), Gustav II Adolf (Gustavus Adolphus).

ing of the "one faith, one baptism, one God, the Father of all" celebrated in *Historiska miniatyrer* and "Bjälbo-jarlen". Is Johan a reactionary, looking backwards while history rushes forward; or is history itself moving through the downward and backward stage of a cycle, with only Johan looking forward? Strindberg seems to suggest that the second possibility at least ought not be discounted.

As in the earlier story, "Utveckling", the Renaissance is presented as a rebirth not so much of learning, the arts, humanism, and all good things, but rather of heathenism, raw cruelty, debauchery, the unscrupulous struggle for power, etc. Far from contributing to the enlightenment of the population, the Reformation ensured that it would remain ignorant longer by closing the monasteries, which were centres of learning, before there were enough secular schools to take over their educational functions. Looked at dispassionately, as Strindberg claims to be doing, Johan seems to have had at least some justification for his views.

Strindberg closes by looking at what Johan was trying to accomplish: to bring Sweden as a full member into the circle of European politics (not as an outsider which had to use Denmark as an intermediary), to form alliances (with Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and Rome) which would guarantee Sweden's territorial claims

if necessary, and to extend the power of the Swedish throne into Europe (his son and two of his grandsons became Kings of Poland). Is that so bad? he asks. Perhaps Johan III was just born at the wrong time, like Sten Sture the Younger.

"Karl Ulfsson och hans moder" and "Apostata" are, in a way, companion pieces: they both reassess historical personages; in the former case, one who was thought to be a child of light is revealed as a child of darkness; in the latter, the process is reversed. The two strains are not always immediately apparent: when Stig Starkodd first met Alf, he had to ask him whether he were dark or fair!

"Vasa-arvet"⁸⁴ ("The Vasa Succession") deals with the struggle between Sigismund and Karl for the throne. Sigismund had been crowned King of Poland and Lithuania in 1587, and King of Sweden at his father's death in 1595, but his uncle managed to manipulate parliament to deprive him of all effective power in Sweden. In 1598, in events discussed in this story, he led an armed expedition to Sweden, but was defeated by his uncle's forces, principally because he was loath to regain power through the bloodshed of kinsmen and subjects and, like Sten Sture the Younger, was willing to believe good of his enemies: he was a child of light,

⁸⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 301-12.

in other words. The following year parliament deposed him, and his uncle became king: the third of Gustav Vasa's sons to do so.

The story is a short one. Its main purpose seems to be to point out some of the cyclical patterns in Swedish history, for with Sigismund two cycles seem to have reached their completion. The first is mentioned right at the beginning: wearing two crowns, Sigismund once more made Sweden part of a union government; although he thought of himself as a Swede, his enemies viewed him as a foreigner (mainly because of his religion), and the ghost of Kristian II walked again. This adds irony to his father's comment to him in the previous story: "... du känner icke din farbroder Karl! Det är Gustav Vasa och Kristian Tyrann i en person!"⁸⁵ Indeed, in 1600, Karl had five of Sigismund's most prominent followers executed, in what has become known as the Linköping Bloodbath!

The second cycle is a larger one: the Vasas seem to be repeating the history of the Folkungs. Birger jarl (like Gustav Vasa, the founder of a dynasty) also had three sons who fought over the Swedish throne, Erik XIV's massacre of the Stures corresponds to the Slaughter at Herrevad's Bridge, and the imprisonment first of

⁸⁵ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 294: "... you don't know your Uncle Karl! He's Gustav Vasa and Kristian the Tyrant in one person!"

Johan by Erik and then of Erik by Johan, culminating in the latter's death, correspond to the events at Nyköping and Håtuna (see *Folkungasagan*). The implication is that, like Magnus Eriksson, Sigismund is a lamb without spot who must be sacrificed in order to atone for the sins of his kinsmen:

Allt, som i föregående tid ansågs avgjort, togs fram igen till diskussion; beslut revos upp, själva arvföreningen sattes i fråga; på rikets nybyggnad under Vasatiden syntes *Folkungasagan* gå igen....⁸⁶

"I Bärwalde"⁸⁷ ("In Bärwalde") is set during the Thirty Years' War. It deals with the decision made by Gustav II Adolph, who had entered the war as the defender of Protestantism, to continue fighting after its original cause -- the defence of the Protestant states of Germany against encroachments by the Catholic states -- seemed to have been settled. Gustav is in a quandary: it has cost him a great deal of political manoeuvring and his nation a great deal of money in order to get a Swedish force into the war in the first place, and now he is faced with having to return home

⁸⁶ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 303:

Everything the previous age had regarded as settled was reopened to discussion; decisions were torn up, the very Act of Succession was put in question; in the rebuilding of the nation under the Vasas, the saga of the *Folkungas* seemed to be recurring....

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 313-24. According to the text, Bärwalde, Gustav II Adolph's headquarters for part of the Thirty Years' War, is north-east of Berlin.

with the admission that all his arguments had been wrong and the expense needless. His generals are out for a fight, and he also faces losing their loyalty if he returns home now. An opportunity to satisfy everybody (including the Swedes back home, whose diminishing treasury will be replenished with French funds) presents itself when Sweden is invited to continue the war as an ally of France, which wants to unseat the Hapsburgs. Gustav agrees, and Europe's most Protestant king enters an alliance with His Most Catholic Majesty, the King of France! It turned out to be an expedient decision, for France emerged from the war as the dominant power in Europe; Gustav atoned for his duplicity (and for the lives lost because the war was prolonged) by dying on the battle-field at Lützen in 1632!

Strindberg enjoys deflating the image of the heroic defender of the faith, but he also recognizes that the alliance with France was a good thing for Sweden. As *Historiska miniatyrer* makes clear, sometimes good things are done for the wrong reasons. In acting against his convictions in order to win honour for his nation, Gustav is ironically compared to Christ in Gethsemane: he doesn't really want to make the sacrifice, but sees no way out of it:

-- Om jag vore ur detta, om jag vore ...
Denna kalken går aldrig ifrån mig!

-- Töm den då, majestät! Den välkomstbä-
garen, som väntar vid hemkomsten, den må fan
själv dricka!⁸⁸

Prophetic words: the King never did return to Sweden!

The main character in "Ölandskungen och den lilla drottningen"⁸⁹ ("The King of Öland and the Little Queen") is Karl Gustav,⁹⁰ heir designate to the throne during the reign (1632-54) of Kristina, the "little queen" of the title. While awaiting his chance to rule (Kristina, who is attracted to Catholicism, keeps threatening to abdicate; she might also be deposed in certain not improbable circumstances), Karl Gustav is kept a virtual prisoner on the island of Öland, off Sweden's south-east coast. Here he leads the life of a gentleman-farmer, keeps abreast of developments in the capital, and dreams of what he will do as king.

Meanwhile, Kristina continues to conduct herself in a thoroughly whimsical manner, enjoying the luxury and power of the monarchy, but paying little attention to matters of policy or winning the respect of her sub-

⁸⁸ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 321:

"If only I were out of this, if only I
were ... This cup will never pass from me!"
"Empty it then, Majesty! The devil him-
self may drain the welcome beaker that awaits
your return!"

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 325-60.

⁹⁰ 1622-60. Son of the Count Palatine, Johan-Casimir of Zweibrücken-Kleeburg and Katarina, daughter of Karl IX by his first marriage, Karl Gustav was Kristina's cousin.

jects. Karl Gustav cannot imagine why she is allowed to remain in power, but his best friend and counselor, Paul Würz, has the answer:

-- Hur kan hon sitta kvar?
 -- Därför att herrarne få regera
 under en sorglös kvinna, men icke under en
 kraftfull man!⁹¹

Kristina, then, is an untalented (at least insofar as affairs of state are concerned) woman who renders impotent an eminently capable man. In *Lilla katekes för underklassen*, Strindberg has laid out what happens to women in such positions: they become "unsexed": neither male nor female, but a grotesque parody of both. Such is the case with Kristina, who professes to despise her own sex: "Hon förklarade sig själv förakta kvinnorna, men älska männen, mest därför att de icke voro kvinnor."⁹² At the same time, paradoxically, she is a coquette, maintaining herself as the centre of attention and ensuring that she gets what she wants by playing off favorites against each other. Strindberg's low opinion of dogs comes into play as he assesses the

⁹¹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 337:

".... How can she remain?"
 ".... Because the nobles can rule under
 a thoughtless woman, but not under a powerful
 man!"

⁹² *Ibid.*, 341: "She claimed to hold women in contempt but to love men, mostly because they were not women."

courtiers who allow themselves to be so dominated and manipulated by her:

... Kristina ville alltid föra med sig ett svep av svartsjuka män, som slogos då och då, varför hovet liknade en hundgård.⁹³

The unnaturalness of Kristina's character and position is most fully evident when she has finally abdicated and the prince arrives to begin his reign (1654-60) as Karl X Gustav: he finds her dressed as a man, in which disguise she means to leave the country:

Den lilla kvinnan i karldräkten syntes ännu mindre än hon var, och det skrikande i denna tvåkönsfigur verkade så avskyvärt, att Oxenstjerna icke kunde stanna i rummet. Den råa manliga stämman, det plata bröstet och de koketterande stora ögonen bildade ett fasansfullt monster, som skrämde de sunda männen på dörren.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 344:

... Kristina wanted always to be followed about by an entourage of jealous men, who fought from time to time, and consequently the court resembled a kennel.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 358:

The little woman in male attire looked even smaller than she was, and the shrieking of this hermaphroditic figure made such a repugnant impression that Oxenstierna* could not remain in the room. The gruff masculine voice, the flat chest, and the large flirtatious eyes combined to form a horrible monster, which sent healthy men scurrying for the door.

* Count Axel Oxenstierna (1583-1654) was the effective power during Kristina's reign, first as a member of the committee of regency (Kristina was only six when she became queen) and then as her chancellor. He died the

After Kristina goes, Karl Gustav finds some papers she has left behind: Kristina passes judgement on herself. Karl Gustav's comment recalls the end of "Karl Ulfsson och hans moder": another attempt to establish the rule of women in the north has failed; St. Birgitta has been walking again, in the body of Queen Kristina:

"....

Den Saliska lagen, som utesluter kvinnorna från tronen, är alldeles riktig."*

-- Läs detta, greve Oxenstjerna, sade Karl Gustav. Det är en bekännelse av drottning Kristina, nordens Semiramis.

* Sentiments de Christine i Archenholz' Mémoires.⁹⁵

Strindberg is rather unfair to Queen Kristina: she was the best-educated woman of her age, and was undeniably intelligent and gifted. Historians agree, however, that she was not a good monarch, and her subsequent conversion to Catholicism did much to undermine Sweden's position as a bastion of the Lutheran faith, a reputation her father had cultivated.

—
year Kristina abdicated.

⁹⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 359:

"....

"The Salic Law, which excludes women from the throne, is completely justified."*

"Read this, Count Oxenstierna," said Karl Gustav. "It's a confession by Queen Kristina, the Semiramis of the north."

* "Sentiments de Christine", in Archenholz' Mémoires. [Strindberg's note: he wishes to demonstrate that he is not making this up.]

"Elefantvalvet"⁹⁶ ("The Elephant Vault"), the last story in *Hövdingaminnen*, deals with Karl XI (only son of Karl X Gustav), his death, and the burning of Stockholm Palace. The title refers to the vault where Karl kept his treasure; according to Strindberg, it was not destroyed by the fire. Karl had a reputation as a miser; when crop failures created a famine during his reign, rather than provide relief from the royal treasury, he passed laws reducing the stockpiles and properties of the nobility, thus providing relief, but not out of his own pocket (the symbolic significance of the treasure chamber's surviving the fire).

Karl XI was not yet forty-two when he died, having been king since he was four. His death was caused by stomach cancer (of which Strindberg himself was to die) and the story presents him as old beyond his years, bent almost double with illness, so that his gaze is steadily fixed on the ground: in itself a symbol of his obsession with the riches of this world. Appropriately, then, the story begins with a reminder that this world is but an illusion.

A malcontent, Lars Ekerot, has gained admission to the Palace, claiming to have a message for the King, and is interrogated by the court chaplain and the King's private physician, Urban Hjärne. Ekerot has

⁹⁶ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 361-78.

foreseen the burning of the Palace in a dream, and has come to warn the King. Hjärne promises to relay the message, and after Ekerot has gone, he explains to the chaplain why he does not discount him as a fanatic. His explanation of Ekerot's jaded vision of the world is in terms of the ideal forms of Plato, who, as seen in *Historiska miniatyrer*, was one of the sources of Strindberg's own growing conviction that this world is but a dim reflection of another. The words *andra sidan* (the other side) are significant for Strindberg:

-- Den människa, som bibehållit svaga minnen av urbilderna, skall alltid känna sig besviken vid åskådandet av avbilderna, sådana livet erbjuder dem. Eller så här: urbilderna giva ju bakvända avbilder i den spegel som heter världen; därför skall världen förefalla bakvänd för det vakna sinnet med de livliga minnena från andra sidan eller det övre. Vem vet om icke Ekerot är en sådan flykting från ovan, vilken blott gästar härnere, men underhåller förbindelser med andra sidan.⁹⁷

Dr. Hjärne is spokesman for several of Strindberg's views, so it is interesting that he identifies

⁹⁷ *Samlade skrifter*, XLIII, 363:

".... The person who has retained dim memories of the ideal forms will always feel disappointed when he beholds the reflections offered by life. Or look at it this way: the ideal forms produce what must be reversed images in the mirror which is the world; therefore, the world must appear backwards to the awakened consciousness which possesses vivid memories of the other side, or the beyond. Who knows but that Ekerot is such a refugee from beyond, only visiting down here, while maintaining contact with the other side!"

the Nordic god Loki with Satan (Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 364): in his poem "Lokes smädelser", written during his atheistic period, Strindberg had himself identified with Loki! Of more relevance to the present story, however, is the fact that Hjärne is interested in alchemy: in itself a symbol of the quest for spiritual perfection. His researches in occult fields are directed at helping mankind: a nice contrast to the king who refuses to use his fortune to alleviate the suffering of his subjects.

Finally, the King appears. Strindberg makes it clear that, although indeed inordinately attached to his treasury, he is nevertheless a benefactor of the people: by reducing the power of the nobility he has also reduced the oppression of the lower classes, who have even been given seats in parliament as a result of his reforms (i.e., instead of temporary assistance, he has given them the means to assist themselves permanently). He has even arranged for some famine relief, but the ships carrying the supplies have become ice-bound. Now bent with pain and care, he has to bear the additional burden of his people's hatred. Little wonder he feels earthbound! His illness gives him the appearance of carrying a great weight on his back, and his physical distortion reflects his spiritual limitations, a fact revealed by his view of two paintings in the Royal Chapel:

Bokstavligen böjd av mödor och sjukdomar, så att han endast kunde se till sin egen höjd, stannade han vid Ehrenstrahls tvenne stora tavlor Yttersta domen och Korsfästelsen. Men han såg bara fotstycket på Domen, där de fördömda vred sig under plågoandarne. Han visste att däruppe funnos utvalda också, men dem kunde han icke se. Då gick han över till Korsfästelsen att få betrakta den törnekrönte försonaren, men han såg endast krigsknektarne.⁹⁸

Unaware of the king's presence, the chapel organist begins to play, inappropriately enough (considering the setting) music from Lully's opera *Les fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus*. The sprightly rhythms bring the king out of his gloomy thoughts and self-absorption, but the spell soon wears off, and when the chaplain enters with bad news, the king becomes so worked up with rage that he loses consciousness. When he comes to, the chapel is filled with light, but he cannot see its source. He uses the circumstance as an emblem of his life, a life which, in spite of appearances, he has spent trying to improve the lot of his subjects. He compares himself to Jacob, wrestling with God for a

⁹⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 375:

Literally bent with troubles and disease, so that he could not see anything above his own height, he stopped by Ehrenstrahl's two large paintings of the Last Judgement and the Crucifixion. But he saw only the bottom of the "Judgement", where the damned writhed under the tormenting spirits. He knew that the elect were also there, higher up, but he could not see them. Then he went up to the "Crucifixion" to look at the Saviour crowned with thorns, but he saw only the knights of war.

blessing on his people. His own suffering is a sign that he has won that blessing, as will one day become apparent. In the meantime, all his hopes are in the beyond, when the dark side of his nature will at last be cast off and he will be wholly a child of light:

-- Förlåt mig, Wallin, viskade han. Och hjälp mig upp; här är så ljust; skiner icke solen däruppe vid taket?

-- Jo, solen har kommit fram!

-- Och jag får icke se den! Man säger att jag suttit så ivrigt över penningkistor att jag kroknat; det är lögn; jag har mest suttit på hästrygg, i kärror och slädor, när jag for omkring och skötte mitt folks angelägenheter. Jag har brottats med Gud, därför slog han mig med sin åska, så att min höft-sena är förlamad. Jag går med näsan i jorden, fastän jag sökt himlen två gånger om dagen; jag går och luktar efter min grav, säger man! Ja, Herre himmelens Gud, kommer jag bara på rygg en gång, skall jag se din sol och dina stjärnor igen!⁹⁹

He dies shortly thereafter, and a month later Ekerot's vision is realized. Two rooms are rescued from

⁹⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLIII, 377:

"Forgive me, Wallin," he whispered. "And help me up. It's so light in here; isn't the sun shining up there near the ceiling?"

"Yes, the sun has come out."

"And I'm not permitted to see it! They say I've sat so constantly over my treasure chests that I've grown permanently hunched over. That's a lie; I've sat mostly on horseback, in carriages, and in sleighs, when I went about attending to the affairs of my people. I have wrestled with God, and he has struck me with his lightning, leaving me lame in the hip. I walk with my nose to the ground, although I've sought Heaven twice a day; I walk around sniffing out my grave, they say! Yes, Lord God of Heaven, when finally I am once more laid on my back, I'll see Your sun and Your stars again!

the flames: that in which the curtailment of the nobility was being arranged, and the treasure chamber. Karl XI perished like his palace, but his two greatest accomplishments survived him: his reform of the class system, and his preservation of the nation's wealth in times of difficulty! He was not all dark, like Kristian II, nor was he all fair, like Sten Sture the Younger; like all of Sweden's greatest leaders, he was a combination of both.

The central symbolism of this collection is particularly appropriate to its subject matter: the Swedes were born of gloomy forests and sun-drenched valleys and plains, and the darkness of the Swedish winter is matched only by the joyous and almost uninterrupted daylight of the Swedish summer. As the nation struggles towards the light, it must not forget its dark origins, for the darkness also is a tool in the struggle.

Chapter 78

Taklagsöl

In both mood and theme, *Taklagsöl*¹ (*The Roofing Celebration*, 1906) is closely related to the chamber plays, with which it belongs chronologically. The novella contains three inter-connected stories, fitted together like Chinese boxes: the outer, or frame story relates the sufferings and eventual death of a man known only as the curator (although his first name appears to be Gustaf); the middle story relates the collapse of the curator's marriage and the resultant loss of both wife and son; and the third, contained within the double frame of these stories, traces the vicissitudes in the marriage of the curator's downstairs neighbours. The two inner stories are told in the ramblings of the dying and often delirious curator, as he talks to his only visitor or to his nurse.

The dominant symbol of the frame story is a light which becomes known as the green eye; it is also the chief symbol of the novella. The light takes its colour from a lampshade in the window of his enemy's apartment, just across from the curator's. The constant glaring of the lamp (it is January) leads the curator to think of it as an eye, constantly watching him.

¹ *Samlade verk*, LV, 7-63.

Because it belongs to his enemy, it rapidly becomes the evil eye, the channel of malicious desires and ill will: "... jag tyckte allt ont strålade ut från det där huset. ... hans gröna öga var stadigt riktat på mig och mitt öde."² It is as though his enemy were responsible for all his woes, and particularly for the accident which provokes his decline and death. This is accomplished through the evil eye: " ... när olyckan kom, greps jag av en fruktan för fienden."³ It seems not unreasonable to assume that the evil eye is also the source of the dark powers which have overseen the destruction of the curator's marriage:

... jag förstod att [min fru] i botten var utan skuld i detta elände, att vi båda voro utan skuld, styrda av dunkla krafter utom oss.⁴

The situation gains piquancy from the realization that it is inspired by Strindberg's own experience:

Gröna ögat är ... min först hustrus man ... Och när jag flyttade in här 1901 med min tredje fru bodde C.G.W:1 mittemot på Narvavägen, så att hans fönster syntes från säng-

² Samlade verk, LV, 17: " ... I thought everything evil radiated from that house. ... his green eye was focused steadily on me and on my fate."

³ Idem.: "... when the accident happened, I was seized with a fear of my enemy."

⁴ Ibid., 12:

... I understood that, at heart, [my wife] was blameless in this misery, that we were both blameless, driven by dark powers outside ourselves.

kammaren. För två år sen byggdes ett hus förr
så att hans hus blev osynligt. O.s.v.!⁵

This circumstance explains the curator's comment on the significance of the green eye's colour: "Det gröna ljustet bar hoppets färg, hoppet om hämnd...."⁶ Green, of course, is also often associated with jealousy, as is the eye in Christian symbolism (deriving, apparently, from Christ's injunction, "... if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out").⁷

Toward the end of the novella, when the chimneys are finally set on the roof of the new building, the curator can no longer see the green light (and, conversely, the maleficent rays of the green eye can no longer reach him). He sees this as a good sign: the end of the influence of the evil eye, perhaps even the end of the bad feeling which directed it against him: "... nu är skorstenarne uppe och gröna ögat är släckt; må

⁵ Brev, 230 (from a letter to Emil Schering, his German translator, April 17, 1907):

"The green eye" is ... my first wife's husband ... And when I moved here* in 1901 with my third wife, [Carl Gustav Wrangel] lived directly opposite on Narvavägen, so that his window could be seen from the bedroom. Two years ago a house was built in between, so that his house could no longer be seen. Etc.!

* Karlavägen 40.

⁶ Samlade verk, LV, 17: "The green light was the colour of hope: hope of revenge...."

⁷ Garai, 37.

ditt hat nu också släckas, gamle fiende."⁸ He gets his wish, apparently, for he dies peacefully, dreaming, like Falstaff, of green fields:

Och så låg han där, leende som om han bara såg vackra ting, gröna ängar, barn och blommor, blåa vatten och flaggor i solsken.⁹

This is obviously not the jealous green of the lamp, nor is the hope it symbolizes ironic: it is the hope of resurrection (another symbolic value inherent in green, deriving from the greening of nature in the spring): the curator has a glimpse of the Isle of the Blessed (the verdant isle) as he slips from this life

Strindberg himself has explained the symbolism of the building which rises and finally cuts off the influence of the evil eye. The story is one of redemption through suffering, and the building is a physical symbol of the curator's suffering, growing higher as his health declines, gradually expiating his sins so that envy and revenge can no longer harm him. In the letter to Emil Schering cited above, Strindberg writes:

⁸ *Samlade verk*, LV, 60: "... now the chimneys have been raised and the green eye has been blotted out; may your hate also be blotted out, old enemy."

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63:

And so he lay there, smiling as if he saw only beautiful things: green meadows, children and flowers, blue waters, and flags in the sunshine.

"Leitmotivet är det gröna ögat, hämnden som släcktes av lidandet och slutar med flaggning...."¹⁰

The flags are those the curator sees in the dream of his last sleep. But he has also seen them in reality: they decorate the roof and facade of the new building, elements of the roofing celebration being held even as he expires. Flags are symbols of victory, and as such are appropriate here: not only has the curator won a victory over the powers of evil through his suffering, but in his death he has won a victory over suffering itself. Victory is also figured in two other accoutrements of the roofing celebration: the wreaths which also decorate the newly completed building, and the three cheers raised for the contractor by the workers. Strindberg has indicated that the erection of the building symbolizes the progress of the curator's suffering and its completion a spiritual victory; the bridge between symbol and naturalism, between abstraction and reality, is provided by the curator's seeing and hearing these signs of victory and believing they are meant for him: "Den döende log, han visste

¹⁰ Brev, 229 (April 17, 1907): "The leitmotif is the green eye: the revenge which is extinguished by suffering and ends with the raising of flags...."

icke vad det gällde, såg bara grönt, blommor och flaggor, tog åt sig hurraropen."¹¹

As the edifice rises, there is a danger that not only will the evil rays of the green eye be blotted out, but also the healing rays of the sun, symbol of physical and spiritual integrity and of illumination: perhaps the curator's spiritual progress will be impeded rather than aided by suffering. The nurse assures him that there is no danger of this:

-- Vi äro i slutet av januari, svarade röda korset; solen stiger ju till den 24 juni, och långt innan dess har muren upphört växa.¹²

She proves right: the sun still enters the room when the building's roofbeams are raised, and the curator dies when it has been completed, with the sun streaming through his window: "Slutligen på tredje dygnets morgon, då solen föll in i rummet ... tycktes han

¹¹ Samlade verk, LV, 63:

The dying man smiled; he did not know what it was all about, only saw green, flowers, and flags, and assumed the cheers were for him.

¹² Ibid., 27:

"It's the end of January;" Red Cross answered, "the sun climbs until June 24,* as you know, and the walls will have stopped rising long before then."

* Midsummer.

vara utlöst ut ur stoftet."¹³ The reference to the morning of the third day requires no comment: the still climbing sun is another symbol of victory, this time also of victory over death. In the vision with which the curator dies, the green fields are bathed in sunlight. Strindberg saw this as a promise of the afterlife; in an early outline of the novella, the closing scene is summarized in the words: "På andra sidan: föreställningen om ett bättre."¹⁴

A propos the afterlife, this portion of the story contains a nice piece of reasoning concerning man's inability to either prove or disprove its existence. It comes from the nurse (known to the curator as Red Cross), who describes herself as "måttlig kristen" ("moderately Christian"), although the doctrine she expounds is quite unorthodox:

-- För övrigt är ju möjligt att somliga själar äro färdiga att leva vidare, under det andra måste upplösas för att gjutas om. Och möjligt är också att de som icke tro på själens odödlighet äro sådana som skola förintas, efter som de äga förkänslan av det.

¹³ Samlade verk, LV, 62:

At last, on the morning of the third day, with the sun streaming into the room ... he seemed to be released from the substance of the body.

¹⁴ Cited Ibid., 165: "On the other side: intimations of a better world."

Och båda parterna ha väl rätt. Den som säger:
"Mitt enda liv", han har väl bara det här.¹⁵

This world is viewed cynically: mere survival here involves the destruction of others, and individual destinies are so inextricably bound up with each other one seems helpless in the hands of hostile powers:

-- Vilket nät, vilken väv är icke människors öden; alla känna varandra, alla äro släkt eller på annat sätt intrasslade; en och samma blodström i så många rännilar; en och en enda energi som sändes ut till och med genom våra djurs kroppar. Man är född i en folkträngsel, måste röra sig med de andras rörelser, trampar de närmaste på tårna och knuffar dem i sjön som stå längs stranden, vållar deras död utan att man velat. Varje rörelse är farlig för de andra, och likafullt måste man röra sig; jag har ingen skuld, och de ha ingen; vem har då?¹⁶

¹⁵ Samlade verk, LV, 47-48:

".... Besides, it's possible that certain souls are ready for further life, while others must be melted down in order to be recast. And it's also possible that those who don't believe in the immortality of the soul are the ones who will be destroyed, since they have a presentiment of that. So I suppose both sides of the debate are right. Those who say: 'I have only one life,' must only have this one."

¹⁶ Ibid., 29-30:

"What a net, what a web, the destinies of men form! Everyone knows everyone else, everybody is related or otherwise bound together: one and the same bloodstream in so many channels, one and only one energy, transmitted through the bodies of even our animals. Man is born in a crowd and must move when others move, step on his neighbours' toes, and push those standing along the shore into the sea, causing their deaths against his will. Every movement is dangerous for the others, and yet one must move. I'm not to blame and neither are they. Who is, then?"

This cynicism is very different from the mood in which the curator dies. The clue to the change is the oblique reference to the powers with which this extract ends: these powers (and the despair they induce) flow through the green eye and their influence is obliterated through the hero's suffering and purification.

The second story, occupying the middle ground in the novella's tale-within-a-tale structure, concerns the disintegration of the curator's marriage. This occurs in three stages: in the first, he drives his wife and child away by playing a tasteless German variety number on the gramophone for the boy; in the second, his wife is turned against him by members of his own family; and in the third, he returns to a scene of former shared happiness, but is unable to persuade wife and child to join him. These memories, and those of the story they enclose, are given in stream-of-consciousness narration, as the curator's mind wanders under the influence of morphine.

The gramophone which figures in the first of these marriage episodes, together with the cylinders played upon it, becomes a leitmotif for this portion of *Taklagsöl*, just as the green eye is for its framing story. An instrument which reproduces previously recorded material, the gramophone is a symbol of the curator's

memory. In 1906, the gramophone was still a relatively new invention, and Strindberg has adapted it to his purposes admirably. The curator buys it for his son's birthday and plays the cylinders several times when alone, but when he plays one for his wife and son, the latter is frightened and the former disgusted: all circumstances which might apply to a man's memories, especially if they are not particularly happy. The connection is soon made explicit: "Så började den sjuke att spela opp igen likt grafofonen utan spärrhake."¹⁷ Simile becomes metaphor, the level on which symbols operate, when the curator awakens from yet another drug-induced sleep before relating the third episode in the breakdown of his marriage:

När han vaknade, började åter rullen i hjärnfonografen att gå; gav ifrån sig alla sista minnen och intryck, men i sträng ordning alldeles så som de blivit "inspelade".¹⁸

The memories on this mind-cylinder comprise the two separate but thematically related stories dealing with marriage. The first, which surrounds or encloses the other, has its own leitmotif: a harsh military

¹⁷ Samlade verk, LV, 18: "Then the sick man's words began to unroll again, like a gramophone without a stopping device."

¹⁸ Ibid., 48:

When he awoke, the cylinder in the brain-gramophone began to revolve again, giving voice to all the most recent memories and impressions, but in strict order, just as if they had been "prerecorded".

voice which announces, in German, the title of the piece of music on one of the cylinders and the name of the recording company: "Falkensteinmarsch! Nachtigal-rekord!" The curator finds that the recording makes him uncomfortable, and this is somehow connected to the sound of the voice which makes the announcement:

-- Då ryter en förfärlig korpralstämma: Falkensteinmarsch, Nachtigal-rekord: en hel takts paus och så blåses upp denna marsch, som egentligen liknade många andra, men nu i min ensamma våning gjorde ett fasans intryck på mig, ty jag erinrade när det stycket kreerades i Hamburg under för mig särdeles plågsamma omständigheter. Det var i Alsterpaviljongen ... usch nej, jag vill inte tänka på det! Men ser du, musiksergeanten som där ropade ut numret hade samma röst som denna i grafonen -- jag minns hans förfärliga mustascher, han blodsprängda ögon; det måste vara han som förföljt mig ända hit. Så underligt: jag hatade honom redan då, ty han betraktade min fästmö med oblyga och mig med segerstolta blickar. Och nu hade jag honom i rummet, skrikande Falkensteinmarsch! Nachtigal-rekord! Och så marschen, mycket suggestiv som alla plagiat; den var nämligen stulen ur Père-la-Victoire Boulangermarschen och något mera. Trots mitt hat, tog jag om stycket flera gånger, ty det livade upp min ensamma matsal; men för att slippa sergeanten försköt jag rullen ett stycke in på axeln.¹⁹

¹⁹ Samlade verk, LV, 9-10:

Then the awful voice of a corporal: "Falkensteinmarsch, Nachtigal-rekord," a pause lasting a whole bar, and then the beginning of the march, which, in fact, resembled countless other marches, but now in my lonely apartment it made a ghastly impression on me, for I remembered when the piece was first performed in Hamburg, under circumstances particularly painful for me. It was in the Alster Pavillion ... ugh! no, I don't want to think about it! But you see, the voice of the music sergeant who announced the number there was identical to the one on the gramophone -- I remember his dreadful moustache, his blood-

There is not much detail about these memories, except that they were painful and perhaps embarrassing. Nevertheless, the act of remembering helps pass the time, and he manages to suppress the most painful part, or thinks he does: this is precisely the part he is unable to banish from his mind for the remainder of the story: "Falkensteinmarsch! Nachtigal-rekord!"

Similarly, he allows his mind to dwell on the memories associated with the final stages of his marriage: memories also filled with a certain amount of pain and embarrassment (such as that he feels when he unintentionally plays a bawdy song for his young son). Indeed, the two birds alluded to in the music sergeant's announcement seem emblems of his relationship with his wife: the falcon, as a bird of prey, symbolizes destruction and strife, whereas the nightingale, first among all birds that sing, symbolizes amorous yearning (Cirlot, 26).

shot eyes; it had to be he: he'd followed me all the way here. So strange: I already hated him then, for he looked at my fiancée shamelessly and at me triumphantly. And now I had him in the room, screaming: "Falkensteinmarsch! Nachtigal-rekord!" And then the march, very familiar, as all plagiarisms are: it had been lifted, you see, from the Père-la-Victoire Boulanger March and something else! Despite my abhorrence, I played the piece several times, for it livened up my lonely dining room; but to avoid the sergeant, I started the cylinder a bit in from the edge.

The Falkenstein March is associated with the curator's courtship; the bawdy German song with the loss of his family. When he is reunited with them for a summer in the archipelago, music again plays a rôle. At the beginning of the summer, when they are alone, music expresses their harmony and contentment:

Om aftnarne, när barnet lagt sig, sutto
modren och jag ensamma i den vackra salen;
oftast spelade hon på pianot men musiken var
mig endast som ackompanjemang till hennes
skönhet....²⁰

Music plays a similar rôle later in the same section of the story, not only expressing harmony but actually creating it, as it produces a reconciliation between the curator and his estranged brother:

... inifrån hördes Mendelssohns H-moll Caprice spelad av svägerskan....

Min bror och jag växlade en blick vid
åhörandet av musikstycket som i vårt föräldrahem spelat en viss roll. Harmoni, försyning hördes i vår tystnad, ålagd eller oss påsmugen av den väldiga musiken. -- Så tystnade pianot, känslorna dallrade efter, man upptäckte varandra, översvallade i sällhet att vara vänner....²¹

²⁰ Samlade verk, LV, 31:

In the evenings, after the child had gone to bed, the mother and I sat alone in the beautiful parlour; most often she played the piano, but for me the music was only an accompaniment to her beauty....

²¹ Ibid., 37-38:

... from within came the sounds of Mendelssohn's Capriccio in B-Minor, played by my sister-in-law....

My brother and I exchanged a glance on hearing this piece of music, which had played a certain rôle in our parental home. Harmony and forgiveness filled our silence, imposed

When the curator's relatives arrive on the island, they announce themselves by playing the waltz "Le Charme" on a gramophone. "Le Charme" is strongly associated with the inner story in the novella, where it is the young wife's favorite piece of music, and where it signals mutual love and tranquillity in the marriage of the young couple. Here it has quite the opposite function: it is a herald of disaster:

... en kolossal grafon spelade upp -- Le Charme -- kan man tänka sig ... och slutligen öppnades dans på däck. Jag såg hur min hustru led; kontrasten mot vår ensamhet kom henne att märka det hon hade tråkigt. Till råga hade barnet fått höra musiken och ville att vi skulle gå ned i stranden för att lyssna ... och jag släpades mot mitt öde.²²

This is what happens when a piece of music is displaced to an environment with which it is not in harmony: it becomes a portent of general disharmony. The collapse of the marriage is irreversible once the curator's wife has fallen under the influence of his fam-

—
upon us or gradually induced in us by the powerful music. When the piano stopped playing, our feelings were in turmoil, we discovered each other, and overflowed with the happiness of being friends....

²² Samlade verk, LV, 35:

... a huge gramophone began playing -- "Le Charme" -- just imagine! ... and eventually they began to dance on the deck. I saw how my wife suffered; the contrast to our solitude made her realize how bored she was. On top of everything, the child had heard the music and wanted us to go down to the beach to listen ... and I was dragged to my fate.

ily. The signal of her defection, and of the rupture to follow, is again "borrowed" music: "[Min hustru] läste [kusinens] böcker, spelade svägerskans musik...."²³

In the third episode of this inner frame story, in which the curator spends the summer alone on the same island, there is no music; his life is characterized by emotional emptiness: "Egendomligt var, att när en av gästerna skulle spela på pianot, så vägrade detta att tjäna en främmande herre...."²⁴

Strindberg's vampire and cannibal symbolism returns in this vivisection of a marriage. Early in the story, the wife is described as a bloodthirsty beast: "Min hustru ... började gräva i mitt tysta inre, klösa ut mina inälvor, så att jag blödde av smärta."²⁵ Later, in a link between the two inner stories, the curator sits in the apartment of his downstairs neighbours and tries to imagine the impression they formed from the sounds they inevitably heard:

... jag föreställer mig ... hur de ...
bevittnat vår kamp däruppe ... -- tills den
evige tystnaden inträdde efter två själar

²³ Samlade verk, LV, 39: "[My wife] read [my cousin's] books, played my sister-in-law's music...."

²⁴ Ibid., 51: "Strangely enough, when one of the guests wanted to play the piano, it refused to serve a strange master...."

²⁵ Ibid., 11: "My wife ... began digging in my silent interior, clawing out my entrails, so that I bled with pain."

konsumerat varandra, ätit varandra, neutraliserat varandra.²⁶

The actual term vampire, however, is reserved for the curator's relatives, especially for his cousin and sister-in-law. The former is not only labelled a vampire, but his nature is described as well:

... kusinen var i åldern utan pretentioner. Men hans vampyrnatur hade blottat sig igen; han sög i hennes själ, drog åt sig, ville vinna, bibringa sina åsikter om allt, etablera vänskap, upptäcka sym- och antipatier, tränga ut mig, med ett ord.²⁷

The campaign works: the wife adopts the ways of the intruders, and is soon subsumed completely into their sphere: "Så småningom kastades maskerna, och familjen vampyr tog sig för att hetsa och stuka mig vid mitt eget bord."²⁸

²⁶ Samlade verk, LV, 26:

... I picture ... how they ... were witnesses to our struggle up there ... -- until eternal silence descended after our two souls had used each other up, eaten each other, neutralized each other.

²⁷ Ibid., 39:

... my cousin was of an age without pretensions. But his vampire nature had revealed itself again: he sucked in her soul, drew her to himself, strove to win her over, to instill in her his own opinions about everything, to be her friend, to discover common sympathies and antipathies; in short, to force me out.

²⁸ Ibid., 40: "Gradually, the masks were dropped, and the family of vampires set about baiting and savaging me at my own table."

The curator made a collection of human brains during his expeditions to Africa, and this has given him a reputation as a headhunter and cannibal. The rumour is kept alive by "the green eye", and not denied by the curator until he is on his deathbed:

Jag har aldrig jagat människor, fastän jag samlat hjärnor; det var någon djävul -- ja, det var gröna ögat, som spred ut det; jag skrattade först ... så höll jag med, slutligen berättade jag det själv och trodde på det; men var gång jag sökte praktik som läkare, tog det emot; det var mänskoätarn man var rädd för; så är det att ljuga på sig själv....²⁹

This, then, is how the evil influence of the green eye works: through the spreading of rumours, which is just as damaging as physical aggression, especially if the victim cooperates. The charge is not entirely groundless: the curator has admitted that there was something of the vampire-cannibal in his relationship with his wife. Indeed, in the inner story, he admits as well to something vampiric in his interest in the young couple downstairs: "... jag är mest ensam ... och när

²⁹ Samlade verk, LV, 53:

I've never hunted men, although I have collected brains. It was some devil -- yes, it was "the green eye" -- who spread that rumour. I laughed at first ... then I went along with it, and finally I repeated it myself and believed it. But every time I sought to practise as a doctor, that went against me: everyone was afraid of the cannibal. That's what happens when you tell lies about yourself....

jag icke har eget liv att leva, så lever jag andras."³⁰
 He is not a vindictive man, however, does not seek to harm others, and, although he admits to hatred, seems never to seek revenge. This distinguishes him from "the green eye" (who, in true cannibal fashion, seeks to devour his victims) and lends truth to his denial of the rumours about him: "Detta var min svaghet, att jag icke kunde hämnas, icke göra ont utan att lida själv, och därför gick jag under."³¹

The sun is also an important symbol here. As in the frame story, it symbolizes wholeness and integrity, and is used to suggest that the separation of the curator from his wife and child was necessary for his own psychological well-being. As a family man, he had been fragmented; he was denied the healing and integrative influence of the sun. Even the cook lived a more harmonious existence:

Barnet och sköterskan ägde det vackraste rummet i våningen, det enda där solen sken; kokerskan hade ett lika vackert rum åt solen, där hon drog upp blommor ...³²

³⁰ Samlade verk, LV, 21: "... I'm alone most of the time ... and since I don't have a life of my own to live, I live that of others."

³¹ Ibid., 40: "That was my weakness: I couldn't take revenge, couldn't cause pain without suffering myself, and so I went under."

³² Ibid., 15:

The child and his nurse occupied the most beautiful room in the apartment, the only one into which the sun shone; the cook also had a beautiful room on the sunny side, where she grew flowers ...

Almost the first thing he does when his wife and child leave is to move his bed into the sunny room -- hardly the action of a broken-hearted and repentant man! -- and when the sun shines on him there, he is filled with content: "Följande morgon sken solen in i rummet; en varm torr luft stod omkring mig, och jag var lycklig."³³ As already seen, he dies in the sunlight, and his dying dream is golden with sunshine.

Closely related to the sun symbolism is that of the lion. Embodying majesty, strength, courage, and pride, the lion symbolizes the male principle. More specifically, a lion skin is an attribute of Hercules, who, in his turn, is

... a symbol of the individual freeing himself in the quest for immortality, expiating his sins and errors through suffering and "heroic striving". (Cirlot, 138.)

The symbol has appeared previously in *Fadren*, where the hero, humiliated as the slave of Omphale, longs for his lion skin (i.e., his military tunic). Something of this can be seen in *Taklagsöl* when the curator's wife comes to scorn and indeed to detest the lion skin: his virility is rejected, his masculine pride offended, and his integrity questioned:

På salsgolvet låg min lejonhud, jag hade
själv skjutit djuret.... I början av vår

³³ Samlade verk, LV, 16: "The following morning the sun shone into the room; I was surrounded with warm dry air, and I was happy."

lycka hade min hustru älskat och beundrat denna trofé, men efter barnets ankomst, ändrade sig hennes tycke, och hon reflekterade över min grymhet att kunna döda.³⁴

The child has come between them, and as both the gramophone and the lion skin incidents show, his wife has begun to find him repulsive, his virility threatening rather than attractive. When she and the young son leave, he is able to reintegrate his own personality, reasserting those aspects he had been suppressing in a desire to please his wife: he moves his bed into the sunlight and his lion nature reasserts itself to the extent that even when he seems most dependent its presence is felt: "Hjälp mig! röt han som ett lejon, så att det rungade i våningen och genom golvet...."³⁵

The ghosts on the summer island, a woman dressed in black with two little girls in red, would seem to be Strindberg's first wife, Siri von Essen, and their daughters, Karin (1880-1973) and Greta (1881-1912), the two eldest of Strindberg's five children. Their function in this story (in which the wife can be identified

³⁴ Samlade verk, LV, 17:

On the parlour floor lay my lion skin: I had shot the animal myself.... At the beginning of our happiness, my wife had loved and admired this trophy, but after the child arrived she changed her mind, reflecting on my cruelty in being able to kill.

³⁵ Ibid., 61: "'Help me!' he roared like a lion, so that it resounded in the apartment and through the floor...."

as Harriet Bosse, and the "son" as their child, Anne Marie, b. 1902) is as symbols of another problem besetting the curator's marriage: it is haunted by shadows from his past.

Finally for the inner framing story, it contains another aspect of the redemptive nature of the curator's suffering: not only does it lead to his own salvation, but it seems to play a similar rôle for his wife as well; he becomes a kind of Christ-figure or scapegoat for her:

Det föreföll mig som en satisfactio vicaria, att jag skulle belastas med hennes fel; jag blev hennes korsdragare, jag led för hennes skulder, fick hennes ondska in i mig; kände mig småningom oren, och led hennes skuld-känsla som hon borde ha burit.³⁶

Taklagsöl's third story is a digression from the second. In it, he describes the marriage of the young couple who live downstairs. His own marriage is already in serious difficulty when he begins; theirs is followed from the wedding day, through crisis and collapse, to apparent reconciliation, or at least truce. Since it is pieced together mainly from sounds heard through the floor/ceiling separating the two apart-

³⁶ Samlade verk, LV, 44:

It seemed to me a satisfactio vicaria that I should be burdened with her faults; I carried her cross, I suffered for her sins, took her evil upon myself. Gradually, I felt unclean and suffered her guilt feelings, which she should have borne.

ments, the leitmotif of the story is appropriately aural. A variety of music is played throughout the story, several of the pieces developing symbolic meanings as the narration proceeds.

Chief among the musical symbols is a waltz called "Le Charme",³⁷ which is played seven times during the course of the story, and is mentioned an eighth. It is first heard at the newlywed couple's ball, where it is played so often that the curator concludes it is the bride's favorite waltz. Whenever it is repeated, it carries with it associations from (and eventually comes to symbolize) those early days of marriage and the charm of young, tender, care-free love. A note of nostalgia, as if those qualities were more memories than actualities, enters as the couple settles into a routine that includes musical evenings in which one item is constant: "... alltid är Le Charme med, men med riktiga balerna är det slut."³⁸ Although the piece regains some of its freshness when it announces the birth of the couple's child, an unmistakably plaintive quality enters soon afterwards: "Ännu spelar frun sin reper-

³⁷ Tentatively identified in *Samlade verk*, LV (87, n. 20) as the waltz "Charme" by Swedish composer Th. Pinet (1875-1968).

³⁸ *Samlade verk*, LV, 21: "... 'Le Charme' was always included, but there were to be no more proper balls."

toar, och Le Charme dyker upp ibland som en saknadens suck över en flydd ungdom."³⁹

When the husband begins not to come home in the evenings, "Le Charme" is the first piece to disappear from the repertoire, before the music ceases altogether. When next we hear the waltz, it is in the story which immediately frames this one: "Le Charme" suggests to the curator's wife, reunited with him for the summer, that she is bored and lonely (see above).

His marriage breaks down; his neighbours are able to achieve a reconciliation. This is signalled in the frame story, when the dying curator once again hears "Le Charme" being played in the downstairs apartment:

Jag trodde att den eviga tystnaden inträtt därnere i våningen, eller att makarne skilts åt, men så äro de i gång igen och så spelas Le Charme. Fram och tillbaka, allting vacklar, går igen, dyker ner, dyker opp.⁴⁰

"Le Charme" thus links all three stories. Because music is so important in the inner two and fills so many of their episodes, silence, when it occurs, is all the more noticeable. It is never a good thing. As in

³⁹ Samlade verk, LV, 22: "The wife still plays her repertoire, and 'Le Charme' creeps in occasionally, like a sigh of regret for a vanished youth."

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60:

I thought eternal silence had taken over down there, or that the couple had separated, but they are a going concern once more, and "Le Charme" is played. To and fro, everything totters, repeats itself, plunges down, and resurfaces."

the above passage, it usually bears the epithet *evig* (eternal), and has suggestions of coldness, hostility, and finality: a symbol, in fact, of the breakdown of human communication and the resultant collapse of human relationships. Both married couples have periods of *den eviga tystnaden*; in the case of the curator and his wife, it really does become eternal, but in the case of the downstairs neighbours, it proves, at least temporarily, something which can be overcome.

Two other pieces in the young wife's repertoire hold a great deal of appeal for the curator:

... hennes repertoar är något begränsad, enkel, dock icke osympatisk. Hennes bästa är Peterson-Bergers *Sommarsång* och *Vågor i Stranden*, vilka jag kan höra hur ofta som helst, emedan de äga något oförgängligt, och efter fyra års slit-tid håller de ännu.⁴¹

It is significant that he assigns to these pieces the quality of immortality, for he calls for one of them as

⁴¹ *Samlade verk*, LV, 21:

... her repertoire is somewhat limited, simple, but not uncongenial. Her best pieces are Peterson-Berger's "Summer Song" and "Waves on the Seashore",* which I never tire of hearing, for there is something immortal about them, and they still stand up after four years of wear.

* Swedish composer W. Peterson-Berger (1867-1948) published "*Sommarsången*" and "*Vågor i stranden*" in 1896 and 1900 respectively (*Ibid.*, 187, n. 21).

he lies dying. His call for help has caused the music from downstairs to be broken off in mid-composition:

-- Spela mera! skrek han då. Sommarsången! vill jag ha! -- Två minuters sällhet för ett liv i helvetet! Två minuter, på verandan, under syrenerna, makan, barnet, fränder och vänner, trogna tjänare, vin, musik, blommor!⁴²

As signalled by his final vision, the world he is now entering is a summer world, even if it lacks many of the associations he has just enumerated. "Sommarsången" becomes, then, a bridge between the inner and outer stories, just as "Le Charme" links all three.

As in the two outer stories, music also has an infernal aspect. Contrasted to the sometimes sweet, sometimes plaintive music of the young wife is that played by the curator's maid while he is out; through no fault of his own, this earns him the ill will and even the persecution of his neighbours:

Nu hör jag steg ... i min våning.... Det är Johanna, jungfrun som.... ... går ut i salen och öppnar pianot med en hårnål -- ... hon spelar naturligtvis Gubben Noak därför att fulare musik finns icke; plågar mina grannar, som hämnas på mig den oskyldige. Detta var mig obekant att Johanna spelade Gubben Noak i min frånvaro -- och nu förstår

⁴² Samlade verk, LV, 61:

"Play more!" he screamed then, "Give me the 'Summer Song'! -- Two minutes of bliss for a lifetime in Hell! Two minutes on the veranda, under the lilacs, with wife, child, relatives and friends, faithful servants, wine, music, and flowers!"

jag varför en granne ... plågar mig med "Upp genom Luften" som är lika grym.⁴³

A similar negative significance is carried by the song "Glädjens blomster i jordens mull",⁴⁴ the last piece the young wife plays before eternal silence (temporarily!) breaks out downstairs.

The other principal symbol in the inner story also appears in *Spöksonaten*: a statue of Buddha which seems to tend a living plant. The curator and the young cou-

⁴³ *Samlade verk*, LV, 25:

Now I hear footsteps ... in my apartment.... It's Johanna, the maid, who.... goes out into the parlour and opens the piano with a hairpin -- ... she plays "Old Man Noah",* of course, because there's no more hideous music. She torments my neighbours, who avenge themselves on me, the innocent party. I hadn't known that Johanna played "Old Man Noah" in my absence -- and now I understand why a neighbour ... torments me with "Up through the Air", which is equally atrocious.

* "Gubben Noak" is still popular in Sweden; possessing a simple but insistent and very repetitive melody, it is not unlike "Old Macdonald's Farm" in style and effect. "Upp genom luften" has been identified (*Samlade verk*, LV, 188, n. 23) as a song by N.P. Möller (1803-60), the melody of which was later (1885) used for a popular workers' song.

⁴⁴ "The Flowers of Joy in the Dust of the Earth", an anonymous song first published in 1843 (*Ibid.*, 187, n. 23).

ple both have such statues, kept in identical locations in the two apartments:

På kakelugnens gesims sitter den vita Buddha alldeles som uppe hos mig. Den kom till oss just när barnet annonserades, och med den följde en rotskiva av Sarothamnus, vilken skulle växa och blomma utan vatten och jord. Den växte verkligen under Buddhas milda blickar, sköt blad och blomknopp, men så bröts den av. Buddha sitter där ännu, väntande, tålig, undrande över mänskornas otålighet.⁴⁵

Three symbols converge here: Buddha, the colour white, and the plant. All three are symbols of spiritual growth and illumination, as well as of the self.⁴⁶ Because Buddha holds or contains the plant, seems to nurture it, and yet continues unchanged after it has been snapped off, and because the period in which it flourishes seems to be between the birth of a child and a marriage crisis in each case, the whole may be seen as symbolizing the continuity of spiritual development, indeed the continuity of the self, through experiences

⁴⁵ Samlade verk, LV, 25:

On the cornice of the tile stove sits the white Buddha, just as he does upstairs in my apartment. Its arrival coincided exactly with the child's birth announcement, and with it came a root cutting of Sarothamnus, which was supposed to grow and flower without water or soil. It did actually grow under the gentle gaze of Buddha; it leafed and budded, but then it got broken off. Buddha sits there still, waiting patiently and marvelling at the impatience of humans.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jung, *Dreams*, 200; Borden, 107; Cirlot, 53-56; Chetwynd, 71, 147, 154.

which seem at the time to be destructive. So regarded, it is a figure of the curator's final illumination, achieved through suffering, and is another link uniting the three stories of the novella.

Another such symbol is that of masks, which first appears in the inner story and works its way out, as it were. When the young architect and his bride move in below the curator, he spies on the preparations for the wedding reception, which will be held there, and notes with cynicism, but also from experience, that the atmosphere of harmony and celebration will not last: "-- I morgon ha de kastat maskerna! tänkte jag."⁴⁷ It recurs in the middle story, as the curator's relatives achieve influence over his wife and begin turning her against him (see above). Finally, in a passage implying that life is an illusion, the dying curator reflects: "Sådant är livet ... en muffbal med masker och domino; demaskering efter klockan tolv!"⁴⁸

The richly textured and highly symbolic *Taklagsöl*, then, is a variation on the great themes of the post-Inferno years: life as an illusion, and redemption through suffering. In his letter to Schering in April, 1907, Strindberg says he first conceived of *Taklagsöl*

⁴⁷ *Samlade verk*, LV, 20: "Tomorrow they will have laid aside their masks," I thought."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 53: "Such is life: a servants' ball with masks and dominoes; unmasking after midnight!"

as a drama, and a letter the following month reveals that he still contemplated the dramatization of the piece. Some of the changes he entertains would place the resultant play firmly among the chamber plays:

Taklagsöl är klar; effekten är den gröna lampan (ögat) och sedan det växande huset, flaggstången med flaggan. Men mannen måste sitta i stol, ej ligga i säng, läkarens öde måste liksom sköterskans sammanflätas med den döendes. Sköterskan kunde ju vara Hustrun förklädd (?) så blev det spänning i dramat. "Gröna ögat" kunde ju bli Läkaren, som är oigenkännlig för den Döende.⁴⁹

It would have made an effective play; as it stands, it would lend itself admirably, with appropriate sound effects, to a memorable radio production.

⁴⁹ Brev, 230 (from a letter to Emil Schering, May 6, 1907):

Taklagsöl is ready: the effects are the green lamp (the eye) and then the rising house, and the flag-pole with the flag. But the man should sit in a chair, not lie in bed, and the destiny of the doctor and that of the nurse, must be intertwined with that of the dying man. The nurse, of course, could be the wife in disguise (?), to give the drama tension. "The green eye", of course, could be the doctor, whom the dying man cannot recognize.

Chapter 79

Syndabocken

*Syndabocken*¹ (*The Scapegoat*, 1907) was Strindberg's last short novel. Originally planned as an episode in *Taklagsöl*, to be narrated in the first person by the curator (who becomes Libotz) and concentrating on the story of the character who developed into Askanius,² the material apparently struck Strindberg as worthy of elaboration and expansion. The result (ninety pages, compared to the six of the "Insertion") is one of his finest works in the genre.

The novel deals with the fates of two characters who are dissimilar in nature but share similar destinies. As in *Taklagsöl*, one story comments on the other, pointing out the unique aspects of the central character's destiny and how he meets it.

The central character, Libotz, is a lawyer who sets up practice in a small town. At first he tries to attract clients with a few harmless deceptions, but is unsuccessful: clients do not appear until he has performed a professional service out of charity. After this his practice goes well, but he loses respect when

¹ *Samlade verk*, LV, 65-156.

² This version was published for the first time in 1984, under the title "Inskjutning i *Taklagsöl*" ("Insertion into *Taklagsöl*"; *Ibid.*, 179-84).

he is wrongfully arrested with his father (a dishonest tradesman driven to early retirement) for being drunk and disorderly. His reputation suffers further when his clerk, Sjögren, successfully (but again unjustly) sues him for libel. He is unsuccessful in love, and an act of charity to a sick old man (his father) leads to his being unfairly accused of being a Sabbath-breaker. Finally, his landlord refuses to renew his lease, and he leaves town like a criminal. He is the scapegoat of the title.

The subplot concerns Askanius, one of the town's two successful restaurateurs. His is a simple establishment, serving moderately priced food to mainly working class patrons, often on credit; his competition is a finer, more expensive restaurant which caters principally to the professional classes and insists on cash. Because of the attractions of his riverside garden, his good food, and his easy credit, Askanius' business prospers. Then the trouble begins. He is a proud man, and is not satisfied with the humble nature of his establishment. He builds another, with ultra-modern decor, right across from his competitor (thus intimidating his customers and abandoning his garden terrace), and hopes to attract a clientele that spans the social spectrum. For a variety of reasons, the new restaurant never catches on, and Askanius is ruined. He holds on as long as possible, but eventually commits suicide rather than admit defeat.

There are two main differences between Libotz and Askanius. Libotz' sufferings and failures come about through no fault of his own, whereas Askanius' are the result of hubris; and failure affects them differently: Libotz learns to accept his destiny and therefore survives; Askanius struggles against fate, learns nothing from adversity, and is destroyed.

The link between the two stories is the friendship between their protagonists: Askanius is the only person to extend a friendly or helping hand to Libotz during his difficult period of settling in, and Libotz is Askanius' faithful customer, even when his practice is going so well he could afford to eat elsewhere, and during Askanius' adversity. Both are also friends of the public prosecutor, Tjärne, who betrays them both, accelerating and intensifying their downfalls.

In *Taklagsöl*, the symbolism is presented chiefly through the use of leitmotifs. Here it is through myth, in particular that of the scapegoat. The Jewish rite of atonement is described in Leviticus 16, which gives rules for the selection and dedication of the scapegoat, the transfer of the people's sins to it, and its expulsion into the desert. Strindberg summarizes this account near the end of the novel, as Libotz leaves town for good and hears himself called "the Scapegoat". The moment is important, for in it Libotz both recognizes and accepts his destiny:

Skämtet föreföll honom oskyldigt men sant, och han erinrade Gamla testamentets försoningsfest, där en bock belastad med allt folkets synder drevs ut i öknen invigd åt Asasel, det är: åt Den Onde, som därmed fick igen sitt.³

Although this is the first mention of the scape-goat, Libotz is recognizable as such from very early. Indeed, even his appearance betrays his ritual function: "... i hans figur och ansikte lästes ett alldeles bestämt öde skrivet. Han var dömd att lida för eget och andras...."⁴ The vicarious nature of his suffering is again pointed out after he has been unjustly arrested with his father and must endure the gossip:

Medvetandet att han var oskyldig hjälpte honom icke; mängden pressade in det onda samvetet i honom som kolsyran i flaskan, och han förlorade säkerhet, blev förvirrad som en brottsling inför domaren....⁵

³ Samlade verk, LV, 153:

He found the gibe harmless, but true, and he remembered the Old Testament feast of atonement, when a goat laden with the sins of the entire people was driven out into the desert, dedicated to Azazel, i.e., to the Evil One, who thus received back his own.

⁴ Ibid., 73:

... in his person and in his face could be read the signs of a quite definite destiny: he was condemned to suffer for himself and for others....

⁵ Ibid., 83:

Knowing that he was innocent did not help him: the mob pumped its bad conscience into him like carbon dioxide into a bottle, and he lost his certainty, became confused like a prisoner at the dock....

Later, when he visits his father in the nursing home, he must suffer for the latter's ill nature, dishonesty, and total lack of respect for others and for social conventions. Once again the scapegoat, he is laden with his father's sins, recalling the implied curse of the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:5):

Här lassade den gamle av sig alla sina fel och laster på sonen, som tigande lät fadren soulagera sig. Och skuldbelastad, med främmande skuld, gick han.... Defilén i portgången, gatloppet mellan ord som spön, kom honom åter att tänka på sitt ovanliga öde. "Fadrens missgärningar!" sade han sig, ja, det synes vara så.⁶

Suffering for the sins of others is a hard enough yoke to bear, but that is only part of the scapegoat's function: it also bears away the sins of the community, leaving it purified and at peace. After he has left it, Libotz learns that he has served just such a function, absorbing the sins of the town and leaving it cleansed and at harmony:

-- Vet du vad de kallade dig för?
Libotz visste, men svarade icke.
-- Jo, syndabocken. Och eget var att så snart två personer i staden blevo osams, så blevo de vänner igen, bara talet kom på dig.
-- Det var konstigt.

⁶ Samlade verk, LV, 150:

Here the old man unloaded all his faults and vices on to his son, who silently permitted his father to find relief. And laden with sins not his own, he went.... The reception line at the doorway, the gauntlet of lashing words, made him think once more of his unusual fate. "The sins of the fathers!" he said to himself, "yes, that seems how it is."

-- Ja, de kastade sig över din person, uttömde sitt ömsesidiga hat över dig och din advokatbyrå, och så var hatet borta.⁷

This knowledge enables Libotz finally to accept his fate, achieving peace with himself and with the world: "Och Libotz gick ut igen, på landsvägen, mot nya öden, som han anade, men icke fruktade längre."⁸

Libotz' rôle, then, is redemptive; he is, in other words, a Christ-figure. Indeed, he is several times symbolically identified with Christ, of Whom the Old Testament scapegoat is a figure. On the mountain where he struggles with God, he prays to be spared approaching sufferings, echoing the words of Christ in Gethsemane: "Han ... anade nya lidanden större än de förra, bad att få slippa kalken, men utan hopp."⁹ When Tjärne

⁷ Samlade verk, LV, 155:

"Do you know what they called you?"
Libotz knew, but did not answer.

"Yes, the Scapegoat. And strangely enough, whenever two people in town fell out, they became friends again as soon as your name was mentioned."

"That's strange."

"Yes, they threw themselves upon you, poured out their mutual hate over you and your law office, and the hate disappeared.
...."

⁸ Ibid., 156: "And Libotz set off again, on the highway, going towards new destinies, which he foresaw but no longer feared."

⁹ Ibid., 88:

He ... foresaw new sufferings, greater than those he had undergone so far, and prayed that the chalice might pass from him, but without hope.

Cf. Matthew 26:39.

has succeeded in defeating him on the field of love at the end of a particularly trying day, Libotz recalls Christ's final words from the Cross, indicating not only that his suffering in this area is at an end, but also that his sacrifice has been perfect:

... den slagne satt bara med huvudet nedböjt mot bröstet som om han uttalat de sista orden här i livet: Det är fullkomnat.¹⁰

Another, less direct, reference to Christ's chalice of suffering and humiliation, occurs when Libotz has reached the very bottom of his despair. He has just read Job 16, has recognized his own situation in the undeserved sufferings of its protagonist, and longs for death as the only possible delivery:

Det var också hans enda hopp, att få dö en gång, ty här väntade han intet gott mer, därför återstod honom endast vara beredd på allt och dricka sina förödmjukelser som vatten.¹¹

¹⁰ Samlade verk, LV, 112:

... the defeated one just sat with his head bowed to his breast, as if pronouncing the last words in this life: "It is finished."

Cf. John 19:30.

¹¹ Ibid., 117:

That was his only hope too -- to be permitted to die one day -- for he no longer expected anything good here; so all that remained for him was to be prepared for anything, and to drink his humiliations like water.

His despair is dispelled when he discovers and accepts his ritual function as a scapegoat. He is after all, he reflects, in excellent company:

Det var ju ingen tacksam eller ärofull roll, men Kristus hade ju burit samma vanhedrande börda, och det skulle betyda något, "som vi inte kunde fatta".¹²

The townspeople have supported Sjögren's suit, not because they believed him innocent, but rather in order to destroy Libotz, just as the criminal Barabbas was freed so that Christ could be sent to His death (Matthew 27:15-26):

-- Inte må du tro de älskade den där skojar Sjögren; nej det var bara för att äckla dig som de hjälpte honom, och nu när du är borta, så sjunker han som ett skepp; då de fått sin Barabbas lös bara, så dröjer det inte förrän de häktar honom igen, men lös skulle de ha'n först.¹³

¹² Samlade verk, LV, 153:

It was not, to be sure, an appreciated or honourable rôle, but had not Christ borne the same shameful burden, and that must signify something "that passes understanding".

Cf. Philippians 4:7.

¹³ Ibid., 154-55:

".... Don't imagine they loved that scoundrel Sjögren; no, they only helped him in order to sicken you, and now that you've gone he'll sink like a ship. Once they've obtained the release of their Barabbas, it doesn't take long for them to arrest him again, but first they must have him freed."

This allusion to Barabbas (and indirectly to Christ) shows that not only does Libotz eventually recognize himself as a Christ-figure, but he is also so recognized by at least some members of the community for which and at the hands of which he suffers.

These associations of Libotz with Christ are explicit. Another is implicit. Libotz, like Moses, is in the habit of confronting God atop a mountain. The mountain to which he resorts for these confrontations is named Tabor, which, according to tradition (the mountain is not named in the biblical accounts), was also the name of the mountain where the Transfiguration occurred (*Samlade verk*, LV, 196, n. 87). Part of that experience was a voice from a cloud, identifying Christ as the Son of God: "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him." (Matthew 17:5. *Jerusalem Bible*.) We do not know that Libotz has any such experience -- there are no witnesses to what transpires on his Tabor -- but he comes down altered and strengthened (i.e., figuratively transfigured):

Då blev han rädd för sig själv, ... trodde sig fördömd, ... drog ut ur staden, brottades med sin Gud på berget och kom hem lugnad och stärkt i sin fasta tro, så att han kunde fortsätta leva.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Samlade verk*, LV, 132:

Then he grew worried about himself, ... thought he was damned, ... withdrew from the town, wrestled with his God on the mountain, and came home calmed, strengthened in his faith, so that he could go on living.

This is not so dramatic a confirmation of his mission as the biblical precedent, but a similar incident near the close of the novel strengthens the parallel. After his function as a scapegoat has been revealed to him, everything seems to fall into place on Mount Tabor: he experiences a feeling of release and descends the other side of the mountain ready to face his destiny, just as Christ descended from another Mount Tabor after the Transfiguration prepared to begin His Jerusalem ministry, the prelude to His Passion and Death:

Och när han kom fram till berget, sitt Tabor, där han kämpat i natt och mörker, steg han upp på detsamma. Och nu såg han staden i fjärran omgiven av bergens murar som en fängelsegård, och det var honom som han återvunnit friheten.

Efter ett sista avsked, gick han ner på andra sidan berget, [och] kom in i ett nytt landskap....¹⁵

If Libotz is a Christ-figure in his rôle as scapegoat, he also resembles Job in that of undeserved sufferer. He first makes the connection himself, much earlier than he connects his fate with Christ's, although the biblical text which inspires the identification

¹⁵ Samlade verk, LV, 154:

And when he reached the mountain, his Tabor, where he had struggled in the dark of night, he climbed it. And now he saw the town in the distance, surrounded by mountain walls like a prison yard, and he felt he had regained his freedom.

After a last farewell, he descended the other side of the mountain [and] entered a new landscape....

consists of words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper. The words have special significance to the later Strindberg, with his sense of the illusory nature of human experience:

... han hade varit i högmässan om förmiddagen och känt sig hugsvalad av textens: I denna världen haven I tvång, men varer vid god tröst; jag haver övervunnit världen. Där hade röster viskat honom tröst och hopp, givit honom vinkar om att det var prövningar och icke straff han genomgick, att hans öde var Jobs, och hans själv en tämligen skuldfri man.¹⁶

The Book of Job deals with the problem of evil; the text from the Gospel of St. John indicates that relief from this evil, from suffering, is to be found in other-worldly values. Both sources suggest that evil and suffering are unavoidable on earth.

Libotz' most intense identification with Job is, however, far from comforting. Nevertheless, after seeing his situation accurately described, he looks forward to a natural death rather than suicide as a release from suffering, and there is a hint of a better life hereafter:

¹⁶ Samlade verk, LV, 116:

... he had been to church that morning and had felt comforted by the text: "In the world you shall have distress. But have confidence. I have overcome the world." [John 16:33. Douay-Rheims translation.] Voices had whispered to him there, words of comfort and hope, hinting to him that he was undergoing tests rather than punishments, that his was the fate of Job, and that he was himself a rather guiltless man.

Vid en bänkdörr stannade han, tog i handen en psalmbok ... och han fick upp Jobs Sextonde kapitel.

-- "Mitt ansikte är rött av gråt, och på mina ögonlock är svartaste mörker, ändock ingen orätt är i mina händer och min bön är ren. O, jord, ej övertäcke du mitt blod och ingen gräns vare för min klagan, ty si, ännu är mitt vittne i himmelen och min målsman är i höjden. Mina vänner begabba mig: till Gud gråter mitt öga, att han må skipa rätt mellan man och Gud, mellan en människas son och hans broder. Ty åren, de lätt räknade, gå sin kos och jag går den väg jag aldrig återvänder."

Det var också hans enda hopp, att få dö en gång, ty här väntade han intet gott mer....¹⁷

Before assuming the rôles of either Christ or Job, Libotz is cast as Jacob, whose struggle with an angel (or with God Himself) is recorded in Genesis 32:24-32. Like the early Jewish patriarchs, Libotz prefers to pray in solitude, preferably on a mountain. Three times

¹⁷ Samlade verk, LV, 117:

He stopped at the entrance to a pew, picked up a prayerbook ... and opened it at the sixteenth chapter of Job:

"My face is red with tears, and a vale of shadow hangs on my eyelids. This notwithstanding, my hands are free of violence, and my prayer is undefiled. Cover not my blood, O earth, afford my cry no place to rest. Henceforth I have a witness in heaven, my defender is there in the height [vv. 16-19, Jerusalem Bible translation]. My friends scorn me: but mine eyes poureth out tears unto God [v. 20, King James translation]. And O that a man might so be judged with God, as the son of man is with his companion [v. 22, Douay-Rheims translation]! For the years of my life are numbered, and I shall soon take the road of no return [v. 22, Jerusalem Bible translation]."

That was his only hope too -- to be permitted to die one day -- for he no longer expected anything good here....

in the novel, these encounters are referred to as occasions when Libotz wrestled with God. Jacob did not release God's angel until he had agreed to bless him, and the angel accordingly renamed him Israel and promised that just as he had prevailed against God, so he should prevail against men. Neither his brother Esau, in other words, nor any other man should have power to harm him. This promise (similar to the divine affirmation Christ received at the Transfiguration), is perhaps what Libotz achieves on his Mount Tabor, the result of his own struggles with God.

The biblical passages in which Libotz finds special comfort together comprise a message and a blessing: he might seem despised and rejected among men, but worldly glory is ephemeral and illusory at any rate, and God has redeemed and will protect him:

För att hålla sina tankar fria från bitterhet, gick han och upprepade språk ur Bibeln, dem han särskilt mindes, och de verkade med årtusendens hopade kraft på hans barnsliga sinne.

"Låt dig nöja åt min nåd; kraften varder i svagheten fullbordad."

"Naken kom jag ur min moders liv, naken skall jag hädan fara."

"Och du människobarn skall intet frukta dig för dem huru de döma dig; där äro väl gensträviga och vass törne emot dig och du bor ibland skorpioner."

"Ve eder då mänskorna prisa eder."

"I ären dyrt köpte, bliver icke människors trälär."¹⁸

¹⁸ Samlade verk, LV, 153-54:

To keep his thoughts free from bitterness, he left, repeating quotations from the Bible he especially remembered, and they worked with

Libotz is briefly linked to John the Baptist ("... han ... utlämnade sitt huvud på fat åt den förstkommande."¹⁹), another innocent victim. A far more interesting minor allusion occurs near the end of the novel, when Libotz stops on the other side of the mountain:

Här var han okänd och hoppades på vänligt mottagande, dock folket behövde bara se honom för att mörkna och bli tysta, men ingen vågade tilltala honom, ännu mindre förnärma honom. Märket bar han, men skyddet omgav honom.²⁰

the accumulated power of millennia on his childish nature:

"My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness." [2 Corinthians 12:9. Jerusalem Bible translation.]

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." [Job 1:21. King James translation.]

"And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions." [Ezekiel 2:6. King James translation.]

"Alas for you when the world speaks well of you!" [Luke 6:26. Jerusalem Bible translation.]

"You have been bought and paid for; do not be slaves of other men." [1 Corinthians 7:23. Jerusalem Bible translation.]

¹⁹ Samlade verk, LV, 121: "... he ... delivered his head on a platter to the first comer."

²⁰ Ibid., 154:

Here he was unknown, and he hoped for a friendly reception; the people, however, only needed see him to grow sombre and silent, but no one dared speak to him, much less offend him. He bore the mark, but it protected him.

The allusion is to the mark of Cain, who was condemned to be "a fugitive and a wanderer over the earth", but bore a mark as a warning to others not to harm him (Genesis 4:14-15). This mark is also borne by the Stranger in *Till Damaskus I*.

Here, the mark of Cain (which both arouses loathing and ensures protection) is inseparable from the scapegoat function. Its protection, furthermore, is dependent on not seeking revenge on one's tormentors (just as the suffering of the curator in *Taklagsöl* raises a barrier between him and the green eye). Strindberg links these themes in a symbol borrowed from recent scientific advances:

Den utstötte kände ... att han bar på andras hat, ondska, gemenhet, som de ympat in i honom; han kanske var serum-djuret, som bar sjukdomsgiftet, vilket i hans person skulle utarbetas till läkemedlet. Så länge han icke besvarade hatet med hat, var han oåtkomlig, men så fort han lät reta sig, kände han giftet.²¹

The rich biblical symbolism, with its theme of ritual sacrifice and atonement, is the basic structure of *Syndabocken*. Other symbols are subsidiary and sup-

²¹ Samlade verk, LV, 153:

The outcast felt ... that he bore the hate of others, their wickedness and baseness, which they injected into him; perhaps he was the serum animal, infected with the poison of the disease so that it might be transformed to medicine inside his person. So long as he did not answer hatred with hatred, he could not be affected, but as soon as he let himself be provoked, he felt the poison.

portive. Water, for instance, symbol of cleansing and purification and hence, through its use in baptism, of renewal, rebirth, and resurrection, plays a small but revealing part in the unfolding of the story. First, it helps set the scene. The town is full of old people who, it seems, have come here to die. But it is not only physically that the town is dying; it is also undergoing a spiritual death, for the inhabitants have lost their faith:

Staden ägde fordom en ryktbar hälso-brunn, och paviljongen finns kvar ännu med väggarna klädda av upphängda kryckor och käppar, minnen av lyckade kurer. Vattnet är lika kraftigt som förr ... men ingen begagnar det, ty ingen tror på dess verkningar, numera.²²

Small wonder Libotz prefers to confront God on his mountain rather than in the churches of this town! And his confrontations are spiritually productive: he comes from them cleansed and purified, having found the strength to continue. Later in the novel this is stated explicitly (see above), but the first time it happens it is presented in symbolic terms:

På hemvägen började regna, och han mottog skurarna som en hugsvalande nådegåva, lät

²² Samlade verk, LV, 253:

The town was once a celebrated spa, and the pavillion is there still, its walls covered with crutches and canes hung up in testimony of successful cures. The water is just as powerful as it ever was ... but nobody takes advantage of it, for nobody believes in its efficacy anymore.

vattnet svalka sitt ansikte och kände det som ett efterlängtat bad.²³

The colours in the novel are those of the alchemical scale of perfection, from the black of Libotz' clothing, through the black and red of Job 16:17 (see above), to the white and gold of the artificial and false perfection of Askanius' new restaurant, and the real perfection of divine justice: "... vågskålen hade han sett i tingshuset, förgylld på vit grund, med ett svärd ovanför, och den betydde rättvisan."²⁴

Apart from the scapegoat itself, animal symbolism is sparse, but nevertheless it heightens the most telling physical description in the novel. Tjärne, who helps bring about the failures of Libotz and Askanius (resulting in the former's ostracism and the latter's suicide), is associated with the Evil One:

Fiskalen Tjärne var en lång smal person med för litet huvud; som en orm skapad syntes han kunna gå genom hål bara han fick in huvet.²⁵

²³ Samlade verk, LV, 82-83:

On his way home it began to rain, and he accepted the showers as a soothing gift from above, letting the water cool his face, and feeling as if it were a longed-for bath.

²⁴ Ibid., 74: "... he had seen the scales in the courthouse, gilded against a white background, with a sword above them, and they signified justice."

²⁵ Ibid., 93:

Public prosecutor Tjärne was a tall thin man with a head that was too small: shaped like a snake, he seemed able to go through crevices if only he could get his head in.

Not only is this more evocative than the vampire symbol Strindberg might otherwise have used, it is more appropriate: Tjärne acts not so much to gain advantage, as from sheer delight in evil and destruction.

Askanius, whose story is included as a contrast to Libotz', is associated with the rising and falling (Wheel of Fortune) symbolism of many of Strindberg's earlier works, most notably *Fröken Julie*. It first appears as Askanius blabbers the secrets of his establishment to Tjärne, placing the instrument of his own destruction in the hands of his enemy, as it were:

Askanius, uppskuren levande, förtvivlad styrdes av en längtan få begå psykiskt självmord, dragande de andra med sig i avgrunden, men endast för att komma upp, ovanpå, känna sig utomordentlig, sublim i sitt fall.²⁶

No doubt these considerations play a rôle in his physical suicide as well.

The other instance of rising and falling symbolism is a contrast to the rising building in *Taklagsöl*. That building paralleled the spiritual growth of the curator, just as it balanced his physical decline; in *Syndabocken*, as a new hotel (the dining room of which will

²⁶ Samlade verk, LV, 141:

Askanius, dissected alive, disconsolate, was driven by a desire to commit psychic suicide, dragging the others with him into the abyss, but only that he might come out on top, feel himself exceptional, sublime in his fall.

take even more business from his restaurant) rises, Askanius declines both physically and spiritually:

Askanius, numera en vit gubbe stod vid sitt fönster ... betraktande Grands hus som växte ur marken. Alltefter som huset växte, tycktes gubben krympa, bokstavligen....²⁷

Askanius' name is borrowed from Virgil: the name of Aeneas' son and companion, the founder of Alba Longa and, indirectly, of Rome (Johannesson, 289). This is a comically inflated name for a small-town restaurateur, but it epitomizes his inflated image of himself as a man of judgement, sensitivity, culture, and experience, as well as the grandiose nature of his ambitions.

Finally, two references to Shakespeare are of interest in slightly different ways. Both are made by Askanius, who loves to show off his learning. The first, which is properly attributed, expresses a view of women which Strindberg would have found interesting (to say the least):

-- Så här säger Lear:

"Från midjan nedåt äro de centaurer,
Fast kvinnor ovan till;
Till gördeln blott få gudarne regera.
Allt nedinunder tillhör djävulen;
Där är helvete, där är det mörker

²⁷ Samlade verk, LV, 145:

Askanius, now an white-haired old man, stood at his window ... watching the Grand rise out of the earth. The higher the building rose, the more the old man seemed to shrink, literally....

Där är det svavelsjö ...²⁸

The other is wrongly attributed, and Askanius is totally wrong in what he says of it:

-- ... den som icke förstår ironi, den skulle aldrig få tala om Shakespeare. Par exempel, jag tror det är Köpmannen från Venedig ... som säger att livet är vävt av samma tyg som våra drömmar, inte menar han det, han låter en toker säga sådant för att visa vilken toker han är....²⁹

The reference, of course, is to Prospero's "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on...." in *The Tempest* (IV, i). Prospero is far from a fool, and he means these words in all earnest, as does Shakespeare. Needless to say, it is a sentiment with which the author of *Ett drömspel* was in full agreement. Perhaps Strindberg intends Askanius's contention that the passage from

²⁸ Samlade verk, LV, 99:

"This is what Lear says:

Down from the waist they are centaurs,
Though women all above:
But to the girdle do the gods
inherit,
Beneath is all the fiends'; there's
hell, there's darkness,
There is the sulphurous pit....

[King Lear, IV, vi.]

²⁹ Ibid., 99:

" ... those who don't understand irony shouldn't be allowed to talk about Shakespeare. Par example, I think it's the Merchant of Venice ... who says that life is woven from the same fabric as our dreams; he doesn't mean that, but puts it into the mouth of a fool, to show what a fool he is...."

King Lear is also ironic as an endorsement of those sentiments as well!

Richard Vowles traces the scapegoat theme through other Strindberg works in his introduction to a translation of the novel:³⁰

One might go so far as to say that what most of Strindberg's protagonists have in common, is the scapegoat role. Strindberg's captain, in *The Father*, dies to save the world from matriarchy. Miss Julie dies to expiate the old order and to save the world, if possible, from the purely visceral aristocracy of Jean. In a somewhat similar fashion, Indra's Daughter participates in a ritual sacrifice at the end of *A Dream Play*; and the Hyacinth Girl, of *The Ghost Sonata*, dies to save the world from vampirism and manifold deceit. In most cases there is evidence of at least a passing identification with Christ -- the scapegoat par excellence in Western society.

Strindberg once said of Kierkegaard "He was my John the Baptist." Well, if one is going to identify, why not go all the way? Strindberg did, in a kind of guileless egoism. Whether we wish it or not, we come back to the ultimate scapegoat, Strindberg himself.

That is perhaps a good place to leave Syndabocken.

³⁰ pp. vii-xix in Strindberg, *The Natives of Hemsö & The Scapegoat*. The quotation which follows is from p. xviii.

Chapter 80

Letters

Strindberg was a very prolific correspondent: his letters from 1858-1907 have been edited by Torsten Eklund and published (1948-76) in fifteen volumes, under the title *August Strindbergs brev* (*August Strindberg's Letters*). Obviously, there is enough material in the letters alone for several Ph.D. theses! I have restricted myself to Eklund's one-volume abridgement, and to such other relevant letters as have been cited by Strindberg scholars. Letters having specific reference to particular works are dealt with in the chapters covering those works; those cited here are of more general application and interest.

Although Strindberg tried his hand at most literary forms (usually with success), he was primarily a dramatist, and considered himself as such. Indeed, in a letter to his German translator, Emil Schering, he goes so far as to say that not only are his works of prose fiction dramatic, but they were really a kind of notebook, preserving plots, characters, and ideas until such time as greater access to the theatre could permit him to turn them into plays (a previous letter to Schering had revealed that the short novel, *Taklagsöl*, had originally been conceived as a play):

Ja, det är hemligheten med alla mina berättelser, noveller, sagor, att de äro dramer.

Då nämligen teatrarna stängdes för långa tider för mig, påfann jag att skriva mina dramer i episk form -- till framtida bruk.¹

It is not surprising, then, that he should see life in theatrical terms: the world a stage, his life a play, and himself and the people with whom he came in contact merely players. Thus, in 1887, the year in which *Fadren* was written (February) and *Le plaidoyer d'un fou* begun (September), and the year in which the petition for divorce from Siri von Essen was filed (August: the divorce did not become final until 1891), he writes (in a letter to Swedish writer Axel Lundegård, which deals mainly with *Fadren*) of the rôles a man is forced to play in the tragicomedy of marriage: "Ja, vi få ibland spela kyska, ingenus, okunniga, bara för att komma åt det samlag vi vilja!"²

¹ Brev, 230 (May 6, 1907):

Yes, that is the secret with all of my tales, short stories, and stories: they are dramas. You see, when the theatres were closed to me for long periods, I hit upon the idea of writing my dramas in epic form -- for future use.

The previous letter referred to was written April 17, 1907, and is cited in the chapter on *Taklagsöl*.

² *Ibid.*, 99 (October 17, 1887): "Yes, we sometimes have to play the rôles of celibates, ingenus,* simpletons, just to attain the sexual intercourse we desire!"

* Strindberg uses the (masculine) French word rather than its Swedish form, *ingeny*, which is feminine (i.e., *ingénue*).

Almost six years later, in March 1893, he is living in Berlin, and courting the Austrian journalist, Frida Uhl, whom he had met in January of that year. He must have been very much in love, for he seems to recognize from the start that the relationship is potentially volatile. He suggests that initially both of them had been playing parts, but that she has begun to take hers seriously:

Du har spelat rollen av min goda gamla tant, och leken har roat mig, därför att allt vad du gör klär dig. Men du har fastnat i den rollen, du har missbrukat den makt jag gav dig och jag har blivit din löjlige slav.³

Later in the same letter, he sees himself as a skillful director or master magician, who has shaped and formed the talents of this gifted actress, and the powers themselves have rôles in the play. The principal part, however, is a variation on the Omphale myth:

Mörkrets makter driva sitt förhatliga spel och där är det endast siaren som ser klart.

Jag är siare, och jag vill icke bliva en leksak för min egen skaparkraft i en ung kvinna, tillräckligt älskvärd för att kunna förföra en gud.

³ Brev, 141 (March 16, 1893):

You have been playing the rôle of my kindly old aunt, and the game has amused me, because everything you do suits you. But you have got stuck in the rôle, you have misused the power I gave you, and I have become your foolish slave.

Hur stor din makt än är, så slår du mig i fjättrar ... eftersom det var jag själv, som lärde dig mina trollkonster.⁴

The difference in ages between Strindberg and Frida Uhl is hinted at here (he was forty-four; she would not be twenty-one until the following month). What seems to have begun as a master-pupil relationship (or one in which the two participants at least played those rôles) has reversed itself. A week later, Strindberg reveals that from the beginning he had, in fact, been playing a rôle which made this reversal possible. The reason he gives for his rôle-playing is less coarse than that he expressed in 1887, but perhaps amounts to the same thing:

Första kvällen ... hos dig, som du skänkte mig, tillbad du mig som en gud, räckte mig rosor och vin. Från första ögonblicket var jag vansinnigt förälskad i dig, men din ungdom ingav mig en djup vordnad, och ju mer du såg upp till mig som till en stor man, desto mer anpassade jag mig till en mindre roll, för att giva dig möjlighet att vinna mig.

Jag har spelat liten, svag utan att veta det, för att du skulle bli i stånd att älska mig, lika mycket på vilket sätt. Så stal jag mig in i ditt hjärta, och du, född till

⁴ Brev, 141-42 (March 16, 1893):

The powers of darkness perform their hateful game, and it is only the seer who sees clearly.

I am a seer, and I do not wish to become a plaything of my own creation: a young woman, lovable enough to seduce a god.

Your power is so great that you have cast me into bonds ... and it was I myself who taught you my magician's arts.

moder, utvecklade den moderliga sidan av ditt kärleksbehov.⁵

This identification of the loved one with the mother-figure was typical of Strindberg, as previously seen in *Han och Hon*, where it eventually led to tension between the mother and the mistress, two archetypes which, embodied in the same woman, were irreconcilable. What is amazing in these two letters is that Strindberg reveals he is fully aware of what is going on in his psyche insofar as this young woman is concerned, yet he still presses on toward marriage with her (May, 1893).

The extent to which he realizes the potentially explosive nature of the situation into which he feels himself drawn is apparent in the Omphale symbolism, six years after the writing of *Fadren*. It has been suggested in the passages cited above, but it is most explicit in the earlier letter:

Du har kastat ditt silkesnät över huvudet på mig, och jag sprattlar redan däri och

⁵ Brev, 142 (March 22, 1893):

The first evening ... you allowed me to visit you, you addressed me as a god, offered me roses and wine. From the first moment, I was madly in love with you, but your youth held me in deep respect, and the more you looked up to me as a great man, the more I adapted myself to a lesser rôle, in order to give you the possibility of winning me.

I have pretended to be small and weak without knowing it, so that you should be in a position to love me, no matter how. I thus stole my way into your heart and you, born to be a mother, revealed the maternal side of your need to love.

jag ser för mig det ögonblick, då din Herkules kommer att fatta sländan, Omfale! Om det fortfar som hittills.⁶

In a long letter to his friend Leopold Littmansson the following year, in a passage somewhat reminiscent of Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage" - Seven Ages of Man conceit, Strindberg generalizes on the development of the male psyche. He sees three ages rather than seven, and the first two of those are distinguished by rôle-playing. Jung would be in essential agreement with Strindberg's observations here:

Leon Daudet är kanske ej på orätt väg då han i Haerès menar att mannen gör sin ontogenie (lika svavlet) icke blott i fosterpipan utan även sedan i livet, så: den unge mannen till trettio repeterar modren med kvinnans hysteri, liderlighet, fåfänga och all annan uselhet; mellan 30-40 ger han igen fadren med dess äregirighet, kraft och känslolöshet: efter 40 först kommer jaget, sådant det avlats av dessa far- och mor-repetitioner.⁷

⁶ Brev, 141 (March 16, 1893):

You have cast your net of silk over my head, and I am already floundering in it, and I clearly see that moment when your Hercules will take up the distaff, Omphale! If things continue as they have been going.

⁷ Ibid., 158:

Léon Daudet* is perhaps not on the wrong track when he says in Haerès that man (like sulphur) undergoes ontogeny** not only in the womb but also after birth, as follows: the young man under thirty rehearses the mother, with the woman's hysteria, lechery, vanity, and every other wretchedness; between thirty and forty he recreates the father, with his ambition, power, and lack of emotion; only after forty does the ego appear, offspring of these father- and mother-rehearsals.

* Léon Daudet (1868-1942): French political journalist

A letter to Emil Schering in early spring, 1907 deals with *Spöksonaten*, and is discussed more fully with reference to that play; what is of interest here is his characterization of the Colonel in that play as the victim of an illusion, but an illusion he has created himself: he is both actor in and audience of a play he has penned himself:

Människorna ... skryta med sin inbillade lycka, och i allmänhet döljer man sitt elände. Översten spelar sin autocomedie till slut....⁸

But if life is a play which we must act out on the stage of the world, creating illusions which replace reality, Strindberg is nevertheless very clear on one point: the pieces he creates for the theatre are plays (i.e., fiction), and are not to be confused with the realities of his own life. He draws upon his own experiences, of course, but he also draws on the experi-

and novelist.

** ontogeny: the origin and development of the individual being (as distinguished from phylogeny: that of the tribe or species) (OED). Strindberg uses the French form of the word.

⁸ Brev, 227 (March 27, 1907):

People ... make a show of their imagined happiness, and in general hide their misery. The Colonel plays his auto-comedy to the end....

ences of others, and the whole is shaped and expanded by imagination (i.e., invention). He seems to foresee here the principal approach critics will take to his works, treating them as autobiographical documents -- and to disapprove! The letter is also to Schering, and was written about a week later than the one cited above:

Nu ber jag Er, läs mina nya dramer endast som sådana; det är mosaik som vanligt, ur andras och eget liv, men var så god och ta icke det som autobiografi, eller bekännelser. Det som icke stämmer med faktum är diktat, icke ljuget.⁹

The same might be said of his autobiographical novels: autobiography, yes, but fictionalized!

The letters, however, are both autobiographical and confessional, even if they contain a good deal of dramatization both of himself and others, such as is implied by the relationship he saw between life and theatre. The most striking example of this so far has been the Hercules-Omphale symbolism in the letters to Frida Uhl. Omphale is one of the rôles played by woman. Another is that of goddess: mother-goddess, love goddess, or, disastrously, both at once. A telling passage

⁹ Brev, 228 (April 2, 1907):

I now beg of you, read my new dramas only as such: they are mosaics, as usual, of my own and others' lives, but please do not take them as autobiography, or confessions. What does not correspond to fact is invented, not falsified.

in a letter to Axel Lundegård draws on this rôle of woman as goddess, and what follows when the devotee of the goddess loses faith in her:

Jag var övergångsmannen i Sverige, men var nog romantikus att inte kunna leva utan "ideal". Mitt var förkroppsligat i en kvinna, ty jag var kvinnodyrkare. När det föll, föll jag!¹⁰

This was written during the break-down of Strindberg's marriage to Siri von Essen. We have seen above how the woman who became his second wife was endowed with mythic properties, and indeed, assumed the rôle of mother-goddess. When that marriage also ends, he is again sunk in bitterness and despair. This is when he conceives his idea of founding a monastery for kindred spirits, a plan he unfolds in a long letter to Leopold Littmansson (see below). The goal of the monastery is to be:

Andens odling genom isolering och avstängning från kontakt med de orena: emancipation från dyra och onyttiga levnadsvanor. Enkelhet i mat och dryck.¹¹

¹⁰ Brev, 102 (November 12, 1887):

I was the man of change in Sweden, but I was enough of a romantic not to be able to live without an "ideal". Mine was incarnate in a woman, for I was a worshipper of woman. When it [i.e., my ideal] fell, I fell!

¹¹ Ibid., 158 (Summer, 1894):

The cultivation of the spirit through withdrawal and isolation from contact with the unclean: emancipation from expensive and unnecessary habits. Simplicity in food and drink.

The "unclean" (and perhaps also the "expensive and unnecessary habits") evidently include woman. It is during this period especially that Strindberg develops his well-known misogyny. Having twice failed to make a success of marriage, he resolves to have nothing more to do with women, who have brought him a modicum of brief happiness, but much enduring pain and misery. He reveals this pain and the anguish of separation in a letter to Torsten Hedlund, resolving henceforth to lead a celibate life (he has apparently reached the conclusion that sex even within marriage is sinful):

Jag har varit bunden med blonda rep och svarta flätor, rosiga barnarmar, men jag har slitit alla band, så att blodet runnit. Måtte frestelserna blott vara slut! Ensamheten är förfärlig och lidandet oerhört, men jag brinner hellre upp än jag återvänder till synden, helgad eller icke!¹²

This anguished and bitter passage is remarkable for its incorporation of the slavery (Omphale) symbol. The end of the final sentence is a reversal of the admonition of St. Paul: "it is better to marry than to burn" (I Corinthians 7:9. King James translation).

¹² Brev, 173 (October 30, 1895):

I have been bound with blond ropes and black braids, with the rosy arms of children, but I have broken all bonds, so the blood flowed. If only the temptations would end! The loneliness is terrible and the suffering enormous, but I will burn up rather than return to sin, sanctified or not!

Ten days later he again writes to Hedlund and expands upon his misogyny: what he hates is not so much woman herself, as the effect that she has on him (and she could not have this effect if he did not love her so). The letter refers to his current interest in Buddhism (an interest which finds its most developed dramatic expression in *Ett drömspel*):

Som buddhist är jag, lik Buddha och hans tre stora lärjungar, kvinnohatare, emedan jag hatar jorden därför att den binder min ande och därför att jag älskar den. Kvinnan är för mig jorden med all dess härligheter, bandet som binder; och allt av det ondaste jag sett, är kvinnokön.¹³

In 1897 Strindberg returns briefly to Sweden, where he writes *Inferno* (in French: he is obviously not planning to remain in Sweden). In a letter to his daughter Kerstin,¹⁴ he indicates that although he is working very hard and is happy to be doing so, he nevertheless misses her mother, in the year in which his divorce from her becomes final. Woman has undergone

¹³ Brev, 177 (November 10, 1895):

As a Buddhist I am, like Buddha and his three great disciples, a woman-hater, since I hate the earth because it binds my spirit and because I love it. Woman is for me the earth, with all its splendours: the bond that binds; and the most evil of all that I have seen is the female sex.

¹⁴ Christine Strindberg, called Kerstin, was born May 26, 1894 (d. 1956), the only child of Strindberg and Frida Uhl. This letter was written to her when she was not yet three years old: the author is obviously using this means to communicate with her mother.

another symbolic transformation: no longer is she the tie that binds the spirit of the hero to earth, but has become Beatrice, Dante's embodiment of spiritual inspiration and divine revelation:

Är trött och slö av idel skriveri, men jag är glad när jag skriver. Inferno (helvetet) trivs icke utan Beatrice....¹⁵

Before too much longer, after his return to Sweden for good, Strindberg finds another Beatrice, in the person of Harriet Bosse. They meet in 1900, become engaged and marry in 1901, have a child in 1902, and separate in 1903, becoming divorced in 1904. That marriage is treated most fully in *Ockulta dagboken*. The first marriage lasted fourteen years, the second four, and the third three, counting from wedding to divorce, but all three were in fact over much earlier than the divorce dates imply (after ten, one, and two years, respectively). The anguish of the disintegration of these marriages left a far deeper mark on Strindberg and his writing than did the happy times, and contributed to his growing persuasion that all earthly happiness was illusory. These domestic experiences, the conclusions about life which he drew from them, and his religious conversion, all unite to cause him to place

¹⁵ Brev, 187 (May 4, 1897):

Am exhausted and dull from writing to the exclusion of everything else, but I am happy when I am writing. Inferno (Hell) is no fun without Beatrice....

all hope for happiness in the afterlife, as he makes clear in a letter to Harriet Bosse after their marriage too has failed:

Jag sträver uppåt, men går nedåt.... Min enda tröst finner jag nu hos Buddha som säger mig rent ut att livet är fantasma, en Trugbild, som vi skola se rättvänt i ett annat liv. Mitt hopp och min framtid ligger på andra sidan....¹⁶

Before he attains faith in the afterlife, however, he already yearns for an escape from the world of illusion and suffering, and this yearning finds expression in his desire to establish a monastery.

The monastery is an escapist dream, a haven from a world of unrealized ambitions and very real sufferings. In Strindberg's literary output it appears most frequently in the post-Inferno works, but the notion was well formulated long before that. In 1894, in the aftermath of his second marriage, he writes a long letter to Leopold Littmansson, inviting him to join him in just such a venture. His first task, as he sees it, is to acquire a group of rich disciples, who will be able to finance the institution he envisages: one equipped

¹⁶ Brev, 223 (October 4, 1905):

I strive upwards, but go downwards.... I take my only comfort from Buddha, who tells me quite plainly that life is a phantasma, an apparition in a mirror, which we shall see turned right way round in another life. My hope and my future lie on the other side....

for the tranquil pursuit of all his interests: books, painting, alchemy, music, and gardening:

Har Du allvar i själen, och vill bli någon, göra något, så tag ditt kors och följ mig. Jag går till Ardennerna och hyr ett hus; stiftar klostret, när jag har en lärjunge. Stadgar och dräkt (variant på Dominikanernas!) färdiga. Efter 30 dagar skall jag ha huset fullt, och med rika ynglingar som skola köpa ett riktigt gammalt kloster -- i Frankrike! och inreda med bibliotek, ateljéer, laboratorium, orgelsal och trädgård!¹⁷

The monastery is to be a mutually beneficial institution, with the members supporting each other in their common goal of spiritual perfection and in their artistic endeavours (Littmansson had musical ambitions). Curiously, Strindberg casts himself, as head of the order, in a feminine rôle:

Du frågar vad jag vill Dig! -- Jag behöver en som tror; och Du behöver en jordemoder som drar ut ungarne åt Dig! Är det ej fair play! Utan illusioner!¹⁸

¹⁷ Brev, 154 (Summer, 1894):

If you are in earnest, and want to be somebody, do something, take up your cross and follow me. I am going to the Ardennes to rent a house, and will found a monastery when I have a disciple. The rules and the habit (a variation of the Dominicans'!) are ready. In thirty days I will have the house full, and that with rich young men, who will buy a proper old monastery -- in France! -- and equip it with a library, studios, a laboratory, an organ room, and gardens!

¹⁸ Brev, 154 (Summer, 1894):

You ask what I want from you! -- I need one who believes; and you need a midwife who will pull children out of you! Is that not "fair play"! Without illusions!

But the monastery will have another, even higher, goal: the formation of supermen. The term is not used when the concept is first mentioned in the letter, but Strindberg here defines what is involved:

Ett kloster ... skulle ha denna uppgift (...). Att genom bekämpande av djuret frambringa ett skönt exemplar av människa: undertryckande av de vegetativa och animala funktionerna för att befordra de effektiva och intellektuella.¹⁹

To this end, the monastery is to have a strict rule, but Strindberg abhors externally imposed discipline, so the members of the order will not censure each other or force adherence to the rule: what is freely chosen will be freely followed:

I klostret får ej väntas personlig frihet, då klostrets idé är uppfostran till övermänniska och uppfostran är tvång på de lägre drifterna. Men tvånget under regeln är självvalt, och personlig disciplin eller muntliga tillrättavisningar existera ej.²⁰

¹⁹ Brev, 158:

A monastery ... should have this goal (...). To create, through struggling against the animal, a beautiful specimen of mankind: suppressing the vegetable and animal functions in order to foster the effectual and intellectual.

²⁰ Ibid., 159:

In the monastery one must not expect to find personal liberty, for the idea of the monastery is the training of supermen, and training is constraint on the baser instincts. But constraint under the rule is self-chosen, and personal discipline or verbal reprimands do not exist.

This is an important point for Strindberg; in another letter (to Torsten Hedlund) he avers that the vow of obedience is one of the two main obstacles to his seeking refuge in a Catholic monastery: "Jag har tänkt på ett katolskt kloster, men därmed följer bekännelse och en lydnad som jag hatar."²¹

Strindberg then grows lyrical. He imagines that his plan will work, that he and his disciples will succeed in becoming supermen, whereupon they will emerge from their cloister and dazzle the world with their accomplishment, having first exchanged their black habits for white in token of their spiritual perfection:

När vi uppfostrat oss så att vi förete den högsta typen av mänsklighet, då först visa vi oss! Som frälsningsarmén! Vi bygga ett vitt drakskepp med guld och färger; kläda oss i den vita högtidsdräkten och ro en vallfart utför floden Aisne; segla med blåa sidensegel när vinden är med i Seine; gå igenom Paris, utan att debarkera; spelande nya instrument dem jag uppfunnit, nya melodier, dem jag låter naturen (slumpen) uppfinna; sjungande sånger i tonarter med kvart och åttondels heltoner som ingen hört; och så segla vi in i Marne uppåt igen till Aisne där vi bo!²²

²¹ Brev, 175 (November 10, 1895): "I have thought of a Catholic monastery, but that involves confession and an obedience which I hate."

²² Ibid., 161:

When we have so formed ourselves that we embody the highest type of humanity, only then will we show ourselves! Like the Salvation Army! We will build a white Viking ship decorated with gold and bright colours, array ourselves in our white festive habits, and row on pilgrimage down the River Aisne; sail with blue silk sails when the wind is with us

Strindberg was to realize this dream in a way he did not expect: the musical instruments of his own invention and the songs no one had ever heard were his literary legacy to the world, particularly to the theatre!

Despite Littmansson's apparent lack of enthusiasm, Strindberg maintains the vision. When he writes of it to Torsten Hedlund the following year the Nietzschean elements have disappeared, however, and the monastery has become principally a place of retreat from the world and its suffering:

... jag frågar ofta: varför gör ni ej Klostret, alla världströtta söka, fristaden med ensamhet i sällskap, där man kunde med en sträng regel, askes, symboler, hålla anden fri från vardagslivets inflytelser. Jag har sedan länge varit betänkt på en sådan stiftelse, upprätthållet av måttligt arbete, och -- varför ej -- tiggeri, sanktionerat av regeringarne, märk väl för dem som bära ordens dräkt och äro förtjänta. Missbruket torde väl knappt växa ut, då förödmjukelsen är större än behaget. Eremitståndet har jag också tänkt på, men därmed följer frestelserna dem öknerna icke kunde skydda en Antonius

—
on the Seine; go through Paris without debarking; playing, on new instruments I shall invent, new melodies, which I shall let nature (chance) invent; singing songs in keys possessing quarter- and eighth-tones which no one has ever heard; and so we will enter the Marne and sail again up to Aisne, where we live!

ifrån.²³

Whether anything might ever have come of these schemes had Strindberg been successful in attracting one or more disciples is an interesting speculation. At any rate, by 1897 he seems to have abandoned the plan, although not the ideal. In the letter to Kerstin Strindberg cited above, he announces his intention to enter a Catholic monastery in France upon completion of *Inferno*:

När jag har fått min *Inferno* tryckt, går jag säkert i kloster, bland Frères Saint Jean de Dieu. Sjukvårdare och munkar.
Därhän har det gått.²⁴

²³ Brev, 175 (November 10, 1895):

... I often ask myself: why don't you establish the Monastery which all the world-weary seek, the sanctuary with solitude in community, where, with a strict rule, asceticism, and symbols, one could keep the spirit free from the influences of ordinary life? I have been thinking of such an institution for a long time, one maintained by moderate work and -- why not? -- begging, sanctioned by the governments, mind, for those who wear the habit of the order and are deserving. Abuse could scarcely arise, for the humiliation would be greater than the pleasure. I have also considered the hermit state, but that involves temptations, from which the desert could not protect even St. Anthony.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 188 (May 4, 1897):

When I have had my *Inferno* printed, I am definitely entering a monastery, with the Frères Saint Jean de Dieu. Tenders of the sick and monks.
It has come to that.

Why Strindberg should have chosen the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God is not known, although perhaps it had something to do with the fact that the founder of the order was himself in his forties when he commenced his religious life. Curiously, St. John of God is the patron saint of booksellers and printers, as well as of nurses and the sick.

At any rate, Strindberg did return to France when he had completed *Inferno*, but he did not enter a monastery; instead, he wrote *Legender* (*Legends*, 1897-98). The monastery continues to beckon intermittently in his post-inferno works, however, as a symbol of refuge from the world of illusion and suffering, and of the quest for spiritual perfection.

Two letters contain interesting references to the world as illusion not dealt with elsewhere. The first is in an early letter to Frida Uhl. It has already been noted how strangely conscious Strindberg seemed, when he was courting her, of the dangers the relationship held for him; that impression is supported by his stated opinion (in a love letter!) that love itself is an illusion:

Jag skulle vilja vandra vid Er sida, evigt och ändlöst under träd, vid havstranden, över berg och dal. Är det vansinne? Har jag trötat ut Er? Är Ni rädd att Er själ skall smälta samman med min? Tror Ni att jag vill sluka Er som en kannibal? Är Ni så medveten, att Ni inte längre kan hänge Er åt livets ljuvaste illusion, den gudomliga lögnen, som

gör oss lyckligare än den mest upphöjda sanning?²⁵

The second passage generalizes this opinion to cover life itself: even the pleasures of his beloved archipelago are fleeting; he writes to Richard Bergh after returning to Stockholm from a summer in the archipelago (in Furusund = Fagervik):

Det var bara skioptikonbilder jag gav Dig från Furusund! Förvandlingsbilder, dissolving views! Men så är väl hela livet. Två minuters sällhet för trettio dagars tortyr. Det är priset!²⁶

Happiness is an illusion purchased with suffering! Reference has been made to Strindberg's suffering from loneliness, which is perhaps what drove him to marriage over and over again, even though he seemed to realize

²⁵ Brev, 137-38 (February 26, 1893):

I would like to wander by your side, endlessly and forever beneath trees, by the seaside, over mountains and valleys. Is that madness? Have I worn you out? Are you afraid your soul will melt into mine? Do you think I will devour you like a cannibal? Are you so self-possessed that you can no longer indulge in life's sweetest illusion, the divine lie, which makes us happier than the most sublime truth?

²⁶ Ibid., 217 (September 14, 1904):

It was only sciopticon* pictures I gave you from Furusund! Changing images, "dissolving views"! But isn't all of life like that? Two minutes of happiness for thirty days of torture. That is the price!

* A magic lantern adapted for the exhibition of photographed objects (OED).

that his marriages were doomed to failure. Another broken marriage, and separation from the offspring of that marriage, left him even lonelier. Loneliness is something from which he also suffered vis-à-vis the world in general, particularly when he was being attacked from all sides for his iconoclastic works; as in the former case, this loneliness is a consequence of his own deliberate actions, however, and he seems also aware of that. A letter to the Norwegian author Alexander Kielland describes the uproar following the publication of *Svenska folket*: "Jag står så helvetets ensam i denna eldsvåda jag legat till."²⁷ The same symbol (destruction by a fire of one's own making) appears in a letter three years later, this time to Norwegian author Jonas Lie, but the personal reference of the former instance is here universalized: "Jag tror världsbranden förestår då vi skola förgås alla i en enda stor brasa som vi själva tända!"²⁸ This is, of course, how Hercules died.

After the collapse of the second marriage, he writes to Frida Uhl expressing his guilt, his doubts of her sincerity (illusion, again!), his feeling that he

²⁷ Brev, 52 (October 3, 1881): "I stand so infernally alone in this conflagration I have prepared."

²⁸ Ibid., 74 (October, 1884): "I believe that the fire of general destruction [i.e., Armageddon] draws near, when we shall all perish in one great fire, ignited by ourselves !"

was born to be an outcast, and his loneliness, in which he lacks even the solace of religion:

... ändå är jag rädd att ha gjort dig ont; jag är rädd ... trots mina tvivel på uppriktigheten av dina känslor.... Ser du: jorden är de onda och de grymma! Konsten att göra ont är en gåva av himmelen som blivit mig förvägrad, och utkastad i öknen som tjänstekvinnans son är jag född för öknen, där jag skall förgås ensam, eller måste jag skapa mig en Gud som beskyddar mig mot de onda andarna.²⁹

In December 1896 Strindberg finds himself in Malmö, a city he apparently detests, especially at that time of the year, when days are short and grey. He wants to impress on Frida Uhl (the letter is ostensibly written to the two-year old Kerstin) how unhappy he is, perhaps hoping for a reconciliation (the seasonal symbolism would seem to suggest this, as well as other passages in the same letter), but the grime of industrial Malmö seems to take on a more universal significance (life itself), and clouds are well-known post-Inferno symbols of the afterlife. The path strewn with

²⁹ Brev, 171 (February, 1895):

... nevertheless I am afraid I have done you wrong; I am afraid ... in spite of my doubts about the sincerity of your feelings.... You see, the word consists of the evil and the cruel! The art of doing evil is a gift from heaven which has been denied me: cast out into the desert like the son of the bondswoman, I am destined for the desert, where I shall perish alone; or must I fashion myself a God who will protect me from the evil spirits?

thorns, another symbol for life, is recognizable from Dödsdansen and other works:

Livet tager och ger, livets träd är på ont och gott: efter vintern kommer vår och efter sommaren vinter. Men här i dimmornas och mörkrets land skulle du dö, nyckelpiga! Här gråter himlen smuts, havet är smutsigt. Jorden är smuts, själen får den sanna längtan uppåt, över molnen. O ve! Men än sedan! Det står så skrivet och den som kan läsa, tar sitt kors och vandrar törnestigen till slut.³⁰

As if to soften the harshness of these lines, he writes again the following day (from Copenhagen); the bleakness of the previous letter is gone, but the softening takes on (perhaps unintentionally) the form of a familiar Strindberg symbol for human love: roses and thorns united on the same plant:

Du är alltså i Dornach, där det finns törnen, men där också mina rosor ha blommat och du har knoppats -- du min lilla vildros!³¹

³⁰ Brev, 186 (December 11, 1896):

Life takes and it gives, the tree of life bears both evil and good; after winter comes spring and after summer, winter. But here in the land of fogs and darkness you would die, ladybird! Here the heavens weep dirt, the sea is dirty. The world is dirt, the soul truly yearns upwards, over the clouds. Alas! But what then? It is written, and he who can read, let him take up his cross and travel the thorny path to the end.

³¹ Ibid.:

And so you are at Dornach,* where there are thorns, but where my roses have also bloomed and you have budded -- my little wild rose!

* Dornach was the name of the estate of Frida Uhl's parents at Amstetten, 100 km. west of Vienna. It is the

In a letter to Schering written the same day as he sent him *Spöksonaten*, Strindberg reveals that he suffered greatly during the writing of that play: he gave it the subtitle *Kama Loka*,³² but specifies that this subtitle is not to be used: it is a purely private indication of the suffering the writing of the play has occasioned him. The implication is that the suffering was of a psychological nature, but it was physical as well, as the letter goes on to relate: "Jag har lidit som i Kama Loka (Scheol) under skrivningen och mina händer ha blödit (bokstavligen)."³³

The cause of this bleeding was probably an outbreak of eczema, from which Strindberg suffered periodically (most notably during the *Inferno* crisis, when the condition was aggravated by his chemical experiments), but he obviously sees a mystical significance in the phenomenon. Indeed, it provided the basis for *Den blödande handen* (The Bleeding Hand), which was to have been Opus 4 of the Chamber Plays (i.e., it would

location of the Rose Room in *Till Damaskus I*, and is also the setting of *Advent*.

³² Brandell (*Skrifter*, XII, 367) says that this is the theosophists' name for Hell. Strindberg no doubt would have seen significance in the fact that Kama is the name of the Hindu god of love!

³³ Brev, 227 (March 27, 1907): "I have suffered as in Kama Loka (Scheol) during the writing, and my hands have bled (literally)."

have come between *Spöksonaten* and *Pelikanen*), but he subsequently destroyed it (on April 2, 1907). His reason for doing so was that the play was a self-defence and as such a defiance of fate, and he feared even more suffering would result were he to publish the play. The letter is again to Schering:

I mitt Karma eller Öde tyckes ingå, att jag icke få försvara mig med andra ord: att jag är dömd i vissa viktiga punkter lida oskyldigt (i andra icke). Och om jag söker försvara mig, straffas jag såsom för brott mot mitt Ödes-lag (Karma).

Det brända Opus IV var ett självförsvar, och därför brann det.³⁴

There is a strong Buddhist influence in this passage, and it is interesting to note that Strindberg is realistic enough to admit that not all of his sufferings are undeserved! His literary legacy would have been greatly reduced had he systematically put into practice the principle followed here, but perhaps he feels that his life might have been much happier had works such as *Le plaidoyer d'un fou* never been published!

At any rate, Strindberg finds peace at the end of his life, a peace whose main elements are a conviction

³⁴ Brev, 228 (April 2, 1907):

My Karma or Fate involves not being able to defend myself: in other words, I am doomed in certain important points to suffer innocently (in others not). And if I seek to defend myself, I am punished, as if for a crime against the decrees of my Fate (Karma).

The burnt Opus IV was a self-defence; and that is why it was burned.

that life is an illusion and that happiness lies beyond the grave. These elements inform all his later works, among which are many of his greatest. He rakes over the coals of his past once more, in *Stora landsvägen*, by way of summing up, but his sights are now fixed firmly on the future (and the beyond). He indicates this sense of closing the doors on the past and beginning anew, as it were, in a letter to Richard Bergh which, incidentally, elucidates the title of *Brända tomten*, written the same year:

Jag är glad i hågen att efter tio års kamp nått den barnsliga klarhet med vilken de högsta problemen skola skådas, och att jag får bygga på brända tomter ...³⁵

³⁵ Brev, 233 (November 1, 1907):

I am happy in the thought that, after ten years* of struggle, I have attained the child-like clarity with which the greatest problems should be viewed, and that I am able to build on burnt ground ...

* 1897-1907, roughly the period since the Inferno crisis.

Chapter 81

En blå bok

Towards the end of his life, Strindberg produced a work unique in literature: the monumental *En blå bok*, avlämnad till vederbörande och utgörande kommentar till "Svarta fanor"¹ (*A Blue Book: Presented to Whom It May Concern and Comprising Notes to Svarta fanor*), which was published in four parts, in 1907 (I), 1908 (II and III), and 1912 (IV). It has been called a combination prayer book and encyclopaedia,² and the contents range over the whole of the author's life and the many subjects in which he was interested. Strindberg regarded it as the culmination of his career, writing in a section of Part I entitled "Blå bokens historia" ("The History of the Blue Book"):

Jag läser nu korrektur på Blå Boken och känner som om därmed vore min mission slut i livet. Jag har fått säga allt vad jag hade att säga.³

¹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVI (Part I), XLVII (Part II) and XLVIII (Parts III and IV). Pages are numbered consecutively through the three volumes. The four parts contain over 650 titled sections; for obvious reasons, these are not listed in the index, except in a very few cases, where the section title is mentioned in the body of the text.

² *Skrifter*, XIII, 443.

³ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVI, 411:

I am now reading the proofs of the *Blue Book* and feel as if with it my mission in life is accomplished. I have been able to say all that I had to say.

Written August 22, 1907, these words are a bit premature -- he was to continue adding to *En blå bok* right up to his final year -- but nevertheless indicate the importance he placed on the work.

Its contents are hard to describe, so many and so varied are the subjects touched upon. Its nature is perhaps best expressed in the felicitous title of the early English translation: *Zones of the Spirit: A Book of Thoughts*. In it we see a Strindberg who has made his peace with Christianity, abhors his undisciplined and godless past, and defends himself against the charge of misogyny while continuing to hold all of his views on women. It is a strong and beautiful book, although the author's views on women are rather less enlightened than one might expect in this summing up of his experience and thought: three failed marriages have left a deep scar. The earthly destination of his life's pilgrimage has been reached, and if he seems at times excessively hard on those who have not yet achieved his beatific vision, he applies the same censures to his own past: the Strindberg who raged against God in *Inferno* rages against His enemies in *En blå bok*.

At the end of his account of how the book came to be written, Strindberg tells of the change in his life when he began it: things began going right for him and he no longer felt persecuted for unknown crimes.

Indeed, he implies that the sufferings he has undergone, far from being arbitrary as he once thought, have had a very definite reason, and the crime a name: he was being punished for serving the powers of darkness:

Men det egendomliga är, att från den stunden började mitt egentliga Karma att fullbordas. Jag var skyddad, det gick mig väl och jag fick nya bättre vänner än dem jag förlorat. Och nu vill jag tillskriva alla mina föregående systematiska motgångar den omständigheten att jag tjänade de svarta. Där var ingen välsignelse med dem!⁴

Another explanation is given earlier in Part I, this time in conjunction with a familiar symbol: the child unjustly punished for something he did not do:

... då förstod jag först varför jag tyckt mig så ofta i livet ha varit orättvist anklagad och straffad för brott, dem jag icke begått. Jag erkänner nu att jag begått dem i tankarne. Men hur visste människorna det? Säkert finns det en immanent rättvisa, som straffar tankesyndar, och när människorna taga varann på misstankar, ful uppsyn eller på känsel, så ta de rätt! Det är hårda ord, men det är nog så.⁵

⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 414-15:

But the strange thing is that from that moment my true Karma began to be realized. I was protected, things went well for me, and I made new friends, better those I had lost. And I now chalk up all of my previous systematic adversities to the circumstance that I was in the service of the black ones. There was no blessing with them!

⁵ Ibid., 84 (from the section "Tankesynder": "Sins of Thought"):

... then for the first time I understood why so often in life I had felt myself unjustly accused and punished for crimes I had not committed. I now confess that I had committed them in thought. But how did people know that? There is without doubt an inherent jus-

The explanations do not really differ: suffering is the result of living without or turning away from God. Indeed, even suffering at the hands of a woman can be attributed to this cause: "... ett har jag sett, att så fort en man lämnar Gud, så får han träla hos en kvinnodjävul."⁶ Suffering, then, is deserved, a punishment for sins committed or even only contemplated, and it comes from God. As such, it cannot be evil, and therefore must produce good. The good, here as in the Quarantine Station on Skamsund, is the purification of the soul:

... jag genomgått den stora skärselden som brände soporna i min själ, och ... jag medelst självbestraffning och askes kravlat mig ur den värsta gyttjan. Råsilket brukar "degommeras" genom kokning, innan det spinnes; på samma sätt synas mina nervtrådar genom livets eklut slutligen ha "skalats" och undergått den procedur som kallas silkets "sköning".⁷

tice which punishes sins of thought, and when people regard each other with suspicions, dirty looks, or intuitions, they are right! This sounds harsh, but I am sure that is how it is.

⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 133: "... one thing I have seen: as soon as a man leaves God, he becomes a slave to a she-devil."

⁷ Ibid., 184 (from the section "Det sjätte sinnet": "The Sixth Sense"):

... I went through the great purgatorial fire, which burned the refuse of my soul, and ... by means of self-punishment and asceticism I crawled out of the worst mire. Raw silk is usually "de-gummed" before it is spun; in the same manner, my nerve fibres seem to have been "unhulled" by going through the mill of life, and to have undergone the process known as the "fining" of silk.

The symbol has appeared before, as the cauldron of Medea in Till Damaskus I, but there the outcome is not necessarily good, as it is here.

Suffering seems to be particularly therapeutic if it lasts for forty days or forty years (as with the Stranger in Till Damaskus I):

.... Min tjänare gick, huset stod på ända; jag fick byta sex tjänare på 40 dagar, den ena sämre än den andra. Då måste jag slutligen sköta mig själv, duka och elda; jag åt svart svinmat ur en hämtare -- med ett ord allt bittert livet äger måste jag lida, utan att jag förstod orsaken.

.... Så kom generalrepetitionen på Drömspelet. Detta drama skrevs för sju år sedan, efter jämnt 40 dagars lidanden, bland de svåraste jag genomgått. Och nu ha jämnt 40 dagars fasta och pinor utgått. Det tyckes således finnas en hemlig lagstiftning med stipulerade straffbestämmelser. Jag kom att tänka på syndaflodens 40 dagar, ökenvandringens 40 år, Moses', Elias' och Kristus' 40-dagars fastor.⁸

⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 405-06 (from "Blå bokens historia"):

.... My servant left, and the house was stood on end; I had to change servants six times in 40 days, the one worse than the other. Finally I had to look after myself, set the table and tend the fire myself; I ate black pig slops from a bucket -- in short, I had to suffer all the bitterness life possesses, without knowing the reason.

.... Then came the dress rehearsal of the Dream Play. That drama was written seven years ago, after exactly 40 days of suffering, among the hardest I have endured. And now exactly 40 days of fasting and anguish have passed. There seems, then, to be a secret law, with stipulated terms of punishment. That made me think of the 40 days of the Flood, the 40 years of wandering in the desert, and the 40-day fasts of Moses, Elijah, and Christ.

Out of this particular forty days came *En blå bok*, which, as we have seen, Strindberg saw as the fulfillment of his mission. The seven years since the previous forty days of deprivation recall the seven Stations of the Cross in *Till Damaskus I*.

The triumph of a positive concept of suffering sees the banishment of "the powers", who receive no mention in *En blå bok I*; the forces which direct men's destinies are now seen as beneficent, coming from God rather than Satan or the ambiguous (as to good and evil) "powers". Christ, for Whom the central figure of *Inferno* felt only coldness, is here glorified and accepted as Saviour; in relating a life-story Strindberg admits parallels his own, he says this of Christ:

... redlös driver han nu omkring, tills han finner ankarbotten i tron på Kristus, dämonbetvingaren, den högsta visheten, Frälsaren som frälsar från tvivlet och förtvivlan och vansinnet.⁹

Accompanying this downgrading of "the powers" is a corresponding de-emphasis on Hell, Satan, and demons.

⁹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVI, 199 (from the section "Brev från helvetet": "Letter from Hell"):

... he now drifts about disabled, until he finds an anchor-hold in faith in Christ: the subjugator of demons, the highest wisdom, the Saviour, Who delivers from doubt and despair and insanity.

For if suffering is not yet at an end, it now has a purpose, leading towards the redemption of a purified soul (i.e., it is no longer the eternal punitive suffering of Hell); Hell is a place from which (as in Advent) one can be delivered. Referring again to the life which parallels his own, Strindberg describes the descent into and delivery from Hell:

Sedan blir hans 20-åriga bana brokig; han går på dåliga vägar, vilseledd av den rådande amoralen. På mitten av vägen går det honom som Dante och flere andra, han kommer i helvetet, men får en Virgilius, som leder honom ut och fram till räddaren. Därmed börjar hans eget liv....¹⁰

Indeed, the coldness felt by Inferno's central character toward Christ, and that experienced by most of the characters in Påsk, is given an explanation in En blå bok: "Då det himmelska ljuset når de osaliga, så far en isköld genom ådrorna och blodet stockas."¹¹

Strindberg's Vergil, who leads him from Hell, is Swedenborg (to whom En blå bok is dedicated), and most

¹⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 199 (from "Brev från helvetet"):

Then his twenty-year old path becomes checkered; he follows evil ways, led astray by the prevailing ape-morality. In the midst of this path, it happens to him as to Dante and many others: he descends into Hell, but he finds a Vergil, who leads him out and up to the Redeemer. With that his own life begins....

¹¹ Ibid., 76 (from the section "Det stämmer": "That's Right"): "When the heavenly light reaches the damned, an icy cold flows through their veins and their blood thickens."

of his ideas about and descriptions of Hell are heavily influenced by his writings. Hell does not await the sinner after death, but rather is experienced here on earth, psychologically, physically, or both:

... Vi ha [funnit] Swedenborgs helveten
... dels vara sinnestillstånd, dels likna
jordelivet under vissa förhållanden.¹²

The conditions that make life on earth a Hell are soon specified; by now, it is hardly surprising that for Strindberg man experiences hell-on-earth most often in his relations with woman: thralldom to a she-devil is the punishment for turning away from God! Strindberg always struggled against this punishment; the struggle is chronicled in the marriage plays, the Giftas stories, Fagervik och Skamsund, and the autobiographical novels. As a result, he has been called a misogynist. By way of answering the charge, he attacks his critics, drawing on the symbolism of Swedenborg's Hell:

... Swedenborg berättar, på sitt sätt, om den störste tyrannens ankomst till Hades. Han ville resa helvetet mot himmelen, men fick till straff att behärskas av en ryslig kvinna, vilken han dyrkade. Hon var inbegreppet av det uronda, den medvetna lögnen, det överlagda bedrägeriet, fulheten, orenligheten, förstörelsebegäret. Men han tvangs att i henne se det goda, sköna, ljuva, och han kallade henne sin ängel. Alla hans anhängare

¹² Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 76 (from "Det stämmer"):

... We have [found] Swedenborg's Hells
... in part to be states of mind, in part to
resemble life on earth under certain conditions.

måste dyrka henne, annars kallade han dem kvinnohatare. Var Swedenborg får sina berättelser ifrån, vet jag inte, men hans skildringar likna fotografier ur vår verklighet och kunde tas för satirer. Den modärna kvinnodyrkan är icke från kristna riddartiden, ty dessa romantici ärade kvinnligheten i dess dygder, men vår nya gynolatri är kommen från hedningarne, och är ett slags furiedyrkan såsom tvångsföreställning eller straff. Dyngherrens söner avguda sina furier och prisa deras laster, så att lastbarhet är dygd, elakhet är karaktär, lögnväsen betyder intelligens, råhet är styrka. Och den som icke vill vara med på denna djävulsdyrkan kalla de kvinnohatare.¹³

¹³ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 108-09 (from the section "Furie-kulten som straffande föreställning": The Cult of the Furies as a Scourging Obsession):

... Swedenborg relates, in his way, how the greatest tyrant* arrived in Hades. He wanted to raise Hell against Heaven, and as a punishment he fell under the domination of an atrocious woman, whom he worshipped. She was the very essence of primal evil, the bold-faced lie, willful deceit, ugliness, uncleanness, and the desire to destroy. But he was compelled to see in her the good, the beautiful, and the sweet, and he called her his angel. All of his followers had to worship her; otherwise he called them woman-haters. Where Swedenborg gets his stories from, I do not know, but his depictions are like photographs of the reality we know, and could be taken as satires. The modern worship of women does not come from the time of the Christian knights, for those romantics honoured womanliness in its virtues; our new gynolatri comes, rather, from the heathens, and is really a kind of Fury worship, in the nature of an obsession or punishment. The sons of the muck-lords deify their Furies, extolling their vices, so depravity is virtue, wickedness is character, a talent for lying indicates intelligence, brutality is strength. And anyone who will not go along with this devil-worship is called a woman-hater.

* En blå bok II reveals this as none other than Karl XII!

At another point,¹⁴ Strindberg says he could not possibly be a woman-hater, since, like Euripides in *Historiska miniatyrer*, he has always loved a woman and has produced children by them! Be that as it may, he could never be accused of being a woman-worshipper either! The point made in *Dödsdansen* and elsewhere, that marriage is, for the most part, Hell, is reiterated here. It has its high points, but these are rare and of short duration:

Jag minns en halvtimme, då vi tre verkligen gingo hand i hand på en grönskande ö i havsstranden, och då fick jag intrycket att det var himlen. Så ringde middagsklockan, och vi voro åter på jorden och strax därpå i helvetet.¹⁵

The verdant isle is Strindberg's symbol for eternal happiness, the Isle of the Blessed. The significance of its appearance here is that the Isle of the Blessed is not synonymous with the Isle of the Living; rather it is the Isle of the Dead (i.e., eternal bliss is not to be found on earth, but in the hereafter).

¹⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVI, 145 (in the section "Stackare": "Wretch").

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 175 (from the section "Hägringar": "Mirages"):

I remember a half-hour when we three [i.e., the author, his wife, and their child] actually walked hand in hand along the shore of a verdant isle in the sea, and I then had the impression that we were in Heaven. Then the dinner bell rang, and we were on earth again, and immediately after that, in Hell.

Although he cannot be accused of worshipping the devil incarnate in woman, Strindberg has often been plagued by she-devils. And he has felt the malevolent force of Satan, most notably during the Inferno period. This is now past, however, and Satan is no longer a personal tormentor; he is, rather, the god of the followers of the ape-morality, as Strindberg calls a life without religious or moral principles:

Deras gud är den ludne Pan, som ifrån att ha varit bock blev halvmänniska och sedan den Onde, Satan eller Guds motståndare.¹⁶

A faith in the victory of good over evil has previously been expressed most explicitly, perhaps, in *Svanevit*; in *En blå bok* it is linked not only to purity and love, but also to faith in God, of which the other characteristics are but signs. The she-devil and the dream-disillusionment symbols are combined in the exploding witch symbol:

-- Skulle det finnas häxor alltså? -- Ja visst finnes det. En ful och ond kvinna, som förvänder synen på en man, så att han i henne ser det skönaste och godaste, den är en häxa.
-- Skall en sådan brännas då? -- Nej, ty hon bränner sig själv på sin ondska, om hon näm-

¹⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 241 (from the section "Den ludne guden": "The Hairy God"):

Their god is the hairy Pan, who, from having been a goat, first became half human, and then the Evil One: Satan, God's adversary.

ligen råkar en god människa, som är pansrad
med kärleken till Gud....¹⁷

The fairly limited use of classical mythology is generally connected to the justification (at least to himself) of the author's attitudes to women. A good example is the ever-present Omphale symbol. In *En blå bok I* Omphale is not mentioned by name, but she is obviously in the author's mind in such passages as the following:

Det finns många slags hat, och kvinnans
"kärlek" till mannen är en avart av hatet.
Hon åtrår hans mannakraft för att få bli man
och göra honom till passiv -- kvinna.¹⁸

This is an interesting occurrence of the Omphale symbol, for here it is explicitly linked with the vampire symbol of the marriage plays and elsewhere.

¹⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 20 (from the section "Vidskepelse och icke": "Superstition or Not"):

"Are there, then, witches?"

"Yes, of course there are. An ugly and evil woman who pulls the wool over a man's eyes so that he sees in her the most beautiful and the best, is a witch."

"Should such a person be burned, then?"

"No, for she burns up with her own evil if she happens to meet a good person who is armoured with the love of God...."

¹⁸ Ibid., 197 (from the section "De tomme hat": "The Hate of the Empty"):

There are many kinds of hate, and woman's "love" for man is a variety of hate. She craves his virility in order to become a man herself and to make him a passive creature: a woman.

The most extended use of classical mythology also occurs without specific reference to the myth (Pygmalion and his image), although it is no less clearly alluded to, with overtones as well from the biblical account of the creation of man in the image of God. The symbol also appears in *Till Damaskus I*, where the Stranger names the Lady Eve and seeks to mould her in his image, according to his own needs. It is remarkably consistent with the theories of C.G. Jung, who would substitute the term anima where Strindberg has *homunkel*, *astralbild*, *double*, and *dubbelgångare*:

... När en man börjar älska en kvinna, så kastar han sig i en trance, blir diktare och konstnär; ur hennes bildbara oindividualliserade astralmateria arbetar han ut en tankeform, i vilken han ingjuter allt det vackraste han äger inom sig, och skapar så en *homunkel*, som hon adopterar till sin *double*; och det är den hon låter mannen operera med. Men denna *astralbild* är även mannekängen som hon, jägarinnan, sätter ut för att locka med, under det hon själv ligger bakom busken med laddad bössa lurande på rovet.

Mannens kärlek till sin *homunkel* överlever ofta alla illusioner, och han kan ha fattat dödligt hat till hennes själv, under det hans kärlek till *dubbelgångarn* fortlever. Men detta maskspel ger anledning till de djupaste disharmonier och lidanden; han blir skelögd genom att betrakta två bilder som icke sammanfalla; han vill famna sitt moln, men får fatt i en kropp; han vill höra sin dikt, men det är en annans; han vill se sitt konstverk men det är bara en modell. Han är lycklig i sin trance fastän världen icke kan fatta hans lycka; vaknar han ur sitt sömngångeri, då växer hans hat mot kvinnan, ju mindre hon motsvarar hans *urbild*, och när hon har mördat sin *dubbelgångare*, då är kärleken

slut och det gränslösa torra hatet står
ensamt kvar.¹⁹

Another interesting classical allusion is the comparison of Shakespeare (and thus, the artist) to Hercules: Strindberg believed that Shakespeare (like himself) suffered through all the emotions he describes, in order to enrich humanity with his art:

Jag vill ... tänka mig ett Shakspere-monument, föreställande Herakles tändande sitt

¹⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 250-51 (from the section "Dubbelgångaren": "The Doppelganger"):

... When a man begins to love a woman, he casts himself into a trance and becomes a poet and an artist. From her impressionable unindividualised astral material he forms an ideal, into which he infuses all that is most beautiful within himself, and so he creates a homunculus, which she adopts as her double; and it is this ideal that she allows the man to deal with. But this astral image is also the decoy which she, the huntress, sets out as a lure, while herself lying behind the bushes with a loaded gun, waiting for the prey.

A man's love for his homunculus often survives all illusions, and he can conceive a deadly hatred for the woman herself, while continuing to love the double. But this masquerade leads to the deepest disharmony and suffering; he becomes cross-eyed from looking at two images which do not coincide; he wants to embrace his cloud, but clutches a body; he wants to hear his poem, but it is another's; he wants to see his work of art, but it is only a model. He is happy in his trance, although the world cannot understand his happiness; should he awaken from his somnambulism, his hatred for the woman increases the less she measures up to his archetype, and when she has murdered her double, love is finished and only boundless hate remains.

eget bål på berget Oeta, givande sitt rika liv till ett självoffer åt mänskligheten!²⁰

A final symbol derived from classical mythology is the butterfly, associated with the goddess Psyche and symbolizing the soul (the Greek word *psyche* means both soul and butterfly). Strindberg extends the symbol to indicate resurrection and the afterlife by tracing the life-cycle of the butterfly: "Men på gravsten, inom en kyrkogårdsmur, ser jag ibland den bilden: larven (masken), puppan (mumien) och fjäriln."²¹

²⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 72 (from the section "Diktarens självoffring": "The Self-Sacrifice of the Poet"):

I can ... imagine a monument to Shakespeare, portraying Hercules lighting his own funeral pyre on Mount Oeta, giving his rich life as a self-sacrifice for mankind!

Ironically, Stockholm's principal monument to Strindberg, Carl Eldh's magnificent statue *Titanen* (The Titan), suggests another self-sacrificing hero from classical mythology: Strindberg is Prometheus, astride a rock on the sides of which are portrayed, in low relief, scenes from his works.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 387 (from the section "Nekrobios = död och uppståndelsen": "Necrobiosis = Death and Resurrection"):

But on gravestones, within a cemetery wall, I sometimes see this image: the larva (the worm), the pupa (the mummy), and the butterfly.

Biblical symbols are not so abundant as they are elsewhere, but are well chosen, as is characteristic of Strindberg. In "Blå bokens historia", as well as comparing himself to Moses, Elijah, and Christ (see above), he finds a parallel with Job:

16:e april. -- Läste korrektur på Svarta Fanor (skriven 1904). Tvekade om den boken vore ett brott och börde inställas. Slog i bibeln och fick upp Jobs bok, där profeten tvingas fram att profetera, även när han dolde sig. Detta hugsvalade mig. -- -- Men det är en fasans bok!²²

and with Jeremiah:

Så var Blå Boken ute och den var vacker att se på, utanpå i blått och rött. Den liknade min första bok, Den Röda Boken, men var ändock så olik den i rött och blått. I den fick jag som Jeremias "upprycka, nedbryta, förgöra och fördärva", men i denna bok har jag fått "uppbygga och plantera".²³

²² Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 407-08:

April 16th. -- Read the proofs for Svarta fanor (written in 1904). Was in two minds about whether the book were a crime and ought to be suppressed. Consulted the Bible and it fell open at the Book of Job, where the prophet is compelled to prophesy, even when he hid himself. This comforted me. -- -- But it [i.e., Svarta fanor] is a damnable book!

²³ Ibid., 412:

And so the Blue Book was published, and it was handsome to look at, with a blue and red cover. It much resembled my first book, the Red Book [i.e., Röda rummet], but was nevertheless so unlike that one, which was red and blue. In it, like Jeremiah, I had to "tear up, knock down, destroy" [Jeremiah 18:7.] and ruin, but in this book I have been able to "build up and plant" [Jeremiah 18:9. Both quotations translated from *The Jerusalem Bible*].

These references, together with Strindberg's belief that *En blå bok* completed his life's mission, indicate that he sees himself as a prophet, writing as he does not by choice but by compulsion, whose sufferings, humiliations, and destructive writings have not been without purpose or effect, but the necessary preparation for the production and delivery of his Great Work, the purpose of which is to affirm and encourage. This sense of mission should be borne in mind when reading Strindberg's defence against the charge that his writings are gloomy and pessimistic:

Jag vill skriva ljust och vackert, men får inte, kan inte; tar det som en fasans plikt att vara sann, och livet är obeskrivligt fult.²⁴

Unexamined earthly life, that is. For the point of *En blå bok* is that the Hand of God is behind everything in an individual's life, even when that individual does not acknowledge God, and even when his life seems to consist of undeserved and unmitigated evil; through it all God is furthering His own designs for the world and, whatever his own feelings at the time, for the individual. Even the idolators and godless followers of

²⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVI, 406-07 (from "Blå bokens historia"):

I want to write cheerfully and beautifully, but am not permitted, am not able to do so; I take it as a damnable duty to be truthful, and life is indescribably ugly.

the ape-morality serve God's purpose: "... vi behöver väl vår filisté, Busen, att skrämman barnen med,"²⁵ and "... filistéerna begagnades som gadd för att sporra de tröga."²⁶ One recalls the ending of *Påsk*.

Strindberg uses the expulsion from Eden as a familiar symbol (cf. "En häxa") for the onset of difficulties in marriage and disillusionment generally:

... han kom under administration och fick sitta tio år i utlandet i ett pensionat som kreditorerna betalade för honom, och detta med familj, en hustru inbegripen som gift sig till paradiset men strax blivit utdriven.²⁷

Finally, he uses an injunction of St. Paul to support his opposition to the relationship expressed by the Omphale symbol:

Deras förfäade män understödjade dem och märka icke att de äro i träl-dom, ty den som arbetar för en sysslolös han är träl. Men "I ären

²⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 73 (from the section "Filistéernas uppgift": "The Purpose of the Philistines"): "... surely we need our philistine, the Bogey Man, to frighten the children with."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80 (from the section "Måttlighet även i religion": "Moderation Even in Religion"): "... the Philistines were used as goads to spur on the sluggish."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 116 (from the section "Avundas Ingen!": "Envy Nobody!"):

... he went into receivership and had to live abroad for ten years in a private hotel paid for by his creditors; and this with a family, which included a wife who had married into Paradise, but was immediately driven out.

dyrt köpte, varer ingens trälär!" heter det.²⁸

Here, as in the Quarantine Officer's tales in Fagervik och Skamsund, water is a symbol of salvation; the passage recalls a similar one in the earlier work:

Om mina vänner ateisterna och hedningarna visste vilken befrielse det är att återknyta kontakten! Det är som att kasta sig i kristallklart havsvatten efter en svettpromenad på dammig landsväg i rötmånadssol.²⁹

The significance of the highway symbol in the pilgrimage plays is here clarified a bit. It is a symbol of the aimless, restless meanderings of those who bear the curse of Cain, that is, of the godless. Thus, return to God is seen as plunging into a crystal sea after a wearisome journey on a highway, and we recognize many of the characters from Till Damaskus and

²⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 144 (from the section "Vitt slaveri": "White Slavery"):

Their brutalized husbands support them, without noticing that they are in thralldom: for whoever works for an idler is a slave. But it is written: "A price was paid to redeem you; do not enslave yourselves to human masters."*

* 1 Corinthians 7:23. Knox translation.

²⁹ Ibid., 100 (from the section "Att återknyta med luftledningen": "Reconnecting with the Overhead Power Line"):

If only my friends the atheists and the heathens knew what a release one feels on reestablishing contact! It is like throwing oneself into crystal-clear seawater after a sweaty walk on a dusty highway in the sun of the dog days.

other pilgrimage plays in the following depiction of the godless:

De som ingen religion äga, de äro liffare och strykare, parias, zigenare, tattare och skojare; de tro sig hemma överallt men äro det ingenstädes annat än på landsvägen, på marknadsplatsen, bakom cirkusstallet, utanför bykrogen.³⁰

The illusory nature of earthly experience is expressed in the symbol of the dream and in a related symbol, sleepwalking: the lover who discovers the true nature of his beloved, as distinct from his projections onto her, is said to awaken from somnambulism, and he who rediscovers God is blessed with, among other things, the ability to sleep at night, presumably no longer troubled by nightmares and dreams, or illusion. The illusions of earth are most potently exposed, however, in a variation of the Poster-hanger's experience with the landing net and creel in *Ett drömspel*:

Samvetsgranna människor äro icke lyckliga, ty de kunna icke sätta ner sina fordringar, förefalla naiva som icke lärt att ingenting är vad det ger sig ut för; ingenting motsvarar föreställningarne. Man ville fråga om de äro födda med minnen från något ställe eller tillstånd, där det fullkomligaste fanns. När jag var sju år, stannade jag ofta fascinerad framför musikhandlarens fönster och betrak-

³⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 212 (from the section "Primus inter pares"):

Those who have no religion are tramps and vagabonds, pariahs, gypsies, vagrants, and blackguards; they believe themselves at home everywhere, but are at home nowhere except on the highway, in the marketplace, behind the circus stable, outside the village inn.

tade hans uthängda jägarhorn ... och jag tyckte mig på den mörke gatan se naturtonerna från skog och fält; jag älskade instrumentet; men när en gosse berättade att det kostade trettio kronor, undrade jag om livet skulle ge mig min önskan en gång.... Slutligen blev jag trettio år, och fick pengar för första gången i mitt liv. Jag köpte jakthornet; det kostade bara sju kronor; gossen hade ljugit. Men instrumentet ägde bara tre toner, och när jag ledsnat på dem, kom härligheten upp i vinden. Det var en realiserad ungdomsdröm i alla fall!³¹

The hunting horn in this passage recalls the one sounded by the Lady's grandfather as she and the Stranger approach her mother's dwelling in *Till Damas-kus I* and the horn which summons the Father in *Svane-vit*: in the one case a symbol of persecution and an omen of misfortune, in the other an instrument helping

³¹ Samlade skrifter, XLVI, 115-16 (from the section "En ungdomsdröm för 7 kronor": "A Youthful Dream for 7 Crowns"):

Conscientious people are not happy, for they are unable to lower their expectations and seem naive, never having learned that nothing is what it gives itself out to be, nothing lives up to appearances. One ought to wonder if they were born with the memory of a place or a condition where perfection exists. When I was seven, I often stood fascinated before the window of the music shop, looking at the hunting horn on display ... and, on the dark street, I imagined that I saw the natural hues of woods and fields. I loved the instrument, but when a fellow told me that it cost thirty crowns, I wondered if life would ever grant me my wish.... Eventually I was thirty, and had money for the first time in my life. I bought the hunting horn; it cost only seven crowns; the fellow had lied. But the instrument had only three notes, and when I tired of them, the glorious object was consigned to the attic. It was the fulfillment of a youthful dream, in any case!

to effect rescue and deliverance (like the trumpet to be blown on the Last Day, summoning the damned to perdition and the blessed to eternal bliss). By association, it is also connected with Diana the huntress, who appears in *En blå bok* lying in wait for the prey while her lover follows the decoy he himself has created.

The main colour symbolism in *En blå bok* is connected with the titles of three of Strindberg's works: *Röda rummet*, *Svarta fanor*, and *En blå bok* itself. The significance of red and black is discussed elsewhere: they are the colours associated with the two basic stages of the alchemic progression. Most notably in *Till Damaskus III*, blue is associated with Venus and hence with sensuality. Here, however, it is the colour of the blue flower, previously encountered in *Svanevit* and *Ett drömspel*: symbol of the ideal, the purely spiritual, the soul. In a passage cited above, Strindberg points out that *En blå bok* differs from *Röda rummet* as blue differs from red, that is, as the spiritual differs from the physical, the world of the spirit from the world of suffering. It differs from *Svarta fanor* as spirituality differs from nihilism.

1908 saw the publication of *En ny blå bok* (A New Blue Book), which became *En blå bok II* when Part III appeared. It is in much the same vein as its predecessor, a witness to the presence of the Hand of God everywhere in the created world and in human history

and experience. It is, however, rather less apologetic than *En blå bok I*, focusing instead on the utter folly into which mankind falls when he tries to live without God. Strindberg's lifelong interests in the natural sciences and history, as well as more recent interests such as philology, are all brought into play, as he attempts to demonstrate that no area of human activity or enquiry can be completely satisfactory so long as it ignores or consciously excludes a Creator Who continues to direct, and reveal Himself through, His creation.

The natural sciences come in for a good deal of criticism in this respect, for they especially pride themselves on their objectivity, their rejection of data which cannot be observed, quantified, and repeated. Strindberg has long been an observer of nature, and he assembles an impressive collection of phenomena which science is either unable to explain at all, or for which he finds the explanations either preposterous or unsatisfactory: phenomena are often "explained" by theories (such as the theory of evolution) which are no more objective and scientifically verifiable than religious explanations. In a sense, this is a realization of Strindberg's original plan for *Jardin des plantes*: to proceed from the created world to a revelation of the Creator. Unlike his other incursions into scientific or quasi-scientific realms, however, *En blå bok II* does not offer Strindberg's own

solutions to the problems he raises; his renouncement of that sphere of activity for religious reasons was sincere:

... det är väl med denna vetenskap som med alla andra, att den fotas på en obefogad nyfikenhet om förborgade ting, som vi icke kunna veta, icke få lov att veta. Livet har andra uppgifter än att snoka ut det som skall vara hemligt eller måste vara det, emedan vårt förstånd icke räcker att fatta det.³²

His aim is rather to demonstrate that science, the modern religion, cannot explain the universe any better than theology can, in a good many cases worse. After suggesting a hypothetical explanation (merely to demonstrate that the accepted explanation is not the only one possible) for a scientifically perplexing phenomenon he has observed with falling stars, for example, he continues:

... men att göra detta sannolikt, bryr jag mig icke om, emedan jag icke vill öka gissningarne. Kan jag däremot göra sannolikt, att vi ingenting veta om stjärnfallens natur, så är jag nöjd.³³

³² Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 463 (from the section "Tendens-geologi": "Evolutionary Geology"):

... surely this science is like all the others, grounded in an unwarranted curiosity about hidden things, which we cannot know, are not permitted to know. Life has other aims than to ferret out that which should or must remain a secret, since our understanding is not sufficient to comprehend it.

³³ Ibid., 583 (from the section "Stjärnfall": "Falling Stars"):

... but to demonstrate this is not my concern, for I do not want to add to the guesswork. If, on the other hand, I can demonstrate that we know nothing about the

Strindberg's conclusions about the sciences can be summed up in a few words: they may be interesting, they may sometimes even be useful, but they are unreliable, examples of the pursuit of vanity and illusion:

Underverkens tid är icke förbi, och de äro alla relaterade i fysiken och kemin, där förklaringarne äro så dumma, att underverket kvarstår såsom sådant.³⁴

The Swedish word *vetenskap* retains the true meaning of the English word *science* (from the Latin *scire*: to know), referring not only to science in its more restricted usage, but to all areas of human knowledge, and Strindberg's distrust of science extends to areas not normally included in the English word: archaeology, history, even biblical exegesis, and literature itself. Indeed, the area which comes in for most scorn after the natural sciences is the interpretation of ancient documents. *En blå bok II* exposes three great hoaxes: the discovery of radium (for the existence of which Strindberg thought the scientific evidence was far from conclusive), the deciphering of Babylonian and Assyrian cuneiform, and that of Egyptian hieroglyphics (using

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nature of falling stars, I am content.

³⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 588 (from the section "I underverkens tid": "In the Age of Miracles"):

The age of miracles is not over, and they are all reported in physics and chemistry, where the explanations are so stupid that the miracle remains as such.

the Rosetta Stone). He has examined transcriptions and translations of cuneiform and hieroglyphic inscriptions and found them so inconsistent and fanciful as to be not only unreliable, but, in fact, totally worthless. He goes so far as to suggest that cuneiform and hieroglyphics may not have been writing systems at all, but may have served a purely decorative function or, in the former case, have a natural (and haphazard) origin! As for Assyriologists and Egyptologists, they are merely availing themselves of a "short-cut" to academic prominence, and to base an interpretation of ancient civilizations on their findings is pure folly. Faith in these pseudo-sciences is like subjection to a woman: a result of or punishment for rejecting God:

Mänskligheten vill icke bedragas, men när den icke vill tro de gudomliga sanningarna, så får den till straff kraftig villfarelse, det vill säga den blir benägen att tro lögnen och dumheterna. En gudlös människa kan man inbilla vad smörja som helst.³⁵

As for history, one historian so contradicts another, and the assessment of historical persons and events changes so enormously from one age to another,

³⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 508 (from the section "Assyriologi": "Assyriology"):

Mankind does not want to be deceived, but when it refuses to believe the divine truths, it is subjected to powerful delusions as a punishment; that is, it is disposed to believe lies and stupidities. A godless person can be made to believe any rubbish at all.

it too must be viewed as suspect. As Strindberg points out in his own historical writings, history has almost invariably been written by or from the point of view of the governing classes, who had a vested interest in suppressing information which did not suit their ends and exaggerating information which did, with the result that we really cannot be certain what happened in the past, or why. Any even if history were able to explain events, those explanations would be useless, for historians almost universally refuse to take into account the action of divine Providence: the guiding Hand of God. His own historical writings (most notably *Historiska miniatyrer*) have been attempts to redress the balance; their author modestly omits mention of them in his summation of the discipline:

"Gud i naturen" har man många böcker om, men Gud i historien har man få. Herder och Johannes von Müller äro kanske de enda. Eljes är all historia gudlös och därför värdelös.³⁶

³⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 547-48 (from the section "Historieskrivningens omöjlighet": "The Impossibility of Writing History"):

"God in nature" is the subject of many books, but God in history of few. Herder* and Johannes von Müller are perhaps the only ones. Otherwise, all history is godless and therefore worthless.

* Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803). His *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind) was published in 1774 (Benét, I, 460).

His observations about history are particularly relevant to one of the genres at which he excelled: the historical play. The historical dramatist must use his imagination to supply details and motives about which history remains, for whatever reason, silent, and often he telescopes or rearranges historical events for dramatic economy and effect, in both cases leaving himself open to the charge of historical inaccuracy. Obviously if history itself is at best but a series of probable hypotheses, at worst a tissue of lies, the charge is irrelevant. A comparison of Shakespeare's *Richard III* with historical accounts of the same personalities and events leads Strindberg to this conclusion: "Då är historien teaterpjäs, och pjäsen icke historia!"³⁷

Biblical exegesis, as a sphere of activity particularly susceptible to being tailored to serve the sectarian interests of the exegete, is also suspect: the Bible is already sufficiently comprehensible to meet mankind's spiritual needs, and any obscure passages are meant to remain that way. Here, however, Strindberg makes an exception: Swedenborg's interpretations bring even more clarity. He gives an example of this type of interpretation, using Moses' wanderings in the desert. His interpretations are interesting and significant to

³⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 756 (from the section "Lögn-historia": "Lies and History"): "So history is a play, and the play not history!"

his own works, but are better presented in a newspaper article written in late 1910 (see the portion of the chapter on *Tal till svenska nationen* which deals with the article "*Bibelforskning*" ("*Biblical Research*"). With this single exception all biblical scholarship is summarily dismissed:

Allt detta förklarar oss Swedenborg i *Arcana Coelestia*, som tolkar Mose två första böcker på sådant sätt, att all bibelkritik annulleras.³⁸

More sadly, for a man who had enriched the literature of his country and of the world for almost four decades, Strindberg is beginning to view literature itself as also a vain and godless (and therefore worthless) pursuit. In the section "*Var äro vi hemma?*" ("*Where Are We at Home?*"), with its allusion to John 15:19 ("... you do not belong to the world...." *Jerusalem Bible*), he refers to literature as "*ett tryckt prat*" ("*printed chit-chat*": *Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 620), and later he foreshadows his own laying down of the artist's pen:

Jag har skildrat gudlösas äktenskap, jag har lidit därför, men jag ångrar det icke och tar icke tillbaka ett ord. Sådant var det! De gudlige skildra icke sina äktenskap, och de skriva varken pjäser eller romaner; det borde

³⁸ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 629 (from "*Bibelförklaringar: Arcana coelestia*"):

Swedenborg explains all this for us in *Arcana Coelestia*, which interprets the first two books of Moses in such a way that all biblical criticism is nullified.

anmärkas i litteraturhistorien, som mestadels handlar om gudlösa böcker!³⁹

Strindberg is to continue writing until he dies, but with *Stora landsvägen* he is to renounce the fictional modes altogether; this passage indicates that that renunciation was deliberate, motivated by the same considerations which had earlier prompted him to abandon his alchemical studies. He took his religious beliefs very seriously indeed!

All of this is, of course, the application of Strindberg's belief that earthly life is an illusion, for if all areas of knowledge in which man traditionally seeks certainty and insight prove to be lies, approximations, deceptions, guesses, and delusions, what kind of reality can earthly existence be said to have? Man is like a sleepwalker, taking his dream for reality until he awakens and the unreality of his experience floods in upon his confused senses. The symbol is not new to Strindberg -- he had used it at least twenty-five years earlier, in *Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar* -- but his assessment of what constitutes reality

³⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 735 (from the section "Fostbrödralag": "Sworn Brotherhood"):

I have described the marriages of the godless; I have suffered because of it, but I do not regret it, and I do not take back a word. That is how it was! The godly do not describe their marriages, and they write neither plays nor novels; that should be noted in literary history, which for the most part deals with godless books!

(once the dream of the sleepwalker is shattered) has changed considerably. Once he had thought it lay in naturalism, the laws of evolution and psychology; at one point he looked for it in science and scientific investigation; now he sees it as something outside earthly existence altogether: the "other side", the realm of Plato's ideal forms, the Christian afterlife. There alone is man truly at home:

"Det är ett helvete!" hör man hela dagen, alla dagar, och det är allmänna meningen. Men bara det ljusnar lite, bordet dukas, sängen bäddas, så börjar man trivas igen. Man illuderar sig, ibland med *das liebe Alkohol* och fortsätter sitt sömngångeri vaken. Så blir man väckt av något buller, far upp, rasar, gråter, och så somnar man om igen. Slutligen blir sömnen borta, och man vaknar för att aldrig kunna somna mer. Man är väckt, och det hjälper inga sömnmedel.

Då upptäcker man hela sveket! Man ser var man är, och vad allt det förflutna varit, som man trott vara verkligheten.

Den relativt vise börjar då vända sig från verklighetens fantomer och skuggor och söka det andra riktiga, det verkligt verkliga.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 620 (from "Var äro vi hemma?"):

"Life is hell!" one hears all day, every day, and that is the general opinion. But let it only brighten a bit, the table be laid, the bed made, and one begins to be content again. Man deludes himself, sometimes with *das liebe Alkohol*, and continues his sleepwalking awake. Occasionally he is awakened by a noise, starts up, collapses, cries, and falls asleep again. Eventually, sleep deserts him, and he awakens, never to sleep again. He is awake, and no sleeping draught can help.

Then he discovers the whole fraud! He sees where he is and what his whole past has been, which he had taken for reality.

The relatively wise then begins to turn away from the phantoms and shadows of reality

The man who has thus discovered the illusory nature of existence and determined to seek the eternal verities in the only place they can be found becomes a pilgrim on the highway of life, at home nowhere, but, unlike the vagabond, he has a destination: his forty years of wandering aimlessly in the desert are over, and he is prepared to enter the Promised Land:

Bed men arbeta; lid men hoppas; ena ögat riktat på jorden, det andra på stjärnorna; icke sätta sig fast och slå sig ner, det är ju en fotvandring; icke hem, utan gästgivargården, skjutshåll; söka sanningen ty den finns, men endast på ett ställe, hos en, som själv är vägen, sanningen och livet!⁴¹

These are the words with which *En blå bok II* ends. *Stora landsvägen*, the last dramatic exploration of the pilgrimage symbol, begins and ends on a mountain. This is not itself the goal of the pilgrimage, but the final way-station before that goal is reached. Symbolically, ascent of the mountain corresponds to passage from the earthly (physical) to the heavenly (spiritual) planes of existence: God was originally worshipped in high

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and seek the other truth, the real reality.

⁴¹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 806 (from the section "Summa summarum"):

Pray, but work; suffer, but hope; keep one eye on the earth, the other on the stars; do not get stuck and settle down, for this is a pilgrimage, after all: you are not at home, but in a inn, a way-station; seek the truth, for it exists, but only in one place: with One Who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

places, and the Greek gods dwell atop a mountain. Strindberg draws on these traditions, but also on Swedenborg, Plato, and theosophy, to link the mountain symbol to the fulfillment of man's destiny. In the following extract, the identity of the Hermit in *Stora Landsvägen* becomes a little clearer: he is a guru, but he is also a manifestation of "the powers", now no longer hostile or even indifferent, but a beneficent agent of God:

[Swedenborg] har ... förklarat, att det existerar okända upphöjda platser på jorden, där mäktiga väsen bo, vilka tjäna Herren och styra människors öden. Detta erinrar om Platons Phaidon där detsamma säges, och även om teosofernas Mahatmas eller Lärare som bo i Himalaya.⁴²

These "unknown lofty places" are elsewhere represented by Strindberg in his cloud symbolism, which in turn is connected to the symbol of the verdant isle, the Isle of the Blessed. That connection also appears in *En blå bok II*, although not explicitly. In the section "Meteorologi" ("Meteorology"), Strindberg describes, as an example of a natural phenomenon science is unable to explain, the appearance of a certain cloud

⁴² *Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 623 (from the section "Bibelns källskrifter": "The Sources of the Bible"):

[Swedenborg] has ... explained that there are unknown lofty places on the earth where powerful beings dwell, who serve the Lord and direct the fates of men. This recalls Plato's *Phaedo*, where the same thing is said, and even the theosophists' Mahatmas or Teachers, who live in the Himalayas.

formation in the Stockholm sky, always at the same time of day, for several weeks continuously, and always at the same time of year over several years. He does not comment on its significance here (presumably, as with the falling stars, he does not wish to add to the guesswork), but he includes two drawings of the cloud formation, made on August 30 and September 18, 1907, respectively (*Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 571). The drawings are not only indeed remarkably alike, but, much more interesting, they delineate the contours, masses, and composition of Böcklin's *Toten Insel*. The "powerful beings" who dwell in these "unknown lofty places", then, are the spirits of the blessed dead. All traces of malevolence towards mankind have disappeared; the inhabitants of the other side have returned to that state of which childhood seems a memory:

Ett snällt barn motsvarar verkligen Swedenborgs skildring av människorna i bättre världar, och äger alla deras dygder. De äro godtrogna, oskyldiga, tacksamma, smeksamma, naiva, utan förställning; de äro omedvetna om ondska och lögn, liksom skyddade för onda inflytelser, som de varken se eller förstå.⁴³

⁴³ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVII, 693 (from the section "Begreppet ungdom": "The Concept of Youth"):

A well-behaved child really corresponds to Swedenborg's description of people in better worlds, and possesses all of their virtues. They are trusting, innocent, grateful, loving, naive, unaffected; they are oblivious to wickedness and lies, as if protected from evil influences, which they neither see nor understand.

This is a considerable change from the dark and malignant powers Strindberg formerly saw as guiding the destinies of men! It does not mean, however, that one's destiny will be any easier: one will still have to suffer, and life will still be a highway strewn with thorns. But the knowledge that fate is not blind, not malevolent, that it serves a purpose and leads ultimately to eternal happiness, ought to make it much easier to bear! Indeed, Strindberg tells us, so benevolent are these "powerful beings" that they often suffer for us, as we sometimes do for each other. One can, then, suffer for a crime one did not commit, but by way of sacrifice, not punishment:

Teosoferna vidgå, att från andra sidan högt stående andar godvilligt stiga ned för att hjälpa mänskorna både med ledning och med att lida för deras skuld. Det skulle således finnas oförskyldt lidande här nere på jorden! Det ser så ut också, ty jag har sett människor lida för andras fel, lida omänskliga kval, men en kort tid; och så voro de lika glada igen. De drog in i de rysligaste historier, kommo ut oskadda, kände ingen skuld. Och ju mer de ledo dess skönare blevo de. Det bet inte på dem!

Detta är en uppbygglig tanke, och kan formuleras med Kristus i mennesket, det är väl uttytt: att många människor följa Kristi föredöme att lida för mänskligheten.

Men väl att märka alltså: Karma är icke alltid Nemesis, med vilket det ofta förväxlas!⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 703-04 (from the section "Karma"):

The theosophists claim that from the other side highly developed spirits voluntarily come down to help men, both with guidance and by suffering for them. So undeserved suffering does exist down here on earth! And

For Strindberg, the hardest thing to bear has not been suffering itself, but the anguish of feeling that the suffering is undeserved. He can see that suffering to atone for one's own sins can lead to purification and redemption, and in the above passage he concedes that one can also suffer for others. But surely such vicarious suffering must be freely accepted, in order for it to be Christ-like. That still leaves a lot of suffering unaccounted for, and here he takes comfort in the theory of reincarnation: if one suffers to atone for a sin committed in a previous existence, even though one is completely unaware either of that existence or the sin, there is still some kind of justice in suffering: it is one's karma, and fulfilling one's karma leads eventually to eternal happiness:

En teosof tröstade mig ... en gång med den förklaringen, att jag lider för okända förseelser i ett föregående, och att jag icke får beklaga mig, ty straffet är rättvist; och vidare, att det ingår i mitt karma (= öde)

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this would seem to be so, for I have seen men suffer for the faults of others, suffer inhuman anguish, but only for a short time, and then they were as happy as before. They were dragged into the most dreadful stories, came out unharmed, and felt no guilt. And the more they suffered, the more beautiful they became. It left no mark on them!

This is an edifying thought, and can be expressed as Christ in man, which means more or less that many people follow the example of Christ in suffering for mankind.

The implication of this is certainly worth noting: Karma is not always Nemesis, with which it is often confused!

att få orätt även när jag har rätt. Det är också den enda möjliga förklaringen.

....

Nu tröstar jag mig med: att det skall så vara, men av okända grunder! Och de privilegierade som få rätt, när de göra orätt, betraktar jag som bödlar eller djävlar.⁴⁵

This is an application of the doctrine that the sins of the fathers are visited on the descendants: our previous existences are "fathers" to our present one!

As in Strindberg's most Swedenborgian play, *Advent*, Hell is conceived of as existing on earth, and a state from which one can be delivered: hence, a divine instrument of redemption. Life as hell is no new concept in Strindberg's writings, and it has very often found its expression in marriage. But the realization that Hell is subservient to Heaven and serves its ends adds an ironic twist to the notion of marriage as hell:

Äktenskapen sades förr vara stiftade i himlen, och det logo vi åt, ty vi tyckte dem mest vara stiftade i helvetet! Men om vi med himlen mena de orter varifrån våra öden sty-

⁴⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 708 (from the section "Tiga och lida": "Suffer in Silence"):

A theosophist once comforted me ... with the explanation that I suffer for unknown offences committed in a previous existence, and that I must not complain, for the punishment is just; and further, that it is part of my karma (= fate) to be treated wrongly even when I am right. And that is the only possible explanation.

....

Now I comfort myself with the consideration that that is how it must be, but for unknown reasons! And the privileged, who are treated right when they do wrong, I regard as tormentors or devils.

ras, då ligger sanningen nog där, eller på båda ställena.⁴⁶

This represents a mellowing of Strindberg's view of marriage, but not a complete transformation: marriage is still hell, but a redemptive hell from which one can be delivered is preferable to one of eternal torment! Indeed, it is linked to the theory developed in *En blå bok I* that unhappiness in marriage is a punishment for turning away from God: a corollary to Advent's principle that he who will not allow Christ to suffer for him must suffer himself. In *En blå bok II*, the interconnection of these things is developed with the help of the Adam-Eve, Prometheus-Pandora, and Hercules-Omphale myths:

De gamla grekernas religiösa visdom synes ibland vara hämtad ur samma källa som Israels och vår, men genom hantering blivit solkad och vänd baklänges. Gamla Testamentets Eva blev ursprungligen skapad mannen till en hjälp och glädje i ensamheten. Men efter syndafallet vände sig bladet.

Hos grekerna blev Pandora genast skapad till ett straff, ty när människorna gjorde uppror mot Zeus och icke ville lyda honom, så skulle de få lyda kvinnan. Mannen var från början en liknelse, danad av lera, men åt denna ville Prometheus ge gudomligt liv och därför stal han eld (anden) från himmelen. När så den fullkomnade mannen i känslan av

⁴⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 701 (from the section "Karma"):

It used to be said that marriages were made in Heaven, and we laughed at that, for we thought most of them were made in Hell! But if by Heaven we mean the regions from which our destinies are directed, then the truth surely lies there, or in both places.

sin natur som halvgud, gjorde revolten, befallde Zeus Vulcanus att av gyttja göra en kvinna, alltså en ny skenbild, vilken begåvades av alla gudarne med charme eller tjusförmåga, talförhet o.s.v.

Under sitt personligblivna begär blev nu mannen slav, och han fick lära sig lyda. De största härskare och tyranner ... ha krupit för sina skenbilder av skön gyttja....

....
"Efter du lydde din hustrus röst", och icke min, så skall du få lyda henne i stället!

Men endast den som genom lydnad mot Gud "är behaglig i Guds ögon", undgår henne. Det är enda sättet! Probatum est!⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 696-97 (from the section "Pandora"):

The religious wisdom of the ancient Greeks seems sometimes to have been drawn from the same source as Israel's and ours, but through handling to have become soiled and turned back-to-front. The Old Testament's Eve was originally created as a helpmate and comfort in loneliness. But after the Fall, it was a different story.

With the Greeks, Pandora was created as a punishment right off, for when men revolted against Zeus and would not obey him, they had to obey woman. From the beginning man was a likeness, fashioned from clay, but Prometheus wanted to give him divine life, so he stole fire (spirit) from heaven. When perfected man, conscious of his nature as a demi-god, then revolted, Zeus commanded Vulcan to make a woman out of mud: a new shadow image, in other words, which was endowed by all the gods with charm or the ability to enchant, loquacity, etc.

Man now became a slave to his incarnate desire, and he had to learn to obey. The greatest rulers and tyrants ... have crept before their shadow images of beautiful mud....

....
"Because you listened to the voice of your wife",* and not to me, you will have to obey her instead!

Only he who "is pleasing in the sight of God" can avoid her, because he obeys God. That is the only way! Probatum est!

Marriage becomes a hell when the love affair with which it began is replaced by a struggle for dominance, or power. It is indicative of Strindberg's softening attitude that he now concedes (albeit with qualifications and reservations) that the whole blame for problems in marriage does not fall on woman:

Den stund makarna fatta sitt kärleksförhållande som en maktkamp, då det just är motsatsen, då är helvetet i huset. Kvinnan har en benägenhet att vilja härska, men om jag nu säger till hennes ursäkt, att denna böjelse är hennes sätt att reagera mot den tryckande mannen (icke förtryckande, ty den har jag aldrig sett!), så ber jag icke få ångra det.⁴⁸

These reflections lead to an observation, borrowed from Swedenborg, that marriage between the godless is impossible, and the section concludes with the passage in which Strindberg comments on the godlessness of the marriages portrayed in his works.

A more positive attitude to women appears in a discussion of the characters in *Hamlet*, where Claudius

* Genesis 3:17 (*Jerusalem Bible*).

⁴⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 735 (from "Fostbrödralag"):

The instant husband and wife understand their love relationship as a power struggle, when it is just the opposite, hell enters the house. Woman has a tendency to want to dominate, and if I now say in her defence that this inclination is her way of reacting to the pressure (not oppression, for that I have never seen!) of the man, I pray I never have cause to regret it.

is seen to have at least one redeeming aspect to his personality: "Själva kungen då, är han alltigenom kolsvart? Det kan han icke vara, då han vunnit en kvinnas kärlek."⁴⁹

Among the many contributions which Swedenborg's teachings make to this volume is a list of correspondences Strindberg has compiled from his works,

För dem som råkat i förbindelse med astralplanet och vilja söka tolkning av de sällsamma upplevelser som därmed följa, antingen det sker i drömmen eller i vakna tillståndet....⁵⁰

While it would be a mistake to attach too much significance to this list (another reason Strindberg gives for including it is that it may help Egyptologists interpret hieroglyphics!), it is nevertheless not without interest. The following condensation (from pp. 526-30) is restricted to those items which seem to have a bearing on Strindberg's own writings,⁵¹ and is given in

⁴⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 794 (from the section "Karaktärsteckning": "The Delineation of Character"): "But what of the King himself: is he thoroughly black? That cannot be, since he has won the love of a woman."

⁵⁰ Ibid., 526 (from the section "Ur Swedenborgs korrespondenslära": "From Swedenborg's Theory of Correspondences"):

For those who have established a connection with the astral plane and wish to seek an interpretation of the singular experiences which ensue, whether in the dreaming or the waking state....

⁵¹ Another caveat: Strindberg was using much of this symbolism long before he came into contact with Swedenborg.

English only, since the format scarcely lends itself to subtleties or nuances:

Snakes = soul murderers.
Bird = understanding.
Fruit = wisdom (nourishment).
The serpent = sensuality.
Woman = love of self.
Thorn = curse.
Thistle = devastation.
The sun = love.
Silver = spirituality.
Gold = the good of love.
Copper = love of neighbour.
Iron = naturally true.
Stone = faith.
Wood = good works.
Ship = knowledge of the good and true.
Lightning = illumination from heaven or exposure of falsehood.
Fruit tree (Olive tree) = love of the good.
Laurels and grapevines = love of the true.
Eagle = knowledge.
White clothing = truth of word.
White = spiritual light.
Red = the light of love.
Black = falsehood.
Fire = infernal love.
Smoke = damnation.
Green = living.
Dogs = greed (gluttony).
Mill = scrutiny.
Stars = knowledge of the good and true.
Eye = understanding.

En blå bok II contains descriptions of three very different vampires. All are women, but we know from other writings that the vampire symbol can be applied to men as well. The first is a vampire who operates through psychic energy: she need not know her victim, and he can even be unaware of her existence; nevertheless, the intensity of her desire for him will sap his energy and perhaps even his will to live. This vampire resembles a succubus, except that she is a real woman:

Ynglingen i pubertetsåldern, som blivit föremål för en, kanske okänd, kvinnas böjelse, plågas av detta, känner sig ofri, besatt, och blir stundom frestad beröva sig livet för att bli fri sin vampyr. Olycklig kärlek kan ju sluta i självmord.⁵²

The second vampire chooses a somewhat older victim: older than herself it is implied (Strindberg's wives were one, twenty-two, and twenty-nine years younger than he, respectively). Her model is Friedrich von Fouqué's Undine:

Vem har icke någon gång råkat den lilla Undine? Den unga flickan, som passiv, utan mening, utan tanke, satt mitt emot dig som en vacker blomma med jämnt lika mycket liv; eller med munnen halvöppen som en fågelunge tog emot din själ, givande dig illusionen att hon fattade vad du sade. Med öppna ögon drack hon dina blickar, tycktes sända dem tillbaka mättade av kraft.

....
Så kom den gröna kronan och den vita slöjan.

Masken kastades, kunskapens frukt var ibiten, och nu upptäckte du att -- din själ hade hon fått, men din ande icke.⁵³

⁵² Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 612 (from the section "Häxprocesserna": "The Witch Trials"):

The youth who has reached the age of puberty and become an object of fancy to a (perhaps unknown) woman, is plagued by her, feels himself confined, possessed, and occasionally is tempted to take his own life in order to rid himself of his vampire. It is known that unhappy love can end in suicide.

⁵³ Ibid., 643 (from the section "Undine"):

Who has not at some time come across the little Undine? The young girl who, passive, without opinions, without thoughts, sat directly opposite you like a beautiful flower and with just as much life as one; or, with her mouth half-open like a young bird, received your soul, giving you the illusion that she understood what you were saying.

The description fits Tekla in "En häxa", as she is courted by her future husband during the Midsummer excursion on Lake Mälaren. She is a woman who, having no soul of her own, assumes that of a man, who does not discover the deception (he believes he has found a soul-mate) until it is too late. She thus assumes a borrowed personality, but lacks the vitality (spirit) to lead an independent existence.

More dangerous is the third vampire, who not only assumes the personality of another, but passes it off as her own, destroying her victim in the process. Such is the woman Strindberg calls Thaïs:⁵⁴

Goethe, i andra delen Faust, inför
larver och lemurer, vilka kämpa om besitt-
ningen av filosofens jordiska hölje för att
ännu en stund få leva ett skenliv. Teosoferna
mena med larver dödes själar som fara in i de
levande människor, vilka äro tomma och själv-
lösa av naturen.

Jag kände en kvinna, som var ett kom-
plett vacuum, och därför ständigt måste ha
sällskap för att galvaniseras till skenliv.

—

With wide eyes she soaked up your glances,
seemed to send them back charged with power.

....

Then came the green crown and the white
veil [i.e., marriage].

The mask was laid aside, the fruit of
knowledge swallowed, and you now discovered
that -- she had taken your soul, but not your
spirit.

⁵⁴ The name comes from the title character of a novel (1890) by Anatole France. A monk is obsessed with voluptuous dreams of the courtesan Thaïs; on meeting him, she converts to Christianity and becomes a saintly hermit (i.e., she assumes his previous identity); he, however, is transformed into an epitome of lust.

Hon "ät upp män" bokstavligen, och när hon fått deras själar bästa, så slängde hon dem, kropparne brydde hon sig mindre om.

När hon blev fylld av en betydande man, så gick hon ut i sällskap och bländade med det lånta ljuset; och hon var bländande, gjorde intryck av "den stora kvinnan". Vi kallade henne Thais.⁵⁵

Finally, by way of redressing the balance a bit, an instance of male vampirism which Strindberg not only recognizes, but seems to recommend. But there is irony here: Strindberg has been singularly unsuccessful in following his own advice:

Kvinnans stoft tyckes vara av en finare materia än mannens, och ett av hennes själshöljen också. Om mannen därför vill införa henne i sin själ, och riktigt äga henne under rocken, så måste han rena sitt grova kött genom försakelser och vård; och han måste utrota sitt själviska onda, smycka sin ande med alla de vackra egenskaper han ville besitta, men kan-

⁵⁵ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 740-41 (from the section "Larver eller tillfälliga materialisationer": "Larvae or Temporary Embodiments"):

Goethe, in the second part of Faust, introduces larvae and lemurs, which fight for occupation of the philosopher's earthly remains in order to be able to live a semblance of life awhile longer. By larvae, the theosophists mean the souls of the dead, which enter the bodies of living men who are empty and devoid of self by nature.

I knew a woman who was a total vacuum and therefore had to have constant companionship in order to be galvanized into a semblance of life. She literally [sic] "ate men up" and when she had obtained the best parts of their souls, she discarded them: their bodies were of less concern to her.

When she had sated herself on a substantial man, she went out in society and dazzled with his borrowed light; and she was dazzling, creating the impression of "the great woman". We called her Thais.

ske saknar. Då först kan hans brud hålla sitt intåg i hans hjärta, och är hon väl där, så behöver han icke stänga klaffarna, så länge nämligen han håller rent och fint i de båda kamrarna och förmaken.

Detta, mina vänner, unga och gamla, är hemligheten kunna bevara en kvinnas kärlek! Jag har talat! Mätte jag icke få ångra det!⁵⁶

En blå bok III⁵⁷ appeared in the autumn of 1908.

Written in much the same vein as the first two parts, it provides evidence of Strindberg's continuing spiritual development, and, in a few instances, second thoughts about subjects broached in earlier sections. There is, for instance, a reassessment of the theory of reincarnation, which the author seemed to embrace in En

⁵⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 775-76 (from the section "Sorgen": "Sorrow"):

Woman's body seems to be fashioned from a finer material than man's, and is also one of the envelopes of her soul. If a man wants to incorporate her into his soul, then, and really to possess her under his skin, he must purify his coarse flesh through privation and care; and he must root out his selfish vices, adorn his spirit with all the beautiful qualities he wants to possess but perhaps lacks. Only then can his bride make her entry into his heart, and if she is content there he does not need to close the valves, so long, of course, as he keeps both chambers and the auricle* clean and tidy.

That, my friends, both young and old, is the secret of keeping a woman's love! I have spoken! May I not have cause to regret it!

* Förmaken (the auricle) is also the Swedish word for drawing room. There is a possibly unintended pun: she will not leave him if he does the housework!

⁵⁷ Ibid., XLVIII, 807-1036.

blå bok II. He does not reject it here, but looks, rather, for Christian evidence to support such a belief, feeling that the teachings of theosophy and oriental religions have small claim on the faith of a Christian. He does find some evidence and, admitting that it is skimpy, concludes that this is an area hidden from us because it is beyond our understanding. Nevertheless, the hints are comforting, for reasons already suggested:

Vise män av alla folk hava trott på en andra födelse, och kristendom själv refererar till dem som ett axiomatiskt faktum.

Präster och leviter frågade ju om Johannes var Elias, och Kristus troddes ibland vara någon av de väldige Herrans profeter som reinkarnerat.

Det vore skäl att vi kristne upptogo detta axiom, som kristet, utan att resonera över det. Då skulle vi nedlägga vår upprorsanda mot ett oblitt, oförklarligt öde, och vi skulle se vidden bakom graven, men även framför vaggan.

Vi skulle skåda livet som en lärorik dröm, blåsa på våra sorger utan att blåsa bort dem, undergivet befalla vår själ och vårt liv i Guds den allsmäktiges hand, hans, som skall väl göra't.

Men allt detta utan att grubbla över gåtorna, som vi icke få lov att veta men som det är gott att ana.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Samlade skrifter, XLVIII, 846 (from the section "Sömngångare": "Sleepwalkers"):

Wise men of all peoples have believed in a second birth, and Christianity itself refers to [it] as an axiomatic fact.

Priests and Levites asked if John [the Baptist] were Elijah, and Christ was sometimes believed to be some reincarnated prophet of the Almighty Lord.

That should be sufficient reason for us Christians to adopt this axiom as Christian, without arguing about it. Then we would be able to lay down our spirit of revolt against

This much milder (and less unorthodox) belief in reincarnation is perhaps occasioned by the fact that Strindberg seems to have found an alternative explanation for his past sufferings which fully accounts for them, leaving nothing to be attributed to crimes committed in previous existences: "Rent ut sagt: Jag tillskriver all min otur, alla mina olyckor den enda orsaken att jag varit gudlös."⁵⁹ But this is in very general terms. A bit later, Strindberg reveals what he considers to have been his great crime, and the cause of all his subsequent suffering. The passage is not confessional in nature but the reference is transparent: his intervention in and disruption of the marriage of Baron Carl Gustaf Wrangel and Siri von Essen:

När en ung man dras in i en familj, så skall han ju vara artig mot värdinnan. Men han skall icke säga henne artigheter om hennes yttre, icke ens om hennes toalett; han skall icke sjunka i hennes ögon eller lägga an på henne; icke upptäcka gemensamma symp-

a hard and inexplicable fate, and we could see the wide expanse beyond the grave, and also prior to the cradle.

We would view life as an instructive dream, blow on our sorrows without blowing them away, submissively commit our souls and our lives into the hand of God Almighty, Who will handle them well.

But all this should be done without brooding over mysteries we are not permitted to know, but which are good to know about.

⁵⁹ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVIII, 903 (from the section "Tillräckliga grunden": "Sufficient Grounds"): "In plain language, I attribute all my misfortune, all my miseries, to the single cause that I was godless."

tier, med ett ord icke röra vid henne. Ty om han det gör, så kan han få plikta för det med ett helt långt liv i outsägliga kval. Hon kan nämligen av obetänksamhet kasta sin charme på honom, och då kan han antingen dö av obesvarad kärlek, eller kunna de två bindas för livet i ett helvete utan namn. Den kränkta mannens berättigade hat är så starkt, att det kan följa som en förbannelse genom hela livet.⁶⁰

This realization or presentiment had occurred to Strindberg at least as early as the previous year, when it provided the symbol of the green eye in *Taklagsöl*. There, however, it had not yet acquired the overwhelming significance in the author's life that is evident here.

There is also a development in Strindberg's thinking about the powers, which in *En blå bok II* ceased to be blind or malicious forces of darkness and became agents of God's Will, acting always for the ultimate good of the human soul and sometimes intervening on its

⁶⁰ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVIII, 938 (from the section "Pilen i levern": "The Thorn in the Flesh"):

When a young man is drawn into a family, he should of course be polite to the hostess. But he should not make polite remarks about her appearance, not even about her dress; he should not humble himself in her eyes or play up to her; not discover common interests; in a word, not touch her. For if he does that, he can be made to pay for it with a whole long life of inexpressible anguish. For, out of thoughtlessness, she can cast a spell on him, and either he can die of unrequited love or the two of them can be bound together for life, in a hell without a name. The offended husband's justifiable hate is so strong, it can follow him as a curse throughout his whole life.

behalf, by offering advice and vicarious suffering. En blå bok II identified them with Swedenborg's "powerful beings" and found similarities in Plato's ideal forms, and the Mahatmas (literally great spirits) and gurus of theosophy and Indian religion. En blå bok III takes up these suggestions and develops them. So completely positive have the powers become that now they are referred to most often as "helpers", and are identified with guardian angels and the ranks of the heavenly host. Their main function is to warn against sin and provide counsel when situations seem ambiguous. They appear in quite unexpected ways:

När en människa vänt sig från det onda med uppriktig avsky, får hon osynliga hjälpare och rådare på den nya goda vägen. Dessa hjälpare, skyddsänglar, se vi ju aldrig, men de giva sig tillkänna på många sätt, dels genom immanenta yttringar av antipati, dels genom hörbara ljud, varningssignaler, bultningar i väggen, syrsors gnissel i örat, knipningar i foten (vänster betyder "ja", höger betyder "nej"), knaprandet av en obefintlig råtta, vilken senare dock kan visa sig (för alkoholisten).⁶¹

⁶¹ Samlade skrifter, XLVIII, 890 (from the section "Astrala iakttagelser": "Astral Observations"):

When a person has turned away from evil with genuine loathing, he is given invisible helpers and counsellors on his new good path. These helpers, guardian angels, we never see, but they let their presence be known in many ways, in part through internal manifestations of antipathy, in part through audible sounds, warning signals, poundings on the wall, the chirping of crickets in the ear, pains in the foot (the left means "yes" and the right "no"), the gnawing of a non-existent rat (which, however, can reveal itself -- to the habitual drunkard).

One is reminded of the bangs, clanks, and other mysterious noises in *Svarta handsken* (written at about the same time); this is their explanation. Strindberg is well aware that most or all of these phenomena have or could have very simple "natural" explanations, but that does not lessen their significance as supernatural manifestations: the knocking on the wall may very well be caused by a neighbour who is hanging a picture, but what has caused him to choose precisely this instant to do so? An occurrence need not in itself be supernatural to have a supernatural cause and, if we heed it, a supernatural effect. But surely these things are too mundane, too commonplace, too petty to bear so much significance? That is because human lives and human destinies are themselves common and petty, and that is why God, Who is too sublime a being to concern Himself with such trivialities, leaves the guiding of human destinies to the "helpers":

Jag skulle dock numera vilja utbyta ordet Gud mot Hjälparen, Skyddsängeln, åt vilken den allerhögste överlämnat människornas små öden att ordna. Evangelierna tala ju om himmelens härskoror, troner, furstadömen och väldigheter, om överänglar och änglar.

Det är vår Hjälpare, som närmast höra våra små barnsliga böner.⁶²

⁶² *Samlade skrifter*, XLVIII, 919 (from the section "Naturliga förklaringar eller närmare och fjärrare orsaken": "Natural Explanations or Immediate and More Removed Causes"):

Nowadays I would, however, almost exchange the word God for Helper, Guardian Angel, to whom the Omnipotent has entrusted the direction of men's small destinies. The

As we shall see in the final section of the book, which deals with the Isle of the Blessed, the helpers play an important rôle in the afterlife as well, preparing the recently dead for their entry into heavenly bliss. Of possible significance is the fact that in *Bibliska egennamn* Strindberg translates the name Jesus as *hjälpare* (helper; *Samlade skrifter*, LII, 118), an attribute also applied to God in the name Eleazar, which figures importantly in *Historiska miniatyrer*.

One of the characteristics which distinguishes *En blå bok III* from the first two volumes is the preponderance in it of discussions of personalities: Strindberg's friends, former friends, and enemies. As with the extract above, dealing with Strindberg's involvement with Siri von Essen and her first husband, there are no names mentioned, but as with that extract, it is often not difficult to identify the persons intended. The attitude of these pieces is generally critical, pointing out annoying habits or faults of character: an

—
gospels,* remember, speak of heaven's dominions, thrones, principalities, and powers, of archangels and angels.

These are our Helpers, who in the first instance hear our small childish prayers.

* Not so: these heavenly beings are not mentioned in the gospels, but in St. Paul's epistles (see especially Colossians 1:16).

attitude that seems not to harmonize easily with Strindberg's Christianity. The same attitude can be found in the attacks on enemies in *Stora landsvägen*, which is also an otherwise highly spiritual work. Strindberg was aware of the apparent inconsistency, and defended himself with the claim to be writing as an *esprit correcteur*, that is, out of a desire to correct and reform rather than to avenge. He refers to Leviticus 19:17 ("You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall punish your neighbour, that you might not incur guilt because of his guilt."), a text first cited by Birger jarl in *Hövdingaminnen*, and also to the New Testament injunctions to the early Christians that they should admonish one another (see especially 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15):

Bröderna skola straffa varandra, står det i en epistel, och det göra de också! De både predika och straffa, om det så bara sker på en krog. Så att inte behöver du genera dig! Kunda de skriva, så skulle de också!⁶³

Having reconciled himself to God through a long life of suffering, he now sees it as his duty to admonish others to do the same. The godless and the idolators are

⁶³ Samlade skrifter, XLVIII, 1024 (from the section "Olika predikare": "Different Preachers"):

Brothers should punish each other, one of the Epistles says, and they do so too! They both preach and punish, even if only in a tavern. So you need not be embarrassed! If they had also been able to write, they would have done so!

sleepwalkers, living in a world of illusion, just as he once was. Having woken to a greater reality and found it good, he seeks to awaken others:

Men om man nu funnit att mycket av det onda härflyter av okunnighet, oförstånd, slöhet, sömnaktighet, så har ju den väckte en viss rättighet att väcka dem som sova. Och om han i hastigheten skriker att elden är lös, istället för att be om ursäkt först, så är ingen skada skedd.⁶⁴

En blå bok III concludes with a section entitled "Högre existensformer; die Toteninsel"⁶⁵ ("Higher Forms of Existence: die Toteninsel"), in which Strindberg elucidates exactly what he understands by the Isle of the Dead/Isle of the Blessed. Since this is the dominant symbol of his entire post-Inferno career, appearing as the verdant isle, "the other side", and in his cloud symbolism, what he has to say about it is very significant indeed. The main source of the ideas concentrated in the symbol is Swedenborg, but Strindberg has incorporated elements from Plato, from Böcklin's painting, and from his own experiences and observa-

⁶⁴ Samlade skrifter, XLVIII, 1023 (from "Olika predikare"):

But if one has now discovered that much wickedness originates in ignorance, imprudence, apathy, somnolence, then he who has awoken has a certain right to wake up those who sleep. If in his haste he shouts that fire has broken out instead of first requesting permission to speak, no great harm has been done.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1033-36.

tions, to make it specifically his own. The description is introduced by the formula "... om jag skulle ... konstruera nästa varelseform, så bleve den så har." ("... if I were to extrapolate the next form of existence ... it would be like this:"); in my translations from the description, I have eliminated the conditional mood.

The first point to be noted is that the Isle of the Blessed is not the whole of the afterlife, but only the first stage of it, where the souls of the blessed are weaned away from the world of illusions they have just left and are initiated into the divine mysteries:

... detta var endast en station, den nästa efter döden från jordelivet.

Hela denna station bestod av öar, simmande i något som kunde vara luft eller vatten. Bergen bestodo av alla vackra stenarter, men voro endast liknelser. Då öarna simmade omkring ändrades utsikten allttjämt, och resor blevo därför onödiga. På varje ö fanns en borg, där väktare, hjälpare och lärare bodde.

Här levde nu goda människor, som slutat jordelivet och så tämligen bestått prövningarna. De hade mest haft svårt i livet, varit neddragna i laster och brott, men fått en sådan avsky för det onda, att de vänt sig åt det goda. Befriade från den mänskliga djurkroppen och från ont och osant, voro de alla sköna och rena. De voro halvt genomskinliga, så att de icke kunde dölja eller ljuga.

Här vilade de ut efter livets fasor.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Samlade skrifter, XLVIII, 1034-35:

... this is only one station, the next after death to earthly life.

The whole of this station is composed of islands, floating in something which might be air or water. The mountains are composed of all kinds of precious stones, but are only likenesses. Since the islands float around, the view is constantly changing, and travel

All is not rest, however, although all is pleasant. The day consists of only nine hours: two for work (gardening), one for eating, two for instruction and recreation, and four for sleep. The instruction is, in fact, part of the rest cure, and is designed to lead the inhabitants of the isle to an understanding of and reconciliation with their past lives, in order that they might finally achieve the perfect peace which is necessary before even higher levels of existence can be attained. This instruction is carried out by the helpers and teachers in the castle:

De undervisades nu av lärarne om meningen av deras förflutna jordeliv. Varför de blivit födda av de föräldrarna, under de villkoren. De fingo veta orsakerna till att deras umgänge var sådant, deras lärare just dessa.

Hela livets sällsamma väv repades upp, och de sågo trådarna i sitt öde. Varför de måste begå den handlingen, som de ogillade; varför andra haft lov att plåga dem orättvist.

Med varje upplysning lossades ett bitterhetens band; ljus och försoning spred ett

is therefore unnecessary. On every island there is a castle, where keepers, helpers, and teachers reside.

Here good men now live, who have completed their earthly lives and endured the trials tolerably well. Most of them had a hard time in life, were dragged down into vice and crime, but acquired such a loathing for evil that they turned toward the good. Freed from the animal bodies of human beings and from evil and untruth, they are all beautiful and pure. They are semi-transparent, so they can neither hide anything nor lie.

Here they rest themselves after the horrors of life.

stilla sken över det rysliga förflutna. De förläto i sinnet sina fiender, och välsignade dem ibland. Allt, även det ohyggligaste tog en försonande dager, och därmed, endast därmed utplånades dessa hiskliga minnen de aldrig trott sig kunna bli fria ifrån.

Då gråto de av glädje, och föllo i hänryckning. Detta hade de aldrig kunnat tänka sig: att en försoning med det förflutna fanns.⁶⁷

Those unhappy with this regimen, who do not find the peace and forgiveness experienced by the others, are free to leave at any time; presumably they are not yet ready for the eternal mysteries and are reincarnated on earth, to continue working out their karmas. Those who remain are lead from an understanding of and reconciliation with their pasts to a realization that

⁶⁷ Samlade skrifter, XLVIII, 1035:

They are now taught the meaning of their past earthly lives by the teachers. Why they were born to just those parents in just those circumstances. They are able to learn the reasons they were surrounded by such company, had just those teachers.

The whole strange fabric of life is unravelled, and they see the strands of their destinies. Why they had to perform certain deeds they disliked; why others had leave to torment them unjustly.

With every clarification, a bond of bitterness is loosened; light and forgiveness spread a tranquil glow over the dreadful past. They forgive their enemies in their hearts, and sometimes bless them. Everything, even what was most appalling, is seen in a forgiving light, and thereby, only thereby, are those frightful memories obliterated, from which they thought they would never be free.

They weep for joy and fall into ecstasy. They were never able to imagine this: that they could be reconciled with the past.

earthly life has been an illusion, and human knowledge ignorance: a penalty for godlessness:

Någon undervisning om de man kallar världs-gåtorna, kosmogonien, teogonien, filosofien eller vetenskaperna, kunde de icke få här, ty deras förstånd räckte icke. Men ett fingo de veta: att allt vad de lärt i vetenskap på jorden var falskt, till straff därför att de ville som Gud bli vetande.⁶⁸

This peaceful, idyllic, and beneficial existence continues for thirty years (but years composed of nine-hour days; i.e., just over eleven earth years): it takes time for the soul to heal after passing through the vale of sorrows which is earthly existence! It is then ready to continue on its heavenly pilgrimage: to even higher and more enlightened forms of existence:

Vid trettio år avsomnade de en natt utan att veta det, för att på andra platser uppfostras vidare, i visdom, kärlek, tro och hopp!⁶⁹

Finally, *En blå bok III* contains two brief references to Strindberg plays which convey something of

⁶⁸ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVIII, 1036:

Here they can receive no instruction in what are called the mysteries of the Universe: cosmogony, theogony, philosophy, or the sciences, for their understanding is not sufficient. But one thing they are permitted to know: that all the knowledge they acquired on earth was false, a punishment for wishing to know as God knows.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1036:

After thirty years, they fall asleep one night without knowing it, in order that in other places they might be further trained in wisdom, love, faith, and hope!

their significance to him. The first is in a discussion of his most persistent foe among the critics (Oscar Levertin, 1862-1906) entitled "Min värsta ovän" ("My Worst Enemy"), and refers to the spiritual breakthrough represented by the *Till Damaskus* trilogy: "Därpå följde min stora Damaskusresa, då jag fick upp ögonen efter en tids blindhet...."⁷⁰ The other reference is a summary of what Strindberg was trying to accomplish with *Ett drömspel*:

Jag har ofta beklagat människorna, frikämt dem, och särskilt i *Drömspelet* tagit dem i försvar mot vedersakaren, Satan eller Anklagaren. Och jag har funnit skulden hos livet självt. Vi äro ju andar, fångslade i kroppen, som fordra begärens mer eller mindre pockande tillfredsställelse. Vi äro ju inkastade i en kamp, där även den fredligaste utmanas till självförsvar och nödvärn, och måste antaga utmaningen, såvida han icke skall trampas eller gå under.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Samlade skrifter*, XLVIII, 943: "Then followed my great Journey to Damascus, when I opened my eyes after a period of blindness...."

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1022 (from "Olika predikare"):

I have often felt sorry for humans, acquitted them, and, especially in the *Dream Play*, defended them against the adversary, Satan or the Accuser. And I have found the fault to lie with life itself. We are, after all, spirits imprisoned in bodies, which demand the more or less urgent satisfaction of desires. We are, then, thrown into a battle, where even the most peaceful is challenged to self-protection and defence and must take up that challenge if he is not to be trampled and defeated.

En blå bok IV⁷² was published in 1912 under the title *En extra blå bok* (An Extra Blue Book). It contains further demonstrations that human learning is all vanity, with the bulk of the book devoted to mathematics. It is without interest in the present context. *En ny extra blå bok* (A New Extra Blue Book) was published after Strindberg's death. I have not been seen a copy of it, but doubt it would add anything of significance: by 1912 Strindberg seems indeed to have said all he had to say!

⁷² *Samlade skrifter*, XLVIII, 1037-1115.

Chapter 82

Oväder

The plays Strindberg wrote in 1903 were weak and had no success on the stage. For the next three years, disillusioned with the theatre and especially with the lack of enthusiasm with which his plays were greeted in Sweden, he wrote none whatsoever. In 1906, however, his interest in the theatre began to reawaken, as several of his plays were given Stockholm productions and were warmly received, culminating in the Stockholm première of *Fröken Julie* in December after a successful tour of the provinces. His dream of having his own theatre revived, and together with August Falck, the young director of that production of *Fröken Julie*, he turned the dream into a definite plan. While they were searching for a suitable site for the eventual Intima teatern (the Intimate Theatre), Strindberg began what became known as the chamber plays, specifically tailored for the type of theatre he had in mind.

Opus I of the chamber plays is *Oväder*¹ (Storm), which was written in late January and early February, 1907. It is a highly personal play, dealing with the author's feelings after the failure of his third marriage, and his reaction to rumours that Harriet Bosse

¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 287-305.

was planning to remarry, thus providing their daughter with a step-father. Strindberg turned fifty-eight on January 22 that year, and the play conveys his desire, after an eventful life, for an untroubled, peaceful existence, free from the sorrow and suffering that passion had always brought him: a desire to be able to grow old with grace and dignity.

The play is about a Gentleman who occupies the ground floor of an elegant building in a fashionable district of Stockholm. He has lived there for ten years, the first five with his younger wife (Gerda) and their daughter. The marriage failed, however, and he now lives there alone with his memories. His only acquaintance are his Brother (a consul); a Confectioner² who lives and has a shop in the building; and his cousin Louise, who cares for his home. It is late summer, and the Gentleman is troubled by new neighbours in the flat immediately above his, who operate a gambling club there. The new tenant has appeared suddenly, and just as suddenly disappears. He discovers that this man was Gerda's second husband, and that he took the Gentleman's daughter with him when he left. He meets Gerda, and finds that both she and their daughter have lost their hold on him. His memories of them had been

² The Swedish word is *konditor*, a pastry cook and owner of a *konditori*: a combination pastry-shop and cafe.

all that tied him to the world of passion and suffering, and he now looks forward to a tranquil old age. As these events unfold, a storm gathers, produces a bit of rain and lightning, and disperses.

Because of their highly condensed nature, the chamber plays are necessarily very symbolic. The first symbol which strikes one's attention is the building in which the Gentleman lives. The inhabitants have little to do with each other: the Gentleman has been living there for ten years and knows none of the other tenants except the Confectioner, and the latter reveals that he had lived there two years before discovering that there was a nursing home in the building, from which dead bodies were collected at night! No wonder, then, it is called the Silent House! But if its inhabitants lead detached lives, it is nevertheless not a hostile environment: it is, rather, simply a place where one does not speak of sorrows and suffering (and therefore does not speak at all): "... han talar inte om sina sorger, och ingen annan heller här i tysta huset."³

For the Gentleman in particular, the building is a peaceful, protective, nourishing environment. He keeps his flat exactly as it was when Gerda was also living there, and her photograph is enshrined as if on an

³ *Skrifter*, XII, 302 (III, i): "... he doesn't talk about his sorrows, and neither does anyone else here in the Silent House."

altar, on the ledge of the tile stove in his dining room. For him, the building is a sanctuary to his memories of the woman he loved and their child, beautiful memories from before things began to go wrong between them: "... som endast vackra minnen stannat i våningen, så blev jag kvar."⁴ He lives in the past, and although this gives him a feeling of security and protects him from the vicissitudes of the world beyond the building, he nevertheless feels constricted by it and, viewed objectively, the person he has become is a stranger:

Jag har blivit orörlig, jag är bunden vid denna våning genom minnena ... endast därinne har jag ro och skydd. Därinne ja! Det är intressant att se sitt hem utifrån; jag föreställer mig att det är en annan som vandrar därinne ...⁵

The building, then, is indeed a symbol of life ("... här ha de dragit in med bröllopsvagnar och ut med likvagnar...."⁶), as Sprinchorn suggests;⁷ it is not the whole of life, however, but only that part of it

⁴ *Skrifter*, XII, 291 (I, i): "... since only beautiful memories remained in the flat, I stayed on."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 290 (I, i):

I've become stationary; I'm tied to this flat by its memories ... only in there do I find peace and security. In there, yes! It's interesting to see your home from outside; I imagine to myself that it's someone else wandering around in there...

⁶ *Ibid.*, 290 (I, i): "... they've arrived here in wedding coaches and left in hearses...."

⁷ *Strindberg, Chamber Plays*, xvii.

which is past and cherished in memory. That is why it is silent: its inhabitants do not live in the boisterous world around them, but in the world of their pasts, as coloured by their memories. They are mostly old; the one remaining young person, the Confectioner's daughter Agnes, makes a desperate attempt to leave, and Gerda, also young when she was living there, thought of it as a prison: "... när jag satt fången här, så var det icke fångvaktarns fel utan fängelsets, att jag vantrivdes!"⁸

Into this tranquil world comes a disturbing element: the tenant immediately above the Gentleman's flat dies, and the flat is taken by people who are greatly at odds with the Silent House. They are Gerda and their child -- not as he remembers them, but as they really are -- and her second husband, a flashy gambler and entrepreneur. In contrast to the tranquil environment, they are garish, loud, vulgar, and unsettling: the real world of the present intrudes on the quiet, subdued world of memory. It is the Brother who first voices uneasiness at this jarring new element:

En trappa upp, Fischers! Röda rullgardinen
som lyser likt en cigarrlykta om natten; jag

⁸ *Skrifter*, XII, 298 (II, vii): "... when I was imprisoned here, it wasn't the guard's fault, but the prison's, that I was unhappy!"

tror ni fått dåligt sällskap i huset!⁹

The confrontation of the Gentleman with these new tenants, however, has a liberating effect on him: the present, in all its sadness, releases him from his bondage to the past, and he can now look forward to an untroubled future, for his peace is no longer founded on the illusions of memory. As a symbol of this liberation, he will move out of the house, just as Strindberg himself moved the following year to Blå tornet (the Blue Tower: see the chapter on Svarta handsken: The Black Glove):

Stäng fönsterna, och drag sen ner gardinerna,
så få minnena gå och lägga sig att sova, i
ro! Ålderdomens ro! Och i höst flytter jag
från det tysta huset.¹⁰

⁹ *Skrifter*, XII, 293 (I, iv):

On the first* floor -- the Fischers! The red
blind which glares like a cigar end in the
night; I think you have bad company in the
building!

* i.e., the floor above street level (in North America,
the second floor).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 305 (III, ix):

Close the windows, and then draw the cur-
tains,* so the memories can lie down and
sleep, in peace! The peace of old age! And in
the fall I shall move from the Silent House.

This is a nice theatrical touch: these are the final
lines of the play.

The most important colour symbol in the play is the red of the curtains and window-shades in the Fischers' flat. Throughout Strindberg's works, red signifies passion (in both senses: strong emotion and suffering). The Gentleman's old passions are awakened when the new tenants occupy the flat above his, symbolized by the red glow from their windows. These passions are not extinguished until after they have left, when Louise puts out the lights they have left burning and the windows become dark. Again, it is the Brother who early in the play divines the significance of this red glow in the night: "De fyra röda gardiner se ut som ridåer, bakom vilka man repeterar blodiga dramer ... så inbillar jag mig...."¹¹ Gerda's second husband appears in the black and white associated in Strindberg (cf. *Till Damaskus*, etc.) with those who administer penance: "Herr Fischer.... Det är han ovanpå! Han med vita händerna i smoking!"¹² This is consistent with the func-

¹¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 289-90 (I, i):

The four red curtains look like theatre curtains,* behind which bloody tragedies are being rehearsed ... or so I imagine....

* There is a link between this speech and the final lines of the play; both of which implicitly compare memories to the illusion of the theatre.

¹² *Ibid.*, 296 (II, iv): "Mr. Fischer.... That's the man upstairs! The one with the white hands and the dinner jacket!"

tion of the character who, through provoking suffering in the present, releases the Gentleman from bondage to the past. Also of interest is the green tile stove upon which the Gentleman enshrines the photograph of Gerda and their child. The colour green here has the same significance as in *Himmelrikets nycklar*: a symbol of a state somewhere between life and death: life, because the woman and child are in fact still alive; death, because the Gentleman thinks of them not as they are, but as they were five years previously: as if, in fact, they were dead.

Flowers, as things that are delicate and require loving care and attention if they are to flourish and be beautiful, are associated with the delicately preserved and tenderly nourished memories of the wife and daughter. The Brother again serves as interpreter of symbols:

... ser du inte, hur han sköter dina blommor, på dina rabatter här; han bar hit jorden själv, du minns, i en korg; känner du dina blå Gentiana och resedan, dina rosor, Malmaison och Merveille de Lyon, som han ympat själv; förstår du hur han vårdat ditt minne och er dotters?¹³

¹³ Skrifter, XII, 294 (I, vi):

... don't you see how he cares for your flowers, here in your flowerbeds; he carried the earth here himself, you remember, in a basket. Do you recognize your blue gentians and the mignonette, your Malmaison and Merveille de Lyon roses, which he grafted himself? Do you understand how he has nursed the memory of you and your daughter?

This is why, when the Gentleman first glimpses Gerda in the building, during a flash of lightning, and is assured there is nobody there, he attributes the vision to the effect of the flowers (which surround Gerda's photograph on the stove ledge): "Det är så kvavt, och blommorna ge mig huvudvärk ..."¹⁴

A symbol of major importance is the gas lamp in front of the building. The play takes place on the first night on which it is necessary to light the street lamps after the Stockholm summer, in August. It is still technically summer, but autumn is quickly approaching. In the symbolism of the seasonal cycle, the male figure associated with summer is the bridegroom; that with autumn, the old man. The Gentleman is approaching old age and looks forward to that period of life when, freed from the passions of his youth, he will be able to lead a calm and peaceful existence. He therefore eagerly awaits the lighting of the first lamp as a sign that that period of his life is beginning:

De här ljusa kvällarne gör mig skygg, det är nog vackert på landet, men i stan verkar det såsom emot naturens ordning, nästan hemskt; tänder de bara första lyktan, så känner jag mig lugn igen....¹⁵

¹⁴ Skrifter, XII, 295 (I, vi): "It's so stuffy in here, and the flowers give me a headache ..."

¹⁵ Ibid., 290 (I, i):

These light evenings make me skittish; oh, it's beautiful in the country, but in the city it seems to be against the laws of nature, and is almost horrible; they only have to light the first lamp, and I'll feel

Before he can enter that phase of his life, however, he must be reconciled to his past: accordingly, although anticipated throughout the play, the lighting of the lamp is delayed until after his confrontations with his daughter and former wife. Only at the very end of the play does the lamplighter arrive, and the precise meaning of the lamp and why the Gentleman has been looking forward to its lighting is revealed: it is the light of understanding which comes with old age; he will now be able to look back upon the events of his life and make sense of them, without fear of getting trapped in the same pitfalls again:

HERRN: Se där kommer lykttändarn, äntligen!

*

LYKTTÄNDARN (in, tänder lyktan).

HERRN: Första lyktan! Nu är det höst! Det är vår årstid, gubbar! Det börjar skymma, men då kommer förståndet och lyser med blindlyktan, så han inte går villovägar.¹⁶

calm again....

¹⁶ Skrifter, XII, 305 (III, viii-ix):

THE GENTLEMAN: Look: here comes the lamplighter, at last!

*

THE LAMPLIGHTER (enters, lights the lamp).

THE GENTLEMAN: The first lamp! Now it's autumn! It's our time of year, old fellows! It begins to get dark, but then understanding comes and shines with a dark lantern,* so we don't go astray.

A dark lantern is one in which the light can be completely hidden, if desired. Strindberg apparently

This light of understanding, like the light of the gas lamp, is gentle, subdued, forgiving, as opposed to the clear and unrelenting light of the Swedish summer, which the Gentleman dislikes. Natural light and the harsher indoor lighting seem to represent the hard, critical, unforgiving scrutiny of the world: "Vi gamla älska skymningen, den döljer så mycket brister hos oss själva och andra ..."¹⁷

When the new upstairs tenants go, they leave the lights burning, and the empty flat in full, harsh light symbolizes the emptiness of the Gentleman's past, which has so long disturbed his peace:

Ser du däroppe! De har gått ifrån ljusen --
tomma rum i belysning är mera hemskt än i
mörker ... man ser ju spökena.¹⁸

Strindberg had first planned to call the play *Första Lyktan* (*The First Lamp*), but eventually rejected that title for the one it now bears, and indeed, the weather is another major symbol in the play. Three

wishes to symbolize an inner light.

¹⁷ *Skrifter*, XII, 292 (I, i): "We old folks love the twilight: it hides so many faults in ourselves and others ..."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 302 (III, i):

Look up there! They've left the lights burning -- an empty room is more horrible in the light than in darkness: you can see the ghosts.

aspects of the weather are mentioned: the heat, the closeness (the Gentleman, for instance, has difficulty in breathing), and the storm. All of these combine to create an atmosphere (literal and figurative) similar to that in "Leka med elden"; as in that play, the weather becomes a symbol of the passions: the passions of summer (the Gentleman's youth) which threaten to carry over into autumn (his old age).

In almost the first lines of the play, the heat of the dog days is associated with the passions:

BRODERN (hälsar Konditorn): God afton, herr Starck, det är varmt fortfarande ...

(Sätter sig på bänken.)

KONDITORN: God afton, herr konsul, det är röt månadsvärme....¹⁹

Shortly thereafter, the heat is associated with the new tenants, who alone seem to thrive on it, and the association is underlined with a flash of heat lightning:

Aldrig öppnar de fönsterna, i den här värmen, det måtte vara sydlänningar ... Se, nu blix-tar det! En, två, tre ... Det är bara korn-blixt!! För det hörs intet dunder!²⁰

¹⁹ *Skrifter*, XII, 289 (I, i):

THE BROTHER (greetes the Confectioner): Good evening, Mr. Starck. The heat continues ...

(Sits down on the bench.)

THE CONFECTIONER: Good evening, Consul. It's the heat of the rutting season....

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 292 (I, i):

They never open their windows, in this heat; they must be from the south ... Look: lightning! One - two - three - ... It's only heat lightning! There's no thunder!

Lightning (and the danger of being struck by lightning) is the threat posed by the new tenants: the disruption caused by the outbreak of passion. The point is underlined by the Brother, who clearly associates the symbolism of the storm with that of the colour red: "Jag tycker inte om det här nya okända, som kommit i huset. Det ligger som ett rött åskmoln över en...."²¹

As the play progresses, the Gentleman terminates a conversation with his Brother about the circumstances surrounding the breakup of his marriage; he attributes the unpleasant conversation to the influence of the weather (something unpleasant is in the air): "Men varför sitter vi och talar om det här? Är det värmen och åskvädret eller vad?"²² Later, he talks to his mother on the telephone. Unaware that Gerda is listening to the conversation, he seems to feel that the storm is being averted; and indeed, Gerda's second husband has already left the house with the little girl. The heat, however, continues. In reply to his mother's query about the weather, he exclaims: "Om det är varmt? Åskan har gått över våra huven, mittöver oss, men slog

²¹ Skrifter, XII, 293 (I, v): "I don't like this new unknown that has come into the house. It lies like a red thunder cloud over our heads...."

²² Ibid., 297 (II, vi): "But why are we sitting here talking about this? Is it the heat and the storm in the air, or what?"

inte ner! Blint alarm!"²³ Directly over the Gentleman's head, of course, is the Fischers' flat!

Immediately after this, the Gentleman is confronted by Gerda, and the storm begins to make itself felt more concretely: it begins to rain. She leaves, however, and shortly after that the rain ceases. He still fears, though, that he will be drawn into their lives, and he feels helpless in the face of this possibility:

Hur vill man att jag skall kunna styra, där så många passioner blåsa! Inte kan jag kuva deras lidelser eller ändra deras kurs.²⁴

Louise, however, is confident that the worst has happened already: "... det här ovädret skall väl också gå över!"²⁵ She proves right. Everything works out: the Confectioner's daughter comes home, the second husband goes south alone, and Gerda and her daughter go to live with her mother. The Gentleman will be left in peace; the storm has blown over, and the moon, with its cold, quiet light -- the natural equivalent to the gas lamp -- will soon begin to shine:

²³ *Skrifter*, XII, 299 (II, ix): "Is it hot! We've had lightning over our heads -- right above us -- but it didn't strike! False alarm!"

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 303 (III, i):

How am I supposed to navigate, when so many passions are blowing! I can't quell their sufferings or alter their course.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 303 (III, iv): "... this storm will also blow over!"

KONDITIONER (tittar uppåt): Jag tror ovädret har gått över.

HERRN: Det tycks verkligen ha klarnat, och då få vi månsken.²⁶

A symbol which occurs only once in the play, but then in an extended form, like that of the hairpin in *Ett drömspel*, is closely related to the weather symbolism; it is that of the thermometer, symbol of the instability of the Gentleman's marriage:

GERDA: I högra lådan, längst in, låg en termometer ... (Paus.) Jag undrar om den ligger kvar ... (Går till byffén, drar ut högra lådan.) Ja, det gör den!

BRODERN: Vad skall det betyda?

GERDA: Ja, den blev en symbol till slut! På det obeständiga! -- När vi satt opp bo't, så blev termometern liggande, den skulle ju vara utanför fönstret ... jag lovade sätta ut den ... glömde det; han lovade göra det, och glömde. Så kältade vi på varann, och slutligen, för att komma ifrån det, så gömde jag den här i lådan ... jag fick hat till den, och han med. Vet du vad det innebar? -- Jo, ingen trodde på varaktigheten av vår förbindelse, då vi genast kastade maskerna, och visade våra antipatier. Vi levde första tiden liksom på språng ... färdiga att fly när som helst. -- Det var termometern ... och här ligger han än! Opp och ner, alltid föränderlig, som väderleken. (Hon lägger den ifrån sig....)²⁷

²⁶ *Skrifter*, XII, 305 (III, viii):

THE CONFECTIONER (looks upwards): I think the storm has blown over.

THE GENTLEMAN: It really does seem to have cleared up, so we'll have moonlight.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 298 (II, vii):

GERDA: In the right-hand drawer, at the back, there was a thermometer ... (Pause.) I wonder if it's still there ... (Goes to the sideboard, pulls open the right-hand drawer.) Yes, it is!

THE BROTHER: So what?

GERDA: Well, in the end it became a symbol!

The thermometer really existed, and is mentioned in *Ockulta dagboken*,²⁸ where Strindberg gives it a similar symbolic significance in relation to his marriage to Harriet Bosse.

Reference has been made to cyclical symbolism in the play, with the summer representing the Gentleman's passionate youth and the autumn a rich but quiet old age. Another reference to the seasonal cycle suggests a reason for the failure of his marriage: after a childhood deprived of affection, he could not cope with the passion of marriage: "... vårn var kallt, men sommarn olidligt varm...."²⁹ Still another anticipates the end of the cycle, and indicates why it is important that the Gentleman should find peace in autumn: "... man

—

Of instability! When we set up house, the thermometer got overlooked: it should have gone up outside the window, of course. I promised to put it up ... and forgot; he promised to do it, and forgot. Then we began nagging each other about it and finally, to escape that, I hid it here in the drawer. I'd grown to hate it, and him with it. Do you know what that meant? -- Well, nobody thought our relationship would last, when we cast aside our masks so quickly and showed our antipathy to each other. In those early days we lived as if on the run: ready to flee at any moment. -- That was the thermometer ... and there it is still! Up and down, always changing, like the weather. (She puts it aside....)

²⁸ *Dagboken*, 109 (April 26, 1907). See the chapter on *Ockulta dagboken*.

²⁹ *Skrifter*, XII, 289 (I, i): "... the spring was cold, but the summer insufferably hot...."

måste vara på sin post; och rusta till vintern...;"³⁰
 he must begin to prepare for death.

The play concentrates on the inner life, and the world outside the individual is seen as hostile, garish, and vulgar (as are the new tenants in the building: the reality of the present, as contrasted to the memory of the past or hope in the future). The desire to escape the world, to shut it out, is symbolized by a desire, voiced several times, for blindness and deafness. The relation of this to the symbolism of light and to the Silent House, is obvious. The symbol is introduced in reference to another old inhabitant of the building:

KONDITIONERN: ... vet fröken, att min gumma håller på att bli blind, men vill icke opereras! Det är ingenting att se på, säger hon, och hon önskar sig ibland vara döv med.

LOUISE: Det kan så tyckas -- ibland!³¹

Later we learn that the Gentleman also has trouble with his eyesight: "HERRN (kommer ... in ..., nickar åt Gerda, vilken han med sin närsynthet tar för Louise

³⁰ Skrifter, XII, 289 (I, i): "... we must be at our posts, and prepare for winter...."

³¹ Ibid., 292 (I, ii):

THE CONFECTIONER: ... do you know, miss, my old wife is going blind, but doesn't want to have an operation! "There's nothing worth looking at," she says, and she sometimes wishes she were deaf as well.

LOUISE: It can seem that way -- sometimes!

...):"³² When his mother asks him, over the telephone, about his eyesight, he echoes the sentiments of the Confectioner's wife, and specifically links these sentiments to his new neighbours:

Mina ögon? Jo, jag blir närsynt, men jag säger som konditorns gumma: det är ingenting att se på! Önskade vara lite döv också! Döv och blind! Grannerna ovanpå bullra så fasligt om nätterna ...³³

The Gentleman, through all his tribulations, remains passive: he allows things to happen to him rather than taking any direct action himself. This aspect of his character is symbolized by the game of chess. In both *Kristina* and *Gustav III* chess is a symbol for the manipulation of others. Here it is rather a symbol of the passive life, which views existence as something prearranged, planned, and not to be altered (rather like the well-made play in *Gustav III*): "... bara man vet, hur pjäserna gå, så reder det sig nog ..."³⁴ The point is driven home by the Brother, as he

³² *Skrifter*, XII, 298 (II, ix): "THE GENTLEMAN (comes ... in ..., nods to Gerda, whom, in his near-sightedness, he takes for Louise ...):"

³³ *Ibid.*, 299 (II, ix):

My eyes? Well, I'm becoming nearsighted, but I say what the confectioner's wife says: there's nothing worth looking at! I have wished I were a little deaf as well! Deaf and blind! The upstairs neighbours make such a dreadful noise at night ...

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 295 (II, i): "... as long as you know how the pieces move, it's sure to turn out all right ..."

leaves Gerda to face the Gentleman for the first time in five years: "Tänk icke på vad du skall säga; det ger sig självt, som 'nästa drag' i schackspelet!"³⁵ The passive attitude symbolized by chess, to which the Gentleman seems addicted, is most succinctly stated, however, in an observation which makes no reference to the game. Nevertheless, it is so similar to the two references cited that it belongs with them, for it is the direction in which they point: "HERRN: Allting reder sig bättre, om man icke trasslar till det genom ingripande."³⁶

Oväder, then, is a play about preparing for old age and eventually death, by confronting one's past and being shriven of one's memories (illusions) in order to be able to look back on one's life with the quiet light of understanding.

³⁵ *Skrifter*, XII, 298: "Don't think about what you'll say; it will come of itself, like the 'next move' in a game of chess!"

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 302-03 (III, i): "THE GENTLEMAN: Everything turns out better if one doesn't complicate matters by interfering."

Chapter 83

Brända tomten

Opus 2 of the chamber plays is *Brända tomten*¹ (*The Burnt Lot*), which was finished about a fortnight later than *Oväder*, in early March, 1907. The two plays share the theme of confrontation with the past, the central symbol of the house, and the suggestion of a journey at the end, to name but three things. *The Outsider*,² however, is more philosophical than the Gentleman in *Oväder*, and *Brända tomten* places more emphasis on the theme of life as illusion.

As in *Oväder*, the house is a symbol of the past as preserved in memory:

... ett sånt hus! Den ena kom, och den andra gick, men tillbaks kom de, och här dog de, här föddes de, här gifte de sig och skildes.³

Unlike the Gentleman in *Oväder*, the Outsider is not trapped by the memories embodied in the house, however. Already as a child he had felt oppressed by it (symbolized, as elsewhere, by difficulty in breathing): "... jag känner barnkammarluft, och tryck på bröstet -- ni

¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 307-26.

² *Främlingen*: usually translated "the Stranger", but Strindberg uses a different word than he does for the Stranger (*den Okände*) in the *Till Damaskus* plays.

³ *Skrifter*, XII, 311 (I, v):

... what a house! One arrived and the other left, but they came back again; and here they died, here they were born, here they were married and divorced.

äldre tryckte mig...."⁴ He dreamed of a beautiful world beyond the house, and as soon as he could, he left it:

Där är matsaln med de målade väggarne; palmer, cypresser, tempel, under en rosenröd himmel; så drömde jag att världen såg ut, bara man kom bort ifrån hemmet!⁵

Like many Swedes at the time, he sought his promised land in America, but thirty years later he feels a need to revisit his childhood home or, in other words, to confront his early life. Acting on this desire, he discovers that his earthly life has been nothing but an empty shell:

Jag kommer från Amerika, efter tretti år, det var något som drog, jag måste se mitt barn-domshem igen -- -- -- och så finner jag en ruin.⁶

The house burned to the ground the night before he arrived. This is because it and everything in it was a

⁴ *Skrifter*, XII, 314 (I, x): "... I sense the air of the nursery and the pressure on my chest -- you older ones oppressed me...."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 313 (I, x):

There's the dining room, with its painted walls: palm trees, cypresses, and temples, under a rose-red sky; I dreamed that the world looked like that, if one only got away from home!

⁶ *Ibid.*, 313 (I, x):

I've come from America, after thirty years; something drew me here: I had to see my childhood home again -- -- -- and I find a ruin.

sham, a mockery, an illusion: "... allting var färgat i vårt hus, för att vara oigenkännligt.... Humbug ... !"⁷

The fire that burned the house down was an instrument of poetic (or divine) justice; whoever or whatever the immediate cause, the house deserved to burn. This sentiment is first expressed by the Old Woman: "Jag har sett jag; här i huset har passerat mycket, så mycket, att jag tyckte det var tid det fick rökas ut...."⁸ Later, the same feelings are voiced by Alfred, the Gardener's son: "Jag har haft så ont här i huset, så att jag önskade eld på det många gånger ..."⁹

Finally, having confronted his childhood and found it an empty sham, the Outsider lays its memory to rest, and once more takes to the open road: symbol, as in the pilgrimage plays, of the spiritual quest:

Jag tänkte gå ut till körgårn med denna krans, till föräldrarnas grav; men jag skall lägga den här, på ruinen av mitt fädernehem! Mitt barndomshem! (Gör en tyst bön.) Och så:

⁷ Skriffter, XII, 318 (II, i): "... everything was dyed in our house, to make it unrecognizable for what it was.... Humbug ... !"

⁸ Ibid., 311 (I, v): "I've seen a lot, I have; so very much has happened in this house, I thought it was high time it got smoked out...."

⁹ Ibid., 323 (II, v): "I've suffered so much in this house, that I've wished many times it would burn down ..."

ut i vida världen igen, vandrare!¹⁰

The house has been destroyed by the purgatorial fire, which burns away that which is impure or false. Only charred rubble and ashes remain, symbols of the vanity of this world. The house has been revealed for what it was, and its guilty secrets exposed:

Jo, när de bröt opp studentens dörr, så hitta de fullt med hårnålar på golvet, det kom i dagen likvisst, men det måste eld gå över först ...¹¹

The reference is to the practice of firing a cannon over the surface of the water to bring up the corpses of those who have drowned. The fire has revealed the truth, not only about the nature of the student's relations with his landlady (the Outsider's sister-in-law), but about the house itself as an abode of hypocrisy and illusion.

But if the purgatorial fire destroys what is false, it also leaves behind what is true. In this case, all that is left is ashes, but those ashes can

¹⁰ Skrifter, XII, 326 (II, ix):

I planned to go out to the cemetery with this wreath, to my parents' grave, but I'll lay it here, on the ruin of my parental home! My childhood home! (He prays silently.) Well then: out into the wide world again, wanderer!

¹¹ Ibid., 311 (I, v):

Well, when they broke down the student's door, they found the floor covered with hairpins. The truth surfaced like a corpse, but fire had to pass over it first ...

have a redemptive effect for those who lived in the house, by increasing their understanding of the past:

FÄRGARN: Låt oss inte gräva i ruinerna!

FRÄMLINGEN: Varför inte? När det är brunnet, så kan man läsa i askan....¹²

Upon the understanding so gained, they can then build better futures:

MATILDA: Jag hörde att stybben efter branden skulle köras ut på landen och förbättra jorden ...

ALFRED: Du menar askan ...

MATILDA: Ja, det skall vara bra att så i askan ...¹³

In other words, one can build and improve upon the past if one treats it properly: as ashes (illusion).

Strindberg has no doubt of this; he regards the past here with a particularly jaundiced and jaded eye. The district in which the house stood is known as the Morass, and life there is bitter and vindictive:

CIVIL: Ni har ett särskilt namn på ert kvarter här?

MURARN: Vi kallar det Moraset; och alla

¹² Skrifter, XII, 313 (I, x):

THE DYER: Let's not dig up the past!

THE OUTSIDER: Why not? When the fire is over, one can read in the ashes....

¹³ Ibid., 323 (II, v):

MATILDA: I've heard that the cinders from a fire should be spread out on the plots to improve the soil ...

ALFRED: You mean the ashes ...

MATILDA: Yes, it's supposed to be good to sow in ashes ...

hata varann, förtala varann, pina varann
...¹⁴

As the play progresses, it becomes apparent that the Outsider not only shares this view of the district, but extends it to human society in general, of which the Morass is a microcosm:

Man skulle kunna lägga ett rep om halsen på hela släktet, om man ville vara rättvis, men det vill man inte! Det är ett rysligt släkte, fula, svettiga, stinkande; orent linne, smutsiga strumpor med hål på, kylknölar, liktor-nar, usch!¹⁵

This is Strindberg at his most misanthropic. He shares this disgust for human society and the human body with many of the great mystics, and like them he sees its purpose to be to turn the vision inward, so that man becomes concerned with the soul and its salvation, rather than with the world and the flesh:

... när man är född utan hinna på ögonen, så ser man liv och människor så, som de äro ... och man ska vara en gris för att trivas här i sörjan. -- När man sett sig mätt på de blå

¹⁴ Skrifter, XII, 309 (I, i):

DETECTIVE: You have a special name here for your district?

THE BRICKLAYER: We call it the Morass, and everyone hates each other, suspects each other, torments each other ...

¹⁵ Ibid., 319 (II, ii):

We'd put ropes around the throats of the whole race if we wanted to be just, but we don't want that! It's a revolting species: ugly, sweaty, stinking; with dirty underwear, filthy socks with holes in them, chilblains, corns -- Phagh!

dunster, så vänder man ut och in på ögonen
och tittar sig själv in i själen.¹⁶

It is confrontation with the past, facing it for what
it really was (lies and illusion) that makes this turn-
ing inward of the vision possible.

The fire has not occurred for the benefit of the
Outsider, however, but rather for the others involved
with the house. For the Outsider has long ago learned
the lessons taught by the ashes. His return is to point
those lessons for others. As the realization of the
vanity of the world and the subsequent acquisition of
inner vision is like dying and being born again, so the
Outsider, who has had these experiences, is presented
as one returned from the dead. He has died to the world
and been born again spiritually. When he disappeared
thirty years earlier, the people of the Morass believed
him dead; on his return, he has to admit that in some
respects they were right:

FÄRGARN: Du är icke död, alltså?

FRÄMLINGEN: Jo, på visst sätt!¹⁷

¹⁶ Skrifter, XII, 324 (II, viii):

... when you're born without a film over your
eyes, you see life and men as they are ...
and you'd have to be a pig to be happy in
this muck. -- When you've had enough of illu-
sions, you turn your eyes inward, and look
into your own soul.

¹⁷ Ibid., 313 (I, x):

THE DYER: So you're not dead, then?

THE OUTSIDER: Yes I am, in a way!

We then learn of an incident that occurred when the Outsider was twelve; he hanged himself and appeared to die, but came to life again:

Jag låg på bårhuset ... som död. Om jag var det, vet jag inte -- men när jag vaknade hade jag glömt det mesta av mitt förra liv, och började nu ett nytt, men på det sättet, att ni ansåg mig konstig.¹⁸

This was the Outsider's death to the vanity of the world; when he is reborn, the scales have fallen from his eyes, and he sees the world as it is:

När jag vaknade till medvetande, tyckte jag mig vara i en annans person.... ... jag hade i döden fått nya färdigheter ... jag såg mittigenom människor, läste deras tankar, hörde deras avsikter. När jag var i sällskap, såg jag dem nakna ...¹⁹

These experiences lead to the self-knowledge and inward turning of the vision which induce the Outsider to leave home at an early age and begin his travels along the road to spiritual perfection.

¹⁸ *Skrifter*, XII, 316 (I, x):

I lay in the mortuary as if dead.... Whether I was, I don't know -- but when I awakened, I'd forgotten most of my previous life, and began a new one, but in such a way that you thought me strange.

¹⁹ *Idem.*:

When I regained consciousness, I felt that I was in someone else's body.... ... in death, I'd acquired new skills: I saw right through people, read their thoughts, understood their motives. When I was with people, I saw them naked ...

Just before the close of the play, the Outsider meets his brother's wife. One of her remarks to him is full of ambiguity: it can refer to the his early brush with death, to his going to America, or to the widely held belief that he has been dead all these years. His reply carries the same ambiguities. America thus becomes a symbol of death to the world and perhaps even of life after death:

FRUN: Ni lär ha varit på andra sidan ...

FRÄMLINGEN: Jag har varit över floden, men jag minns intet annat än -- att där var allt vad det gav sig ut för! Det är skillnaden!²⁰

The spiritually reborn know reality; in the Morass we know only illusion! Thus, the inhabitants of the house were a family of dyers, whose profession was to conceal the true nature of things. This is the significance, too, of the revelation that this, the most respectable family in the district, acquired its wealth through smuggling: a convenient side-line for dyers, who can change the appearance of smuggled goods to make them unrecognizable. Indeed, deception is the stock-in-trade of the Gardener as well, who charges more for his funeral wreaths by claiming they are made of better

²⁰ Skrifter, XII, 324 (II, viii):

THE WIFE: They say you've been on the other side ...

THE OUTSIDER: I've been across the water, but I remember nothing except -- that everything was what it gave itself out to be! That's the difference!

materials than they are. He also pretends to be ruined by the fire, although this is not true.

The whole framework of deception and illusion is symbolized by an old clock which the Outsider finds in the ruins of the house and wishes to examine more closely. As soon as he touches it, it disintegrates (like an apple of Sodom):

FRÄMLINGEN: (Uret faller sönder vid beröringen.) Håller inte att ta i! Ingenting höll att ta i, ingenting! Fåfänglighet, förgänglighet! Du lilla jord: den tätaste av alla planeterna, den tyngsta, och därför så tungt på dig, så tungt att andas, så tungt att bära; korset är din symbol, men kunde ha varit en narmössa eller en spänntröja -- villornas och dårarnes värld! -- Evige! Har din jord gått vilse i rymden? Och hur kom hon att snurra runt, så dina barn blevo yra i huvet och förlorade förståndet, att de icke förmå se det som är, utan endast det som synes? Amen!²¹

The Outsider's sister-in-law is beginning to be disillusioned with this world, and seeks his advice, as someone who has been "on the other side": "När ingent-

²¹ Skrifter, XII, 318-19 (II, i):

THE OUTSIDER: (The clock falls to pieces when touched.) It doesn't stand up to scrutiny! Nothing stood up to examination, nothing! Vanity of vanities! You, little earth, are the densest of all the planets, and that's why life here is so oppressive, why it's so difficult to breathe, why our burdens are so heavy; your symbol is the cross, but it could have been a fool's cap or a straitjacket -- world of fools and madmen! -- Eternal One! Has your earth gotten lost in space? And how did it start spinning, so that your children got dizzy and lost their understanding, becoming unable to see what is, but only what which appears to be? Amen!

ing håller att ta i, vad skall man då hålla sig till?"²² The Outsider avoids this direct question, but the answer emerges from their ensuing conversation: one must reject the world of illusion and confront the inner, spiritual world of reality. In the meantime, one can endure the suffering and injustice of the world in the certain knowledge that ultimately even they are illusions (since they are of this world, which is illusory) and that, in any case, one has deserved them:

FRUN: Vad skall jag göra?

FRÄMLINGEN: Lid! Det går över! Även det är en fåfänglighet.

FRUN: Lid?

FRÄMLINGEN: Lid! Men hoppas!

FRUN (räcker handen): Tack!

FRÄMLINGEN: Och tag till tröst --

FRUN: Vad?

FRÄMLINGEN: Att ni icke lider oskyldigt.²³

In his rôle as spiritual guide, and as one who has died and risen again, the Outsider has many similarities with Christ. Another incident in his youth points in this direction, although he disclaims its implica-

²² Skrifter, XII, 324 (II, viii): "When nothing stands up to scrutiny, what's left to hold on to?"

²³ Ibid., 325 (II, viii):

THE WIFE: What shall I do?

THE OUTSIDER: Suffer! It doesn't last! Even that's an illusion.

THE WIFE: Suffer?

THE OUTSIDER: Suffer! But hope!

THE WIFE (holds out her hand): Thank you!

THE OUTSIDER: And comfort yourself with the thought --

THE WIFE: What?

THE OUTSIDER: That you don't suffer guiltlessly.

tions. He was punished unjustly for a crime (stealing apples from a nearby tree) committed by his brother (i.e., the Dyer):

Det hände nämligen så, att jag icke blev ond på dig för det orättvisa straffet, utan jag blev ond på trädet, och förbannade det. -- Två år senare var just den stora grenen torr, och blev bortsågad. Jag kom då att tänka på fikonsträdet, som Frälsaren förbannade en gång, men jag drog inga förmättna slutsatser.²⁴

Shortly after this exchange, he identifies the Student with St. Peter, who denied the Lord three times, and so puts himself in the rôle of Christ:

STUDENTEN: Jag ljuger aldrig!

FRÄMLINGEN: Bara tre gånger på den här lilla stund!²⁵

Furthermore, at least once in the play he paraphrases Christ: "... ser på liljorna uppå marken, det är som de

²⁴ Skrifter, XII, 315 (I, x):

It so happened, you see, that I didn't get angry at you for the unjust punishment, but at the tree, and I cursed it. -- Two years later, precisely that large bough dried out and was sawn off. I happened to think then of the fig tree which the Saviour once cursed,* but I drew no presumptuous conclusions.

* Vide Matthew 21:19-21; Mark 11:13-23.

²⁵ Ibid., 329 (II, ii):

THE STUDENT: I never lie!

THE OUTSIDER: Only three times in the last few minutes!

inte var hemma här, och känn hur de dofta!"²⁶

The Outsider, then, is a Christ-figure, leading others to salvation. A reference to the Adam and Eve story establishes that he is not, however, to be identified with Christ Himself: unlike Him, he is a fallen member of the human race, like those around him:

Jag erinrar att trädgården hyrdes ut en gång; men vi hade lov att spatsera i den. Det föreföll mig då som om vi voro utdrivna ur paradiset -- och frestaren stod bakom vart träd! På hösten, när äpplena lågo mogna på marken, då föll jag för frestelsen, det var oemotståndligt ...²⁷

This story drifts into another, in which the taking of forbidden fruit leads to knowledge of good and evil. As in the case of the Lady in Till Damaskus, this knowledge is acquired by reading a forbidden book, in this case apparently the memoirs of Casanova. The Outsider's loss of innocence, like the Lady's, happens in the autumn (i.e., the season when apples are ripe for the picking), and the forbidden book was read beneath a tree known as the tree of knowledge:

²⁶ Skrifter, XII, 319 (II, ii): "... consider the lilies of the field -- it's as if they weren't at home here -- and notice how fragrant they are!"

²⁷ Ibid., 315 (I, x):

I remember that we once rented out the orchard, but we had permission to walk there. It seemed to me then as if we had been driven out of Paradise -- and the Tempter stood behind every tree! In the fall, when the apples lay ripe on the ground, I gave in to the temptation: it was irresistible ...

... det var en viss chevaliers berömda memoarer -- jag tog ut dem, stängde skåpet. Och under den stora eken därborta studerade jag. Vi kallade den för kunskapens träd, all right. Och därmed utträdde jag ur barndomens paradiset och invigdes, för tidigt, i de hemligheter som ... ja!²⁸

Another symbol this play has in common with the *Till Damaskus* trilogy is weaving. Throughout the play, there are references to the spinning of the web of fate. Fate is not necessarily malevolent here, however; its operation, as seen through the symbol of weaving, can lead to the rejection of the world and its values which is necessary for spiritual enlightenment. As in *Oväder*, the pattern woven by fate can only be seen and understood in old age:

FRÄMLINGEN: ... hur det vävde sig ihop här, egna öden och andras ...

FÄRGARN: Det gör det nog överallt ...

FRÄMLINGEN: Alldeles ja, överallt sig likt ... När man är ung ser man väven sättas opp; föräldrar, släkt, kamrater, umgänge, tjänare är ränningen; längre fram i livet ser man inslaget; och nu går ödets skyttel fram och tillbaks med tråden; den brister ibland, men knyts tillsammans, och så fortsätter det; bommen slår, garnet tvingas ihop till krumelurer och så ligger väven där. På ålderdomen när ögat blir seende, upptäcker man att alla krumelurerna bilda ett mönster, ett namnchiffer, ett ornament, en hieroglyf, som man nu

²⁸ Skrifter, XII, 316 (I, x):

... it was the celebrated memoirs of a certain chevalier. I took them out, and closed the cupboard. And, beneath the large oak out there, I studied them. We called it the tree of knowledge, and with good reason! And with that I was delivered from the paradise of childhood and initiated, too early, into those secrets which ... yes!

först kan tyda: det är livet! Världsväverskan har vävt det!²⁹

Strindberg uses the feminine form of the Swedish word (*världsväverskan*) for the World Weaver, indicating that the reference is not to God (Who would be *världsvävaren*). In a letter to Emil Shering³⁰ about *Spöksonaten*, the next of the chamber plays, he indicates that the World Weaver is, in fact, Maya (illusion). The interpretation of the weaving, then, the wisdom that comes with old age, involves not only recognizing the pattern of one's life, but also realizing that one's whole life has been an illusion: "Det är ett nät som icke är bundet av människor ..."³¹

²⁹ *Skrifter*, XII, 314 (I, x):

THE OUTSIDER: ... how they've been woven together here, our own fates and those of others ...

THE DYER: That happens everywhere, surely ...

THE OUTSIDER: Absolutely! it's the same everywhere ... When you're young, you see the loom set up: parents, relatives, friends, acquaintances, and servants are the warp. Later in life, you see the weft, and the shuttle of fate goes back and forth with the thread. Occasionally it breaks, but is knotted together again, and continues: the boom strikes, the yarn is forced together to form curlicues, and the fabric takes shape. In old age, when your eyes begin to open, you discover that all the curlicues form a design, a monogram, a pattern, a hieroglyph, which you can now interpret for the first time: that's life! The World Weaver has woven it!

³⁰ *Brev*, 227. The letter is dated March 27, 1907.

³¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 325 (II, viii): "It's a net not knotted by human hands ..."

There is a rather striking use of birds in the play, whereby doves become symbols of those tied to the illusions and deceits of the past; when the past is destroyed, they too must perish:

Vet du att våra duvor byggde på taket här, och när det brann i natt, så flög de först runtomkring, men när taket föll in, så for de mitt i elden ... De kunde inte skiljas från gamla hemmet!³²

Finally, the play contains two references to ghosts which throw some light on Spöksonaten. The first suggests that ghosts are those whose deceptions, lies, weaknesses, and inconsistencies one perceives after understanding, true vision, or spiritual rebirth have been achieved. The "now" in the following passage refers to the period after the Outsider passed through the experience of death and resurrection as a child:

Du vet ... att vi ansågo vår släkt vara den bästa, och att särskilt våra föräldrar sågos med nästan religiös vördnad. Nu fick jag sitta och måla om dem i ansiktet, klä av dem, dra ner dem, och få ut dem ur mitt sinne. Det var rysligt! Sedan började de spöka; bitarne av de sönderslagna figurerna togo sig ihop,

³² Skrifter, XII, 323 (II, v):

Do you know, our pigeons nested in the roof here, and when it burned last night they flew around at first, but when the roof collapsed, they flew right into the middle of the fire ... They couldn't be parted from their old home!

men passade icke, och det blev till ett vaxkabinett av monster.³³

The second reference suggests that a ghost can also be the body which the pilgrim soul inhabits: the physical body which is earthbound while the soul strives towards heaven; in this passage the Outsider refers to himself as a ghost:

FÄRGAREN (...): Går du och spökar här på ruinerna?

FRÄMLINGEN: Spöken trivs på ruiner.³⁴

³³ *Skrifter*, XII, 315 (I, x):

You know ... that we thought our family was the best, and held our parents especially in almost religious veneration. Now I was able to sit and repaint their faces, strip them naked, pull them down, remove them from my heart. It was horrible! Then they became ghosts: pieces of their dismembered bodies joined themselves together, but they didn't fit properly, and they became a wax museum of monstrosities.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 325 (II, ix):

THE DYER (...): Are you haunting the ruins?
THE OUTSIDER: Ghosts are happy among ruins.

Chapter 84

Spöksonaten

*Spöksonaten*¹ (*The Ghost Sonata*) was completed only a few days after *Brända tomten*, in March, 1907. Opus 3 of the chamber plays, it is also the most widely known and performed. In it, Strindberg moves beyond even the highly symbolic style of his most recent works, into surrealism, in which symbols and figures of speech become literally and physically embodied on the stage. Not only is an old woman whose life has ceased to have meaning compared to a living mummy, for instance, but she is portrayed as such, referred to as such by other characters, and thinks of herself as such: figures of speech become realities.

Spöksonaten is a thorough examination of one of Strindberg's most frequent symbols, the vampire. This symbol is usually associated with marriage or similar relationships between the sexes, but it is broadened here into a basic characteristic of a sizable portion of humanity. Indeed, it seems, it is the rare person who is not either a vampire or the victim of a vampire.

Spöksonaten is perhaps the blackest expression of disgust with humanity during this entire period of

¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 327-44. Although Strindberg apparently spelled this title *Spök-sonaten*, a spelling adopted by both *Samlade skrifter* (XLV, 147-211) and *Skrifter*, modern practice is to eliminate the hyphen.

Strindberg's life. And yet its vision is not totally without hope: the Student survives, untouched by the vampirism surrounding him, and the play ends with a vision of the Isle of the Blessed. As in *Dödsdansen*, where the vampire symbol is also important, Strindberg is describing the demonic side of human existence: that stage which corresponds to Hell in traditional cosmogony: the original subtitle of the play was *Kama Loka*, the name given to Hell by the theosophists.²

The principal vampire in the play is the Old Man, Hummel. When he takes the Student's hand in order to demonstrate how cold his own is, the Student has to tell him to let go, for he can feel his own energy flowing into the old man: "... släpp min hand, ni tar ju min kraft, ni kyler ut mig, vad vill ni?"³ What he wants is for the Student to become a friend to his daughter, also a vampire it would seem, for she is very sick and he feels that contact with the Student would restore her to health:

Därinne ... sitter min dotter.... Hon hade förlorat lusten att leva, utan att veta varför ... men hon visnade i denna luft ... därför sökte jag åt henne en vän, i vars när-

² Brev, 227 (from a letter to Emil Schering, dated March 27, 1907).

³ *Skrifter*, XII, 332 (I, i): "... let go of my hand; you're drawing energy from me, aren't you? I'm becoming quite cold; what do you want?"

het hon kunde förnimma ljuset och värmen från
en ädel handling ...⁴

He regards the Student as a gift he has made to his daughter, as a kind of expiation for his own vampirism: "Ser ni, jag har tagit, hela mitt liv; nu har jag en trängtan at få ge! ge!"⁵ But the Student is not his to give; he must be stolen, and stealing human beings comes naturally to a vampire:

MUMIEN (...): Du är en mänskotjuv, ty du har stulit mig en gång med falska förespeglingar; du har mördat konsuln ... du har stulit studenten....⁶

Contrasted to the Old Man is the Milkmaid, the bringer of life and health to others, who restores the Student's strength at the well, rather than trying to draw it from him as Hummel does. Later, it is revealed that in the past there has been a struggle between this nourisher of life and the vampire (who has been a vampire by profession as well as by nature):

⁴ Skrifter, XII, 339 (II, viii):

In there sits ... my daughter She'd lost the will to live, without knowing why ... but she was withering in this air ... and so I found a friend for her, in whose proximity she could experience the light and the warmth of a noble deed ...

⁵ Ibid., 333 (I, ii): "You see, all my life I've taken; now I have a compulsion to give! give!"

⁶ Ibid., 340 (II, viii):

THE MUMMY (...): You're a stealer of men, for you once stole me with false representations; you've murdered the consul ... you've stolen the student....

Senare råkade jag denna man i Hamburg....
Då var han ockrare eller blodsugare; men där
var han även anklagad för att ha narrat en
flicka ut på isen för att dränka henne,
emedan hon bevittnat ett brott han fruktade
få upptäckt ...⁷

This girl, it turns out, was the Milkmaid.

Everyone he meets, with the exception of the Milkmaid and the Student, is victimized, stripped of all force and effectiveness, reduced to inaction. Meanwhile, his own power grows at the expense of those around him, until he is destroyed.

The Old Man begins to die when he is defied by the Mummy (who has more life in her than she lets on), and when she reveals his true nature (see above) to those assembled for the ghost supper. The vampire, deprived of his source of energy, shrivels up like an unwatered plant and by the end of the scene is dead.

Hummel is aided in his attempt to destroy the house through vampirism by the Cook, who appears to be related to him in some way, if only as another vampire: "Hon tillhör vampyrfamiljen Hummel; hon äter opp oss

⁷ Skrifter, XII, 340 (II, viii):

Later, I met this man in Hamburg.... He was a usurer, or bloodsucker, then; but he was accused there of having lured a girl out on the ice in order to drown her, for she had witnessed a crime which he feared to have discovered ...

..."⁸ She does this by extracting all the nourishment from the food before she serves it to her employers:

... vi få många rätter, men all kraft är borta ... Hon kokar ur köttet, ger oss trådarne och vatten, medan hon själv dricker ur buljongen; och när det är stek, kokar hon först ur musten, äter såsen, dricker spadet; allt vad hon vidrör förlorar sin saft, det är som om hon sög med ögonen; vi få sumpen, när hon druckit kaffet, hon dricker ur vinbuteljerna och fyller med vatten ...⁹

As a vampire, she is, according to the Student, like Lamia, the child-devouring demon of classical mythology, but, as a cook (nourisher), she is a lamia with a difference: "... nu känner jag vampyren i köket börja suga mig, jag tror det är en Lamia som diar barn...."¹⁰ As cook she feeds others, but only in order that as vampire (Lamia) she might devour them.

The Cook and Hummel are directly identified as vampires, but she indicates that vampirism is much more

⁸ *Skrifter*, XII, 342 (III, i): "She belongs to the Hummel family of vampires; she's eating us up ..."

⁹ *Idem.*:

... we get a lot of dishes, but all the strength has gone from them ... She overboils the meat and gives us the sinews and water, while she drinks the bouillon herself; and when it's steak, she first boils the essence out of the meat, eats the gravy, and drinks the broth; everything she touches loses its juice; it's as if she sucked it dry with her eyes; we get the dregs after she has drunk the coffee, she drinks out of the wine bottles and fills them up with water ...

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 344 (III, ii): "... now I can feel the vampire in the kitchen beginning to suck me; I think she is a Lamia who suckles children...."

widespread: all those who employ others are vampires as well, for they live off the labour (i.e., strength) of those they employ! The vampirism of the Cook, then, is reciprocated by her employers: she is as much exploited as exploiting: "Ni suger musten ur oss, och vi ur er; vi tar blodet och ni får vattnet igen -- med koloriten."¹¹

It has already been indicated that the daughter of Hummel and the Mummy is a vampire as well; in fact, this is suggested as early as her first appearance in the play, through her close association with the hyacinth. Hummel assigns characteristics of pure spirituality to her, but her tending of the hyacinths suggests an uncomfortable parallel to the use he intends the Student to serve in her own life:

... är hon inte själv lik den blåa hyacinten?
... Hon ger dem dricka, bara rent vatten, och
 de förvandla vattnet i färger och vällukt
...¹²

After vampirism, flowers form the largest cluster of symbols in the play. Chief among these is the hyacinth, usually associated with the blue flower of myth-

¹¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 343 (III, ii): "You suck the very essence out of us, and we out of you; we take the blood, and in exchange you get water -- with colouring."

¹² *Ibid.*, 333 (I, ii):

... isn't she herself like the blue hyacinth?
... She gives them water, nothing but pure water, to drink, and they transform the water into colours and perfume ...

ology, symbolizing pure spirituality. This cannot be the case here, however, since the hyacinth is closely associated with the Young Lady, who is a vampire; Strindberg specifies, besides, that these hyacinths are of several colours. The traditional association with the blue flower is, however, retained by the Old Man (see above) and by the Student, who prefers blue hyacinths to all the others:

FRÖKEN: Älskar ni hyacinten?

STUDENTEN: Jag älskar den över alla andra
... jag älskar dess färger; den snövita
oskyldiga rena, den honinggula luva, den
skära unga, den röda mogna, men över alla den
blå, daggbå, den djupögda, den trofasta
...¹³

His preference for the blue hyacinth reveals more about the Student than it does about the vampire-maiden with whom he, like her father, mistakenly associates it. In fact, these flowers, so beautiful to look at, are poisonous:

STUDENTEN: Min kärlek är obesvarad, ty de
sköna blomstren hata mig ...

FRÖKEN: Huru?

STUDENTEN: Deras doft, stark och ren ...
förvirrar mina sinnen, dövar mig, bländar
mig, tränger mig ut ur rummet, beskjuter mig

¹³ Skrifter, XII, 341 (III, i):

THE YOUNG LADY: Do you love the hyacinth?

THE STUDENT: I love it above all other
flowers ... I love its colours: the snow-
white, innocent and pure; the delightful
honey-yellow; the youthful pink; the mature
red; but above all, the blue: sky-blue, deep-
eyed, faithful ...

med giftiga pilar som göra mitt hjärta ve och
mitt huvud hett!¹⁴

Later he returns to this phenomenon, again making specific reference to both the attractive aspects of the flower and its poisonous effects:

Nu ha era blommor förgiftat mig och jag har
givit er giftet tillbaka -- Tänk att de
skönaste blommorna äro så giftiga, äro de
giftigaste....¹⁵

Having given us these hints as to the meaning of the hyacinth, Strindberg does not explain precisely what that meaning is. Hints can be found, however, in an examination of his own reading material. His personal library¹⁶ contains several works, mostly in French, dealing with the symbolism of flowers. What these books say about hyacinths is not only consistent among the various works, but consistent also with the

¹⁴ Skriffter, XII, 341 (III, i):

THE STUDENT: My love is unrequited, for the
beautiful flowers hate me ...

THE YOUNG LADY: What do you mean?

THE STUDENT: Their strong clean scent ...
confuses my senses, deafens me, blinds me,
forces me out of the room, bombards me with
poisoned arrows which make my heart miserable
and my head hot!

¹⁵ Ibid., 344 (III, ii):

Now your flowers have poisoned me, and I've
given the poison back to you -- Just
think: the most beautiful flowers are so
poisonous -- are the most poisonous....

¹⁶ Formerly in Stockholm's Nordiska museet (The Scandinavian Museum), but now preserved, and available for consultation, in Strindbergsmuseet (The Strindberg Museum) in Blå tornet.

use Strindberg makes of the flower in this play. Madame de Genlis, for example, points out the custom of removing these flowers from the rooms of expectant mothers because of a belief that their perfume was poisonous, and might injure both mother and unborn child. Mme Charlotte de La Tour mentions (280) the myth of Hyacinth (which Strindberg would have known at any rate), which links the flower to both love and loss: the flower sprang from the blood of the youth Hyacinth, beloved of Apollo, when the god accidentally killed him. These two observations seem to come together in the *Nouveau langage symbolique des Plantes* of Haccoephi Chrysès, who attributes to plants very specific emblematic meanings, and often full sentences which they might convey to the initiate. A hyacinth, he (?) says, carries the meaning: "Vous m'aimez et vous me donnez la mort."¹⁷

This suggests what Strindberg may have had in mind when he associated the Young Lady, who is in love with the Student but is also preying on him as a vampire, with the hyacinth; the poisonous scent of the flower only strengthens the correspondence.

The other plant symbol of major importance is the Ascalonicum, or shallot, which the statue of Buddha in the hyacinth room holds in his lap:

¹⁷ 35: "You love me and you are killing me."

På kakelugnen sitter en stor Buddhabild med en rotskiva i knä, och ur den har stängeln av en Ascalonlök skjutit upp, bärande den klotformiga blomställningen med vita stjärnblommor!¹⁸

That Strindberg uses the shallot here would seem to strengthen the identification of the hyacinth with the vampire symbol. For the hyacinth does have another symbolic meaning, derived from its physiology, which Strindberg specifically points out. When the Young Lady asks the Student to tell her the legend of the hyacinth, he replies that she first must learn the meaning (i.e., the symbolism) of the flower:

Rotskivan är jorden som vilar på vattnet eller ligger i myllan; nu skjuter stängeln upp, rak som världsaxeln, och i dess övre ända sitta de sexstråliga stjärnblommorna.¹⁹

This conflicts with the primary symbolism of the hyacinth in the play, however, and, as if realizing this, the Student transfers the secondary symbolism to the shallot: its globular (rather than cylindrical, as with the hyacinth) flower cluster and its location in

¹⁸ *Skrifter*, XII, 341 (III, i):

On the tile stove sits a large statue of Buddha with a root cutting in his lap, and from this has risen the stalk of a shallot, bearing the spherical cluster of white star-shaped flowers!

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 341 (III, i):

The root cutting is the earth, which rests upon the water or lies in the soil; now the stalk shoots up, straight as the axis of the world, and at its topmost end sit the six-pointed star-shaped flowers!

the lap of Buddha make it a more complete embodiment of the symbolism in any case (how all this could be made clear to a theatre audience, is another question!). The transfer occurs in the Student's very next speech:

Det är således en avbild av Kosmos ... Därför sitter Buddha med rotskivan jorden, ruvande med sina blickar för att se den växa ut och uppåt ombildande sig till en himmel. -- Den stackars jorden skall bli himmel! Det väntar Buddha på!²⁰

The transfer is a natural one, based on the physical similarities between the flowers of the two plants. It is completed in the exchange immediately following the above speech, which begins with hyacinths and ends with shallots, and a realization that the latter fit the symbolism perfectly:

FRÖKEN: Nu såg jag -- är icke snöblomman också sexstrålig som liljanhyacinten?

STUDENTEN: Ni sade't! Då äro snöblommorna fallande stjärnor ...

FRÖKEN: Och snödroppen är en snöstjärna ... vuxen ur snön.

STUDENTEN: Men Sirius, den största och vackraste av firmamentets stjärnor i gult och rött, det är narcissen med dess gula och röda kalk och sex vita strålar ...

FRÖKEN: Har ni sett askalonlöken blomma?

STUDENTEN: Ja, visst har jag! -- Den bär

²⁰ Skrifter, XII, 341 (III, i):

And so it's an image of the Cosmos ... That's why the Buddha sits brooding over the root cutting of the earth, watching to see it grow outwards and upwards, shaping itself into a heaven. -- The poor earth shall become heaven! That's what Buddha's waiting for!

sina blommor i en boll, ett klot som liknar
himmelsgloben beströdd med vita stjärnor
...²¹

The symbolism is thus divided between the two flowers: the hyacinth, with its poisonous perfume, remains a symbol of the vampire, while the shallot, which resembles it, becomes a symbol of the universe. The image of Buddha sitting over the shallot, waiting for it to produce its celestial globe, is one of the most striking and poignant in the play, and interjects another note of optimism: the world as it is is pretty

²¹ Skrifter, XII, 341 (III, i):

THE YOUNG LADY: Now I understand -- aren't snowflakes* also six-pointed, like the hyacinth flower?

THE STUDENT: You're right -- Snowflakes, then, are falling stars ...

THE YOUNG LADY: And snowdrops are snow-stars ... risen out of the snow.

THE STUDENT: But Sirius, the largest and most beautiful of the yellow and red stars in the firmament, is the narcissus, with its yellow and red calyx and six white points ...

THE YOUNG LADY: Have you seen the shallot bloom?

THE STUDENT: Yes, of course I have! -- Its flowers form a ball, a cluster which resembles the globe of heaven, sprinkled with white stars ...

The transition is smoother than the translation indicates: the word for snowflakes which Strindberg uses (apparently his own coinage) is snöblommor: literally, snow-flowers. Snowdrops, of course, really are flowers, which bloom while there is still snow on the ground.

insignificant and disappointing, but it will produce a heaven if only we have patience and faith:

Du vise, milda Buddha, som sitter där och väntar att en himmel skall växa upp ur jorden, förläna oss tålamod i prövningen, renhet i viljan, att hoppet icke må komma på skam!²²

An example of the persistence of Buddha's patience despite tribulation is to be found in a variant of the same symbol in *Taklagsöl* (q.v.).

The symbolism of the other plants in the play has been commented upon elsewhere: the spruce twigs strewn on the street by the Concièrge (symbolizing mourning), the laurels (symbols of fame and recognition) watered by the same character, and the palms which surround the statue of the Mummy as a beautiful young woman (a statue which bears a remarkable likeness to her daughter, the Young Lady), traditional symbols of fertility and victory, perhaps suggesting that although beautiful women may become mummies in their old age, their beauty lives on in their female progeny.

As in the first two chamber plays, the house in *Spöksonaten* is itself an important symbol; as in them, it symbolizes life, as conditioned by the past. For the characters of this play, life has become a dreadful

²² *Skrifter*, XII, 344 (III, ii):

O wise and gentle Buddha, who sit there waiting for a heaven to spring up from the earth, grant us patience in affliction and purity of will, that hope might not be frustrated!

affair: "Det var ett fasligt hus ..."²³, full of dark secrets:

STUDENTEN: Ni har mycket hemligheter här i
huset ...

FRÖKEN: Likt alla andra²⁴

and, indeed, going to seed: "... när ett hus blir gammalt, så möglar det...."²⁵

Into the house come two forces: the Student and the Old Man (Hummel). Both love the house (i.e., life), but one as a participant in its goings-on, the other as an exploiter:

GUBBEN: Jag älskar också det här huset

...

STUDENTEN: Spekulerar ni i hus?

GUBBEN: N-ja! Men inte på sättet ni menar

...²⁶

The Student and the Old Man are thus allied in their love of the house, and they have a common mission: to restore life to it, to get rid of the mould which has seized it in its old age and stagnation:

²³ Skrifter, XII, 336 (II, ii): "What a dreadful house ..."

²⁴ Ibid., 343 (III, ii):

THE STUDENT: You have a lot of secrets in
this house ...

THE YOUNG LADY: As in all others ...

²⁵ Ibid., 336 (II, ii): "... when a house gets old, it goes mouldy...."

²⁶ Ibid., 331 (I, i):

THE OLD MAN: I also love this house ...

THE STUDENT: Do you speculate in houses?

THE OLD MAN: N-yes! But not in the way you mean ...

GUBBEN: Detta var min mission i detta hus: att rensa ut ogräset, avslöja brotten, göra upp bokslutet, så att det unga får börja nytt i detta hem, som jag skänkt dem!²⁷

The mission succeeds, for the Student, who is a life-force, remains in the house at the end of the play; what the Old Man did not foresee was that the fulfillment of his mission would involve the destruction of the anti-life forces in the house, chiefly himself and his daughter! That this is necessary, however, has been made abundantly clear, for his servant, Johansson, has characterized him as a destroyer of houses: "... han ser på hus, raserar dem...."²⁸ and "Han ... plockar ut en sten i sänder, tills huset rasar ... figurligt talat ..."²⁹ Shortly before his death, his existence is summed up by the servant Bengtsson: "... han satt där ute som en vampyr och sög all must ur huset, så att vi blev som skelett...."³⁰

²⁷ *Skrifter*, XII, 339 (II, viii):

THE OLD MAN: This was my mission in this house: to get rid of the weeds, to expose the crimes, to settle the accounts, in order that the young ones might begin anew in this home with which I've provided them!

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 334 (I, iv): "... he looks at houses, destroys them...."

²⁹ *Idem.*: "He ... removes one stone at a time, until the house collapses ... figuratively speaking ..."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 340 (II, viii): "... he sat out there like a vampire and sucked the very essence out of the house, so that we became like skeletons...."

The most important animal symbol in the play is the parrot, one of the identities frequently assumed by the Mummy. Indeed, as Bengtsson hints, her association with this bird is more than just caprice:

MUMIEN (som en papegoja): Vackra gojan! Å Jakob ä där? Kurrrrre!

BENGTSSON: Hon tror att hon är en papegoja, och det är ju möjligt så är ... (Till Mumien.) Polly, vissla lite för oss!

MUMIEN (visslar).³¹

In the world of symbolism, birds generally represent spirits. That the Mummy's spirit should be a parrot is appropriate, because she has ceased to have a personality of her own; that has been stolen from her by the vampire Hummel. Because she is a mummy (i.e., has ceased really to live), her spirit is but a reflection of the forces which made her so, and, like a parrot, has no thoughts of its own, but merely repeats the words it has been taught, without understanding or originality.

³¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 336 (II, ii):

THE MUMMY (like a parrot): Pretty prattle!
And Jacob's* there? Sirrrrrrah!

BENGTSSON: She thinks she's a parrot, and it's possible she is, you know ... (To the Mummy:) Whistle a little for us, Polly!

MUMIEN (whistles).

* Jacob would appear to be the Old Man's first name, but according to Sprinchorn (Strindberg, *The Chamber Plays*, 227), is also a name commonly given to grey parrots.

The Mummy, then, as Polly the parrot, goes through the play looking for Jacob, the Old Man. She finds him when he too becomes a parrot, immediately before his death:

MUMIEN (stryker gubben på ryggen): Gojan! Å Jakob där?

GUBBEN (som en papegoja): Jakob ä där! -- Kakadora! Dora!

MUMIEN: Kan klockan slå?

GUBBEN (kluckar): Klockan kan slå! (Härmar gök-klockan.) Ko-ko, ko-ko, ko-ko! ...³²

The two other birds with which the Old Man identifies here, the rooster and the cuckoo, are both connected with the symbolism of the clock (see below).

The Old Man accomplishes the first part of his mission (the cleansing of the house) at the ghost supper, which forms the central scene of the play. While he exposes the deceits and treacheries of those present, a clock can be heard ticking, symbolizing, like the death-watch beetle in *Till Damaskus I*, the immanence of judgement and punishment for those misdeeds:

Hör hur klockan knäpper, som dödsuret i väggen! Hör ni vad hon säger? "Ti-den! Ti-den! -- -- --"

När hon slår, om en liten stund, då är er tid ute, då får ni gå men icke förr. Men hon hyttar först, innan hon slår! -- Hör! nu var-

³² Skrifter, XII, 340 (II, viii):

THE MUMMY (strokes the Old Man on the back): Prattle! Is Jacob there?

THE OLD MAN (like a parrot): Jacob's here! -- Cockle-doodle-doo!

THE MUMMY: Can the clock strike?

THE OLD MAN (clucks): The clock can strike! (Imitates a cuckoo clock:) Cu-coo, cu-coo, cu-coo! ...

nar hon: "Klockan kan slå." -- -- -- Jag
också kan slå ...
(Han slår med kryckan i bordet.)
Hör ni?
(Tystnad.)³³

To this threat of impending death and damnation, the Mummy opposes the Christian promise of forgiveness through repentance and suffering, thus figuratively as well as literally stopping the inexorable ticking of the clock for those present: there is no need to suffer damnation for the sake of the past if that past has been expiated:

MUMIEN (fram till pendylen och stannar den; därpå redigt och allvarligt): Men jag kan stanna tiden i dess lopp -- jag kan göra det förflutna om intet, det gjorda ogjort; men icke med mutor, icke med hot -- utan genom lidande och ånger -- -- --³⁴

³³ Skrifter, XII, 340 (II, viii):

Listen to the clock ticking, like a death-watch beetle in the wall! Do you hear what it's saying? "It's time! It's time! -- -- --"
When it strikes in a little while, your time will be up; then you can go, but not before. But it shakes its fist before it strikes -- Listen! now it's giving a warning: "The clock can strike." -- -- -- I too can strike ...
(He strikes the table with his crutch.)
Do you hear?
(Silence.)

³⁴ Ibid., 340 (II, viii):

THE MUMMY (goes up to the clock and stops the pendulum; then, precisely and in earnest): But I can stop time in its tracks -- I can render the past to nothing, undo what has been done; but not with bribes, not with threats -- rather, through suffering and repentance -- -- --

The Mummy and Bengtsson then reveal the deceits and treacheries of the Old Man, and since he feels no repentance for what he has done, he must submit to the sentence he was so ready to pass on the others. Shortly thereafter, in a passage cited above, he rapidly assumes the identities first of a parrot, to signify the loss of his own personality; then of a rooster, to announce that a new day is at hand for the inhabitants of the house; and finally of a cuckoo, to announce that the time has come, predicting his own almost immediate death and possibly that of his daughter as well.

Another important symbol in the play, although perhaps not so important as those mentioned above, is water -- the source, essence, and preserver of all life -- which is found in several forms, from the well of the opening scene to the water which nourishes the flowers in the final scene. Water is also, particularly in the forms of rain and baptismal water, a symbol of purification and regeneration.

At the opening of the play, the Concièrge is seen watering the laurel plants, providing them with sustenance and thus life. Attention is then directed to a well and to the Milkmaid, who associates herself very quickly with its life-giving, purifying water: "Mjölk-flickan ... dricker en dryck ur skopan; tvättar hän-

derna; ordnar sitt hår, speglade sig i vattnet."³⁵ The Student enters: tired, unshaven, and dirty, after spending the night tending the victims of a collapsed house. With the aid of the Milkmaid, he drinks of the water and has his eyes bathed in it: a symbol of purification and regeneration, and a symbolic awakening: he will be on the alert when he meets the Old Man and the other characters of the play. This is why he is able to see through even the beautiful Young Lady in the final scene of the play, and remains untouched by the corruption around him.

Similarly, the rain which falls at one point also symbolizes purification. It is first mentioned as the Student prepares to perform his task of purifying the house. He and the Old Man are watching the Young Lady water her hyacinths, and the Old Man comes out with the curious remark "... tänk om det blir regn...."³⁶ The sight of her watering the flowers reminds him of her own need for nourishment (like the hyacinths, she needs to draw water -- life -- from someone else), and his hopes are raised that the Student might provide this.

³⁵ Skrifter, XII, 329 (I, i):

The Milkmaid ... takes a drink from the ladle, washes her hands, and arranges her hair, using the surface of the water as a mirror.

³⁶ Ibid., 333 (I, ii): "... just imagine, if it should rain...."

As he learns the details of the Student's life from Johansson, his satisfaction is expressed with the announcement that the rain has begun:

JOHANSSON (talar ohörbart).

GUBBEN: Det är bra! -- Extranumret? -- Hela namnet ute! Student Arkenholz, född ... föräldrar ... utmärkt ... jag tror det börjar regna³⁷

In instances of drowning, water symbolizes the world of the subconscious, and the drowning itself an entry into that world. Water congealed (or frozen) is a denial of its life-giving qualities, and the ice on the surface of a body of water represents the division point between the conscious and the subconscious worlds. Thus, when the Old Man once tried to drown the Milkmaid by forcing her through a hole in the ice, he was, in symbolic terms, trying to suppress or eliminate the life-force.

The water from which the shallot grows while its stalk rises heavenward has a similar meaning: the subconscious world, the source and destination of all life: "Rotskivan är jorden som vilar på vattnet...;"³⁸

Jag älskar ... dess jungfruliga gestalt som ... reser sig från rotskivan, vilar på vatt-

³⁷ Skrifter, XII, 334 (I, ii):

JOHANSSON (speaks inaudibly).

THE OLD MAN: That's fine! -- Special edition? -- The whole name given! Student Arkenholz, born ... parents ... remarkable ... I think it's beginning to rain

³⁸ Ibid., 341 (III, i): "The root cutting is the earth, which rests upon the water...."

net och sänker sina vita rena rötter i det
färglösa flytande....³⁹

In respect to the Cook's life-sapping practice of substituting water for the blood and wine she feeds the inhabitants of the house, however, water carries the opposite symbolism, for it is the blood and wine that are the life-giving elements: if water can nourish, it can also dilute.

Finally, water (life itself) can grow stagnant and putrid, as has happened to the Mummy and to the house (another symbol of life): "Genom att tiga för länge bildas det stillastående vatten som ruttnar, och så är det här i huset också."⁴⁰

The play ends with the dominant symbol of Strindberg's later years: as the Young Lady fades from this life like one of her flowers, the scenery disappears, and Strindberg's principal symbol of the after-life is revealed, the alternative to

³⁹ Skrifter, XII, 341 (III, i):

I love ... its virginal form which ... rises from the root cutting, rests upon the water and sinks its pure, white roots into the colourless liquid....

⁴⁰ Ibid., 344 (III, ii): "Water that has remained still too long becomes stagnant and putrefies, and that's also how it is with this house."

... denna villornas, skuldens, lidandets och dödens värld; den eviga växlingens, missräkningarnes och smärtans värld!⁴¹

The Young Lady is sent off with a prayer from the Student that the Lord of Heaven will be merciful to her on her journey, and her destination is revealed in this final tableau: "(Rummet försvinner; Boecklins Toten-Insel blir fond; svag musik, stilla, angenämt sorgsen, höres utifrån ön.)"⁴²

Other Strindberg symbols -- the prison, the asylum, the sun, nakedness, nets, etc. -- abound in the play, but are not significantly developed in it, nor do they play a major part in its structure or meaning.

⁴¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 344 (III, ii):

... this world of illusions, guilt, suffering, and death; the world of constant fluctuation, disappointments, and pain!

⁴² *Idem.*:

(The room disappears; Boecklin's "Toten-Insel" becomes the background; faint music, serene and pleasantly melancholy, is heard from the island.)

Chapter 85

Pelikanen

Opus 4 of the chamber plays, *Pelikanen*¹ (*The Pelican*), was completed in May, 1907, two months after *Brända tomten* and *Spöksonaten*. Less surrealistic than *Spöksonaten*, it continues its examination of vampirism, locating it once more among the symbols associated with marriage. In *Dödsdansen*, which also dealt with vampirism in marriage and family life, the Captain and Alice share the blame for the disintegration of the marriage; in *Pelikanen* the blame is shifted entirely to the female partner,² who is, of course, a vampire, albeit unwittingly. The dominant symbols of the play are those dealing with vampirism and, because the vampirism is so long unrecognized by either vampire or victims, with sleepwalking (and thus with illusion).

It is best to begin, however, with the symbol which gives the play its title. The pelican is an ancient Christian symbol of the virtue of charity and, more specifically, of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross (Ferguson, 23). This symbolism springs from the mediæval belief that of all creatures the pelican has the

¹ *Skrifter*, XII, 345-62.

² Most scholars agree that the Captain and Alice were modeled on the same couple as the deceased husband and the Mother in *Pelikanen*: Strindberg's sister Anna and her husband, Hugo Philp.

greatest love for its offspring, wounding itself with its beak in order to feed them with its own blood.

The bestiaries give two conflicting accounts of the pelican's habits. According to some, the male is very fond of his offspring, until they rebel and he kills them, whereupon the grieving female dashes her breast with her bill and covers her younglings with her blood, and they, reviving, feed upon this blood (Benét, II, 770). According to others, it is the female who kills her young with an excess of fond caresses, and the male who revives them, in the manner outlined above (Borges, 114). Strindberg seems to have been aware of both traditions, for although the character identified with the pelican throughout most of the play is the Mother, in the final cataclysmic scene the Son realizes that it was, in fact, his father who was the pelican:

... det var nog han, som var pelikanen, för han plockade sig åt oss, han hade alltid knän på byxorna och sliten sammetskrage, när vi gick som grevebarn ...³

The illusion that the Mother is the pelican is instilled in her by the Son-in-law (her lover), and is part of her self-deception: "Se på mig, som ... levat i arbete, släp och plikter för mina barn och mitt hus

³ Skrifter, XII, 362 (III, vi):

... it was really he who was the pelican, for he tore out his own feathers for us: he always had patched knees on his trousers and a worn velvet collar, while we went about like young nobles ...

...;"⁴ "... jag är din mor och har närt dig med mitt blod ..."⁵

Gerda, the daughter, is taken in by this deception until she awakens from her illusions with the realization of the nature of the relationship between her mother and her husband. The Son, however, is not deceived: to the first declaration of the mother cited above, his response is "Äh! -- Och pelikanen, som aldrig gav sitt hjärtblod, det står i zoologien att det är lögn."⁶ Indeed, he finds her more like a cunning beast, but blinded to her own nature by self-deception: "Hon är listig som ett djur, men hennes egenkärlek förblindar henne ofta ..."⁷ This impression is borne out by a stage direction when the Mother finds herself trapped by the collapse of one deception after another: "MODREN (går omkring i rummet, som ett nyss fångat vilddjur):"⁸

⁴ *Skrifter*, XII, 358 (III, iii): "Look at me, who ... have lived a life of work, drudgery, and duty, for my children and my house...."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 360 (III, v): "... I'm your mother, and have nourished you with my blood ..."

⁶ *Ibid.*, 358 (III, iii): "Piffle! -- And the pelican too -- which never gave of its heart-blood: the zoologists say that's a lie."

⁷ *Ibid.*, 355-56 (II, i): "She's as cunning as an animal, but her self-love often blinds her ..."

⁸ *Ibid.*, 358 (III, iii): "THE MOTHER (paces the room like a newly captured wild animal):"

There is nevertheless at least one sense in which the Mother is a pelican, for the bird also carries a secondary meaning, less common than the traditional one and an ironic comment on it: in Jungian dream analysis, a pelican often represents "a rapaciously greedy person" (Meurice, 131): an accurate description of the Mother's true nature.

The undeceiving of Gerda and the Mother is accomplished by the Son, after he learns the truth from a letter left him by his dead father. In symbolism reminiscent of *Dödsdansen I* and *II*, the Son is compared to a sheep:

MODREN: Han talte så konstigt i afton här

...
MÅGEN: Det fårhuvud ...

MODREN: De bruka vara baksluga....⁹

As in *Dödsdansen*, the sheep is pitted against the vampire. It soon becomes evident that the latter is embodied in the Mother. Although never explicitly identified as such, Strindberg assigns to her the characteristics of the vampire-Cook in *Spöksonaten*, thus associating her as well with the lamia symbol: the monster who nourished children only in order to devour them:

⁹ *Skrifter*, XII, 350 (I, iii):

THE MOTHER: He spoke so strangely here this evening ...

THE SON-IN-LAW: The numbskull [literally, the sheep-head] ...

MODREN: They [i.e., sheep] can often be crafty ...

... hon åt i köket på förmiddagen och gav oss det utspädda, uppvärmda, hon skummade mjölken, därför äro vi barn misslyckade, alltid sjuka och hungriga.... När vår far upptäckte detta, ... hon lovade bättring, men fortsatte, och gjorde uppfinningar, det var sojan och kajennpepparn!¹⁰

The Mother is a vampire, then, because she survives and indeed flourishes at the expense of others. She is a vampire also in a less obvious way, when she alienates the Son-in-law's affections:

GERDA (gråter): Allt kunde jag förlåta; men att du tog mitt liv från mig icke -- ja, han var mitt liv, ty med honom började jag leva ...¹¹

If Gerda cannot forgive her mother, the Son does extend some form of exoneration; she is not a vampire out of malice, but by nature, and he does not hold her accountable for what she cannot help: "Du kunde väl inte vara på annat sätt!"¹²

¹⁰ *Skrifter*, XII, 355 (II, i):

... she ate in the kitchen in the mornings, and then served us the food diluted and warmed over; she skimmed the cream off the milk: that's why we children are failures, always sick and hungry.... When our father found this out, ... she promised to reform, but kept on, and made new discoveries: soya sauce and cayenne pepper!

¹¹ *Idem.*:

GERDA (weeping): I could forgive everything, but not that you took my life from me -- yes, he was my life, for with him I began to live ...

¹² *Ibid.*, 359 (III, iv): "I suppose you couldn't act any other way!"

Although the Mother is the principal vampire in the play, she is not the only one. For the young of the pelican are also vampires, through eating their parent's blood: if the two children have not eaten of their mother's blood, they have of their father's. They realize this before the end of the play, however, and are spared the violent death of the Mother: she hurls herself from a window to destruction, whereas they sink peacefully into the purgatorial flames.

The symbol of sleepwalking is closely associated with that of vampirism in this play. For vampirism in Pelikanen is a consequence or manifestation of self-deception, and the vampire is destroyed by the shattering of the illusion which allows it to exist, or, in terms of the sleepwalking symbol, by waking up. In the surrealistic convention of the chamber plays, the destruction is literal.

The two principal sleepwalkers are Gerda and the Mother. Gerda's illusion consists in her belief that her Mother (whom she accepts, for awhile, as the mystical pelican) and her husband both love her, whereas in fact they are in love with each other. Her husband realizes that she is ignorant of the world around her, but warns the Mother of the dire consequences that will follow her awakening:

Hon vet ingenting ännu, förstår ingenting,
men hon börjar vakna ur sömngångersömn.
Akta dig när hon slår upp ögonen!¹³

Indeed, she knows herself that she is sleepwalking (supporting the Son-in-law's contention that she is beginning to awaken), but does not wish to wake up, for fear of what she will find: "Tyst! Jag går i sömnen, jag vet det, men jag vill inte bli väckt! Då skulle jag inte kunna leva!"¹⁴

Nevertheless she is awakened by the Son, who has learned his Mother's true nature from his father's letter, and has closely observed her behaviour with the Son-in-law. Once awake, Gerda indeed does not like what she sees, and would gladly return to her somnambulant state, but it is too late: she must now face up to her situation, play her part in the attempt to awaken the Mother, and pass through the purgatorial fire before she can recapture her happiness:

Om så är, då vill jag inte leva, men är jag
tvungen, så vill jag gå döv och blind genom

¹³ *Skrifter*, XII, 352 (I, v):

As yet she knows nothing, understands nothing, but she's beginning to awaken from her somnambular sleep. Be on your guard when she opens her eyes!

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 354 (II, i):

Be quiet! I'm walking in my sleep -- I know that -- but I don't want to be awakened! I shouldn't be able to live then!

detta elände, men i hoppet om ett bättre
efteråt ...¹⁵

The Mother begins to awaken when the Son ruthlessly confronts her with the truth about herself and those around her. Her attitude is one of disbelief that these things could have escaped her notice for so long, and the Son, in a gesture of generosity that is rare in Strindberg, exonerates her: a sleepwalker cannot be held accountable for his actions while asleep:

SONEN: Håller du på att vakna?

MODREN: Ja, nu vaknar jag, som ur en lång, lång sömn! Det är förskräckligt! Varför kunde man inte väcka mig förut?

SONEN: Det ingen kunde var väl omöjligt!
Och när det var omöjligt, så rädde du väl inte för'et!¹⁶

The Mother, however, is not so easy to awaken as Gerda; this is but the beginning of the process. When the Son leaves her alone, she considers killing herself by jumping out the window, but is prevented from doing so by what appears to be a supernatural visitation,

¹⁵ Skrifter, XII, 361 (III, v):

If that's true, I don't want to live, but if I'm forced to, I want to go deaf and blind through this wretched existence, with, however, the hope of a better hereafter ...

¹⁶ Ibid., 359 (III, iii):

THE SON: Are you waking up?

THE MOTHER: Yes, I'm waking up now, as if from a long, long sleep! It's horrible! Why couldn't someone wake me up earlier?

THE SON: It must have been impossible, since no one could do it! And since it was impossible, I guess you can't be held responsible for it!

which causes her to collapse. When Gerda enters shortly thereafter, there is a literal enactment of a spiritual awakening: "MODREN (vaknar, reser sig):"¹⁷ But even this awakening is not complete, for she soon sinks back into her old self-deceptions: "GERDA: Stackars mamma! Du går ännu i sömnen, som vi alla, men skall du aldrig vakna?"¹⁸ Gerda makes one last effort to awaken her: "GERDA (tar Modren i axlarne och skakar henne): Vakna i Herrans namn!"¹⁹ But this attempt too is unsuccessful. It is not until the house catches fire and her life of illusion begins literally to collapse around her that the Mother awakens, and then only to hurl herself from the balcony: not for her the better hereafter to be gained by passing through the purgatorial fire!

Gerda's observation that "we all" have been sleep-walking extends the symbol to mankind in general, and echoes a similar universalization made earlier by the Son, which links this play clearly to the belief dramatized in *Ett drömspel*, that man inhabits a world of illusion:

¹⁷ *Skrifter*, XII, 360 (III, v): "THE MOTHER (awakens, rises):"

¹⁸ *Idem.*: "GERDA: Poor mama! You're still walking in your sleep, as we all were, but will you never wake up?"

¹⁹ *Idem.*: "GERDA (takes the Mother by the shoulders and shakes her): Wake up, in the name of the Lord!"

GERDA: Tyst! Jag går i sömnen....

SONEN: Tror du inte vi alla gå i sömnen då?
-- jag läser om stora brottslingar,
som ... tyckte de handlade rätt, ända tills
de upptäcktes och vaknade! Är det inte en
dröm, nog är det en sömn!²⁰

Although the father has died before the play begins, he is nevertheless active in it: his letter, for instance, causes the Son and, through him Gerda, to awaken, and is the first step in the awakening of the Mother. More than this, however, his spirit is present in the house, localized in the rocking chair which was his preferred seat. At several points in the play, the chair either is set in motion by the wind, or continues to rock back and forth after someone has risen from it. This invariably produces an agitated reaction in the Mother, as in the following instance:

SONEN (reser sig från gungstolen, som blir gungande tills Modren kommer in):

....

*

MODREN (in, får se gungstolen röra sig; fasar, men lugnar sig):²¹

²⁰ Skrifter, XII, 354 (II, i):

GERDA: Be quiet! I'm walking in my sleep....

THE SON: But don't you think we're all walking in our sleep? -- I read of great criminals, who ... thought they were doing the right thing right up until they were discovered, and awoke! If this isn't a dream, it's certainly a sleep!

²¹ Skrifter, XII, 356 (II, ii-iii):

THE SON (rises from the rocking chair, which continues to rock until the Mother enters):

....

*

For the Mother, the chair represents everything that stood between her and the father: "... den där stolen gör mig tokig! Det var alltid som två hackknivar när han satt där ...och hackade mitt hjärta."²² Whenever the chair rocks, it recalls her marriage and the man who finally knew her for what she was. It is as if her dead husband has come back to haunt her, to accuse her of her crimes, to chop again at her heart. Furthermore, both the Son-in-law and the Son sit in this chair when they have things to say which she does not wish to hear, and she makes it clear that when they are so seated they are passing on the accusations of her dead husband, acting in his place, as it were:

MÅGEN (sätter sig i gungstolen):

....

MODREN: Vad du är lik gubben nu, när du sitter i hans gungstol!²³

Indeed, the stage direction at the end of III, ii indicates that the Son has been sitting in the chair in the

—
THE MOTHER (enters, notices the rocking of the chair, shudders, but calms herself):

²² Ibid., 359 (III, iii): "... that chair is driving me crazy! Whenever he sat there, it was like two chopping knives ... chopping up my heart."

²³ Ibid., 357 (III, ii):

THE SON-IN-LAW (sits in the rocking chair):

....

....

THE MOTHER: How like the old man you are now, when you sit in his rocking chair!

previous scene, when he awoke Gerda with information acquired from his father's letter.

The rocking chair has an ally in the wind, which, as well as causing the chair to rock ominously for no apparent reason, produces several other "supernatural" effects, all of which harass the bedevilled Mother: windows howl, rattle, and are blown open; the tile stove also howls; doors slam and open as if by themselves; papers are scattered about; plants stir and rustle; a picture of the father falls from the wall; etc. As in *Oväder*, the storm portends a crisis in the life of the family, but here it plays a more active part in bringing that crisis to a head. As it does in Arab legend (Cirlot, 147) and hence in "Samum", the howling wind seems to symbolize both the hunter (in this case, the father) and death. Unlike the one in *Oväder*, this storm does not pass; the play ends with it at its height. It is, incidentally, significant that it is a palm, emblem of victory and triumph, which bristles menacingly in the wind, for it signals the triumph of the father over the Mother.

The play takes place in winter, in cyclical symbolism the season of the witch (the Mother) and the disappeared hero (the father). The most potent symbol the play draws from those associated with the winter cycle is cold, which symbolizes the emptiness and frigidity of the characters' emotional lives, their isola-

tion from each other. The Son is always cold, and can only escape this condition by seeking warmth outside the family, or in music: "... kandidaten fryser hela dan, så han måste gå ut eller hålla sig varm vid pianot ..."²⁴ Gerda suffers from the same affliction:

GERDA: Jag fryser, ge oss lite eld!
 SONEN: Är du också frusen?
 GERDA: Jag har alltid frusit och hungrat!
 SONEN: Du också! Det är konstigt här i
 huset!²⁵

This cold, which Gerda describes as "en gravkyla",²⁶ is directly caused by the Mother, who hoards the firewood, denying heat to her family while keeping herself warm at the kitchen fire: another aspect of her vampirism. As her illusions disappear, however, she too becomes cold; she has considered herself both loved and loving, and when undeceived, she realizes that her life too is frigid and empty:

MODREN (...):
 (Nu börjar det blåsa igen ... så att papper
 flyga omkring.)
 Stäng fönstret, Fredrik! (En blomkruka blå-
 ser ner.) Stäng fönstret! Jag fryser ihjäl,
 och det slocknar i kaklugnen! (Hon ...

²⁴ Skrifter, XII, 347 (I, i): "... the young master is cold all day, so that he has to go out or keep himself warm at the piano ..."

²⁵ Ibid., 354 (II, i):

GERDA: I'm freezing! Make us a little fire!
 THE SON: Are you cold too?
 GERDA: I've always been cold and hungry!
 THE SON: You too! What a strange house this
 is!

²⁶ Ibid., 355 (II, i): "the coldness of the grave"

stänger dörrn, som slås upp igen; gungstolen rörs av blåsten....)²⁷

Both Jung and the traditional symbolism which he systematized associate wood with the female, or mother principal (Cirlot, 356). Since fire is required to produce heat, and hence to banish cold, the only way in which the children in the play can have warmth in their lives is through the destruction of the Mother: "... ved måste brännas opp för att kunna värma!"²⁸

The fire which destroys the Mother (indirectly: she jumps off the balcony to escape it) also purifies the children, preparing them for a "better hereafter": the phoenix, destroyed by fire, rises again from its own ashes. This is the purgatorial fire, which destroys the old life -- "... nu brinner allt gammalt, allt gammalt ont och styggt och fult ..."²⁹ -- only to make a new life possible: "Allt måste brinna opp, annars kom

²⁷ Skrifter, XII, 359 (III, iv):

THE MOTHER (...):

(The wind begins to blow again ... making papers fly around the room.)

Close the windows, Fredrik! (A flowerpot is blown over.) Close the window! I'm freezing to death, and the fire in the stove is dying! (She ... closes the door, which blows open again; the rocking chair is rocked by the wind....)

²⁸ Ibid., 357 (III, ii): "... wood must be burnt up, if it's to give heat!"

²⁹ Ibid., 361 (III, vi): "... now everything old is burning up: all the old evil and nastiness and ugliness ..."

vi inte ut härifrån!"³⁰ This is why the Mother does not die in the fire itself: she is not to be regenerated in a "better hereafter".

Among the "supernatural" events which prepare the way for the final conflagration are two triple knocks at the door, both of which send the Mother into a panic, for she is convinced that her husband has returned from the dead to call her to account:

MODREN (.... ...det bultar tre slag på fonddörren): Vem är det? Vad var det? (Hon stänger fönstret.) Stig in: (Fonddörrarne öppnas.) Är det någon där? (Sonen höres vråla inne i våningen.) Det är han, i tobakslandet! Är han inte död? Vad skall jag göra, vart skall jag ta vägen? (Hon gömmer sig bakom chiffonjén.)³¹

Symbolically, she is right, for the number three implies the resolution of conflicting opposites (the Mother and the father), and signifies also the end of the natural process (the three stages of which are creation, preservation, and destruction, or birth,

³⁰ *Skrifter*, XII, 361 (III, vi): "Everything must be burnt up; otherwise we'd never have gotten out of here!"

³¹ *Ibid.*, 359 (III, iv):

THE MOTHER (.... ... there are three knocks at the rear door): Who is it? What was that? (She closes the window.) Come in! (The rear doors open.) Is there anyone there? (The Son is heard bawling inside the apartment.) It's he, in the tobacco patch! Isn't he dead? What shall I do? where shall I flee? (She hides behind the *escritoire*.)

life, and death):³² the time has come for the resolution of the conflict between the Mother and the father, and it will result in the destruction of the former.

The other symbols in the play, already familiar from other Strindberg works and discussed elsewhere, all contribute to the pattern indicated here, but none is sufficiently important to merit further consideration in this context.

Like the other chamber plays, *Pelikanen* is basically pessimistic in its vision of humanity, but like them also, it nevertheless holds out a glimmer of hope for suffering humanity. Just as, in the blackest of them, *Spöksonaten*, what good there is triumphs and persists, so in the most vengeful, *Pelikanen*, general destruction is tempered with the hope of a "better hereafter". The process of confrontation with and examination of the past, in order to separate what was evil from what was good, so that the evil might be destroyed and the good purified and strengthened, continues in Opus 5 of the chamber plays, *Svarta handsken* (1908).

³² Cirlot, 95, 226, 279.

Chapter 86

Siste riddaren

*Siste riddaren*¹ (*The Last Knight*, 1908) and *Riksföreståndaren*, are companion pieces. Within the chronology of Swedish history, they fill the gap between Engelbrekt at one end and Mäster Olof and Gustav Vasa at the other.

The Swedish king whose reign is anticipated at the end of Engelbrekt is Karl Knutsson Bonde. Or perhaps one should say "whose reigns": Karl Knutsson reigned during three separate periods, with one (Danish) king and three (Swedish) Regents in between! He had become Rikshövitsman in 1436, beating out Engelbrekt for the position, and Regent in 1438. In 1440, after meetings with the Swedish Council and with Karl Knutsson (who received large parcels of land -- including all of Finland! -- in compensation), Kristofer of Bavaria (the Union king) assumed the throne of Sweden, but in 1448, after Kristofer's death, the Swedes chose Karl Knutsson as king. In 1457 he was deposed, and the Union king Kristian I ruled also in Sweden, until 1464. Karl Knutsson returned to power that year, supported by a Polish army, but was again driven out of the country in 1465. From then until 1467 Sweden was ruled over by

¹ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 7-152.

three Regents in rapid succession, none of whom distinguished himself in character or deed, and Karl Knutsson was recalled to the throne in 1467, holding it until his death in 1470.

On his deathbed, Karl Knutsson Bonde chose Sten Sture the Elder to succeed him; he was elected Regent the following year. A strong nationalist, Sture had participated in the routing of Kristian I from Sweden, and pursued a strongly nationalistic policy. Noble, popular, unselfish, he was the co-founder of Uppsala University, and is said to have been the model for the heroic and impressive statue of St. George (carved by Bernt Notke in 1489) which stands in Stockholm's Storkyrkan (Great Church). He was defeated by the Union king, Hans (son of Kristian I) in 1497, and Hans assumed the Swedish throne. When a conspiracy was formed against the king in 1501 and he was driven out of the country, Sten Sture the Elder again became Regent. The following year the city of Stockholm was captured from the enemy on Sture's behalf, by forces led by Hemming Gadh. Sture died in 1503, and was buried in the Carthusian monastery at Mariefred.

In January of 1504 a new regent was elected, Svante Nilsson Sture. Svante Nilsson's father was Nils Bosson Natt och Dag, a family name very much in disfavour after the unpunished murder of Engelbrekt by Måns Bengtsson Natt och Dag in 1436. Svante therefore

took the name Sture from his mother's family, and was not related to Sten Sture the Elder. Svante Nilsson Sture was Regent from 1504, the same year in which he married for the second time (the second wife was Mette Dyre, a Dane, widow of a member of the Norwegian national council), until his death in 1512. His main accomplishments were the forming of an alliance with Lübeck (the chief city of the Hanseatic League) in 1509, and the driving of the Danes from Sweden in 1510, assisted by Hemming Gadh.

Finally we come to the hero of *Siste riddaren*, Sten Sture the Younger. Born in 1492, he was the son of Svante Nilsson Sture (really Natt och Dag) and his first wife, but from the age of twelve was raised by his stepmother, Mette Dyre. At the age of eighteen he became a member of the national council, and was sent to Lübeck and on a military expedition to the Danish islands, and the following year, 1511, he was made governor of two Swedish counties. On July 23, 1512, the day on which the first act of the play is set, the national council elected Erik Trolle as Regent and then reversed its decision, electing Sten Sture instead (his father had died January 2). In 1515 Erik Trolle's son, Gustav, returned from Rome as the Archbishop of Sweden and began almost immediately to conspire against the Regent, in an effort to increase his own influence and power. The Archbishop was, in fact, in league with the

Kalmar Union, and in 1517 Sture was forced to capture the Archbishop's castle, defeating a Danish army at Stockholm and taking Gustav Trolle prisoner. As a result of this, he was excommunicated. He defeated the Union king, Kristian II at the Battle of Brännkyrka in 1518, and in 1520 he was wounded resisting another Danish invasion; he died while returning to Stockholm. His widow, Kristina Gyllenstierna, defended Stockholm Palace against Kristian II, but was eventually persuaded to surrender, on the strength of false promises. The body of Sten Sture the Younger was finally given burial in the Greyfriars monastery church in Stockholm, but was disinterred and burned by Kristian II during the razing of the city, the Stockholm Bloodbath. (Ohlmarks, 90-103)

Such are the bare historic facts. Strindberg injects life and drama into this outline by emphasizing the character of Sten Sture the Younger, an amalgam of the highest ideals of chivalry and of Christianity, and his dramatic conflict against the ruthless and grasping Gustav Trolle. Those familiar with *Folkungasagan* will recognize in Sten Sture the Younger many of the character traits displayed by Magnus Eriksson; indeed Strindberg has admitted as much in *Öppna brev*:

Vår Magnus Folkungen blev den kristne mannen,
som går under för hedningarnes fördomsfrihet,

och han stod nyligen upp i Sten Sture den yngre, Den Sista Riddaren.²

It was a theme which fascinated Strindberg: the good man who acts according to his principles and is destroyed by the forces of darkness, the man who is out of joint with his times. Magnus Eriksson had been born too early; Sten Sture the Younger, as the title of the play indicates, was born too late: he tried to live by a set of values his age had eclipsed. Ironically, the representative of the new barbarism in the play is Sweden's highest-ranking official of the Church which professes precisely the values espoused by Sture!

Throughout the play Sten Sture the Younger is symbolically linked with St. George,³ the patron saint of Stockholm. As we have seen, this also links him with Sten Sture the Elder, with whom he had in common his name, the office of Regent, and many qualities of character. The opening act is set in the basement of Stockholm's city hall,⁴ a place traditionally given

² Samlade skrifter, L, 256 (Fifth Letter):

Our Magnus Folkung became the Christian who goes under before the unscrupulousness of the pagans, and he recently rose again in Sten Sture the Younger, the Last Knight.

³ This is the same St. George (of Cappadocia) who is the patron saint of England. He has come to symbolize the triumph of right over oppression and wickedness (Ferguson, 121), which in turn is symbolized in depictions of the saint slaying a dragon.

⁴ Not the present City Hall, which is a modern building.

over to a restaurant or tavern, where city officials can take their meals, official celebrations can be held, and those seeking favours from the high and mighty can come in hope of an informal meeting. This banqueting hall contains three vaulted rooms: Vinstocken (The Grape Vine), which is reserved for the mayor and the city councillors; Murgrönan (The Ivy), reserved for the Hanseatic merchants of Lübeck; and Rosen (The Rose), as large as the other two combined, for the Guild of St. George (knights). All are painted with the plants for which they are named, but the Rose Room⁵ has additional ornamentation:

I valvet Rosen är S:t Göran och Draken
målade, hästen vit, riddarens rustning i silver
och guld; rosar vita och röda runt
omkring.⁶

This is the background against which Sten Sture the Younger is first introduced, and against which he moves and deliberates for the whole opening act of the play. As the young Regent reveals his character, the audience is thus constantly reminded of the ideal Christian knight he so strongly resembles.

⁵ cf. *Inferno*, *Till Damaskus*, etc.

⁶ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 279:

Painted on the wall of the Rose Room are St. George and the dragon (the horse white, the knight's armour in silver and gold), surrounded by white and red roses.

The connection is made explicit (as is the identity of the dragon) in Act IV by Gustav Eriksson (i.e., the young Gustav Vasa, who lived at court and was a friend of Sture's). After Sture has taken Gustav Trolle prisoner, Vasa urges him, in a speech which also gives the play its title, to put an end to Trolle's treachery once and for all by executing him:

Du, riddare, Siste riddaren, vill du korsaklinga med en ärelös förrädare! Tre gånger har ormen bitit dig, kast'en i elden!⁷

The chivalrous and Christian knight refuses to so take advantage of an unarmed enemy, trusting that any kindness he shows Trolle will be repaid by the latter's altering his ways. He lives by a variation on the Golden Rule: "Tro gott om Gud och människor, så bli de goda -- mot dig!"⁸ Gustav Vasa, the political realist, advises against mercy:

Ja, Sten Sture, om du är för god för denna världen, så förverka icke himlen med en illgärning, när du släpper lös den draken, som ingen Sankt Göran kan dräpa!⁹

⁷ Samlade verk, LXI, 110:

You, knight, the Last Knight, do you want to cross swords with a dishonorable traitor! Three times the serpent has bitten you; throw him in the fire!

⁸ Ibid., 38 (Act I): "Believe good of God and of men, and they will be good -- to you!"

⁹ Ibid., 110:

Yes, Sten Sture, you may be too good for this world, but do not forfeit Heaven by committing the outrage of setting free this dragon, which no St. George can slay!

An earlier reference has also connected the archbishop with the dragon. Referring to the scandalous behaviour and values of the papal court, behaviour and values his son exemplifies, Erik Trolle foresees the discontent among the faithful which will lead to the Protestant Reformation:

... I har sätt draktänder, och era frön ha grott i Tyskland! Du har hört talas om Luther i Wittenberg?¹⁰

While the allusion is to the Greek myth of Cadmus, who sowed the teeth of a dragon in the ground, from which sprang a host of armed men who immediately began to fight each other (sometimes seen as an allegory of the invention of the alphabet, also attributed to Cadmus), it nevertheless strengthens the connection between Trolle and the dragon. Erik Trolle no doubt connects his metaphorical dragon also with the seven-headed dragon in the Book of the Apocalypse (Ch. 12), where power on earth is given to a seven-headed beast which was often taken as a figure of the corrupt Church whose representative Gustav Trolle is. If so, Sture can be similarly linked to the other great knightly dragon-fighter of Christian tradition, the Archangel Michael.

¹⁰ Samlade verk, LXI, 91 (Act III):

... you have sown dragon's teeth, and your seeds have sprouted in Germany! Have you heard tell of Luther in Wittenberg?

The dragon, however, represents more than just Gustav Trolle. In the first scene of Act V, the Swedes are trying to repel a naval invasion led by Kristian II. Gustav Vasa, who had carried the Swedish colours to victory in the Battle of Brännkyrka in 1518, approaches a group of maids-in-waiting who are repairing the banner and requests them to sing "The Song of St. George", and to sing it loud enough for the Danes to hear it on their ships. It is obviously meant as an expression of confidence that their own St. George, the Regent, will defeat this particular dragon, Kristian II:

(Tärnorna sjunga):

Hör du Jöran vad jag säger dig,
Du skall mitt ärende uträtta,
Till Cappadociam den stora stad
Där skall du med drakenom strida.

Den staden är både bred och lång,
Där bor en hednisk konung inne.
För samma stad ligger en drake
Han ligger den staden till mene!¹¹

The dragon, then, is Kristian II, the Kalmar Union, Denmark, and all who are opposed to Sweden's destiny as

¹¹ Samlade verk, LXI, 117:

(The Maids-in-waiting sing):

Listen, George, to what I have to say,
You shall perform the task I set:
Go to the great city of Cappadocia
And there do battle with the dragon.

That city is both wide and long,
A heathen king lives in it.
At the city gate a dragon lies,
He does the city great harm!

a sovereign nation. An imposing opponent indeed for our gentle Christian knight!

This symbolism is particularly apt for Sten Sture the Younger, combining as it does the two traditions of chivalry and Christianity. It is supported and complemented by biblical allusions and references. Sten Sture, like Magnus Eriksson before him, opens the play as one successful in all he does. On his first appearance, he approaches the aged Bishop Hemming Gadh and asks for his blessing. The blessing he receives is an adaptation of one of Strindberg's favorites, Psalm 128 (Vulgate 127):

STURE (går till Biskopen, faller på knä, lägger hans hand på sitt huvud): Välsigna mig, fader, så som du var en välsignelse för min fader, för mitt land och mitt folk.

HEMING GAD:

Säll är den som fruktar Herren
Såsom ett fruktsamt vinträd
 skall din hustru vara
Därinne i ditt hus,
Såsom olivtelningar dina barn
Omkring ditt bord.
Ty se, så varder den man välsignad
som fruktar Herren!
Herren välsigne dig från Sion!¹²

¹² Samlade verk, LXI, 34 (Act I):

STURE (goes up to the Bishop, falls to his knees, and places the Bishop's hand on his head): Bless me, father, as you were a blessing for my father, my country, and my people.

HEMING GADH:*

"Blessed is every one that feareth the
Lord;

....
Thy wife shall be
as a fruitful vine
by the sides of thine house:
thy children like olive plants

i fulla korgar, sträck ut din hand, tag och
ät!¹³

The reference is to the anointing of David by the prophet Samuel, confirming his destiny as future king over Israel and Judah (1 Samuel 16:1-13), but has more reverberations than that, as is usual in Strindberg. The man who actually occupied the throne of Israel, Saul, developed a deadly hatred for David and set out to kill him. On two separate occasions (I Samuel 24 and 26) David finds Saul in a completely undefended and helpless position, which he could exploit to remove the threat to his own life. On both occasions, however, he refuses to harm Saul: as king, Saul, after all, is the Lord's Anointed too. This great magnanimity toward and trust in an enemy (David too hoped that Saul's heart would soften towards him as a result of his clemency) is imitated by Sten Sture the Younger when he has Sweden's consecrated archbishop in his hands and refuses to exploit the opportunity to be rid of him forever. We remember too that when Strindberg's Magnus Eriksson believed himself betrayed by his own son, he compared himself to David: yet another bond between these two characters.

¹³ Samlade verk, LXI, 108:

... become king! Now! The Lord has anointed you with the oil of victory, little David! Are not baskets full of good things being held out to you? Stretch out your hand! Take! Eat!

When Sten Sture is represented as St. George, the identity of the dragon is extended to include all of his (and Sweden's) enemies; when Sture is identified as David, the identity of Saul is similarly inclusive. In Act II, Gustav Vasa pins the rôle of Saul on Erik Abrahamsson, who has vacillated between the nationalist and the unionist causes several times, and is to go over to the unionists again. His simile is intended only to suggest that Erik Abrahamsson seems out of place at the Sture court, but it too has more sinister reverberations: "Du har kommit hit som Saul bland profeterna."¹⁴

The second time Sten Sture extends mercy towards an enemy is during the naval siege which opens Act V. When he hears that the Danes are starving aboard their ships, he orders food to be sent to them. This act of charity (which parallels the second time David spares Saul's life) is repaid when Kristian II refuses to honour the safe-conduct he has granted to representatives from the Swedish side, and slays the six emissaries sent to treat with him. Sture responds with a

¹⁴ Samlade verk, LXI, 68: "You have come here as Saul among the prophets." The allusion is to 1 Samuel 19:18-24. David has taken refuge with Samuel in Ramah, a community of prophets. Saul pursues him there, seeking to kill him, but is unsuccessful when he falls into an ecstasy, allowing David to escape. What is suggested is that, first of all, Erik Abrahamsson is no friend to Sten Sture, secondly, he will fall under the spell of the court for awhile but, finally, he will resume his enmity.

quotation from Christ, Who also suffered (on the Cross), in spite of the fact that He had committed no wrong: "Min Gud, min Gud, vi haver du övergivit mig?"¹⁵

Despite this identification of Sten Sture as a Christ-figure, he is an entirely different sort of Christ-figure than Magnus Eriksson; Sture is Christ-like in that he is a good man, blameless in all he does, who nevertheless (and despite God's apparent favour) suffers at the hands of his enemies; he is not, like Magnus Eriksson, a sacrifice for the sins of others. Strindberg's point about Sten Sture the Younger seems to be that, noble and altruistic though he be, great and impressive though his gifts, he is out of place in a ruthless age, which requires ruthlessness to set it right. His function in history seems to be to serve as a noble ideal, a shining example of what Sweden's ruler can and ought to be: but not just yet! If Engelbrekt became a symbol of liberation, Sten Sture the Younger is a symbol of what life in the Promised Land will be like. But the Promised Land must be conquered first! In a passage already cited, Gustav Vasa points out that Sten Sture is too good for this world. After his death, Anna Bielke, one of the leads in the romantic sub-plot of the play, indicates that he has

¹⁵ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 135: "'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" (Matthew 27:46).

gone to a place better adapted to his character; his suffering and disappointments are over:

"Och Gud skall avtorka alla tårar och döden skall icke vara mer, icke heller sorg, icke heller rop, icke heller värk varder mer, ty det förra är förgånget."¹⁶

This is not to be the case for those left behind, however. Standing over the unburied body of the Regent, Anna Bielke and his widow, Kristina, exchange reflections on his life which apply equally well to coming events in Swedish history:

ANNA BIELKE: så hoppfull han såg ut
... som om han visste att det skall slutas
väl!

KRISTINA: Men först genom blod och tårar
...¹⁷

Indeed, Sture's stepmother, Mette Dyre, had already predicted both his death and the cataclysmic events which would follow it. In her prophecy of doom for Sweden, she reverts to the symbolism of the primitive nordic religion:

Jag ser det i molnen, i vattnet, i drömmen --
Sten Sture får aldrig krona annan än törnets

¹⁶ Samlade verk, LXI, 151 (Act V, sc. 2):

"And God shall wipe away all tears ... and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."
(Apocalypse 21:4. King James translation.)

¹⁷ Ibid., 140 (Act V):

ANNA BIELKE: he looked so hopeful
... as if he knew that everything would turn
out well!

KRISTINA: But first, through blood and
tears ...

krona -- Han lever icke året ut -- ty han har lidit sitt mått och druckit all livets bitterhet -- Så stundar vargatid, ond död, bråddöd. -- Ve! Ve! -- Ragnarök, makternas skymning, Surturbrand!¹⁸

In Norse mythology, Ragnarök is the destruction of the gods: a great battle between the gods and the monsters will result in the destruction of both, and of the world of men along with them. Ragnarök will be ushered in by many portents, among them great wars throughout the earth, and a time of strife and hatred between men, appalling deeds of murder and incest, cold, famine, earthquakes, etc. (Davidson, 37) Surt is an evil spirit or giant, who will destroy earth and heaven with fire at Ragnarök. (Ibid., 202)

Mette Dyre repeats the second half of her prophecy after the first half has come true, this time using Christian symbolism from the Apocalypse:

"Och en annan ängel kom ut från altaret och sade: Sänd din vassa lie! Och ängelen lät sin lie gå på jorden och kastade druvorna i Guds vredes stora vinpress; och vinpressen tram-

¹⁸ Samlade verk, LXI, 136-37 (Act V, sc. 1):

I see it in the clouds, in the water, in dreams -- Sten Sture will never receive any crown but the crown of thorns -- He will not live out the year -- for he has suffered his full measure and drunk all of life's bitterness -- Then hard times will be upon us, evil death, sudden death. -- Alas! Alas! -- Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Powers, the unleashing of Surt!

pades utanför staden och blod från pressen
steg ända upp till betslen på hästarne!"¹⁹

This presages in very vivid terms the Stockholm Blood-bath of 1520, which followed hard on the death of Sten Sture the Younger. In the Apocalyptic account these things do not come to pass until the just and virtuous have first been culled from the earth: such, it seems, was Sten Sture!

These prophecies of disaster all contain a promise, however: there may be blood and tears in the immediate future, but things will end well, as Sten Sture believed. In the play, the above passage from the Apocalypse is followed immediately by the "God shall wash away all tears" passage quoted by Anna Bielke, and in Norse mythology Ragnarök is followed by a regeneration of the world, which will rise again from the sea, more beautiful than ever, cleansed of all suffering and evil, a world of peace and harmony (Davidson, 38). Sten Sture the Younger has been spared the worst of the Ragnarök phase -- it is his successor, the practical Gus-

¹⁹ Samlade verk, LXI, 150-51 (Act V sc. 2):

"And another angel came out from the altar ... and cried ... : Thrust in thy sharp sickle.... And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth ... and cast [the vine of the earth] into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles...." (Apocalypse 14:18-20. King James translation)

tav Vasa, who must lead his nation through that -- and has gone ahead to point the way to a better world.

Just as the biblical references, combined with the legend of St. George, all serve to identify Sten Sture as a Christian knight (even David is associated with Christ: he received the promise of the coming of the Messiah, and Christ is said to be "of the house and lineage of David") -- he is associated with the New Covenant, when, as Magnus Eriksson's Queen Blanche puts it, forgiveness is the order of the day -- so too his enemies are associated with the Old Covenant, when "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" prevailed. What is more, Gustav Trolle, the Christian archbishop who is far from Christian in his actions, is aware of this; he is guided not by the high ideals of the Church he represents, but by his own ambition:

GUSTAV TROLLE: När jag fått agg till en människa, så förlåter jag aldrig!

ERIK TROLLE: Det är vackert sagt av en Herrans tjänare!

GUSTAV TROLLE: Jag lever i det gamla Förbundet och kan inte tjäna två Herrar!²⁰

²⁰ Samlade verk, LXI, 90 (Act III):

GUSTAV TROLLE: When I have a grudge against somebody, I never forgive!

ERIK TROLLE: That's a fine thing for a servant of the Lord to say.

GUSTAV TROLLE: I live under the Old Covenant, and cannot serve two Masters!*

* Cf. Matthew 6:24.

There is a character who is cast into the scape-goat rôle, suffering for the sins of his father, and that is Johan Månsson Natt och Dag, the son of Engelbrekt's murderer. Unlike Svante and Sten Sture (the Younger), who were more distant relatives, he has not changed his name, and is therefore instantly known wherever he goes, and shunned. Cut off from employment in the public service because of who he is (even though he himself has done nothing wrong), he becomes obsessed with redeeming the family name. He sells all he has to buy and outfit a ship to recapture the city of Kalmar from the Danes; the gift is accepted, he is refused: it is feared that the knights taking part in the siege will not serve under the son of Engelbrekt's murderer. He finally shows up in Stockholm, hoping that his kinsman, Sten Sture, will find him some employment in the service of his country.

There are a few plays on the wonderfully suggestive surname itself (Natt och Dag is quite literally Night and Day). In Act I Gustav Vasa treats him the same as almost everyone else: with disdain. They have a run-in in the city hall cellar, and when one of the Lübeck merchants asks the identity of the young man arguing with Vasa, he is told, "Han heter Natt och Dag, men mest på Natt!"²¹ This is meant to express that he

²¹ Samlade verk, LXI, 28: "He is called Natt och Dag, but mostly at Night!"

dare not show himself too frequently in daylight, and also that his family name is benighted. Johan gives the lie to this characterization by instantly agreeing with it, adding enough details that all present realize exactly who he is and who his father was: he wants it all out in the light of day! "Ja, så heter han! Den biltoge sonen till Måns Bengtsson till Göksholm."²² He tries to explain that his father had earned forgiveness by returning to the service of Sweden during the reign of Karl Knutsson (showing, if nothing else, that the surname was appropriate: he switched sides in the struggle yet again), but nobody will listen to him, and he is forced to leave.

He reappears after Sten Sture has entered, and sits unobserved until he has an opportunity to approach his kinsman, asking for his protection and aid. The Hanseatic League is taking credit for the ship he has donated, but Anna Bielke forces the truth out. Sten Sture makes Johan the governor of Kalmar Castle, and Hemming Gadh foretells that Johan has exonerated his family name: "Må jag se på dig! Natt och Dag, nu skall du veta att Dag gått upp för dig, och Natt är förbi."²³

²² Samlade verk, LXI, 28: "Yes, that's his name. The outlawed son of Måns Bengtsson of Göksholm [the island upon which Engelbrekt received the fatal arrow-shot]."

²³ Ibid., 48: "Let me look at you! Natt och Dag, know now that Day has risen for you, and Night has passed."

This prophecy proves true. Johan falls in love with and marries Anna Bielke (in whom Gustav Vasa has also shown an interest), the two of them go off to take possession of Kalmar Castle, successfully defend it against the Danes, and, by Act V sc. 2, Johan has died a hero's death. The sentimental Johan Månsson Natt och Dag - Anna Bielke sub-plot seems to have been included mainly to maintain a balance between idealism and harsh practicality: like Sten Sture and Kristina, they are on the side of the angels. Both men suffer in spite of their own innocence; the fact that Johan Natt och Dag is able to achieve personal honour despite the family disgrace indicates, perhaps, that there is, nevertheless, some justice in the world! Natt och Dag dies, but he dies vindicated: the curse of his father's sins has been lifted from his shoulders.

There is another cursed character in the play: Mette Dyre, Sten Sture's stepmother. We are told that she is reviled for something she has done, but we never really find out what that is, apart from one circumstance which can hardly be said to be her fault: she is Danish! Nevertheless, her behaviour seems to verify that she carries a burden of guilt: she makes her first appearance sleepwalking, a sign of a troubled spirit. Her nocturnal habits also tie in with what was said of Johan Månsson Natt och Dag:

ERIK ABRAHAMSSON: Ser du vem som går därute?

GUSTAV ERIKSSON: Mätta Dyre, Stens styvmöder, går hon i sömnen?

ERIK ABRAHAMSSON: Det vet man inte! Men hon är så hatad för alla sina dåd, att hon inte törs visa sig på dagen; därför vandrar hon om natten.

GUSTAV ERIKSSON: Hon ser ut som hon sov!²⁴

The two eventually conclude that she is indeed sleepwalking and Gustav Vasa reflects the mediaeval belief that sleepwalkers were possessed by evil spirits in his closing comment of the Act: "Gud bevare oss alla!"²⁵

Certainly her possession by spirits would account for her gift of prophecy -- she is the Cassandra of this play, and all her prophecies, full of woe though they be, come true! Perhaps this is all that has made her hated: the bearer of bad news is never a welcome guest! But there seems more to it than that. In a long speech near the end of Act V, sc. 1, she confides to an unseen listener (who may or may not exist, or may be human or supernatural) that she is a tortured and tormented soul, that she lives under a curse, that everything she touches, even the one being she has ever

²⁴ Samlade verk, LXI, 70 (Act I):

ERIK ABRAHAMSSON: Do you see who's walking out there?

GUSTAV VASA: Mette Dyre, Sten Sture's step-mother; is she walking in her sleep?

ERIK ABRAHAMSSON: It's hard to say! But she's so hated for all her deeds, she dares not show herself by day; that's why she wanders at night.

GUSTAV VASA: She looks as if she were asleep!

²⁵ Ibid., 71: "May God protect us all!"

loved (her stepson) is destroyed by the contact, and that she blames herself for all the misfortunes Sten Sture has suffered:

.... ... det som har skett är mitt verk; alltsammans! -- -- Nu är jag så, att jag måste fram och göra människor ont, fastän jag icke vill det. Det måste ske, mot min bättre vilja, och jag hatar mig när det har skett, men jag ångrar det icke. Jag har alltid beundrat goda människor, ty de kunde det jag icke förmådde: att älska! -- -- När jag då fick att fostra ett änglabarn med blå ögon och solljust hår, så älskade jag det barnet mer än mina egna; och jag var så rädd om honom, att han från mig aldrig hörde och såg annat än gott! jag lärde honom att älska, tro gott, och förlåta! Det jag icke själv kunde bli, det skulle han! -- Men likafullt, jag var tvingad att göra honom ont! Det är jag som har gjort allt, ty jag kunde aldrig upphöra vara danska! Dunkla ödets makter gav mig så in! (Paus.)²⁶

Earlier in the play it has been suggested that as a Dane Mette Dyre might betray her stepson to Kristian

²⁶ Samlade verk, LXI, 135-36:

.... ... what has happened is my doing, all of it! -- -- Now I am such, that I have to go on doing harm to people, even though I don't want to. It must happen, against my better will, and I hate myself when it has happened, but I don't regret it. I always admired good people, for they had a capacity denied to me: to love! -- -- Then, when I got an angel-child to raise, with blue eyes and hair like sunshine, I loved that child more than my own, and I took such good care of him, that from me he never heard or saw anything but good! -- I taught him to love, believe good, and forgive! Whatever I couldn't be myself, he would be! -- But all the same, I was forced to harm him! It is I who have done everything, because I could never stop being Danish! -- The dark powers of destiny so fashioned me! (Pause.)

II, and at the end of the passage cited above she seems to suggest that she has in fact done so. There is, however, no historical evidence that this was the case. It would seem rather that she views her prophecies as the causes of the events they predict (i.e., she regards them as curses rather than prophecies), that she considers herself evil because she predicts only calamitous events, and that she attributes that circumstance to the fact that she is Danish, and therefore subconsciously inimical to the Swedes, whatever her "better will" dictates. The speech goes on to predict Sten Sture's death within the year, and the ensuing calamities (Ragnarök) for Sweden. She is, then, a bit like Jonah, the unwilling prophet, except that she has the additional curse of seeing her prophecies come true and feeling responsible for them! Unfortunately, she seems unaware of the positive events which will follow the disasters she predicts, even though those positive events are contained within the symbolism on which she draws: of the three women who mourn over the body of Sten Sture the Younger, she is the only one who cannot see the promise of a better life after the blood and tears!

The title of the play suggests that one age has come to an end and another is about to begin. That age begins with Gustav Vasa, who not only ended forever Sweden's entanglement in the Kalmar Union, but also

ushered into his country the sweeping forces of the Renaissance and the Reformation. He is the subject of Strindberg's next two history plays.

Chapter 87

Abu Casems tofflor

The full title of *Abu Casems tofflor: sagospel för gamla och unga barn på oräknade jamber i fem rena akter [de tre motiven ur en franska saga och Tusen och en natt]*¹ (*The Slippers of Abu Casem: Fantasy Play for Children Young and Old: Written in Free Iambic Verse and in Five Good Acts [Based on Three Themes from a French Story and the Thousand and One Nights]*) contains almost all one needs to know about this play! Written in 1908 in an apparent attempt to capitalize on the great popularity of *Lycko-Pers resa*, *Abu Casems tofflor* is a pleasant enough play, glorifying human love and demonstrating a faith in human justice (both surprising enough developments for an author who was simultaneously compiling *En blå bok*), but it is a bagatelle: a pleasant story competently told, but lacking the passion and conviction one expects from Strindberg.

There is little in this play that is relevant to the subject at hand. Indeed, the most interesting character from the point of view of Strindberg's symbolism is an ape, described in the *dramatis personae* as an evil spirit, whose function is to attempt (unsuccessfully) to thwart true love and justice. One can see in

¹ *Samlade skrifter*, LI, 101-80.

him a kind of Christmas-pantomime version of what En
blå bok calls the ape-morality. He is comic and ulti-
mately harmless (and has stolen the show on the few
occasions the play has been performed): perhaps the
pathetic remnant of the once terrifying powers of dark-
ness!

The female romantic lead of the play is Suleika, the daughter of Abu Casem. She has resolved not to marry because of a dream she has had in which a male finch is caught in a net and freed by his mate, but when she in turn gets caught in the net he does not come to her assistance. The dream seems paralleled by reality when a merchant fallen on hard times deserts his wife and children, and she vows she will marry only if the merchant returns to his family (i.e., if the finch returns to free his mate). The merchant does return: he has not fled his responsibilities, but only gone abroad in order to improve his fortunes so that he might meet those very responsibilities: it was not callousness that carried him off, but need. That action is paralleled symbolically when Suleika is shown a cloth on which her dream is painted, together with a scene that completes it:

SULEIKA (obseverar och blir orolig):
Vad är det? Vad är detta? Drömmer jag?
Min dröm! Vem har kunnat gissa?
Där fågelfångarn är, hans nät och lilla
finken,
vars trogna maka kommer till hans hjälp,
me'n maken flyr sin kos! -- Vad nu?
Vem har min dröm drömt vidare?

Chapter 88

Riksföreståndaren

*Riksföreståndaren*¹ (*The Regent*) (1908) is a companion piece to *Siste riddaren*. It continues the saga of Swedish history from the death of Sten Sture the Younger in 1520 to the election of Gustav Vasa as king in 1523. In between the periods covered by the two plays was the Stockholm Bloodbath, which Kristian II set in motion on November 8, 1520, four days after he was crowned. Despite his promises that he would not seek revenge on those who had opposed him, approximately six hundred people in Stockholm and the rest of the country were summarily executed. Others were taken hostage to ensure peace (at the play's beginning Mette Dyre, Kristina Gyllenstierna, and Svante Sture -- son of Sten and Kristina -- as well as Gustav Vasa's mother and sister, and Anna Bielke are all hostages). The strategy did not work; in 1521 an uprising led by Gustav Vasa broke out, and Kristian II was declared deposed in Sweden in August of that year. The same month, Gustav Vasa was elected Regent. He drove the Danes from Sweden, with naval help from the Hanseatic League, and was elected king on June 6, 1523, entering

¹ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 153-268.

Stockholm on June 20 of that year. Riksföreståndaren tells the story of these eventful years.

The regency of Sten Sture the Younger began well, but ended in utter disaster; it seemed a downward slide into the great Slough of Despond which was the Stockholm Bloodbath. By contrast, the regency of Gustav Vasa was a mirror image of Sten Sture's: struggling free of the Bloodbath and rising with determination toward the high ideal which Sweden had cherished for so long: national sovereignty. It was Strindberg's hope and intention that audiences of the second play would be familiar with the first, and that recollections of that play would inform and colour their reactions to Riksföreståndaren. To aid them in this he made the structure of Riksföreståndaren mirror that of *Siste riddaren*: the play takes place in exactly the same settings as its predecessor, but in strict reverse order. The short note at the beginning of Riksföreståndaren explains what he hoped to achieve by it:

SCENERI:

Samma sceneri, som i "Siste Riddaren", men i omvänd ordning. Denna från musiken lånade kontrapunktistiska form, vilken jag begagnat i *Damaskus I*, medför den effekt, att hos åhöraren väckas minnen från de olika lokalerna där de förut spelat; och därigenom verkar dramat såsom passerande långt fram i livet med mycket bakom sig; ackumulerade förmimmelser stå upp, ekon från bättre tider genljuda, mannaålderns hårda allvar står fram, de slagne räknas, krossade förhoppningar erinras, och dramat "Siste Riddaren"

står som ungdomssagan till "Riksföreståndarens" tunga kämpadat.²

In other words, every time the action changes to a different locality in *Riksföreståndaren*, the ideal member of the audience remembers the last time he saw events transpire in that setting (i.e., in *Siste riddaren*), and everything that has happened since. In this way, by the time he reaches the end of *Riksföreståndaren*, he should be vividly aware of the symbolic structure of the two plays taken together: from idealism, through suffering and destruction, to liberation. This was the pattern of Sten Sture's life, as Anna Bielke and Kristina saw it; on the national level, it required a second man, Gustav Vasa, to accomplish the upward swing.

Gustav Vasa has much in common with Sten Sture the Younger: an ideal of service to his nation and a belief

² *Samlade verk*, LXI, 157:

SCENERY:

The same scenery as in *Siste riddaren*, but in reverse order. This contrapuntal form, which I have borrowed from music, and which I have used in *Till Damaskus I*, awakens in the audience memories related to the different locales in which previous actions have been performed; thereby the drama seems to take place at progressively later stages in life, and to have a great deal behind it; accumulated perceptions awaken, echoes from better times reverberate, the austere seriousness of adulthood is emphasized, the fallen are counted, crushed hopes remembered, and the play *Siste riddaren* serves as a youthful prelude to *Riksföreståndarens* weighty achievements in battle.

in its destiny to be independent. The difference is that Gustav Vasa is single-minded in his pursuit of that goal, never wavering from his purpose, and letting no consideration, however weighty or personally explosive, stand in its way. Both men refuse to compromise: Sten Sture follows the codes of Christianity and chivalry at all times and without exception; Gustav Vasa allows nothing to interfere with his drive towards the liberation of his country. In other words, one man's imperative is moral; the other's political. Both men refuse the crown when it is offered them: Sture out of high idealism, Gustav Vasa out of loyalty to his friend's memory (he does not wish to accept the crown while the young Svante Sture, Sten's son, is still alive: a Sture should sit on the throne); but when Vasa sees that it is the will of the people, and that with him as king Sweden can consolidate against her enemies, he accepts. He is an idealist too, but he is able to weigh one ideal against another, and to sacrifice the lesser for the sake of what he considers the greater. Magnus Eriksson's freeing of the prisoners-of-war, and Sten Sture's liberation of Gustav Trolle and his feeding of the invading Danish navy were admirable actions in themselves, but were politically unwise; Gustav Vasa is not likely to make the same mistakes.

The difference between the two regents comes out most clearly in their relationships with their common

domestic enemy, Archbishop Gustav Trolle. Sture, with his faith in the essential goodness of human nature, treated him with forbearance, leniency, and forgiveness. The result was the Stockholm Bloodbath (it was Gustav Trolle who provided Kristian II with the list of those who should be executed, acting thus as prosecutor, jury, judge, and executioner). The connection between cause and effect is clearly drawn in Riksföreståndaren. It is made by a tavern-keeper (i.e., one of the ordinary people) and Gustav Trolle's former chancellor, now a knight in Danish colours (perhaps as wide a cross-section of the social and political spectrum as two people can exemplify):

TAVERNAREN: se på den där tallen
-- den kallas Trolle-tallen för Gustaf Trolle
höll på bli hängd i'n en gång på Sten Stures
tid, men Sturen gav honom livet!

KANSLERN: Är det den tallen? Det var skada
på trädet att det inte fick uppfylla sin höga
bestämmelse, ty man kunde säga att Blodbadet
har vuxit på den roten ...³

In this play as in *Siste riddaren*, Trolle is associated with the powers of evil. Here he is identified not with the Tree of Life, but with a tree of death. In

³ Samlade verk, LXI, 206 (III, i):

THE TAVERN-KEEPER: look at that
pine tree -- it's called the Trolle Pine,
because Gustav Trolle was almost hanged from
it once, in Sten Sture's time, but Sture let
him live!

THE CHANCELLOR: Is that the pine tree? It's
too bad for the tree that it was unable to
fulfill its high destiny, for one could say
that the Bloodbath grew from that root ...

the dramatically effective scene in which he is made to see and recoil from his own nature, the association with Satan (the dragon of Siste riddaren) is made explicit. He is looking at a portrait of himself which has only recently been completed (i.e., he is seeing it for the first time); the voice could be that of one of his victims or one of their survivors, or it could be the voice of his own conscience:

GUSTAF TROLLE (... märker porträtten ...
 därpå lyfter han den gröna duken, fasar och
 rycker bort duken; hans porträtt blir syn-
 ligt): Är det jag? -- Är detta jag? -- Ser
 jag så ryslig ut? Det har djävulen målat!
 EN RÖST: Till sin avbild!⁴

Vasa, in contrast to Sture, wants to eradicate not only the man, but all traces that he ever existed, an intention he expresses after Trolle has fled for his life, and the above-mentioned portrait has been destroyed (by fire!) by Lars Siggeson Sparre: "Hans namn skall nog utplånas med hans bild -- "⁵

The Stockholm Bloodbath was the nadir of the period covered by these two plays; it was also the apex of the career of Gustav Trolle. As the career of Gustav

⁴ Samlade verk, LXI, 326 (III, ii):

GUSTAV TROLLE (... notices the portrait ...
 then he lifts the green cloth, shudders, and
 tears the cloth off; his portrait is
 revealed): Is it me? -- Is this me? -- Do I
 look so dreadful? The devil has painted this!
 A VOICE: In his own image!

⁵ Ibid., 225: "His name shall most certainly be annihilated, along with his likeness -- "

Vasa (and the destiny of Sweden) rise from that nadir, the career of Trolle declines. As the play opens, Trolle is still at the height of his power and influence: directing the affairs of Sweden for Kristian II from Stockholm Palace itself, surrounded by his hostages, and waited on by the son of the former Regent (he has made the young Svante Sture his page). The decline begins with the arrival of an unexpected visitor, Hans Brask, Bishop of Linköping. Brask is no friend of Gustav Vasa, but he is scandalized by and bitterly resentful of Gustav Trolle, who is his ecclesiastical superior: Strindberg is making the point that Trolle was destroyed not so much by the rise of Gustav Vasa as by his own evil actions. Brask calls Trolle to account for his deeds (which include the desecration of Sten Sture's grave), symbolically brands him a marked man, and places a curse upon him:

.... -- Mitt ärende? -- Jag kommer från dina offers gravar, från biskop Vincentius i Skara och Mattias i Strängnäs, från de åtta och nittio martyrer du låtit halshugga, och jag kommer på egna vägnar för att hålla en ed jag svor på blodbadsdagen; att komme jag med livet ur denna sak, skulle jag söka dig, död eller levande, såsom du lät söka den döde Sten Sture, och så skulle jag sätta trälens märke på ditt ansikte. (Brask slår Gustaf Trolle en örfil, som denne tar emot.) Den brände, va? Som bödelns röda järn! -- Nu är du vanärad! -- Det var hela mitt ärende! Inom år och dag kallar jag dig för Guds Den Högstes domstol, antingen du skall drabbas av död, sjukdom eller olyckor! Du sämsta bland

människor! Du härjans son, du träl, du tjuv,
du ljugare! var förbannad! (Går.)⁶

The mark of the slave is a mark of ownership. Brask symbolically marks Trolle not to indicate that he owns him, but to indicate that he is owned: he is a slave of Satan, or of Antichrist. The significance of the mark is given in Apocalypse 14:9-11, in a passage closely related to the words from the same chapter which Mette Dyre cites at the end of *Siste riddaren*, as a prophecy of the Stockholm Bloodbath:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark ... / The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: / And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night (King James trans-

⁶ Samlade verk, LXI, 169-70 (I):

.... What do I want? -- I come from the graves of your victims, from Bishop Vincenius of Skara and Bishop Mattias of Strängnäs, from the ninety-eight martyrs you had beheaded, and I come on my own account, to fulfill a vow I made on the day of the Bloodbath: that if I escaped with my life, I would seek you out, dead or alive, as you had the dead Sten Sture sought out, and then I would set the mark of the slave on your face. (Brask gives Gustav Trolle a slap in the face, to which the latter submits.) It burned, didn't it? Like the red iron of the executioner! -- Now you're disgraced! -- That was all I wanted! Within a year I will call you before the judgement seat of the Most High God, whether you are stricken by death, sickness, or mischance! You worst of men! You son of destruction, you slave, you thief, you liar! Accursed be you! (He goes.)

lation)

The fire and brimstone are still to come for Trolle; lack of rest by day or night begins immediately. This news is delivered by the Tavern-keeper to the Chancellor as he points out the Archbishop's former palace, reduced to rubble by Sten Sture:

... -- de säger att Gustaf Trolle spökar i stenarne fastän han är i livet ännu med litet liv, han kan inte sova om nätterna, sedan Brask lyste lilla bannet över honom....⁷

As in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the inability to sleep signifies a troubled and guilty conscience. Trolle has become afraid of the dark, and what sleep he does get is tormented by nightmares, causing him to thrash about and scream in his sleep, awaking more exhausted than when he retired. This, in turn, weakens him and hastens his decline; once again, Strindberg emphasizes that he is destroyed by his own evil. It is another representative of the common people, the wife of the verger at Uppsala Cathedral (Trolle's see), who both diagnoses the condition and describes the result:

Det vet hela stan att han skriker i sömnen -- för han har nattmaran! Och det är onda sam-

⁷ Samlade verk, LXI, 205 (Act III, sc. 1):

... -- they say that Gustav Trolle haunts the stones even though he still has a bit of life in him: he can't sleep at night since Brask put the little curse on him....

vetet -- för blodbadet -- ja det är det! --
Han vanmäktas tror jag!⁸

In his weakened condition, with Bishop Brask's curse ringing in his ears, and having seen his own nature in the portrait, Trolle becomes convinced that his end has come. The unsettling experience of the portrait has done more than stimulate his conscience; it has also served as an omen of imminent death. He regards the portrait as an apparition of his spiritual double (known in Scotland as a fetch, or wraith), an encounter with which is always followed speedily by death: "-- Jag har sett min fylgja -- jag har sett mig själv, jag måste dö!"⁹ Brask, the portrait, and the Verger's Wife all make it clear to him that he has been tried, found guilty, and sentenced. He awaits the execution of the sentence in fear and trepidation. His father too realizes that his son is a condemned man, and although he eventually agrees to help him escape from the Cathedral sacristy (just before Gustav Vasa and Lars Sparre arrive), he also makes it quite clear that his crimes have been so enormous that he cannot

⁸ Samlade verk, LXI, 219 (III, ii):

The whole town knows he screams in his sleep -- because he has nightmares! And that's his bad conscience -- over the Bloodbath -- yes, that's what it is! -- He's being rendered powerless, that's what I think!

⁹ Ibid., 221 (III, ii): "-- I've seen my double -- I've seen myself; I must die!"

expect to be spared. Earlier, exasperated by his son's total lack of Christian charity or common humanity, he too had placed a curse on him: "Må du lönas efter förtjänst! endast med rättvisa, utan barmhärtighet, utan nåd!"¹⁰ When he meets him again in Act III, he meets a completely different man: broken, tormented, in fear of his life, and in fear of the afterlife (the Swedish word *fördömd* in the following passage can mean either condemned or damned):

GUSTAF TROLLE: Jag är fördömd!
 ERIK TROLLE: Dömd! Ja!
 GUSTAF TROLLE: Till döden!
 ERIK TROLLE: Ja!¹¹

Of Trolle's fate after death there is no doubt: not only do his crimes merit eternal damnation (especially if his father's curse has effect, and he receives neither mercy nor pardon at the Last Judgement), but we have been told that Gustav Trolle was fashioned in the devil's own image, and in the play he is twice likened to a cat: the mediaeval symbol of the ultimate in evil, Satan himself. The first time is in a stage direction, so would escape theatre audiences (even with the most

¹⁰ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 173 (Act I): "May you be rewarded according to your deserts! with strict justice, without mercy, without pardon!"

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 222-23:

GUSTAV TROLLE: I am condemned!
 ERIK TROLLE: Sentenced! Yes!
 GUSTAV TROLLE: To death!
 ERIK TROLLE: Yes!

masterful of actors in the rôle); it describes his reaction to the appearance, words, and actions of Hans Brask in the "mark of the slave" scene:

GUSTAF TROLLE (skakad, har gått baklänges tills han kommit mot väggen, där han står som en hetsad katt att hålla stånd).¹²

The second instance is in the sacristy of Trolle's cathedral. He has entered in armour, with his arm in a sling and his head bandaged. When he asks the Verger's Wife to change the bandage, she lets him know exactly what she thinks of him (and his ultimate destination): "Galna katter får rivet skinn -- (tar av honom hjälmen.) -- när de får stryk, så springer de hem!"¹³

Meanwhile, Gustav Vasa is advancing from Dalarna, where he has rallied support against the Danes, and has reached Uppsala. Trolle flees just in time, and seeks refuge in Stockholm Palace, still held by the Danes. His one thought is flight, but he has already realized that no escape is possible for him. Recalling the biblical symbolism of Siste riddaren, in which he was Saul to Sten Sture's David, he has realized that like Saul he is utterly alone in the hour of his death: "Fly? --

¹² Samlade verk, LXI, 170 (Act I):

GUSTAV TROLLE (shaken, has backed up until he stands against the wall, like a baited cat holding its ground).

¹³ Ibid., 217 (III, ii): "Crazed cats get their skin torn -- (Removes his helmet.) -- when they take a beating, they run home!"

Sig själv? -- Huru? -- Kasta sig på sitt eget svärd, som Saul; men ingen vill hålla i! Ingen!"¹⁴ The sentiment is echoed when he reaches Stockholm. Inside the palace he meets Mette Dyre, like him, a troubled spirit. When he asks her where he might flee, she replies with a paraphrase from the Psalms (of David!):

Vart skall jag gå för din anda, vart skall jag fly för ditt ansikte? Toge jag morgonrodnadens vingar och flöge mot solens uppgång, så är Du efter mig, bäddade jag åt mig i helvetet, så har Du mig fått!¹⁵

¹⁴ Samlade verk, LXI, 221 (Act III, sc. 2): "Flee? -- From myself? -- How? -- Throw myself on my own sword, like Saul;* but there is no one to hold it! No one!"

* Saul's death is described in 1 Samuel 31. He chooses to commit suicide rather than be captured by the Phillistines. He asks his armour-bearer to hold his sword so he can throw himself upon it, but the man is afraid and refuses to do so, so Saul must prop the sword against the ground and fall upon it.

¹⁵ Ibid., 252 (V, i):

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I take my wings early in the morning, if I fly to the point of the sunrise, Thou art after me; if I make my bed in hell, Thou hast caught me!

Psalm 139 (Vulgate 138):7-10. Freely adapted from several translations; the Swedish version is not a direct quotation: even if the wording follows a Swedish translation more closely than it does any of the English ones, a few phrases are either omitted or displaced.

She then echoes the sentiment that has already occurred to him: the reason he can find peace nowhere is that he must bring his tormented conscience with him wherever he goes: "Det är enahanda vart du flyr; från dig själv blir du aldrig lös!"¹⁶

By the second scene of Act V, it is all over: Gustav Vasa has entered Stockholm and has taken the palace. To aid him in this task, Mette Dyre has set fire to the palace's gunpowder stores, and, to use Strindberg's own rather colourful euphemism, "... då flydde Gustaf Trolle ur riket sista gången ..."¹⁷ Presumably, Mette Dyre went with him: she has at last succeeded in clearing her name before the Swedish people, and has found release for her troubled soul. If she has lived under a curse her entire life, it has also been her destiny to die heroically:

Mig tar ingen förrän min tid är ute! Jag har gått på ruiner hela mitt liv, min eländes tid, min smärtas dagar ...¹⁸

¹⁶ Samlade verk, LXI, 252 (V, i): "It's all the same where you flee; from yourself you can never be free!"

¹⁷ Ibid., 257: "... then Gustav Trolle fled the country for the last time ..."

¹⁸ Ibid., 253 (Act V, sc. 1):

Nobody will take me before my time is up! I have walked among ruins all my life, my time of misery, my days of affliction ...

There is reference in the play to another curse: that implied by the Second Commandment, which provides the premise of *Folkungasagan*, namely the visiting of the sins of the fathers upon the children. In this play it is not a serious consideration; allusions to it are, in fact, almost humorous. The first is in Erik Trolle's reaction when his son shows him the portrait and asks if he really looks like that: "Herre evige Gud! Är det mitt barn? ... Nu, Gud, är jag väl straffad -- för mina fäders missgärningar!"¹⁹ It appears again in Act V, scene 2, with an ironic twist. The young Olaus Petri (hero of the next play in the cycle, *Mäster Olof*) refuses to allow Erik Trolle to remain in the city hall cellar, where a feast is being prepared to celebrate Gustav Vasa's capture of Stockholm and election as King: on such a joyous occasion, he says, nobody wants to be reminded of Gustav Trolle and his Bloodbath. Trolle leaves, but not before observing that fate has made a strange reversal: "Skall sönernas missgärningar gå tillbaks på fäderna?"²⁰ This incident is, in a way, a fulfillment of Gustav Vasa's prediction that Gustav Trolle's name would be eradicated as well as his likeness: Erik Trolle is denied access to the festivities

¹⁹ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 222 (III, ii): "Eternal Lord God! Is that my child? ... Now, God, I have been well punished -- for the sins of my forefathers!"

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 260: "Shall the sins of the sons be turned back on the fathers?"

not for any wrongdoings of his own, but because he bears the same surname as his son. And that is a reference backward to Johan Månsson Natt och Dag; to Svante Sture (father of Sten Sture the Younger), who changed his surname from Natt och Dag; and to Engelbrekt.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are few symbolic connections between Gustav Vasa and Christ, for in Strindberg's vision of Swedish history, Vasa too is an instrument of the Lord. Unlike Magnus Eriksson, Engelbrekt, and Sten Sture the Younger, however, Gustav Vasa is not noted for his sanctity: he is a shrewd and practical man of the world. He is, however, a religious man in his own way. In a conversation with his mother early in the play he reveals two things about this aspect of his personality: that he prays regularly, and that he puts faith only in the prophecies he makes himself, where he can control their content!

CECILIA: Du slutar illa, Gustav!

GUSTAV ERIKSSON: Jag! Nej jag slutar alltid väl . . .

CECILIA: Har någon astrolog spått dig?

GUSTAV ERIKSSON: Jag spår mig själv var dag; när jag gjort min aftonbön . . .

CECILIA: Du har icke glömt den?

GUSTAV ERIKSSON: Hur du talar!²¹

²¹ Samlade verk, LXI, 194 (Act II):

CECILIA: You'll come to a bad end, Gustav!

GUSTAV VASA: I! No, I always land on my feet . . .

CECILIA: Has some astrologer told your fortune?

GUSTAV VASA: I tell it myself every day, after I've said my evening prayer . . .

Nevertheless, there are two links between Vasa's career and the life of Christ. Both refer as much to his mission as to the man himself. The first is in an argument between the two Sparre brothers, Lars and Göran. The former is Gustav Vasa's right-hand man; the latter has conceived a deep jealousy of Vasa and has gone over to the Danish side. When they meet, Lars is determined to kill his brother for his treachery in the face of repeated warnings: "Tre gånger har hanen galit, och jag har förlåtit dig! Nu har du förverkat all nåd, och ditt liv är ute!"²² The reference is to Peter's three denials of Christ.

The other parallel to Christ is made by Vasa himself, not in any vain or self-aggrandizing manner, but as an indication that for him his mission out-weighs all other considerations, even those which touch him intimately. On his victorious march from Dalarna he learns that his mother and sister have been taken to Denmark, where they are being held hostage for the city of Uppsala. As an indication that he cannot allow personal considerations to stand in the way of Sweden's destiny, he quotes a remark made by Christ: "Kvinna,

CECILIA: You haven't forgotten it?
GUSTAV VASA: How you do talk!

²² Samlade verk, LXI, 212 (III, i): "Thrice the cock has crowed, and I have forgiven you! Now you have forfeited all pardon, and your life is over!"

vad haver jag med dig? sade den Korsfäste."²³ Calling Christ the Crucified One in this context (the quotation is from the Wedding at Cana, at the very beginning of Christ's public ministry) can perhaps be taken as an indication that Vasa is, nevertheless, deeply distressed by the news. Uppsala is burned (ironically, through no fault of Vasa's), and his mother and sister are put to death in retaliation. Vasa does not learn of this until he is seated at the feast of celebration in the final act of the play. It has been his greatest personal loss in the entire struggle for independence, and he is momentarily crushed, but his magnanimity of spirit will not allow him to indulge his personal grief when so many present have also suffered great personal losses in order that this moment of national celebration might be possible: his grief must stand beside that of Anna Bielke, who lost her husband (Johan Natt och Dag); of Lars Sparre, who lost his brother; and of Kristina, who lost her husband (Sten Sture the Younger). All of them together cannot overshadow the national rejoicing, especially when two final pieces of news (this time good) are brought to the new king: Bishop Brask has surrendered Munkeboda, the last union-

²³ Samlade verk, LXI, 233 (III, ii): "'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'" said the Crucified One."

* John 2:4 (King James translation).

ist holdout in the country, swearing allegiance to the King, and Kristian II has been deposed even in Denmark, fleeing for his life. The play ends with Vasa's announcing his intention to have a Te Deum sung immediately in Stockholm Cathedral. This time, the Miserere will be well finished before the Te Deum is begun!

As mentioned earlier, Bishop Hans Brask was no admirer of Gustav Vasa. Although he dissociates himself entirely (and courageously) from Gustav Trolle, he nevertheless remains loyal to the Union and the Union king. This is mainly out of a sense of religious fatalism: as the legally crowned king of Sweden, Kristian II is, from a certain point of view, the Lord's Anointed, and if this is true, everything Sweden has suffered must be God's will, undoubtedly punishment for sin, and he can find abundant examples of sinfulness among the Swedes that might merit such a punishment:

Din lagvalde Konung är Kristian, som Gud givit landet till ett straff för vårt småsinne, vår avund, vår trolöshet mot varandra, och Blodbadet var en domedag över hundraårigt inbördes förräderi ...²⁴

When it becomes clear to Brask that Vasa's uprising is going to be successful (and that therefore he must have

²⁴ Samlade verk, LXI, 232 (III, ii):

Your legally elected King is Kristian, to whom God has given the country as a punishment for our pettiness, our jealousy, and our lack of faith in each other; and the Bloodbath was a day of judgement on centuries of internal treachery ...

been mistaken in reading God's will), he nevertheless continues to resist, for he feels (along with Vasa himself) that Svante Sture should be king, and he fears Vasa's plans to make the Church subservient to the state. He begins to change his mind when he learns that Sture himself has no greater ambition than to loyally serve Gustav Vasa, and he seems won over completely when he learns of the fate of Vasa's mother and sister: if Vasa is prepared to make such a terrible sacrifice to achieve his ends, perhaps the Church ought to make a sacrifice as well!

The (former) Chancellor has said that the Stockholm Bloodbath grew from the root of the tree from which Gustav Trolle was almost hanged. In that scene in *Siste riddaren*, Sten Sture the Younger acted against the advice of Gustav Vasa. In this play, when Vasa and Lars Sparre have penetrated to the sacristy of Uppsala Cathedral on their advance southward, Vasa again uses the image of the tree and its root to symbolize the downfall of Gustav Trolle, and to foreshadow the Reformation in Sweden, a movement which is to proceed (in the play *Mäster Olof*) under his aegis: "Nu är yxan vid roten -- och nu hugger jag det gamla trädet: Hedningarnes Rom!"²⁵ In *Siste riddaren*, Trolle epitomized all

²⁵ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 225 (Act III, sc. 2): "Now the axe is at the root -- and now I strike the ancient tree: the Rome of the heathens! --"

the excesses of the corrupt papal court; in this play the connection is also made: his portrait, said to be painted in the devil's own image, also has a curious resemblance to Pope Alexander VI (Borgia)!

Strindberg also uses plant symbolism to foreshadow the other great movement the reign of Gustav Vasa ushered into Sweden, the Renaissance. The mediaeval decoration of the city hall cellar has received an addition: the entrance to each of the private arcades is now festooned with (presumably painted) garlands of fruit, an ornamental motif typical of the Renaissance. Strindberg sets the great feast of celebration there on Midsummer Day, so the hall is also decorated with branches of birch in leaf: Sweden's long period of waiting has ended, and she enters a period of seemingly endless day!

Chapter 89

Bjälbo-jarlen

The last of Strindberg's history plays to be written, *Bjälbo-jarlen*¹ (*The Earl of Bjälbo*, 1908), is the earliest in terms of subject matter. It deals with Birger Magnusson, Earl of Bjälbo, *Dux et Prorox Sueciae*, better known as Birger jarl. Although he was never king, Birger jarl was the real power in Sweden for eighteen years, 1248-66, when the nominal rulers were his brother-in-law, Erik the Lisping and Lame (reigned 1222-29 and 1234-50), and his own eldest son, Valdemar (reigned 1250-75), the first of the Folkung kings. His first wife was Ingeborg, sister of Erik the Lisping and Lame, and after she died he married Mechtild of Holstein, the widow of King Abel of Denmark. He was a very powerful man.

During the century before the advent of Birger jarl, the Swedish crown had been passing back and forth (usually as the result of violence) between two powerful royal lines: the descendants of Sverker the Old (reigned 1130-56), who could themselves trace their lineage back to Sweden's last heathen king, Blot-Sven (1084-87); and the descendants of St. Erik (reigned 1150-60). Erik the Lisping and Lame belonged to the

¹ *Samlade verk*, LXI, 269-407.

latter line; his predecessor, Jon Sverkersson Unge (1216-22) to the former. It was during the reign of Jon that the Folkungs first appear as powers very close to the Swedish throne. An increasingly powerful noble family, they seemed completely flexible in their ability to serve both sides of the succession dispute, all the while working themselves closer to the throne. It seems to have been largely due to their influence that the claims of the fifteen-year old Jon Sverkersson Unge were preferred over those of rival claimants in 1216, when he became king. Three years later he came of age, and his principal advisor was Earl Karl Döve Folkung. The earl died in 1220, and Jon Sverkersson Unge two years later, barely twenty-one years old. He was the last Sverker king.

There was now only one royal line in Sweden, that founded by St. Erik, and its representative was Erik the Lispng and Lane, a weak and degenerate king, as his sobriquet indicates. When Erik became king in 1222, at the age of six, the government was entrusted to a council of regents, one of whom was Earl Ulf Fase Folkung, Karl Döve's son. By 1224, when Erik was actually crowned, Ulf Fase was the effective ruler of Sweden. Erik's reign was interrupted for five years, when a representative of the cadet branch of the family, Knut Långe, seized the throne. Knut Långe's son, Holmger, was proclaimed king after his father's death,

but the powerful Ulf Fase Folkung succeeded in driving him off and in restoring Erik to the throne. Five years later, in 1239, Ulf Fase's kinsman, Earl Birger Magnusson Folkung, entered government service and led an expedition to Finland; he had married the King's sister the previous year.

All this time, Sweden was being governed by Ulf Fase Folkung. He died in 1248, and was succeeded by his kinsman, Birger jarl. The last of the line of St. Erik, Erik the Lispng and Lame died childless in 1250, and the throne passed (after Birger jarl had eliminated all rival claimants) to Valdemar, Birger jarl's son and the King's nephew, then twelve years old. Birger jarl was appointed regent, and Valdemar was never able to rule on his own until his father's death, in 1266.

Strindberg has compressed the historical events considerably, in the interests of dramatic effectiveness. Most obviously, he has allowed Birger jarl to participate in events which actually occurred in the ten years following his death. Characteristically, he sets the play at the end of Birger jarl's life. The Sverker and St. Erik dynasties had died out in 1250, the same year in which the Folkung dynasty began. Birger jarl thus straddles two great historic periods. Strindberg shows him as he reaches a critical point in his life, when he realizes, finally, that the crown will never be his. Strindberg wishes him also to real-

ize that, like Shakespeare's Banquo, although he will be no king, he will be the father of many kings, so he makes him aware of many of the events which in reality occurred after he died. These events (and their historic dates) are: Valdemar's adulterous and incestuous affair with his sister-in-law Jutta (whom Strindberg calls Judit) in 1272; his pilgrimage to Rome in 1274 to receive papal pardon for this sin (while there he committed Sweden to the paying of papal tithes, a burden under which his descendant, Magnus Eriksson, suffered); and the seizing of the throne in 1275 by Valdemar's two younger brothers, Erik and Magnus. Erik (who is not mentioned in the play) died the same year, and Magnus became king; he was known as Magnus Ladulås.²

Magnus had three sons, named, confusingly enough, Birger, Erik, and Valdemar.³ His two grandsons, Magnus Birgersson and Magnus Eriksson, are the two victims who

² The name Ladulås means literally Lock-Barn, and according to tradition was given to Magnus because of laws he enacted releasing peasants from the obligation of providing room and board to travelling members of the nobility.

³ The general Swedish practice, to which there are many exceptions, was for the eldest son to be named after his paternal grandfather, to which was added the patronymic, derived from his father's name. Thus, given the fecundity of all concerned, and barring dethronements for one cause or another, Magnus Birgersson would be succeeded by Birger Magnusson, who would be succeeded by another Magnus Birgersson, and so on ad infinitum. Perhaps fortunately for succeeding generations, this did not in fact happen often, or continue for very long when it did!

must suffer for the sins of their fathers in *Folkunga-sagan*.

The two most important characteristics of Strindberg's Birger jarl are his ambition to become king, and the fact that, although he failed in that ambition, he nevertheless founded the great Folkung dynasty. In the play, the ambition is symbolized by the royal lion, a beast Birger jarl adopted as his family's heraldic device; Birger jarl's role as founder of a dynasty is symbolized by *fadersögat*, the eye of the father, as the constantly burning light from his room in a tower of Stockholm's palace comes to be known. The latter symbol has other applications as well: as the true power in Sweden, he is the father of his country, and he is also regarded as the founder of Stockholm.

Using a device he had already found effective in *Siste riddaren* (with Gustav Trolle), and *Gustav Vasa* (with the King), Strindberg does not introduce Birger jarl until the second scene of Act II. By then, the audience has a great deal of information about him, and about how he is viewed by others, and is very curious to meet the man himself. The symbols of the lion and the eye of the father have already been introduced before the man appears whose character they represent.

Thus, at the beginning of Act II, the young King (Valdemar) has been told to "go out and play" while his father conducts important state business with represen-

tatives of foreign governments. While he and Jutta are walking in the palace garden, Birger jarl is seen at a window, watching the antics of some captive lions (not an unfitting symbol here of Valdemar himself, king in name but with no more power than a lion in a cage). Valdemar points out the significance of these beasts, the age-old symbol of royalty: "Ser du Jarlen? -- Han står och beundrar lejonen i kulan! Han älskar lejon, önskade han vore ett!"⁴ During the ensuing exchange, some further aspects of the lion symbol are brought out: they are the family emblem of the Folkungs, they are fierce in battle, and they remind Birger jarl not only of kingly power, but of one of his heroes, Richard the Lionhearted (King of England 1189-99).

JUDIT: Folkungavapnet!

KUNGEN: Det vapnet ville han bruka; fick han släppa lös de mot sina fiender, såge han gärna! -- Nu ryter de! då ler han! -- Vet du att Rikard Lejonhjärta förde dessa lejonens föräldrar från Palestina -- -- --

JUDIT: De ha stamtavla också? -- -- --⁵

⁴ Samlade verk, LXI, 306: "Do you see the Earl? -- He stands there admiring the lions in their den! He loves lions, and wishes he were one!"

⁵ Ibid., 307:

JUTTA: The emblem of the Folkungs!

THE KING: It is an emblem he'd like to put to use; if he could turn them loose upon his enemies, he'd look on happily! -- Now they're roaring! And he's smiling! -- Do you know that Richard the Lionhearted brought back the parents of these lions from Palestine -- -- --

JUTTA: So they have a pedigree too! -- -- --

Birger jarl is never able to turn the lions loose on his enemies, but when Magnus seizes the throne near the end of the play, one of his first acts as king is to do just that: he rids himself of a personal enemy, Birger jarl's Saracen servant (another connection to Richard the Lionhearted and the Crusades), by casting him into the lions' den! Birger jarl, in founding a dynasty, symbolically imitates Richard the Lionhearted, who established the pedigree of his lions!

When Birger jarl does appear, he has two conversations, one with the knight Ivar Blå, who urges him to act on his ambitions, and one with the court astrologer, a man who uses the Earl's superstition to gain political influence. In the horoscope he has cast for Birger jarl, a lion and a crown figure prominently. The Earl, who takes the lion more as a personal than a family emblem, thinks that it portends his own accession to the throne (the significance of the question he begins to ask, but does not finish: is Valdemar to abdicate, be deposed, or die?) The astrologer, however, has other plans in mind: conquest of the Danes:

JARLEN: Vad säga stjärnorna i denna ödes-
digra natt?

ASTROLOGEN (...): Tecknen äro gunstiga! --
Jupiter har gått i Lejonets stjärnbild; och
Mars träder vid midnatt in i Jungfrun syd om
Björnvaktaren och Nordliga Kronan.

JARLEN: Kronan? och Lejonet? Det gitter jag
tolka själv!

ASTROLOGEN: Jarl, ... ett ogunstigt öde
nekade dig, den värdigaste, Kronan, men nu
... skall lyckan vända sig till din fördel;
och din ålder skall skörda vad ditt långa
arbete har utsått. --

JARLEN: Skall Valdemar ...?

ASTROLOGEN: Nej! -- Lejonet som står med ansiktet mot aspekten, är det sydliga lejonet, ett av de tre blå som trampar på nio röda hjärtan -- -- --

JARLEN: Det är Dannebrogs!

THE ASTROLOGER: Ja! Och för att nedstiga till jorden -- Kristofer sitter icke länge på sin tron -- Jakob Erlandsson arbetar för Abels söner -- som snart äro dina ... Då har du tre kronor på dina tre ginbalkar, Folkunge!⁶

⁶ Samlade verk, LXI, 322-23:

THE EARL: What do the stars say on this god-forsaken night?

THE ASTROLOGER (...): The signs are propitious! -- Jupiter has entered the sign of the Lion, and around midnight Mars will enter Virgo, south of the Bearkeeper and the Northern Crown.

THE EARL: The Crown? and the Lion? I can interpret that myself!

THE ASTROLOGER: Earl ... an unpropitious fate has denied you, the most worthy, the Crown, but now ... fortune will turn to your advantage, and your old age shall reap what your long labours have sown.

THE EARL: Is Valdemar going to ...?

THE ASTROLOGER: No! -- The lion involved in this configuration is the southern lion, one of the three blue ones which trample on nine red hearts. -- -- --

THE EARL: The heraldic lions of Denmark!

THE ASTROLOGER: Yes! And to come down to earth -- Kristoffer* will not occupy his throne for long -- Jakob Erlandsson is working for Abel's sons -- who will soon be yours** ... Then you will have three crowns*** on your three bends,**** Folkung!

* Kristoffer: King of Denmark 1252-59, successor to Abel.

** Abel: King of Denmark 1250-52. When Birger jarl married Abel's widow, Mechtild, Abel's sons would become his.

*** three crowns: the three crowns on the Swedish coat

Up to this point, Birger jarl has been doing penance for the slaughters at Herrevad's Bridge (where he secured the crown for Valdemar by slaying the rival claimants, to whom he had promised safe conduct). The Pope had imposed upon him the penance of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, but he was able to substitute a crusade to Finland on condition that he lived out his days as a penitent: abstaining from meat and alcohol, wearing a hair shirt, etc. Now news reaches him that Bishop Kol, who had undertaken to make the penitential pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre for him (an arrangement apparently acceptable to Rome), has returned; Birger is no longer obliged to live as a penitent, since absolution has been won. Confiding to the Astrologer that he is a heathen disguised as a

—
of arms represent the three Swedish "home counties" (originally each a separate kingdom) of Svealand, Östergötland and Västergötland. Birger jarl is not to get three crowns on his coat of arms by becoming King of Sweden, however, but by becoming father of the King of Sweden (which he is already), step-father of the King of Denmark, and father or step-father of the King of Norway.

**** heraldic bends: bars descending from the upper right to the lower left of the escutcheon.

Christian anyway, he immediately orders up a gargantuan feast, rejoicing in the fact that now he can eat like a king. Or is it a lion? No matter: he eats both sumptuously and ravenously: "Jag vill ha kött; och blod; druva och malt, efter tio års svält! Kom ska vi leka lejon!"⁷ A lavish feast is immediately produced. Despite his years of deprivation, however, he does not at once tear into the now-permitted delicacies, but first sends a platter of the food to the lions, whose subsequent roaring is as music to his ears, recalling to him his romantic (and royal) image of himself:

Nej! vänta! (Tar ett stort fat från bordet och lämnar åt Taffeltäckaren.) Låt mina lejon först kredensa bordet! (Taffeltäckaren går ut med fatet på bastionen.) Så får jag dem att sjunga sånger. Från Rikard Lejonhjärtas stora dar!⁸

His sins now atoned for, he can feed his ambition as well as his body!

Birger jarl's kingly ambitions come to nothing: his new wife is too closely related to Valdemar's wife, Sofia of Holstein. The marriage would be incestuous,

⁷ Samlade verk, LXI, 326: "I want meat; and blood; grape and malt, after ten years of starvation! Come! Let's act like lions!"

⁸ Ibid., 326:

No, wait! (He takes a large platter from the table and gives it to the Table-setter.) Let my lions sample the table first! (The Table-setter takes the platter out to the bastion.) That makes them sing me songs -- from Richard the Lionhearted's great days!

the family once again under papal interdiction. Magnus takes advantage of his brother's absence in Rome to seize the throne, and to turn Mechtild back to Denmark. Two of the three crowns the Astrologer foretold for Birger jarl are out of his reach now: Norway has chosen her own king, and the campaign to restore Abel's sons to Denmark's throne has failed. The third crown, Valdemar's is about to topple also, but it lands on the head of Magnus: the three crowns of Sweden become securely the three Folkung crowns! So many events happen all at once, all but one of them disasters; and even that requires some getting used to: Birger jarl would have preferred that the Swedish crown fell to him! At any rate, his kingly ambitions have been soundly trounced. Ivar Blå suggests that he admit defeat, withdraw from the court, and leave the government of Sweden to others. He can keep his lions: no longer symbols of potential greatness, but of a glorious past. And a reminder that the Folkungs are now a royal dynasty (any family can produce one king, but two -- that is already a succession, and if Magnus can be persuaded to marry and produce offspring ...):

IVAR BLÅ: Du är slut, Birger; och du förstör din vackra historia om du går på! -- Gå till Visingsö, det är en bra lejonbur.... ... lev ut din saga, gamla hedning, du som dock har kristnat ditt land, och hav mod gå levande i din grav som Håkan Den Röde! Tag lejonen med dig, som ett minne av dina

segrar i Finska landet, och som ett vårdtecken att Folkungarne nu blivit kungar.⁹

We have already seen Magnus' assertion of the royal prerogative by throwing his father's Saracen servant quite literally to the lions!

As applied to Birger jarl, the lion symbol grows weaker. It gives place, as a personal symbol, to the eye of the father, in Act V. This lamp burns in the window of Birger's tower work room night after night

⁹ Samlade verk, LXI, 396-97 (V):

IVAR BLÅ: You're finished, Birger, and you'll spoil your beautiful legend if you go on! -- Go to Visingsö;* it's a good cage for a lion.... ... live out your saga, you old heathen who nevertheless made your country Christian, and have the courage to bury yourself alive as Håkan the Red** did! Take the lions with you, as a reminder of your victories in Finland, and as a token that the Folkungs have now become kings.

* Visingsö: an island in Lake Vättern associated with several Swedish kings. Visingsö's Näs Castle was completed around the end of the reign of Erik Knutsson (1208-16). This is presumably where Birger jarl is being urged to retire.

** Håkan the Red (Håkan den Röde): King of Sweden 1075-79. The earliest Swedish king for whom contemporary documentary evidence survives (his name appears on a rune-stone). Although the next king, Inge the Elder, began his reign in 1079, there is no record of Håkan the Red's death: hence Strindberg's fantasy.

and all night long. For Birger jarl suffers from a troubled conscience and, as with many other Strindberg characters, this results in sleeplessness. He is able to turn this affliction to his own and his country's advantage, however: it is at night that he works on the nation's business. And the light shines out over the land, like the eye of a solicitous and protective father watching over his sleeping children. This symbol is introduced much earlier than the lion symbol: Birger's fatherhood is to prove his most enduring, and therefore his most important, characteristic. The play opens with a conversation between two representatives of the ordinary people, a fisherman and a watchman. When the Fisherman mentions Birger jarl's crimes, he is cautioned by the Watchman to mind what he says: "Tyst du, Jarlen har öronen ute ... och han sover inte -- Ser du det lyser i hans fönster nere i slottet!"¹⁰

This watchful light is given its name in the following act by Hans, Magnus' fool, in a conversation with Mats, the stable boy:

MATS: Akta dig, Jarlens fönster ser på oss!
HANS: Fadersögat! -- Men gardin är ju för

...

¹⁰ Samlade verk, LXI, 278:

Be quiet, you! the Earl has ears everywhere
... and he never sleeps. -- Look, there's a
light burning in his window down there in the
palace!

MATS: Han står nog bakom ... Akta dig!¹¹

When this act opens, night has not yet fallen: the eye of the father watches over the land by day as well as by night. By day the term applies to the window itself, by night to the light which shines from it. For Hans, who gives the symbol its name, that name is ironic, for he sees Birger jarl as a dominant and manipulative father (as indeed he is to his own sons). This is revealed in his next two references to the symbol. In the first he is taunting Valdemar (banished from the councils of state) from the roof of a doghouse:

I från min hundkojas tak ser jag ner på hela bråten, liksom Jarlen från sitt fönster; och ni äro leksaker för mig, som jag roar mig med; om det roar er, det ger jag fan ...¹²

A few moments later, as darkness falls and the Earl lights his lamp, Hans remarks to Peter, Ivar Blå's fool:

Se, nu tänder gubben sitt fadersöga, då är liggdags snart; han gör som tjuven: När de

¹¹ Samlade verk, LXI, 298 (II, i):

MATS: Take care: the Earl's window is watching us!

HANS: The eye of the father! -- But the curtain's drawn, isn't it? ...

MATS: Don't worry, he's standing behind it ... Be careful!

¹² Ibid., 309 (II, i):

From the roof of my doghouse I look down on the whole mare's nest, as the Earl does from his window; and you're toys to me, which I amuse myself with; whether it amuses you, I don't give a damn ...

andra sova, så vakar han, och när de andra vaknar, så äger han, vad de saknar!¹³

A somewhat less cynical view is presented in Act IV, which is set in Stockholm's almshouse on Christmas Eve. Valdemar and Jutta have had an illegitimate child, the former is about to depart on his penitential pilgrimage to Rome, Jutta is doing penance by caring for the sick in the almshouse, Mechtild has been prevented from entering Stockholm, and, despite all these domestic troubles, Birger jarl is expected on a mission of charity at any minute. There is a suggestion that this show of charity is just that -- a show -- but nevertheless, for whatever motive, the Earl does make a habit of exercising paternal care for his subjects:

HANS: Vet du att Jarlen kommer hit?

GÅRDSMÄSTAREN: Han brukar det på julafton, för att trösta de sjuka och fattiga -- han vill visa, att fadersögat vakar över de ringaste ...¹⁴

Finally, in Act V, the eye of the father emerges as the dominant symbol of the play. Magnus has seized

¹³ Samlade verk, LXI, 310 (I, i):

Look, now the old man is lighting his fatherly eye -- it'll be time for bed soon! He acts like the thief: "While others sleep, he is awake, and when the others awaken, he owns what they have lost!"

¹⁴ Ibid., 376-77:

HANS: Are you sure the Earl is coming here?

THE GROUNDSMAN: He usually does, on Christmas Eve, in order to comfort the sick and the poor -- he wants to show that the eye of the father watches over the most lowly ...

the throne, deposing his brother and aborting his father's ambitions. In an act symbolic of his intention to govern alone (i.e., without his father's help or interference), Magnus installs himself in the Earl's work room. As he is having the furniture rearranged, he three times enjoins the servants to leave the lamp precisely where it is. In his final interview with his father, he expresses his intention to be a good king, exercising the same paternal care over his country as his father had done, by continuing the Earl's policies. The final lines of the play are written in verse:

MAGNUS: Gå i frid, fader; göm dina sår,
glömd blir du aldrig!

JARLEN (tvivlande): Aldrig?

MAGNUS (flyttar ljuset på bordet): Nej!
aldrig! Du har stiftat lagar, jag skall skipa
dem!

Och ifrån detta fönster skall ditt fadersöga
allt framgent lysa över stad och land!
ty jag, din son, skall hålla ljuset brinnande
-- -- -- och när då natten vilar över Ström
och strand

skall väktaren på berget se att ej
han ensam håller vård och vaka,
ty när som dagens sol till sömns har gått
så lyser ännu Jarlens ljus från Stockholms
Slott!
Och främst i Sveakungalängden, fast ej kung,
ditt namn du ristat har som drott!¹⁵

¹⁵ Samlade verk, LXI, 406-07:

MAGNUS: Go in peace, father, hide your
wounds; you'll never be forgotten!

THE EARL (skeptical): Never?

MAGNUS (shifting the lamp on the table):
No! never! You've made laws; I'll administer
them!

And from this window will your father's eye
Shine henceforth over city and o'er land!
For I, your son, shall keep the light e'er

Not only will the eye of the father continue to watch over Sweden through the continued burning of Birger jarl's lamp in his window, then, but the light of the Earl's social vision will continue to shine through the policies of his son, and Sweden's royal chronicles will be illumined with his memory!

Strindberg portrays the power struggle between the Sverker and St. Erik lines as symbolic of the concurrent struggle between paganism and Christianity in Sweden: one line could trace its ancestry back to Sweden's last pagan king; the other to a Christian saint!¹⁶ Birger jarl, like the country itself, is caught between the two traditions: a Christian in outward appearance and observance, he has a heathen soul. But in establishing the Folkung dynasty firmly on the throne, he brings internal peace to the country, and the Christian line of succession (the Folkungs, beginning with Birger jarl's children, are connected to St. Erik's line

burning

-- -- -- And when then night shall rest on
stream and strand,
Will the watchman on the mountain see that he
Is not awake and watchful all alone,
For when the sun of day to sleep has gone
From Stockholm Palace the Earl's bright light
shines on!
Although no king, your name's engraved upon
The list of Sweden's kings, a great archon!

¹⁶ This parallel is only symbolic: after Blot-Sven, who died in 1087, the kings from both lines were Christian.

through their mother) is assured. But that peace has a fearful price: the lives of the victims at Herrevad's Bridge. It is as if the pagan gods demanded one last human sacrifice before relinquishing the field to Christ. This symbolic interpretation of the events is drawn by Junker Karl,¹⁷ who, as the only surviving rival claimant to the throne (he has escaped the fate of the others, presumably because he is a Folkung himself), has an opinion which bears weight:

Efter hundraårig strid mellan Blotsvens hedniska avkomlingar och Den Helige Eriks, har landet fått fred, och Kristus har segrat på Blotsven. Men det måste offras först, och Birger Jarlen tog kniven i hand och anställde offringen -- -- -- Det ångrar han inte! Men han lider av meneden och mordet -- -- -- ¹⁸

The other sacrifice is Junker Karl himself. In the above speech, he shows that he understands that Birger jarl had to do what he did at Herrevad's Bridge, in order to put an end to almost two centuries of dynastic wars. He also understands that Sweden is in very capable hands, but that his own existence is a threat to

¹⁷ Junker: young nobleman, squire.

¹⁸ Samlade verk, LXI, 284 (I, ii):

After centuries of strife between the heathen offspring of Blot-Sven and the offspring of St. Erik, the country has been granted peace, and Christ has defeated Blot-Sven. But a sacrifice was necessary first, and Birger jarl took the knife in his hand and performed the sacrifice -- -- -- That he does not regret! But he suffers because of the perjury and the murder -- -- --

the peace and stability for which so high a price was paid. He is not interested in advancing his claim to the throne, but he knows that as long as he remains in circulation, that claim will represent a hope to disgruntled elements of society. Junker Karl is cut to the pattern of Strindberg's Sten Sture the Younger: understanding all this, he acts with nobility, honour, high idealism, and incredible romanticism and beauty: he resolves to be invested as a crusader (although not yet a knight), and to leave the country he loves forever, but still in her service and in that of the Church. He has done no wrong, but is willing to sacrifice everything for the good of his country:

JUNKER KARL: Nu är som sagt fred i landet -- men det återstår ett trätöfrö!

EREMITEN: Det är Junker Karl!

JUNKER KARL: Det är jag! (Paus.) När min far, Ulf Fasi, som före Birger var jarl hos kung Erik, hade avlidit, kastade man sina ögon på mig såsom efterträdaren. Detta vet Birger, och han vet att varje gång han gör sig misshaglig, så vänder sig folkgunsten till mig! Men jag känner ingen kallelse att styra, jag vill icke gå som en livdömd, och jag älskar mitt land högst av allt; därför ... vill jag draga ut från min fädernebygd -- taga korset och aldrig återvända mer! --

EREMITEN: Det är ett offer som Gudi behagar!¹⁹

¹⁹ Samlade verk, LXI, 284-85 (I, ii):

JUNKER KARL: Now, as I said, there's peace in the land -- but there remains a seed of dissension!

THE HERMIT: That's Junker Karl!

JUNKER KARL: That's me! (Pause.) When my father, Ulf Fase, who was Birger's predecessor as Earl at the court of King Erik, died, I was looked upon as his successor. Birger knows that, and he knows that every time he

Junker Karl persuades the Hermit to invest him as a crusader, and we next meet him in Act III, come to inform Birger jarl of his decision. Birger jarl cannot understand his lack of political ambition or his impulse to self-sacrifice, but Junker Karl's selflessness, sincerity, and idealism nevertheless touch him deeply (he is unconsciously imitating the Earl's personal ideal, Richard the Lionhearted). Although he has only moments before been plotting Junker Karl's death with Magnus, he is so moved by the youth's ingenuousness that he resolves to have the King create him a knight before he leaves on his crusade.

Junker Karl is a lamb without spot, and as such is sacrificed: he dies on his crusade. News of his death

—
makes himself unpopular, the people's favour turns towards me! But I feel no call to govern, I don't want to live like a condemned man, and I love my country more than anything; therefore ... I will remove myself from the land of my ancestors -- take up the cross and never more return! --

THE HERMIT: That is a sacrifice, which is pleasing to God!*

* The relative pronoun here may be either restrictive or non-restrictive: turn-of-the-century Swedish punctuation was not so systematic as modern practice. It seems to me, however, that the non-restrictive alternative is more in keeping with the Hermit's own experience (see below).

reaches Magnus after he has seized the throne. Magnus knows that his reign would be insecure so long as Junker Karl remained alive. He also believes that he will be a good king, and that his reign will be a blessing on the nation. Impressed with the fact that this rival went willingly to his death, a voluntary sacrifice upon the altar of the nation, he is compelled to view Junker Karl as a Christ-figure, as he reveals during his final interview with his father:

MAGNUS: Junker Karl..... är död.

JARLEN: Är han död?

MAGNUS: På korståg i Ryssland! Den oskyldige gick i döden för det allmännas väl!²⁰

The sacrifice of the victims at Herrevad's Bridge obtained peace in Sweden; the sacrifice of Junker Karl obtains stability. The former was seen as a last sacrifice to the pagan gods before they abandoned the field to Christ. It is as if the new God also demands a sacrifice as ratification of His victory. Junker Karl provides this sacrifice. His self-immolation does not, however, atone for Birger jarl's sins, any more than the Earl's own penitential practices or Bishop Kol's pilgrimage atone for them: that task is left to Magnus Eriksson, as we have seen in *Folkungasagan*! No matter

²⁰ Samlade verk, LXI, 405-06 (V):

MAGNUS: Junker Karl..... is dead.

THE EARL: Is he dead?

MAGNUS: On crusade in Russia! He who was guiltless went to his death for the well-being of the community!

how enlightened a dynasty may be, no matter how beneficial its policies to the country, if it is founded on innocent blood it will eventually have to expiate that blood! Junker Jarl is not a sin-offering, but a sacrifice for grace.

The other would-be Christ figure is Bishop Kol, who takes upon himself the task of expiating the earl's sins by completing the pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre imposed by the Pope as the price of absolution. The theory seems to be that if Christ could assume and atone for the guilt of all mankind, then one man can do the same for another. When Bishop Kol returns from the pilgrimage, he offers to continue as Birger jarl's penitential whipping-boy. But all these attempts at atonement by proxy fail. The reason is that, while the Earl is willing to conform outwardly to the rôle of penitent, inwardly he remains unrepentant; he neither accepts the Bishop's sacrifice nor believes in its efficacy. Perhaps they fail, too, because the Bishop is himself a sinner. The following exchange throws considerable light on the matter; it occurs shortly after Bishop Kol's return:

JARLEN: det framfarna är försonat.

BISKOP KOL: Det kan aldrig försonas; mened är dödssynd; och jag skall sitta här och lida för dig så länge livet varar!

JARLEN: Tok!

BISKOP KOL: Du är lika obotfärdig som den hånande rövaren på korset!

JARLEN: Liknar du dig vid Frälsaren då? -- Och du skall utöva Satisfactio vicaria för mig?

BISKOP KOL: För mig och dig! Gå din rövar-
stig, du vildman....

JARLEN: Gå in i stian du, ät med svinen
....²¹

There is another innocent victim: the Hermit who invests Junker Karl as a crusader. Birger jarl had participated in the Synod at Skänninge in 1248, at which priestly celibacy was imposed on the Swedish Church. Like Peder Decius in the story "Högre ändamål" (in Svenska öden och äventyr), the Hermit, Lars of Oppunda, is a victim of that decision. Unlike Peder, however, Lars decided to remain a priest, and in consequence had to suffer separation from his wife and children. The sacrifice takes a toll on his mental stability and outlook on the world, however: at times he bays like an animal, and he has become a misanthropist. Since Birger jarl is himself under papal interdiction, he is not in a position to seek relief for the sufferings of the Hermit and those like him, and since Valdemar's incen-

²¹ Skrifter, X, 351 (II, iii):

THE EARL: what's past has been forgiven.

BISHOP KOL: It can never be forgiven; perjury is a mortal sin; and I shall sit here and suffer for you as long as my life lasts!

THE EARL: Fool!

BISHOP KOL: You're as unrepentant as the mocking thief on the cross!

THE EARL: Do you liken yourself to the Saviour, then? And you will offer satisfactoria vicaria for me?

BISHOP KOL: For myself and for you! Continue on your thief's path, you wild man....

THE EARL: You go out to the sty, and eat with the pigs....

tuous affair with Jutta, the King is in the same position. They therefore harden their hearts to a problem they can do nothing about. It is not until Magnus has seized the throne that permission is received to apply the new canon more humanely: celibacy is to be demanded of and enforced on all new entrants to the priesthood, but those who were already married when celibacy was imposed will be allowed to honour both their marital and their priestly vows. Lars is reunited with his wife and children, and presumably lives happily ever after.

The story is included as a symbol of the enlightened social policies enacted (or, in this case, obtained) by the Folkung dynasty: the sacrifices at Herrevad's Bridge and of Junker Karl have obtained relief for the innocent victims of social injustice! Strindberg does not wish us to forget that, despite the nefarious circumstances under which the Folkungs came to power, they were a progressive and enlightened dynasty for their times.

Birger jarl had four sons: Valdemar, Magnus, Erik, and Bengt. Erik is omitted from the play entirely, presumably because he contributed nothing to the symbolic patterns Strindberg wished to develop. Magnus was between thirty-five and forty when he and Erik deposed Valdemar in 1275, Erik; who died the same year, somewhat younger. On the other hand, the youngest son, Bengt, does appear in the play, even though he con-

tributes even less to the history of the Folkungs than Erik. Bengt is the Swedish form of the name Benjamin, and the happy coincidence that Birger jarl had several sons, the youngest of whom was so named, allows Strindberg to draw a parallel between the Folkung patriarch and the biblical patriarch, Jacob:

BENGT, Jarlen's yngste son (in): Är Jarlen här?

JARLEN (milt): Ja mitt barn, min Benjamin, min ålders tröst, min sista vän....²²

Bengt's character is similar to Junker Karl's: filled with innocence (symbolized by his continually being referred to as a child) and high idealism, he wants nothing to do with the family business of governing Sweden, and has resolved to become a priest: "Jag vill vara barn hela mitt liv, Guds och den Heliga kyrkans barn, och min moders son!"²³ Birger jarl is opposed to this ambition: he does not consider the priesthood to be even a possible vocation for a prince (son of a princess, brother of a king, son of a man who is more than a king), and he denies his permission. In Act V, however, when Birger's power has been superseded

²² Samlade verk, LXI, 338 (II, iii):

BENGT, the Earl's youngest son (enters): Is the Earl here?

THE EARL (tenderly): Yes, my child, my Benjamin, comfort of my old age, my last friend....

²³ Ibid, 342 (III, i): "I want to be a child all my life: God's and the Holy Church's child, and my mother's son!"

by the rise of Magnus, he is compelled to let Bengt do as he wishes. For he discovers that he has lost Bengt's affections; not because of his opposition to the young man's wishes, but because Bengt considers his father's remarriage a desecration of his mother's memory. In fact, he has already taken his preliminary vows without the knowledge or permission of his father: the Church which Birger jarl has offended claims the comfort of his old age. There is a parallel to another biblical patriarch, Abraham, who must accept the grief of sacrificing his son to God: "Isak skulle offras! -- Präst! --"24

The scandalous behaviour of Valdemar, ironically, is a link between Birger jarl and the third of the great biblical patriarchs, Isaac, the father of Jacob and Esau. The mess of pottage in Valdemar's case is Jutta; the birthright is the crown:

JARLEN: Magnus, jag ville jag kunde lita på dig -- -- -- jag önskade du vore min förstfödde -- nu då Valdemar har sålt sin förstfödslorätt för en grynvällings värde -- 25

24 Samlade verk, LXI, 400 (V): "Isaac must be sacrificed! -- A priest!"

25 Ibid., 346 (III, i):

THE EARL: Magnus, I wanted to be able to trust you -- -- -- I wished that you were my first-born -- especially now, when Valdemar has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage --

Birger jarl, then, is linked to the three great patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the symbolism shifts. In the instance cited above, if Birger jarl is Isaac and Valdemar Esau, it is Magnus who fills the rôle of Jacob. And that is an appropriate rôle for him: not only does he assume his brother's forfeited birthright, but it is his descendants who provide the continuity of the dynasty (his son, Birger Magnusson, his grandson, Magnus Eriksson, and two of his great-grandsons, Erik Magnusson and Håkan Magnusson, reign from his death in 1290 until the accession of Albrekt of Mecklenburg in 1365), just as it was the sons of Jacob who founded the twelve tribes of Israel.

The passage cited above indicates that Valdemar lost his crown through the weaknesses of the flesh; another biblical allusion strengthens this suggestion. When Strindberg changed the name of Valdemar's sister-in-law from Jutta to Judit (the Swedish form of the name Judith), he had more in mind than simply giving her the Swedish form of her name. She herself draws the inference early in the play. Valdemar rejects what is in effect a warning on her part; he would have done well to pay heed:

KUNGEN: Judit!

JUDIT: ... och Holofernes!

KUNGEN: Åh, var tyst!²⁶

The story of Judith and Holofernes is told in the Book of Judith (not included in most Protestant editions of the Bible): a woman of uncommon beauty, she seduces the heart of Holofernes, and beheads him while he sleeps. "The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman!" she rejoices.²⁷ Precisely what happens to Valdemar! He does not lose his head (except metaphorically), but he does lose the crown which rests on that head, and is brought down from his position as king. Birger jarl, too, is brought down by a woman: his marriage to Mechtild of Holstein is viewed as incestuous and he finds himself once more under papal interdiction; perhaps more important, the marriage loses him the affections and loyalty of his children. This fulfills a curse put on the Earl by Bishop Kol: "... du tänker ta en kvinna i famn, också; må hon stinga dig i hälen!"²⁸ Strindberg's third marriage had ended in divorce (as had the previous two) in 1904; he would seem to have had per-

²⁶ Samlade verk, LXI, 306 (II, i):

THE KING: Judith!

JUDITH: ... and Holofernes!

THE KING: Oh, be quiet!

²⁷ Judith 12:16 or 12:20, depending on whether the Greek or the Vulgate text is followed. The translation quoted is from The Jerusalem Bible.

²⁸ Samlade verk, LXI, 332 (II, iii): " ... and so you're thinking of taking a woman to your breast; may she stab you in the heel!" The reference is to Achilles' heel, a weakness of the flesh.

sonal grounds for contending that women bring a man only sorrow!

There is another curse in the play but it is not fulfilled, for the curser has to rescind it. Birger jarl curses Magnus on learning that Magnus has acted without consulting him and against his interests, in seizing the throne. Magnus makes him see that his actions prove him a capable politician and a worthy pupil of a respected master:

JARLEN (...): -- Magnus, jag förbannar dig!

MAGNUS: Det skall du icke, far! -- Minns att det var du, som väckte splitet mellan bröder -- att du lärde mig umgås ränker -- Du var plogkarlen, jag är skördemannen! Men gruva dig icke! Valdemar måste bort! Nu är jag kommen! Du har själv satt en krona på mitt huvud, spiran var jag född till.²⁹

The certainty with which Magnus has acted and the self-confidence with which he defends himself, as well as his belief that he is fulfilling his destiny and his acknowledgement of his father's influence, turn Birger jarl's defeat into victory: he realizes that he has sired a king: not a weak, degenerate puppet like Valde-

²⁹ Samlade verk, LXI, 404-05 (V):

THE EARL (...): -- I curse you, Magnus!

MAGNUS: You will not do that, father! -- Remember that it was you who awoke dissension between brothers -- that you taught me to nurse intrigues -- you were the ploughman, I am the harvester! But don't worry! Valdemar had to be overthrown! Now I have come! You yourself have set a crown on my head; I was born to the sceptre.

mar, who was king in name only, but a strong and determined ruler, who will stop at nothing to obtain what he believes is right. The cornerstone to his monument has at last been laid:

JARLEN (strider med sig): Jag börjar tro -- jag ser att jag fött en konung -- jag visste det icke, jag hoppades dock, nu vet jag att Folkungaätt är avlad!³⁰

The loose, almost incoherent syntax of this speech reflects the emotional turbulence of the speaker: the lion may be caged, but the heart of the father is bursting with pride!

Woven through the play is music serving as a vehicle of prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary (the ringing of the Angelus in Act I, the singing of the Ave Maris Stella in Act III, and of O Sanctissima in Act IV), with the constant refrain of all Marian prayers, "ora pro nobis," "pray for us sinners." It seems those prayers are answered in the final act of the play, both for the Folkungs and for the nation. At least for awhile: Strindberg's view of history is cyclical, so these patterns will be repeated at some point in the future: "allt går igen" ("everything happens again").

³⁰ Samlade verk, LXI, 405 (V):

THE EARL (struggles with himself): I begin to believe -- I see that I have fathered a king -- I didn't know it, I nevertheless hoped, now I know, that the Folkung dynasty has been founded ...

Chapter 90

Ockulta dagboken

Ockulta dagboken (The Occult Diary) was kept by Strindberg between February 21, 1896 and July 11, 1908 (i.e., from Inferno to Blå tornet), and recorded mainly observations and occurrences which, it seemed to him, demonstrated the existence of supernatural powers. Shortly before his death in 1912, he decided that Ockulta dagboken should be published as the final part of the cycle of autobiographical writings which had begun with *Tjänstekvinnans son*, chiefly because it filled a gap not covered by the other works in the cycle: his marriage to Harriet Bosse. The complete text did not appear, however, until 1977, when a facsimile of the manuscript was published; the text used as the basis of this chapter is the abridgement edited by Torsten Eklund and published under the title *Ur Ockulta dagboken* (From the Occult Diary) in 1963.¹

As with the letters, Ockulta dagboken contains several useful insights into works with which Strindberg was preoccupied at the time; discussions of passages which have direct bearing on the symbolism of specific works have been incorporated into the chapters

¹ This is the volume henceforth cited as *Dagboken*.

dealing with those works. Those sections of the diary dealt with here have a more general application.

As might be expected of a diary covering the same period as the confessional plays (the *Till Damaskus* trilogy, *Ett drömspel*, the Chamber Plays), *Ockulta dagboken*'s main interest from the point of view of Strindberg's symbolism is the transformation of the world of sin and suffering into a world of illusion and dreams. The diary makes it clear that the primary source of this insight was Indian religion (Hinduism). Strindberg indicates in a note (*Dagboken*, 173) that the information in the passage cited at the end of the chapter on *Ett drömspel* was gleaned from a history of literature, which Eklund has identified (*Idem.*) as Arvid Ahnfelt's *Verldslitteraturens historia* (*History of World Literature*), 1875. This was obviously not Strindberg's only source of information about Indian religion, however, for the passage also makes it clear that *Ett drömspel* had already substantially been written before he came across that book: Strindberg goes on to say that the doctrines elucidated there gave him an understanding of his own play and some of the symbols in it, such as the secret behind the door (nothing): an indication that he sometimes used symbols without himself fully appreciating their significance at the time of writing.

This is not to claim a mystical or supernatural inspiration for Strindberg's writing, however; discov-

eries such as this served merely to clarify and codify ideas and feelings at which he had arrived through his own experiences and had perhaps expressed symbolically because he could not yet formulate them explicitly. Certainly the concept of the world as illusion is nothing new to him, as the diary itself attests. Harriet Bosse (then pregnant with their child) left Strindberg during the period August 22 - October 5, 1901 (a period he symbolically shortens to forty days), after only five and a half months of marriage. Strindberg suffered greatly during this period (at the end of which *Ett drömspel* was written), and a diary entry during that time shows clearly that he had already arrived at a concept of the world as illusion:

Denna för mig så stora och utomordentligt sköna kärlekshistoria, vilken upplöste sig i ett gäckeri, har givit mig full övertygelse att livet är illusion, och att de vackraste historierna vilka upplösas som bubblor av smutsigt tvättvatten, äro gjorda för att inge oss avsky för livet. Vi höra icke hemma här, och vi äro för goda för denna usla tillvaro.²

Indeed, one can trace the concept back much farther in Strindberg's work: one thinks, for instance, of the

² Dagboken, 50 (September 6, 1901):

This love story, for me so great and so extraordinarily beautiful, which dissolved into a mockery, has given me a strong conviction that life is an illusion, and that the most beautiful stories, which dissolve like bubbles of dirty wash-water, unfold in order to instill us with a loathing for life. We are not at home here, and we are too good for this wretched existence.

Nurse in Fadren, with her refrain ("Vanity of vanities....").

Spiritual influences from Buddhism and Hinduism did not displace Strindberg's Christianity or his Swedenborgianism: the parenthetical observations in the passage cited at the end of the chapter on *Ett drömspel*, that love is sin and the sufferings of love the worst of all hells, derive, respectively from the latter two traditions (or from Strindberg's understanding of them). Also noteworthy is the interpretation, toward the end of that passage, of suffering as a punishment for sensuality: the price one has to pay, as it were. This idea is not new to Strindberg either; it is implicit in his favorite symbol for love, the thorned rose. That symbol is present in the diary as well, in a note Strindberg sent Harriet Bosse at the conclusion of the run of *Till Damaskus I* (in which she had played the rôle of the Lady) in November, 1900: "I tanken att vi slutade Damaskusresan i dag, beställde jag några rosor -- med törnen förstås -- andra lär icke finnas!"³ They were engaged three months later; it is as if through the symbol of the thorned rose Strindberg is warning her (or himself) that love and pain are inextricably

³ Dagboken, 17 (December 5, 1900):

Having in mind that we finished the Damascus journey today, I ordered a few roses -- with thorns, of course -- they say there's no other kind!

mixed, just as he had warned Frida Uhl in his letters to her before the second marriage!

When the third marriage too has ended and Strindberg is once again left alone, the idea of punishment returns, this time couched in Christian symbolism: "Livet är nog ett straff! Ett helvete; för somliga en skärseld, för ingen ett paradiset."⁴

This attitude is present also in 1907, when he has abandoned all hope of happiness in this world and placed it in the next. In April of that year he ceases work on a play about the afterlife (the incomplete play is published in *Samlade otryckta skrifter*, I) because his disillusionment with this life makes it impossible for him to write as beautifully as he would wish:

Skriver fin på "Toten-Insel" där jag skildrar uppvakandet efter döden och det som följer, men tvekar och fasar för att blotta livets bottenlösa elände. Jag vill skriva ljust och vackert, men får inte, kan inte; tar det som en fasans plikt att vara sann, och livet är obeskrivligt fult.⁵

⁴ Dagboken, 84 (September 3, 1904): "Life is surely a punishment! A hell; for some a purgatory; for nobody a paradise."

⁵ Ibid., 104 (April 15, 1907):

Am writing fin to Toten-Insel, in which I describe the awakening after death and what follows, but hesitate and shudder to reveal the bottomless evil of life. I want to write lucidly and beautifully, but must not, cannot: I hold it a horrible duty to be truthful, and life is indescribably ugly.

He has been plagued throughout the spring with attacks of eczema, which cause his hands to bleed: no trivial complaint for a writer. This suffering is physical rather than psychological, but it too is viewed as a punishment for sin. He sees the bleeding wounds as stigmata, but this is not a sign of special grace or sanctity; it is, rather, a reminder of the sufferings his sins have caused Christ:

Obs! Efter 40 dagars fasta och trassel, lidanden av alla slag synas mitt i båda händerna djupa hugg såsom av stora spikar (= stigmatisering!). Är det Påsk för mig? Skall jag korsfästas igen? Såsom jag korsfäst Kristus? Jag går i dödstankar och väntar en katastrof!⁶

Ockulta dagboken is full of reports of trivial incidents interpreted either as omens or as signs of the presence of the supernatural. While these provide interesting insights into the workings of Strindberg's mind, they are, for the most part, not important in themselves; i.e., the meanings he read into them remained attached to the particular occasions and did not find its way into his literary works. His conviction that everything has significance, and that the

⁶ Dagboken, 107 (April 18, 1907):

N.B.! After 40 days of fasting and confusion, suffering of all kinds, deep gashes, as if from large nails, have appeared in the middle of both hands (= stigmatization!). Is it Easter for me? Am I to be crucified again? As I have crucified Christ? I am filled with thoughts of death, and await a catastrophe!

powers can use quite ordinary objects to make their presence known, however, informs all of his work: one thinks of the importance he attached to cloud formations, of the spinning wheel and millwheel which move of themselves in Kronbruden, of objects which fly about the room in Advent, of plants which wither and die in unhappy homes, and of numerous similar examples. Two examples of this kind of entry will serve as typical of the rest.

The first is interpreted as an omen, and a good one at that: the hairpin represents woman and the horseshoe good fortune. The incident occurs two days after Harriet has left him (for the forty days in 1901), and he obviously links the incidents into a sign that she will return to him: "Ensam. På morgonen gråt-attack. Gick sedan ut på Gärdet. På hemvägen hittade jag först en hårnål; sedan en hel hästsko."⁷

These omens proved true: she did return. But the relationship was stormy, and ended three years later.

⁷ Dagboken, 84 (August 24, 1901):

"Alone. In the morning, an attack of crying. Then went out for a walk on Gärdet.* On the way home I found first a hairpin and then a whole horseshoe [Strindberg's italics].

* Gärdet (literally, The Field): a large open space near where the Strindbergs were living at the time; formerly the artillery (drilling) field.

Three years after that, Strindberg, alone in their apartment, records a curious incident which he interprets as sympathetic action on the part of the powers:

Efter middagssömnerna fann jag termometern på fönstret borttryckt. Denna termometer, som ingen av oss ville sätta upp (emedan ingen trodde på varaktigheten av vår förening) blev liggande och kastad omkring, hamnade i en låda. När slutligen Harriet gått sin väg ur huset, satte jag upp den. -- Varför är den nu loss? Och vem har gjort det?⁸

This thermometer is incorporated into *Oväder*, where it becomes a symbol of the instability of a marriage.

The symbolism of rising and falling occurs twice in the diary. In the first instance, it is used by Harriet Bosse in a note she sends Strindberg, but this is evidently a response to an accusation he has made. It is written (in Norwegian: her mother tongue) during the forty-day separation: "Tänk dig bare for mig at få høre igjen at jeg drar ned dig, jeg, som intet hellre vil end se dig højst oppe!"⁹

⁸ *Dagboken*, 109 (April 26, 1907):

Following my after-dinner nap, I discovered that the thermometer in the window had been torn off. This thermometer, which neither of us had wanted to put up (since neither believed in the permanence of our union), lay around and was shuffled about until it ended up in a drawer. When Harriet had finally departed from the house, I put it up. -- Why is it loose now? And who has done it?

⁹ *Ibid.*, 56 (September 22, 1901): "Just imagine how I feel, hearing again that I am dragging you down: I, who want nothing more than to see you at the top!"

The second instance is in a dream Strindberg records in 1908, after Harriet has remarried. The dream summarizes their relationship: she came to him timidly, seemed for a short time to enjoy his attentions, but then flew off out of his reach. Although a different bird is involved here, there is perhaps an ironic reference to the poem "Chrysäetos":

Drömde om H-t.... Drömde även om en orrhöna som kom strykande sig för att bli smekt; hon var rädd för mig, trodde jag var farlig; så smekte jag henne; och så flög hon upp och satte sig i hönshusets vagel eller hylla.¹⁰

The bird symbolism also plays a part in an observation Strindberg makes a month before he asks Harriet to marry him; his favorite nickname is Örnen (The Eagle), and when he notices that she is wearing an eagle feather and a heart-shaped pin he takes this as a sign that she loves him: "Hon hade en örnpenna i hatten och ett underligt smycke, ett guldhjärta på bröstet."¹¹

¹⁰ Dagboken, 169 (June 21, 1908):

Dreamed of H-t.... Also dreamed of a greyhen* which came and rubbed itself against me in order to be stroked; she was afraid of me, thought I was dangerous; then I stroked her; and then she flew up and sat on the henhouse roost or shelf.

* greyhen: the female of the black grouse.

¹¹ Ibid., 21 (February 8, 1901): "She had an eagle feather in her hat and a wonderful piece of jewelry, a golden heart, on her breast."

A dream of storks almost two weeks later was perhaps also interpreted as an omen of future happiness in the relationship, although here Strindberg is at pains to provide a natural explanation for the dream; the question remains, however, of why he is suddenly surrounded with so many images of storks (symbols of the spring, new life, and good fortune):

Natten till: Drömde om storkar. NB! I min rum där jag nu bor äro två bilder av storkar; numera tre sedan jag köpt en japansk skärm.¹²

Ockulta dagboken is a very personal document, in many ways even more personal than the letters, which were written with a reader other than the author himself in mind. Apart from its obvious biographical and psychological interest, it provides an interesting insight into how symbols functioned in Strindberg's day-to-day life. As such, it is a useful tool in the interpretation and understanding of the literary works, particularly as regards Strindberg's theory of the illusory nature of earthly experience. One looks forward to its appearance in the ongoing new edition of the complete works.

¹² Dagboken, 28 (February 24, 1901):

Last night: Dreamed of storks. N.B.! In the room where I now live there are two pictures of storks; three, now that I have bought a Japanese screen.

Chapter 91

Svarta handsken

When one thinks of Strindberg's chamber plays, one thinks of four plays written in 1907: *Oväder*, *Brändatomten*, *Spöksonaten*, and *Pelikanen*, which were designated Opus 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. Two years later, Strindberg wrote another play which he intended to be included among the chamber plays, as indicated by its full title: *Opus 5: Svarta handsken: lyrisk fantasi (för scenen) i fem akter*¹ (*Opus 5: The Black Glove: A Lyrical Fantasy (for the Stage) in Five Acts*). That title also indicates why it is not usually included in collections of the chamber plays: although written within the same strictures of length and simplicity of setting (to use the musical analogy, in sonata rather than symphonic form), and although there are some similarities of theme and character, the mood of *Svarta handsken* is quite different. It is a "lyrical fantasy", closer in treatment and mood to *Advent* and *Kronbruden* than to the somber tones of the four earlier chamber plays. It is a Christmas play -- it has even been performed under the titles *Jul* (Christmas) (Stockholm, 1911) and *God jul* (Merry Christmas) (Gothenburg, 1920) -- is written mainly in verse, and is full of charm and

¹ *Skrifter*, XI, 379-96.

optimism. It is a mistake to omit *Svarta handsken* from the canon of the chamber plays, not only because Strindberg clearly considered it one of them, but also because it rounds out the series, going beyond the pessimistic and bitter overtones of the other four plays to the great theme of Strindberg's later years: reconciliation.

In common with the other chamber plays (particularly *Brända tomten* and *Spöksonaten*), *Svarta handsken* gives a lot of weight to the house in which it is set. Indeed, it has been justly observed (Ollén, 572, et. al.) that the central "character" in *Svarta handsken* is the apartment building in which the action takes place. A large building which gives shelter to all sorts and conditions of men, it becomes a symbol of the human community, and the play is concerned with integrating its characters into that community.

In 1908 Strindberg had moved into Drottninggatan 85, a new, well-located, and very modern (it had electricity, an elevator, and central heating) art-nouveau building where he spent the last four years of his life. He first dubbed the building *Gröna tornet* (the Green Tower), from its green (copper-clad) roof, but he soon altered this to the name which has stuck, *Blå*

toronet (the Blue Tower).² He lived in an apartment on the fourth floor, and had a large room with a studio window on the sixth,³ where he worked and eventually housed his library (pawned in 1908 and not redeemed until two years later), and where he provided Fanny Falkner, to whom he was briefly engaged in 1909, with studio space (she was a painter of miniatures as well as an actress).⁴ Blå tornet is easily recognizable as

² The building was never painted blue, but it does have a tower (which houses the elevator and staircase). Strindberg's name for the building probably springs from one of three circumstances, or an association of all of them. First, the tower was (and still is) painted blue on its interior walls. Second, the grocery store at street level sold coffee in paper bags decorated with a blue image of the building (pictures which Strindberg often cut out and glued on his stationery). Finally, Blå tornet is the name of a famous prison in Copenhagen (the widow of Sten Sture the Younger was imprisoned there and Gustav Vasa's mother and sister met their deaths there): Strindberg moved to the building when it became definite that a reconciliation with Harriet Bosse was impossible (she remarried on May 24, 1908; Strindberg moved into Blå tornet July 11) and the name is perhaps a sardonic allusion to the life of solitary confinement he saw ahead of him.

³ He did not rent this studio until 1910, but its use as one of the settings of this play indicates that already in the previous year he had inspected the room, and had planned to rent it and how he would use it.

⁴ In 1960 Strindberg's fourth-floor apartment and the one next to it were acquired by Strindbergssällskapet (The Strindberg Society), which opened Strindbergsmuseet (The Strindberg Museum) there in 1973: Strindberg's own apartment is restored to its original condition, and the apartment next to it houses both permanent and temporary displays, as well as hosting meetings and conferences, and occasionally staging Strindberg's plays: Svarta handsken has been given there, in its original milieu, twice (December, 1978 and December, 1979). Eventually, the sixth-floor studio was also purchased and restored, and Strindberg's library was moved back home (it had been in Nordiska Museet (The Scandinavian Museum) since 1915); it was

the building in Svarta handsken, where it is called Babelstornet (the Tower of Babel), and in which its electricity, central heating, elevator, and concierge all play parts in the action. The Old Man, one of the play's two central characters (a gently mocking caricature of Strindberg himself), spends his time on the sixth floor, which is filled with masses of yellowing papers, while the other main character, the Lady, and her child are modelled on Harriet Bosse and Strindberg's fifth child, Anne-Marie. Curiously, in the play's première production the rôle of the Lady was played by Strindberg's second child (to Siri von Essen), Greta (the rôle of Kersti in *Kronbruden* had been created for her, but was first filled by Harriet Bosse).

The play presents two variations on the theme of reconciliation: the Lady is reconciled to those who surround her (her servants and the other inhabitants of the building), and the Old Man is reconciled to life. She is presented as very beautiful and a devoted, loving mother, but hard-hearted, selfish, and imperious to everyone but her child: she is herself a spoiled

opened to the public in 1984.

The material in this paragraph and accompanying notes has been gleaned from Carlsson, Jarvi and Carlson, Lagercranz (416-34), Levander, Lindström, Ollén (572-77) and Unge, as well as from personal familiarity with the building.

child who has grown to womanhood without having learned to get along with others. In terms of the building, she has turned her own small part of it into a fortress, inside which she can lead her own selfish life, completely isolated from the world around her. The Old Man, on the other hand, is kindly and congenial, getting along with everybody (although we are told that he has deserted wife and children in order to pursue fame), but totally lacking a spiritual dimension to his life: he has been an atheist (he is called a Sadducee, who does not believe in the Resurrection) and a materialist, having devoted sixty⁵ of his eighty years to a search for the meaning of life but misled by his spiritual blindness. He is just as isolated from the world around him: his attic room has become an ivory tower. It is Christmas, and, appropriately, the Word becomes incarnate in both of their lives. The agents of this transformation are the Christmas Elf⁶ and the Christmas Angel. The characteristics of the building (the constant comings and goings of all sorts of peo-

⁵ Strindberg turned sixty around the same time as the play was completed.

⁶ The Swedish Jultomte is quite a different figure than the British Father Christmas or the North American Santa Claus, although he is gradually absorbing (or being absorbed by) those traditions. Like them, he is a personification of the spirit of Christmas, and as such he brings presents (in a sleigh pulled by a goat, which links him to the Norse god Odin), but he is more puckish than his anglo-saxon equivalents, often displaying a fondness for harmless and good-natured tricks.

ple, failures of the electricity and heating systems, noises from the elevator, the stairwell, and from other apartments, the seeming omnipresence of the concièrege, the tendency of things to get misplaced and to reappear in unexpected places in any large building, etc.) all play a part.

The Lady's character is established very early in the play's opening conversation between the Old Man and the Concièrge, when the former remarks, "Om hon vore god som hon vore skön!"⁷ Her selfishness is indicated by the fact that she has given Christmas presents neither to the Concièrge nor to her own servants, her suspicious and inconsiderate nature by the incident of the ring: she has lost a large and valuable ring, and on no grounds has accused her faithful and long-suffering servant, Ellen, of having stolen it (suspicion also falls on her own husband!). This incident, which causes great distress to the innocent Ellen and disharmony in the building at a time when peace, harmony, and good will ought to reign everywhere, spurs the two Christmas spirits into action.

The Christmas Angel diagnoses her problem as the result of having lived too sheltered a life: she has never known sorrow, loss, or discomfort, and can there-

⁷ Skrifter, XI, 381: "If only she were as good as she is beautiful!"

fore not understand how others feel when she acts unjustly towards them. She must be taught a lesson:

När lyckans klara sol har börjat bränna,
så vissna gräs och blomster;
ett litet moln ger skugga, svalka.
Och moln ger regn, på regnet följer grönska

Nu mulnar det!⁸

The task is assigned to the Christmas Elf. He has already sent her a Christmas card bearing a picture which symbolizes her nature: a thistle, which has a beautiful flower, but is hard and covered with prickles. This she has ignored. Now he will play a much more serious trick on her: she will learn her lesson by losing the only thing in the world she loves, her child. A hard lesson indeed, but the audience is assured from the beginning that the loss will be only temporary: the child will be restored to its mother before the day is out, and the mother will have become a better person because of what she has gone through.

On one level, the black glove which gives the play its name is a symbol of her child: she discovers that one of her black gloves is missing only moments before she receives the news that the child too has disap-

⁸ Skriffter, XI, 384 (I):

When the bright sun of fortune starts to
burn,
The grass and flowers wither;
A little cloud gives shade and coolness.
And clouds give rain; the rain brings back
the greenness ...
Bring on the clouds!

peared, and it is restored to her at the end of the play, only moments before she discovers the child safely asleep in its bed. But it is a more complicated symbol than that: the newly recovered glove is found to contain the missing ring, symbol of the wholeness of life. Here we have black containing gold, a potent symbol of the perfectibility of corrupt human nature. The glove is found by various characters during the play and lost again before it can be returned to its owner. One of these, an Old Lady, suggests its metaphysical significance:

Tag nu vara på handsken, så han inte kommer bort igen! -- Svart är han -- som en begravning -- men han döljer en vit hand och kanske något mera!⁹

Like so many of Strindberg's characters, the Lady is purified (made whole) through suffering and love. She and the Old Man are dressed in black throughout most of the play, symbolizing their unredeemed natures, the child's clothing is all white, as is that of the Christmas Angel (in both cases symbolizing purity or innocence) and she is brought from one state to the other (in the final scene she sheds the black pelisse she has been wearing to reveal the white dress in which

⁹ *Skrifter*, XI, 388 (Act III):

Take care of the glove now, so it isn't lost again! -- It's black -- like a funeral -- but it hides a white hand, and perhaps something else!

she first appeared) by the Christmas Elf, who, of course, is wearing red. The final stage of the alchemical scale, gold (perfection) is present, not only in the ring (perfection coming out of corruption), but also in the gold-coloured garment she has been sewing, presumably as a Christmas present for the child. As the Old Lady points out, black is also the colour of mourning, and this meaning links the other two: the Lady mourns for her lost child (whom she fears is dead) and out of her loss (the child and the glove) discovers wholeness: she becomes part of the community rather than living for herself alone, and, incidentally, she recovers her ring.

The Old Man is presented as a gentle, harmless, amiable old fellow whose life nevertheless lacks meaning because he has frittered it away in the vain pursuit of fame as a great thinker, and has devoted all his energies to searching for the meaning of life; like the Lady with her ring, he has been looking in the wrong place. After sixty years of searching, he feels that at last he has found the answer to life's mysteries in the theory of monism, the unity of all matter. Like the Lady, he is basically a good person: the ring is contained in the black glove. Like her, he is brought to a realization of the true meaning of life (giving joy to other people) through being stripped of what is dearest to him: in his case, his philosophical

delusions. This the Christmas Elf achieves through disarranging his carefully filed and categorized papers; by presenting him with a pair of "spiritual" spectacles to replace his "materialistic" ones, so that he sees that his carefully built-up system is in fact a disorganized jumble which proves nothing; and finally by demonstrating the duality of matter and of existence:

TOMTEN:

....
I alltets enhet ser du världens gåta ...

GAMLE:

Precis! Du är en liten kvicker karl,
som fann vad jag i trettio år har letat:
Materiens enhet! Det var ordet!

TOMTEN:

Det var systemet! Nu till verkligheten!
Ponera nu naturens tvåfald! Och låt se,
om ej den teorin har mera för sig!

(Paus.)

Det våta elementet vattnet
en enhet är, består dock av de två
av väte och av syre kan ej disputeras;
magnetens kraft är delt i nord och syd;
elektrikans av plus och minus,
i växtens frö det givs ett hanligt och ett
honligt;

och högst i kedjan allra överst
du finner tvåhet, ty allena
var icke gott för mänskan vara;
och så blev man och kvinna till:
Naturens tvåfald alltså konstaterad!¹⁰

¹⁰ Skrifter, XI, 391 (IV):

THE ELF:

....
In oneness you see nature's mystery solved

OLD MAN:

Just so! You are a clever little chap
To find so fast what took me thirty years:
The unity of matter! That's the word!

THE ELF:

In your system! Now for reality!
Suppose now nature's dual! And let's see
If there is not more evidence of that!

(Pause.)

This philosophical disputation (hardly the sort of thing one expects from a Christmas elf!) shatters the Old Man's carefully built up monistic system, and he is left every bit as devastated as the Lady when her child is taken from her: he has, after all, given up both wife and children to pursue the studies which have now been proven vain. In his feeling of loss and defeat he refers briefly to the title of another chamber play:

....
 bankrutt, fallit, jag ger upp staten
 och sitter tomhant på den brända tomten --
 (Sjunker ned i stolen.)
 Ett snäckdjur, som fick skalet krossat,
 en spindel vilkens nät revs sönder,
 förflugnen fågel ut på oceanen,
 för långt att vända om och hinna stranden --
 Han flaxar över rörlig avgrund --
 Tills trött han faller ner -- och dör!¹¹

—
 That the wet element of water
 Despite its being one, comprises two,
 Hydrogen and oxygen, you must admit;
 The magnet's force comprises north and south,
 Electric power positive and negative;
 In plant seeds can be found both male and
 female;
 And highest in the chain, above all else,
 You find duality, because alone
 It was not good for man to be;
 And so both man and woman were created:
 Nature's duality I now have demonstrated!

¹¹ Skrifter, XI, 391 (IV):

....
 Bankrupt, collapsed, I give up wisdom's staff
 And, empty-handed, sit on the burnt-out lot --
 (Sinks down in his chair.)
 A mollusc in a shell that has been crushed,
 A spider in a web that's torn apart,
 A bird that's wandered too far out to sea,
 Too far to turn around and reach the shore --
 Until, exhausted, it falls down -- and dies!

His project has been like the building of the Tower of Babel and like it, has both failed and resulted in confusion; he carries out his researches (and learns of their failure) on the topmost floor of a building known as the Tower of Babel!

As in the case of the Lady, the Christmas Elf does not take away without also restoring. After exorcising the ghosts of the Old Man's past, he gives him the lost glove containing the ring:

TOMTEN:

....

(Visar en svart damhandske.)

GAMLE:

En liten handske! Må jag se! Jag minns ej --
Hur den kom hit! -- Jo vänta nu jag har det --

I gårdagsmorse jag den fann i trappan --

TOMTEN:

Nu får du den som julklapp ifrån mig --
Den håller hemligheter, och de späda finger
ha gripit in i öden, stiftet ont,
men lilla handen räcket dig till godo.
Om du den ger åt henne som jag väntar,
då har du lycka spritt, en gåta löst
som mera värde har än sfinxens som dig klöst
--12

¹² Skrifter, XI, 392 (IV):

THE ELF:

....

(Shows him a woman's black glove.)

OLD MAN:

A little glove! May I see! Now I wonder --
How that got here! -- Yes, wait now, I
recall: --

I found it yesterday upon the stairs --

THE ELF:

Now take it from me as your Christmas gift --
There are secrets in it, and the tiny fingers
Have been engaged with fate, committed wrong;
But this small hand now offers good to you:
Just give it to the one whom I expect,
And you'll spread happiness, and solve a riddle

This strange Christmas present is part and parcel with the Elf's philosophical discourse, for it is a symbolic realization of the ideas he presented there: the black glove contains the ring; the world is neither all black nor all radiant; the two qualities (evil and good; matter and spirit) must exist together in order that the one might emerge from the other; within the blackest heart there lies a gem, if only one knows where to look (Cf. the Christmas Elf's statement, "... liv är ande / men fängslad i en kropp, ett ting!"¹³)! This is the true secret of existence.

The Old Man gives the glove to Ellen, who arranges that the Lady should find it and the ring it contains. She is filled with remorse for her false accusations and, despite her fear of recriminations, confesses her fault to Ellen and both asks for and receives forgiveness. There follows a series of restorations: the electricity and the heating come back on in her apartment (the Christmas Elf has caused them both to fail, the resultant darkness and cold symbolizing the Lady's spiritual state); she drops her black garment to reveal her white robe, and she finds her child safe in bed.

—

Of far more worth than the Sphinx's, your
downfall --

¹³ Skrifter, XI, 392 (IV): "... life is spirit, / imprisoned in a body, in a thing!"

Before these things happen, however, something else of importance takes place. The Old Man, having at last found the secret for which he has searched for so long, and having been given the opportunity to spread happiness into the lives of others, has died, reconciled at last to the world, and filled with peace and joy. As Ellen describes it, "Den gamle oppe i vinden -- har gått hädan -- nöjd och så försonad med detta som han önskade."¹⁴ Going through his papers, they have discovered that they have known him under an assumed name: he was really the father of the Lady. She admits that she never loved him (he had deserted his family while she was still a child), but now, after all that has happened, she becomes reconciled to him as well, going up to him, closing his eyes, and arranging his body for burial. Peace has been established; joy can now break forth:

JULEN:

Nu är vårt värv till ända snart;
jag sett ett knäfall, hört ett tonfall;
ett enda litet ord: "förlåt" kan allt för-
sona!
Nu är det sagt, nu är det gjort! --
Lägg sorgen av! Må glädjens fest begynna!¹⁵

¹⁴ *Skrifter*, XI, 395 (V): "The old man up in the attic -- has passed away -- content and so reconciled with his desires."

¹⁵ *Idem.*:

THE ANGEL:

Our task is now soon at an end;
A knee has been bent, and a voice been heard;
With one small word, forgive, all can be rec-
onciled!
Now it is said, and now it has been done! --

Finally, a word about the music which accompanies the action of the play, through the device of a piano-playing resident whose efforts are heard through the walls of the neighbouring apartments. His selections (three of them by Strindberg's favorite composer, Beethoven) complement the actions they accompany, and strengthen the symbolism. The first comes at the close of Act II. The lights have been extinguished by the Christmas Elf and the Lady comes out into the hallway of her apartment with a lamp, reads the thistle Christmas card, and tears it up. At this point the music begins; it is Beethoven's Sonata 31, Opus 110 (L'istesso tempo di arioso). As it plays, the Lady takes a silver brush and brushes the child's outdoor clothing, picking off bits of lint, polishing buttons, and sewing on one that is loose. She is content. Of the music, Ward notes (267):

The mood created is fairly light and buoyant, though the visionary quality of the music prefigures the enlightenment which will be brought about by her impending tragedy.

The Lady arises, takes a glove from a basket placed in the hallway to hold such small articles, and searches for its mate. When she cannot find it, she sticks the unmatched one in her bodice and stands there looking quite forlorn. The music goes over to Beethoven's Fun-

—
Put sorrow off! Let joy's great feast begin!

eral March (from the Eroica Symphony). This is a bit bombastic for the circumstances (a lost glove!), but that effect is offset by accompanying noises from the building: a child screams, there is knocking on a wall, the elevator creaks, the water pipes clatter, and voices in another apartment can be heard quarreling. A very effective little pantomime of impending doom!

The third Beethoven piece, Sonata 29, Opus 106 (andante sostenuto), is heard in Act IV, as the Old Man, overcome with great weariness, searches through his papers, still hoping to find there the secret of existence, although they have been thoroughly mixed up by the Christmas Elf. As Ward remarks (*Idem.*), "The slow, extended rhythms emphasize the fatigue of the Old Man and the hopelessness of his task."

The final piece of music, Sinding's *Frühlingsrauschen* (The Rustle of Spring), is played twice: once as the Christmas Elf exorcises the Old Man's past and concludes by presenting him with the glove, and once during the final moments of the play, as the lights come on in the Lady's apartment, she doffs her black garment, and is reunited with her child. As even the title of the piece suggests, Strindberg uses this shimmering, magical composition to indicate the enlightenment and spiritual rebirth of both characters.

Chapter 92

Öppna brev

Memorandum till meddlemmarna av Intima teatern (Memorandum to the Members of the Intimate Theatre, 1908) and Öppna brev till Intima teatern (Open Letters to the Intimate Theatre) (1909) are usually published together, under the latter title, with Memorandum forming the first of five letters. Strindberg was a very shy man and abhorred public speaking, which he avoided whenever possible. The founding of a theatre for the staging of his works¹ was, however, a project very close to his heart, and he was intimately involved with every phase of its operation. Since he found it difficult to speak before the assembled members of the company, he chose this method of communicating with them his ideas about drama, the theatre, acting, directing, stage scenery, etc. Fortunately for posterity: as a result, we have a document treating theoretical and practical aspects of the theatre such as few other major playwrights have left us.

¹ A cooperative project between Strindberg and the young director, August Falck, Intima teatern operated for three years, 1907-10. During that period it gave 1,147 performances of twenty-four Strindberg plays. The theatre failed for several reasons, chief among which were financial problems and Strindberg's deteriorating health. In 1910 he ceased to write plays.

Those sections of Öppna brev which discuss the author's own plays in ways that touch on their symbolism are treated in chapters dealing with those plays: notably *Folkungasagan*, *Carl XII*, and *Engelbrekt*. These are discussed principally in the Fifth Letter. An astonishing proportion (considering that Intima teatern was established for the performance of Strindberg's own plays) of the remaining four letters is devoted to discussing the plays of Shakespeare: he uses the plays of his great predecessor as a historical dramatist to illustrate many of the points he wishes to make, presumably because he did not wish to dictate interpretations by discussing his own plays, and because the plays of Shakespeare would have been familiar to the members of the company (they were studied in the schools). This is another boon to posterity: a master of a genre freely and in detail acknowledging his debt to an illustrious predecessor, as well as a fairly detailed view of one dramatic master as seen through the eyes of another!

The areas touched upon involve such questions as characterization, the use of sources, the relationship between historical drama and history, the use of realistic (and contemporary) as opposed to heroic (and archaic) language, and how to proceed in the intelligent analysis of a play. Only one short passage has a bearing on symbolism, and that in a very general way. It is from a section (copied from *En ny blå bok*, also

known as *En blå bok II*) of the Second Letter (primarily an analysis of *Hamlet*) which deals with Shakespeare's concept of the world. Strindberg, who himself had Catholic leanings, was convinced that Shakespeare was a believing Catholic, and makes a case for this conviction based on evidence in the plays. What he has to say about the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, as evidenced in *Hamlet*, has significance for his own writings. "The glorious hero and excellent man" to whom he refers is (the Ghost of) *Hamlet's* father:

Detta känslans behov av en reningsprocess i eld, innan man inträder i de heligas sällskap, är ju vackert, och en katolik förvånas icke att finna den härlige hjälten och förträfflige mannen i ett sådant läge.²

² Samlade skrifter, L, 86:

This emotional need for a process of purification by fire before one enters into the company of the saints is beautiful, is it not, and a Catholic is not surprised to find the glorious hero and excellent man in such a situation.

Chapter 93

Stora landsvägen

Written in the spring of 1909, *Stora landsvägen*¹ (*The Great Highway*) was Strindberg's last play. As such, it is often regarded as his literary testament, although Sprinchorn argues convincingly (285-86) that, rather than marking the end of Strindberg's career, the play served as a launching pad for the last stage in the public life of this very remarkable man: the political and social debate known as *Strindbergsfejden* (*The Strindberg Controversy*), to which he devoted the rest of his life. Whichever way one regards it -- as a farewell statement or as a stepping-stone to a new career -- the fact remains that the play reviews its author's past, bringing together and synthesizing many of his life-long preoccupations.

Generically, it is also a synthesis. As its subtitle, *Ett vandringsdrama med sju stationer* (*A Pilgrimage Play with Seven Stations*), indicates, it concludes the series of pilgrimage plays which began with *Lycko-Pers resa* (1882) and *Himmelrikets nycklar* (1892) and continued with the *Till Damaskus* trilogy (1898 and 1901); indeed, it is often thought of as *Till Damaskus*

¹ *Skrifter*, XI, 397-422.

IV.² As an autobiographical, confessional play, it caps a series of non-dramatic and dramatic works which go back to *Tjänstekvinnans son* (1886). It is also a dream play, and indeed contains direct references to *Ett drömspel* (1901); it contains a good deal of biting social satire and personal invective, traits otherwise most evident in the novels *Götiska rummen* (1904) and *Svarta fanor* (1907); and it has many similarities with the chamber plays (1907 and 1909). In its spiritual concerns and especially in its ending, it recalls the Christian plays, *Advent* (1898), *Påsk* (1900), and *Kronbruden* (1901), but its Old Testament vision of God is perhaps closer to that of the history plays. Finally, the character of the Japanese, pivotal to the play, is a reflection of Strindberg's long-standing and renewed interest in Chinese and Japanese cultures.³

The central character in *Stora landsvägen* is the Hunter. He is not to be confused with the huntsman who pursues the Unknown in *Till Damaskus*; he is, rather, a

² Vide Ollén (580), who supports the classification, and Ward (269), who rejects it.

³ This interest dates back to his days (1874-81) as an assistant at the Royal Library, where he helped to catalogue the library's Chinese and Japanese holdings, and continued to the end of his life: in 1911 he published a short linguistic-ethnographic study entitled *Kina och Japan* (China and Japan) and this was followed in 1912 with a supporting work, *Kinesiska språkets härkomst* (The Origin of the Chinese Language). These studies (unfortunately, not terribly scientific) are fruits of Strindberg's last consuming hobby.

hunter after truth, and indeed the same character as the Unknown (den Okände), Strindberg's alter-ego: the connection is established by the Wanderer's referring to the Hunter as Herr Inkognito,⁴ using a romance-derived word instead of the Swedish okände. Throughout the play, he is drawn in opposite directions: a life of spiritual withdrawal and contemplation (symbolized by the Alps and the Hermit who inhabits them) and an active life in the world of men (symbolized by the second, third, and fourth "stations" on this pilgrimage: the villages of Lügenwald and Eselsdorf, and the city of Tophet. As the play opens, he is mounting the spiritual heights. His state of mind and spirit is expressed in terms of a familiar Strindberg symbol: he begins to breathe more easily:

Här kan jag andas, och mitt hjärtas hjärtblad
de spåda lungor vädra ut;
ej damm, ej rökar, icke andras andedräkter
mitt blod förgifta.⁵

From the cold ascetic heights, however, the earth below begins to look more and more inviting. The world looks much more organized from above, patterns emerge of which one was not aware, one can see where things

⁴ Skrifter, XI, 401 (sc. 2).

⁵ Ibid., 399 (sc. 1):

Here I can breathe, and let my feeble lungs,
The seed-leaves of my heart, air out;
No dust, no smoke, no air already breathed by
others
Poisons my blood here.

begin and where they end and how they fit into the whole; it all seems to make sense. As he looks down on this scene, the Hunter, who had begun his journey because he felt that the world of men was gradually suffocating him, now begins to long for what he is leaving behind: the world is a temptress, luring him back (just as Strindberg complains, in *Han och Hon*, of an earlier love who lured him away from his work):

Du fagra jord! Du fresterska,
som drar mig ned tillbaka --
Hur du har smyckat dig!
I hoppets grönt och trohets blått,
i kärleks rosenrött.
De höga pinjer målade av solnedgången,
cypresserna av grav och natt,
en klippa med ett marmortempel,
om ärans eller lyckans må vi se,
en grotta, hem för grå sibylla,
som skrämmer nymferna uti olivers lund --⁶

The vision contains two warnings which the Hunter ignores: the cypresses, the cliff, the temple and the cave all come from Böcklin's painting "The Isle of the Dead" (a copy of which was to one side of the pros-

⁶ *Skrifter*, XI, 399-400 (sc. 1):

You lovely earth! You temptress fair,
Who draw me down again --
How you have adorned yourself!
In the green of hope and the blue of faith,
In the rosy red of love.
The tall stone-pines, now painted by the
sunset,
The cypresses by shade and night,
A marble temple set atop a cliff,
Whether to Fame or Fortune we shall see,
A cave, that shelters the grey sibyl,
Who frightens foolish nymphs in the olive
groves --

cenium arch in Intima teatern, where Stora landsvägen had its première in early 1910: to the other side was the companion painting, "The Isle of the Living"); and the sibyl was Aeneas' guide to the underworld in the Aeneid! He finds the icy regions of the spirit too cold for him, and longs for the warmth of human contact, and the Hermit persuades him that he ought to descend the mountain and seek his salvation in the world. He acquires a travelling companion: a character identified as the Wanderer is also on his way down, but from higher up, and they agree to keep each other company.

Although two characters, the Hunter and the Wanderer are in fact two aspects of the same personality. This is brought out dramatically by the conversations between the two. They are, in fact, monologues, one man continuing a single thought, without interruption, where the other leaves off, as if each not only knew what the other was thinking, but were in fact thinking exactly the same thing himself. This phenomenon occurs as well between the Hunter and the Girl at the end of Scene 2. There, the significance of the Wanderer's name for the Hunter (Incognito) is clarified, and it strengthens the identity of these three characters:

JÄGARN:

....

... alla språk kan kallas främmande,
och främlingar vi äro, bli inför varandra.
Incognito vi resa alla,

FLICKAN:

och inkognito inför
oss själva!

....⁷

The first "station" the Hunter and the Wanderer visit (the second in the play, after the Alps) is the village of Lügenwald, so called "därför att det bara bor lögnare här."⁸ The scene is dominated by two windmills, one on each side of the road, which are named Adam and Eve. The place is characterized by squabbling. Adam's miller accuses Eve's of stealing the wind from his mill, and when it is pointed out that the reverse is true when the wind is blowing from the other direction, retorts that since he was on the site first the other should move elsewhere. The Hunter and the Wanderer are drawn into the dispute, are expected to return at a future date to appear before a court of law as witnesses, and are almost arrested for not possessing safe-conduct passes through the region.

⁷ *Skrifter*, XI, 404:

THE HUNTER:

....
... languages can all be called unknown,
And we are foreigners, become so to each other.

Incognito all men must travel,

THE GIRL: and are
incognito even to themselves!

....

⁸ *Ibid.*, 406 (sc. 2): "because only liars live here." Sprigge translates this name as Liarsbourne (316), but this seems unnecessary: there is no reason to think the German name would be more easily deciphered by Swedish audiences than by English ones (the Swedish equivalent, had Strindberg wished to use it, would be Lögnskog or Lögnlund)!

The scene is principally a satire on human justice: the dispute is unimportant, untenable, and illogical, and is furthermore based on lies. The importance the millers themselves give to it is indicated by the fact that it can be broken off for dinner. Nevertheless, they feel it a matter of principle and are willing to drag the matter through the courts, regardless of the expense or the inconvenience to others. The Hunter and the Wanderer are only allowed to depart in peace through the intervention of the daughter of the local squire, i.e., through influence. Mills are usually symbols of justice; here the justice is petty, corrupt, and self-serving. By calling the mills Adam and Eve, Strindberg reminds us of the Eden story: what a paradise the earth seemed from the heights, but man is not content to live in paradise, turning it into an arena for his petty ambition! There are a few nice touches: Adam was the first mill on the site, Adam's miller is the one who abandons the struggle in order to eat, and while both are corrupt, it seems to be Eve's miller who always takes the initiative!

The Wanderer goes to get the safe-conduct passes that will allow them to continue their journey, leaving the Hunter and the Girl alone briefly: this is when they discover that they are kindred spirits, sharing the same views of life and humanity. He invites the Girl to accompany them at least as far as the next vil-

lage, but a fight breaks out between Eve's miller and the Wanderer, and he advises her to leave before she too is drawn into the petty affair. In a brief soliloquy after she leaves, he expresses his frustration, at the same time underlining the symbolic significance of the mills:

Nu är jag nere! Bunden, snärjd,
i rättegångens kvarnverk dragen in,
med känslotrassels nät på smäckra vingar,
lierad med en obekant och intresserad
i en historia som icke rör mig!⁹

This involuntary involvement in the squalid affairs of others is precisely what sent the Hunter to the mountain in the first place: it can be seen in his relief there at no longer feeling poisoned by air that has been breathed by others! It is also one of the ways in which he suffers for the sins of others!

The Wanderer has promised that they will return to give evidence in three month's time, but he has had the forethought to give false names, so he and the Hunter are ready to continue their journey. The next station

⁹ Skrifter, XI, 406:

Now I am captured! Bound, ensnared,
And pulled into the mill-works of the law,
A net of muddled feelings traps my feeble
wings:
Associated with a stranger and involved
In an affair which is not my concern!

is the village of Eselsdorf¹⁰, where they look forward to witnessing a feast of fools.

Eselsdorf is a satire on the literary establishment. A literary competition is taking place there and (just as in the real world, Strindberg implies), it is the author of the worst composition who takes the prize and is rewarded with the public's esteem. It is a village of fools, and the biggest fool of all is the Blacksmith, who not only wins the literary competition, but is the mayor as well and has a wife who holds literary salons. The only sane man in the place (by his own representation; there is, in fact, no proof of this unless it be his enmity for the Blacksmith) is the Schoolmaster, who must, however, act the fool in order not to be incarcerated by the others. Strindberg is commenting sardonically on his own struggles as an artist: financial difficulties were a constant preoccupation and official recognition (induction into the Swedish Academy or receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature) never came, while lesser talents prospered. By 1909 he had achieved a position of great prominence, but not with the literary establishment, whose doors remained closed to him. Both the Blacksmith and the

¹⁰ Again, I can see no justification for Sprigge's translation of this non-Swedish name as Assesdean; if Strindberg had wished to be that obvious he could easily have given the village a Swedish name (such as Åsneby or Åsnetorp).

Schoolmaster are caricatures of literary contemporaries.¹¹ Strindberg's assessment of their talents has proved right: neither of them is now known outside of Sweden! As with Pope's *Dunciad* or Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* the satire against literary pretentiousness and pandering to the public taste stands up even after the actual butts of the satire have been forgotten.

The figure of the Blacksmith also appears in *Till Damaskus*. In *Stora landsvägen*, Strindberg is a bit more specific about what the figure means (apart from the roman-à-clef aspect mentioned above):

VANDRARN: Vem är denna smed?

SKOLMÄSTARN: Det är en Smutsgud, som Esaias talar om; han är hopsatt av de andras elakhet, avund, hat och lögner.¹²

While Isaiah does not use the term *unclean gods* (at least in any of the English translations I have consulted), he nevertheless has a great deal to say about idols, most of which is relevant to this play. Perhaps the reference Strindberg had in mind was Isaiah 2:8:

Their land also is full of idols: they have adored the work of their own hands, which

¹¹ Brandell (*Skrifter*, XI, 427), Ollén (580-81): they are Verner von Heidenstam (1859-1940, Nobel Prize 1916) and Axel Klinckowström (1867-1936), respectively.

¹² *Skrifter*, XI, 409 (sc. 3):

THE WANDERER: Who is this blacksmith?

THE SCHOOLMASTER: He's an unclean god, such as Isaiah speaks of: he is made up of the malice, envy, hatred, and lies of the others.

....

their own fingers have made. (Douay-Rheims translation.)

This quotation corresponds to the rest of the Schoolmaster's remarks: the people's literary idol is in fact their own creation, a reflection of their own tastes and weaknesses; there is as little real literary merit in ~~them~~ as there is divine power in the idols. There is another passage (Isaiah 44:9-12) which may have indicated the choice of a blacksmith:

They are all makers of idols; they are nothing and the works they prize are useless. Their servants see nothing, they understand nothing, and so they will be put to shame. Who ever fashioned a god or cast an image without hope of gain? Watch how its devotees will be put to shame, how its sculptors will blush. Let them all come together, let them appear in court. They will be both terrified and ashamed.

The blacksmith works on it over the fire and beats it into shape with a hammer. He works on it with his strong arm till he is hungry and tired.... (The Jerusalem Bible.)

Isaiah's point is that idols have no power, since they are fashioned (for profit) by ordinary mortals, who are subject to the same weaknesses as the rest of humanity. If Strindberg was indeed thinking of this passage when he made his literary imposter a blacksmith, the idol would be the man's literary works rather than the man himself. Otherwise, the correspondences are the same as for the previous quotation: those works are as devoid of insight and understanding as the public which appreciates them!

There is, however, another possible origin of the blacksmith symbol: citing Alleau,¹³ Cirlot says (28) that "the blacksmith is equivalent to the accursed poet and the despised prophet." Since this meaning is derived from traditional alchemy, presumably Strindberg would have come across it in his own alchemical studies. If he is indeed referring to this tradition, he has added a nice twist of his own: his Blacksmith is not accursed or despised by the public (who, on the contrary, adulate him), but rather by the standards of art and truth (i.e., by Strindberg himself)! No doubt the fact that a blacksmith works with base metals, as opposed to a silver- or goldsmith (true artists) is also a major consideration.

Once again, the Hunter and the Wanderer have resolved not to get involved in the affairs of the people amongst whom they find themselves, but once again they get drawn in (particularly since they begin to feel that the Schoolmaster is a kindred spirit who needs their help). Because of this, and also because everything around him is offensive to his sensibilities, the Hunter again begins to experience difficulty in breathing: "... det måste ha ett slut! Jag kvävs!"¹⁴

¹³ Renè Alleau, *Aspects de l'alchimie traditionnelle* [Paris, 1952].

¹⁴ *Skrifter*, XI, 409: "... is there no end to this! I'm suffocating!"

They resolve to leave Eselsdorf as quickly as possible, taking the Schoolmaster with them, and, once again through deception, they manage to arrange this. Again, they promise to return at a future date, this time to attend one of the literary salons given by the Blacksmith's wife.

The next station on their journey is an arcade in the city of Tophet. Brandell reminds us (*Skrifter*, XI, 427) that Tophet is the name by which Strindberg referred to Stockholm in *En blå bok*. The name is biblical: 2 Kings 23:10 tells us that Tophet, a valley south of Jerusalem, was once the scene of human sacrifices (of first-born children) to the Canaanite god Moloch, and that the reforming king, Josiah, defiled the site with dead bodies, ordure, and other unclean things in order to prevent its further use as a religious site. A perpetual fire was kept burning in order to consume the refuse deposited there (Isaiah 30:33), and it became a symbol of Hell. The meaning of the Hebrew name is obscure, but could be "a place to be spat upon" (Benét, 2: 1017).

Strindberg could be and often was quite lyrical about Stockholm; at other times he saw it as Tophet, filled with every abomination and everlasting fire. Such was his mood when he wrote this play, but he nevertheless makes it clear that the city has a great hold over the Hunter: he has lived here, and it holds many

things which have been dear to him (including his daughter). Of all the places he visits, this is the one most likely to make him abandon his search for the truth. Indeed, part of him does remain here, for it is here the Wanderer parts company with the Hunter: he has been mesmerized by the stare of a waitress in the arcade restaurant, and despite his wish to continue the journey, cannot leave her. We later learn that the girl is, in fact, the Hunter's daughter. The sociable family man is separated from the increasingly ascetic Hunter after truth. The latter knows that family life is not for him and feels that wisdom does not lie in that direction for any man: when his travelling companion abandons the quest because of a woman, his comment is terse but eloquent: "En man över bord! --"¹⁵ He has already been abandoned by the Schoolmaster, who also proved no searcher after the truth: once he had used the Hunter and the Wanderer to obtain what he wanted, he disappeared without so much as a thank-you! He who pursues the truth must travel alone!

The main object of satirical attack in Tophet is commerce: everyone the Hunter meets there is a shop-keeper, with the exception of the Organ-grinder, and he too is a man of business. Like the Schoolmaster, they are only interested in him for what they can get from

¹⁵ Skrifter, XI, 412 (sc. 4): "Man overboard!"

him, and they all try to sell him things or services for which he has no need or desire. But there is another satirical butt: Darwinism. Having accepted the teachings of Swedenborg, Strindberg was unable to accept Darwin's theory, and he regarded those who did so as a lower order of humanity, who sought in Darwin justification for their own inferiority. As "Tschandala" (1888), "Den starkare", "Paria" (both 1890), and *I havsbandet* (1892) demonstrate, he had once believed in Darwin's theories, particularly that of the survival of the fittest, but after the Inferno crisis the idea that man was descended from lower life forms was entirely repugnant to him, and Darwinism was rejected in its entirety. The appearance of the Organ-grinder with his monkey provide an opportunity for a little fun at the expense of Darwinism:

VANDRARN: Är det sant att ni här i staden härstamma från en markatta?

POSITIVSPELAREN: Om det är sant? Akta sig han!

VANDRARN: När jag betraktar dig närmare, så tror jag också det är sant! -- Jag är säker på det, jag vill svära på det!¹⁶

¹⁶ *Skrifter*, XI, 411:

THE WANDERER: Is it true that you here in the city are descended from a monkey?*

THE ORGAN-GRINDER: Is it true? Watch your step!

THE WANDERER: When I look at you more closely, I also believe it's true! -- I'm certain of it; I'll swear to it!

* strictly speaking, en markatta is a guenon, or green monkey, but it seems likely that Strindberg is using

The Organ-grinder shows him a text that was to accompany the music he has been forbidden to play. An illustration purports to be the head of Zeus, but resembles that of a ram: a fitting god for creatures who claim to be descended from animals! But the horned deity is also a reminder of Satan, and this touches upon one of Strindberg's chief objections to Darwinism: that it displaces religion, substituting in the place of the Creator the bestial and amoral. This danger is brought out in an exchange occasioned by another illustration, perhaps of Darwin himself (although the red costume and the fire from the pistol also suggest Satan):

VANDRARN: Tror du verkligen att det där däggdjuret i röda fracken som skjuter med pistol är människosläktets fader?

POSITIVSPELAREN: Om herrn är fritänkare, så ska herrn akta sig ... Vi äro ortodoxa här i stan och vi äro trons försvarare.

VANDRARN: Vilken tro?

POSITIVSPELAREN: Den enda sanna: descensläran.¹⁷

the term in a more generic sense.

¹⁷ *Skrifter*, XI, 411:

THE WANDERER: Do you really think that mammal in the red tail-coat shooting a pistol is the father of mankind?

THE ORGAN-GRINDER: If the gentleman is a freethinker, he'd best be careful ... We here in the city are orthodox, and defenders of the faith.

THE WANDERER: What faith?

THE ORGAN-GRINDER: The one true faith: the doctrine of evolution.

This scene is linked to the preceding one, then, not only through the disappearance of the Schoolmaster, but also through the presence in both of false gods: honour and respect wrongfully placed.

As the shopkeepers cluster around the Hunter, now alone, he determines to put a stop to their importunities, and does so by asking them three times if a murderer named Möller has been arrested yet. This touches on the city's great secret: everyone knows that Möller has committed a murder, but the man goes unpunished because of legal technicalities. Since the legal system is theirs, they are all accomplices in his crime.

We are not told who Möller is, except that he has raised the Hunter's daughter. In fact, he is a real person named Carl Möller, the brother-in-law of Harriet Bosse, who had occasionally looked after Strindberg's daughter, Anne-Marie, even though the child's father would have done so willingly. His "murder" was his support of Harriet Bosse's engagement to Gunnar Wingård, destroying forever Strindberg's hopes of reconciliation with wife and child. The engagement took place April 4, 1907. Thus, the following exchange:

MÖRDARN (...): Jag kan inte se blod, det är
en egenhet hos mig!
JÄGARN: Sedan den fjärde april!¹⁸

¹⁸ Skrifter, XI, 416 (sc. 5):

THE MURDERER (...): One of my peculiarities
is that I can't stand the sight of blood.
THE HUNTER: Since the fourth of April!

That Strindberg included Möller in the play under his own name is an indication of just how bitter he felt towards him. The divorce from Harriet Bosse in 1904, in contrast to his first two divorces, had been quite cordial. On the other hand, there had been no special arrangements for the custody and support of the child, so Strindberg had no recourse against the decisions of his ex-wife. Indeed, it seems that both parties continued to hope for a reconciliation right up to Harriet's remarriage, but increasingly realized that they in fact had very little in common (Modéer, 146-52). Strindberg felt increasing alone (and lonely), particularly when even the hope (however tenuous) of reconciliation was taken from him. His complaint is that he has always lived his life openly (to which his many autobiographical writings testify), whereas his enemies (including Möller) have worked in secret and behind his back, and society condones their behaviour while he must suffer! Once again others are committing the outrages, and he is the one who suffers the consequences: suffering for the sins of others!

As the Hunter prepares to leave the arcade, he pauses at the photographer's shop. The shop was once his, and the photographs still displayed in the window

—
Information in this paragraph from Ollén (581).

are of his friends and family (including his child). This is a reminder of Strindberg's long-standing interest in photography.¹⁹ But the photographs also serve as symbols of memory: memories of people not seen for some time are like photographs: suspended in time, frozen in attitude, constant reminders of what once was and can be no more. As he now reviews the images of those he has loved, he finds no comfort, only pain at what he has lost:

... För mycket länge sedan --
allt detta upphört vara,
men är ännu -- i minnet!
Den eld som ej kan släckas,
som brinner men ej värmer --
som brinner men ej brinner opp ...²⁰

¹⁹ This interest goes all the way back to 1861, when Strindberg was only twelve, and continued throughout his life. He was an accomplished and innovative photographer, and even considered abandoning literature for photography as late as 1892. (Hemmingsson.)

²⁰ *Skrifter*, XI, 413:

... A lot of time has passed --
Since all this ceased to be,
But it lives on -- in memory!
The fire which can't be quenched,
Which burns but gives no warmth --
Which burns without consuming ...*

* There is a allusion here to the burning bush in which God revealed himself to Moses (Exodus 3:1-6): it burned but was not consumed. The point of the allusion seems to be that memory, while painful, is purgatorial (purifying), and therefore divine.

Next, the Hunter meets the Japanese, who has an oriental tea and perfume shop in the arcade. Having left his native land in consequence of a misdeed, he came to Tophet, where he resolved to make a new start as an honest and respectable man, but he found that there is no place for such qualities there: nobody would buy his wares until he began selling dried black-thorn and raspberry leaves as tea and synthetic rather than naturally derived perfumes! This he did, but his conscience gives him no rest, and now he seeks release through death (hara kiri): "Döden först kan befria mig, ty det mesta onda sitter i köttet; själen har jag renat genom lidandet --"²¹

This is the turning point in the play (which, like *Till Damaskus I*, is symmetric: a descent to the depths and a reascent). The Japanese asks for and receives the Hunter's assistance in arranging his death, which is tranquil and noble. His ideas on the transitoriness of life (particularly of life's joys), his attitude to death, and especially his belief in an afterlife, all help the Hunter to work through his own spiritual crisis. He will not imitate the Japanese by taking his own life, but through the encounter he derives the strength to sever the ties which still bind him to the world; he

²¹ Skrifter, XI, 414: "Only death can free me now, for the evil resides chiefly in the flesh: my soul I've purified through suffering --"

will return to the mountain, but this time there will be no looking back!

Strindberg has been credited with prophetic powers (Sprigge, 298; Ollén, 581) in his naming of this Japanese who seeks death in flames: in Tophet he goes by the name of his native city, Hiroshima: a seemingly inexplicable choice thirty-six years before the dropping of the atomic bomb on that city! There is an explanation, however. Strindberg believed that the origin of all languages was Hebrew, and his linguistic studies of Chinese and Japanese were attempts to demonstrate that theory.²² In *Kina och Japan*, he has this to say about the original settlers of Japan and the name of Hiroshima:

Urinnevånarne hette Yezo, eller Jebisu, som jag fick till jebuséer, vilka i äldsta tider sutto i Jebus som sedan blev Jeruscha-lem, som sannolikt ännu återfinnes i Japans Hiroschima (= Hierosolyma).²³

Well, it is not very probable at all, but the fact that Strindberg believed the name Hiroshima to be a variant of Jerusalem is of great interest, for the name then

²² Lennart Utterström, in his introduction to the reissue, in facsimile, of *Kinesiska språkets härkomst*.

²³ *Samlade skrifter*, LII, 460:

The original settlers were called Yezo, or Jebisu. I identify them with the Jebusites, who in oldest times inhabited Jebus, which later became Jerusalem. It is very probable that that name can still be discerned in Japan's Hiroshima (= Hierosolyma).

forms part of the resurrection symbolism which surrounds this character. The Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe whom the Israelites were unable to destroy, and who eventually lived in harmony with them in Jerusalem (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21), a circumstance which in itself could be taken as a figure of immortality; there is also the destruction of Jerusalem foretold by Christ (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 19:41-44 et passim) and the vision in the Apocalypse (21:2) of the New Jerusalem, another example of death and resurrection.

The death which the Japanese has chosen for himself is to be burned alive. The earthly fire of passion has become for the Hunter the infernal fire of memory (which burns, but neither warms nor consumes); here we have the purgatorial fire, which purifies by burning away that which is corrupted, leaving that which is immortal, the soul:

JÄGARN: Vad kan jag hjälpa er med?

JAPANEN: Detta! -- Jag tar en sömndryck att jag blir som död -- ni låter lägga mig i en kista, som föres till krematoriet ...

JÄGARN: Men om ni vaknar -- ?

JAPANEN: Det är just vad jag räknar på!

I ett ögonblick vill jag känna eldens renande, försonande kraft -- lida en kort stund -- och så erfara befrielsens salighet

--24

24 Skrifter, XI, 414:

THE HUNTER: How can I help you?

THE JAPANESE: Like this! -- I'll take a sleeping draught in order to appear dead -- you will have me laid in a coffin, which will be delivered to the crematorium ...

THE HUNTER: But what if you wake up -- ?

THE JAPANESE: That's just what I'm counting

The Japanese leaves in order to prepare for his death, and the Hunter meets another figure from his past: the murderer Möller. Their first exchange connects the Hunter with the Japanese (and both with Strindberg himself):

MÖLLER ([Mördarn] in; ... fixerar Jägarn):
 Är det inte? ...
 JÄGARN: Näh, det är det inte!
 MÖRDARN: Jaså, då är det ...
 JÄGARN: Nej; har varit ... Den du menar,
 han finns inte mer ...
 MÖRDARN: Du är död således?
 JÄGARN: Ja! -- För tolv år sedan begick jag
 hara-kiri; jag avrättade mitt gamla jag; och
 den du här ser känner du icke, kan aldrig få
 lära känna!²⁵

Twelve years before the date of this play was 1897, the year in which Strindberg's *Inferno* appeared, and the end of the spiritual crisis which it records. It was the major turning point in his life: the freethinker, the supporter of the theories of Darwin and Nietzsche,

on!

In an moment I'll know the purifying, propitiatory power of the fire -- suffer for a few minutes -- and then experience the bliss of release --

²⁵ *Skrifter*, XI, 415:

MÖLLER ([the Murderer] enters; ... stares at the Hunter): Aren't you ... ?
 THE HUNTER: No, I'm not!
 THE MURDERER: I see; then you're ...
 THE HUNTER: No: I was ... The man you're thinking of doesn't exist anymore.
 THE MURDERER: Then you're dead?
 THE HUNTER: Yes! -- Twelve years ago I committed hara kiri; I executed my old self; and the man you see before you, you don't know, can never get to know!

and the naturalist, became the searcher after spiritual truth, the disciple of Swedenborg, and the expressionist (*Till Damaskus I* and *II* were written the following year). The exile accused of blasphemy in 1884 prepared for his return to Sweden (in April, 1898), a changed man. He describes his reception there in the following lines: rather than being welcomed with joy as a prodigal son returned to the fold, he was greeted with the disdain of the self-righteous for the self-acknowledged sinner!

The play can be regarded, then, as a symbolic account of Strindberg's life during those twelve years: the opening scene, with its first tentative ascent of the mountain represents the Inferno crisis, the descent of the mountain his return to Sweden, in the hope that he could work out his salvation there, among places and people he had loved, and the other stations his growing disappointment with all aspects of Swedish (and human) society, to the point where he is now ready to abandon the pursuit of earthly happiness and turn once more to the search for truth in spiritual regions. The separation from the Wanderer, who forsakes the journey for the sake of a woman, can be viewed as Strindberg's last attempt to find happiness in marriage; when the Wanderer leaves him, that part of his life is over, and he is left truly alone.

The behaviour of the waitress who enticed the Wanderer was quite shameless, and when the Hunter now dis-

covers that the girl was his own daughter, made common and corrupt by having been raised by Möller, the last hold Tophet has on him snaps. He grows pale, grasps at his heart, and coughs up blood: his heart is breaking and his lungs are been poisoned once more by the breath of other men!

The fifth station is the crematorium park, where the Hunter has arranged to meet the Japanese before the latter's suicide. The Hunter enters alone and, seeing the columbarium, muses bitterly over some of the ashes there. The dead "idolator" is, in fact, Gustaf af Geijerstam (1858-1909), who had once been Strindberg's friend but was later a literary enemy. Strindberg tore into him in *Svarta fanor* and the attack was so merciless and virulent that it was believed to have hastened Geijerstam's death (Sprinchorn, 281). This is the meaning of the Hunter's remark "... när jag klädde av dig, dog du!"²⁶ There is no remorse here, no apology; Strindberg clearly wished to show that he did not regret a word of his attack! When he is reproached for this attitude by the Murderer, the Hunter defends himself by saying that he never did evil for evil's sake, but always acted only out of self-defence, unlike the Murderer, whose victim (the Hunter himself) had never done anything to harm him. He then frightens the Mur-

²⁶ Skrifter, XI, 416: "... when I exposed you, you died!"

derer off by showing him his bloody handkerchief, proof of what he has suffered at his hands.

The scene ends with a conversation between the Hunter and the Japanese, as they wait for the crematorium oven to get good and hot. It is a short philosophical discourse of the meaning (or meaninglessness) of life, which both have found far more bitter than death. But all is not bitterness: the soul, imprisoned within the body, has suffered most from life's humiliations, and when it is released from bondage it will at last know happiness and peace!

JAPANEN (...):

....
och själen, anden, sitter dock i hjärtat,
som fågeln lik i bröstets bur,
en hönskorg eller ryssja.

Du lilla fågel, snart jag öppnar buren,
och du får flyga -- till ditt land,
till blommornas och solens öar,
där en gång jag blev född,
men ej fick dö!²⁷

We learn a bit more of the Hunter's past; he has been a preacher (a reference to Strindberg's religious

²⁷ Skrifter, XI, 416:

THE JAPANESE (...):

....
But the soul, the spirit, sits within the
heart,
a bird within a cage of ribs,
a chicken coop, or bag-net.

You little bird, I'll open up your cage soon;
Then you may fly -- to that far land,
To the isles of flowers and the sun,
Where one day I was born,
But could not die!

plays, or perhaps to his earlier works of social criticism), but abandoned that profession when he realized that the ideals he preached were not attainable. The Japanese is able to turn even that pessimistic note into a cause for hope: the mere existence of ideals is evidence of a better world!

JÄGARN:

....

Det sköna existerar ej i livet --
kan ej förverkligas härnere --
och idealet finns ej i praktiken!

JAPANEN:

Jag vet det -- men det är ett minne,
ett hopp, en båk att segla efter --
och därför: stället fullt!
Låt flaggorna få blåsa ut,
de sitta högt, men synas bättre ...
och visa vägen upp -- mot solen!²⁸

The end of the scene is fraught with symbolism. As the Japanese rises to go to his death, he sees in the now glowing ovens the rosy dawning of a new day, and takes his leave of life: "Välkommen, dag! Farväl, du

²⁸ Skrifter, XI, 417:

THE HUNTER:

....

The beautiful does not exist in life --
Cannot be realized down here --
And the ideal does not work out in practice!

THE JAPANESE:

I know that -- but it's a reminder,
a hope, a beacon towards which to sail --
and therefore set full sails!
Let banners flutter in the wind:
They fly so high the better to be seen ...
and point the way upward -- to the sun!

natt! / Med dina tunga drömmar!"²⁹ After he has gone, the stage lights up and on a cloud in the background is projected a picture of the Land of Desire: the Promised Land which the Hunter has already glimpsed in the first scene of the play, and which he has been trying to find throughout its course. The Girl in Scene 2 assured him that he would reach it, if only he did not tire along the way (in which case the farther he travelled the more it would withdraw from him); now, through his encounter with the Japanese, he knows where it is to be found: not in the world at all, but beyond! The Isle of the Blessed is the Isle of the Dead!

When Scene 6 opens, the Hunter is wandering in a daze, abstracted in thought and not aware of his surroundings. His soliloquy gives us a history of Strindberg's psychological states during the twelve years since the Inferno crisis. The madhouse imagery with which the speech begins is important in *Till Damaskus I*, the first play written after the crisis:

När först min tanke vaknade,
och det gick upp för mig
att jag var instängd i ett dårhus,
ett tukthus, kurhus,
då önskade jag mig ifrån förståndet,
att ingen skulle ana vad jag tänkte --
"Teló, Teló manänai!"
Jag vill, jag ville vara galen!
Och vinet blev min vän --
i rusets slöjor gömde jag mig,
i rusets narldräkt glömde man mig,

²⁹ Skrifter, XI, 417: "Oh, welcome, day! Farewell, you night! / With your oppressive dreams!"

och anade ej vem jag var --
Nu har den ändrat sig,
och glömskans dryck har blivit minnets --
allt minns jag, allt --
insegeln äro brutna, böckerna slås upp!
De läsa själva högt;
och när mitt öra tröttats, ser jag;
jag ser, ser allt, allt, allt!
(Vaknar.)³⁰

³⁰ Skrifter, XI, 418:

When first my thoughts awakened,
And it was clear to me
That I was shut up in a madhouse,
reformatory, sanatorium,
I wished that I had lost my mind completely,
so nobody could guess what I was thinking --
"Thelò, Thelò manènai!"*
I wish, I wished that I were mad!
And wine became my friend --
In drunken mists I hid myself,
In drunken motley I was quite forgotten,
And no one guessed at who I was --
Now everything has changed,
And memory is honed, not dulled, by drink --
It all floods back --
The seals have all been broken, the books are
open wide!
They read themselves aloud;
And when my ears grow tired, I see;
I see, see all, all, all!
(He awakens.)

* I desire, I desire to go mad!

One is reminded of the brief correspondence between Strindberg and Nietzsche (reprinted in *Obliques*: see bibliography under Nietzsche) in late 1888 and early 1889 (when Nietzsche was already seriously deranged, but several years before Strindberg's own mental crisis), in which each strives to impress the other with the extent of his madness!

He comes to in an idyllic seaside landscape, in which he meets his daughter, who is once again a young girl. She does not recognize him, and he introduces himself as Cartaphilus and (when she rejects that name) Ahasuerus, the names by which the Wandering Jew was known in English and German versions, respectively, of his legend. According to the legend, he was a Jew who had taunted Christ that he was not moving quickly enough as He carried His cross to Golgotha, for which he was condemned to tarry (i.e., remain alive) until the Second Coming. Periodically rejuvenated to the age of thirty and grown extremely wise, he has spent the intervening centuries wandering the earth, exhorting men to repent their sins and avoid the wrath of God. Significantly, some versions of the legend connect him with the Wild Huntsman, who haunts certain forests with a pack of ghostly dogs in punishment for a similar offense to Christ (Benét, II, 1071 and 1091). Several elements of the legend(s) make the Hunter's allusion very apt: principally, of course, the wandering, penitential aspects, but also the converted blasphemer and the expectation of release through a religious experience (the Second Coming). The Wild Huntsman, who ever pursues his game but never captures it, is a symbol of the vanity of earthly existence, and applies to the Hunter as long as he seeks happiness in this world.

The child, whose name is Maria (Strindberg's youngest child was named Anne-Marie), also plays a sym-

bolic role. Stockenström has pointed out (11) Strindberg's use of the child, in the tradition of the romantics³¹, as a symbol of the pre-existence and immortality of the soul. That association is very strong in this scene, which closes with a rhapsody on the child that points both backwards and forwards to a happier existence; the Hunter finds in this encounter the strength to carry him through the last station before once again ascending the mountain:

...
du vackra liknelse, en liknelse
som haltar, men är vacker!
Ett minne kanske, eller mer än så:
ett hopp -- en sommardag i skog
vid havet -- namnsdagsbord och vagga!
En stråle sol ur barnaögon,
en gåva av en liten hand --
och så framåt igen och ut -- i mörkret!³²

There is a faint suggestion of the Child Jesus in the cradle and the little hand placed confidently in the Hunter's. The child's association with the afterlife is strengthened by association with the sun.

³¹ Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" is a good example.

³² *Skrifter*, XI, 419:

You lovely parable, a parable
that falters, but is lovely!
A memory perhaps, or, more than that,
A hope -- a summer day in woods
Beside the sea -- name-day cake and cradle!
A ray of sun from childish eyes,
A little hand reached out in trust --
And so onward again and out -- in darkness!

Indeed, the sun is one of the dominant symbols of the play. The aspect of sun symbolism focused upon is its immutability: it sets (i.e., dies) every evening, but rises again every morning, and it does so without undergoing transformations (unlike the moon, with its waxing and waning). As Cirlot puts it (303):

... whereas the Moon must suffer fragmentation (since it wanes) before it can reach its monthly stage of three-day disappearance, the Sun does not need to die in order to descend into hell; it can reach the ocean or the lake of the Lower Waters and cross it without being dissolved.

The sun, then, is an apt symbol of the immortality of the soul, and the rising sun of resurrection, whereas the body, which, according to Christian doctrine, will also be resurrected on the Last Day, must first moulder in the earth, and is therefore lunar.

We see this symbolism operating in the Hunter's vision of the earth he has left behind in the first scene: the high places are illuminated by the setting sun, whereas the valleys (to which he returns) are in shadow (the same will be true when the sun rises). It is also, and more strongly, present in the Japanese's perception of the glowing crematorium ovens as the rudeness of sunrise, and in his conviction that after its release from his body his soul will return (symbolically) to Japan (as the Japanese flag indicates -- and the version Strindberg would have known was even more graphic than the present one -- Japan is the Land of

the Rising Sun). And it is here in Scene 6, as the Hunter leaves the sun-bathed encounter with his child to enter the darkness of the final station: his sun is setting, but will rise again!

The last station is "mörka skogen:" the dark forest. The Hunter's pilgrimage is at an end. He has found the knowledge he was seeking: that the world holds nothing for him, and that his fulfillment lies in death and in what lies beyond. But before he can reascend the mountain, he passes through an experience mystics call "the dark night of the soul," in which the powers of darkness rally in a last attempt to claim the soul as theirs. The Hunter has finally realized that life is a hell, or at very best a purgatory, in which the soul is purified by suffering. Now he sees that hell all around him, in the form of primordial darkness, and is confronted with his final temptations.

We know from the outset that the Hunter will survive these final trials: not only has the previous scene ended with the child-sun symbolism, but he also gets reassurance from a voice in the darkness:

JÄGARN: Allena! -- Har förlorat vägen --
I mörkret!

"Och Elias satte sig under enebärsträdet
och han önskade sig döden och sade: Det är
nog! Tag mitt liv, Herre!"

RÖSTEN (i mörkret): Den som vill mista sitt

liv, han skall behålla det.³³

The feelings of abandonment and self-doubt are common elements in the "dark night of the soul" experience: the soul is being tempted towards despair. The quotation from the story of Elijah is significant, for in the incident from which it is taken, Elijah does not die: after recovering his strength with supernatural assistance,

³³ Skrifter, XI, 419:

THE HUNTER: Alone! -- I've lost my way --
In darkness!

"... and [Elijah] ... sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life...."*

THE VOICE (in the darkness): Whoever wishes to lose his life will preserve it.**

* 1 Kings 19:4 (King James translation; in translations based on the Vulgate this is 3 Kings 19:4).

** The gospels record several variants of this saying of Christ: Matthew 10:39 and 16:25; Mark 8:35; and Luke 9:24 and 17:33. All of the contexts seem appropriate to the play, but Luke 17:33 is closest to the wording Strindberg uses here. A sequel to one of the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Second Coming, it immediately follows an admonition to remember the fate of Lot's wife, who looked back with longing on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah!

...he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

(1 Kings 19:8. King James translation.) Indeed, Elijah is himself a figure of the immortality of the soul, for despite the wish he expresses here (and as confirmation of the principle expounded by Christ and echoed by the Voice), Elijah never dies: when his earthly days are over he is whisked bodily into heaven in a flaming chariot (2 Kings 2:11).

Strindberg specifies that throughout this final scene music should be played quietly in the background ("på avstånd": distantly), and has chosen Chopin's Nocturne 13 (Opus 48, no. 1): not triumphant music, certainly, but quiet, reflective, and peaceful: not despairing either!

In this dark forest there are two tempters. The first to confront the Hunter is the Woman, who, though blind, recognizes him, and tells him that she believes in him. What is being represented here is the blind adulation and cult of personality among the general public (as opposed to the literary establishment, whom we met in Lügenwald): on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (January 22, 1909), Stockholm had feted Strindberg in celebrations which included a torchlight procession to his home in Blå tornet, where the assembled multitudes sang for and cheered the man who for so long had been shunned. When he rebukes her, telling her

to believe in God alone, she begins to bring up incidents from his past life.

The Hunter has been a lawyer, defending truth against the idolators, among whom he includes the Woman:

Jag var den Ende Sannes sakförare, emot avgudadyrkarna -- ni ville alltid dyrka, er själva, era släktingar, era vänner -- men ni ville aldrig ge enkel rättvisa --³⁴

When she berates him for abandoning the law, he says that he was once deceived into feeling sorry for a wrongdoer, and thereafter felt unworthy to represent justice. Similarly, he has given up the profession of preacher because he realized that what he was preaching could not be realized in this world. These are references to Strindberg's social and religious works, and why he no longer produces them. Perhaps an indication of the future course of Strindberg's life as a champion of social democracy against a conservative establishment, is predicted in a following exchange:

KVINNAN: Vill du föra människornas sak ännu?

³⁴ Skriffter, XI, 419:

I was defence attorney for the One True God against the idolators -- you always wanted to idolize: yourselves, your relations, your friends -- but you never wanted to give simple justice --

JÄGARN: När de ha rätt, eljes icke! --³⁵

Things turn nasty when she calls him a prosecutor rather than a defender, accusing him of bringing charges against the administration (styrelsen): she is trying to manipulate him into recanting or at least regretting his attacks upon those he has characterized as idolators. She is not successful, for he recognizes her as the Tempter and rejects her with the words Christ used to repel the temptations of Satan in the desert: "Gå hädan, Satan! Innan du frestar mig till hädelser!"³⁶

He shows her his bloody handkerchief as proof of how much he has suffered and continues to suffer. It is a token of vicarious expiation, like the handkerchiefs people used to dip into the blood of an executed man in order to cure dropsy: he has suffered not only for his own sins, but also for the sins of others! She cor-

³⁵ Skrifter, XI, 419:

THE WOMAN: Do you still want to plead for mankind?

THE HUNTER: When they are right; otherwise, no! --

³⁶ Ibid., 420: "'Get thee hence, Satan!'" Before you tempt me to blasphemy!"

*Matthew 4:10 (King James translation). The words are linked to another sentiment which the Hunter echoed upon first encountering the Woman: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

rectly identifies the source of the blood: he is in the process of coughing up his heart!

It is important to note that the Hunter does not feel himself an innocent victim, like Magnus Eriksson in *Folkungasagan*; he is, rather, like Bishop Kol in *Bjälbo-jarlen*, suffering for his own sins as well as those of others: he is a scapegoat rather than a lamb without spot:

JÄGARN: (...):

Bocken är som bekant intet rent djur, men på den stora försoningsdagen fick han allt folkets synder över sig att bära; och så utrustad drevs han ut i ödemarken att förtäras av vilda djur! Det var syndbocken!

KVINNAN: Menar du dig ha lidit för andras fel?

JÄGARN: För egna och för andras; alltså även andras!³⁷

In what sounds very much like a literary testament, the Hunter dismisses the cult of personality (Strindberg was very shy, and did not enjoy being fussed over), saying that he does not wish to be remembered for who or what he was, but rather for what he

³⁷ *Skrifter*, XI, 420:

THE HUNTER (...):

The goat, as you know, is not a clean animal, but on the great day of atonement he was given the sins of all the people to bear; and so laden he was driven out into the desert to be devoured by wild beasts! That was the scapegoat!

THE WOMAN: Do you believe that you've suffered for the faults of others?

THE HUNTER: For my own and for those of others; consequently, even for those of others!

has done. And not for everything he has done either, but for one specific sphere of activity. Yet another of his former professions has been that of architect (cf. the common derivation of the word poet from the Greek word for maker), and of all his buildings there is only one by which he wants to be remembered:

JÄGARN: Det var i staden Thofeth, där jag byggt teaterhuset.

KVINNAN: Det anses vackert!

JÄGARN: Behåll det då i minnet, när jag upphört vara -- och glöm mig!

KVINNAN: "Jag är icke, blott vad gott, jag uträttat, är."³⁸

The Woman has one final charge before she disappears: she accuses the Hunter of lack of sympathy for his fellow human beings. His reply is that if the charge were true it would be understandable -- nobody has ever shown fellow-feeling for him, so he could hardly be criticized for not reflecting it back -- but he believes that his works belie the charge. The Woman has no answer to that, and disappears without a word:

KVINNAN:

Varför hade ni aldrig medlidande med era medmänniskor?

³⁸ Skrifter, XI, 420:

THE HUNTER: That was in the city of Tophet, where I built the theatre-house.

THE WOMAN: It is considered beautiful!

THE HUNTER: Then retain that in your memory when I have ceased to be -- and forget me!

THE WOMAN:

"I am not;
only the good
that I have done
is."

JÄGARN: Frågan är orätt framställd! Säg ni nå'nsin någon ha medlidande med mig? Nej! -- Hur kunde jag då besvara känslor, som icke skänktes mig? -- Och för övrigt, vem var det som först predikade: "Det är synd om människorna!"

KVINNAN (försvinner).

*

JÄGARN: Hon gick!

De gå alltid, när man vill försvara sig!³⁹

Finally, the Tempter enters. The Hunter's final temptation is the offer of a position as court architect to the Grand Duke (Satan himself!), with a large salary, lodging, firewood, full board, etc., all on the condition that he conduct himself as a normal person! The Hunter turns this offer down outright: "Han begär icke mitt arbete, utan han begär min själ ..."⁴⁰ The price of official recognition, Strindberg fears, is far too high!

³⁹ *Skrifter*, XI, 420:

THE WOMAN:

Why did you never feel compassion for your fellow men?

THE HUNTER: The question is unjustly put! Did you ever see anyone have compassion on me? No! -- How could I then reciprocate feelings never shown to me? -- And besides, who was it that first preached, "Mankind is to be pitied!"*

THE WOMAN (disappears).

*

THE HUNTER: She has gone!

They always go, when you want to defend yourself!

* Indra's Daughter, in *Ett drömspel*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 421: "He isn't asking for my work, he's asking for my soul ..."

The play closes with a long soliloquy in verse. He has found no happiness, no comfort, no warmth in the world, only greed, vengeance, idolatry, deceit, pettiness, and dishonour. He does not belong here: "En resande i andras land / är alltid främling, ensam."⁴¹ One thing only has brought him joy: the encounter with the child. And that encounter, far from binding him to earth, has encouraged him to look for happiness beyond:

Du lilla barn, du sista ljusa minne,
som följer mig i nattlig skog!
På sista färden till det fjärran land --
de fyllda önskningarnas land,
som hägrade från alpens höjd,
men skymdes ner i dalarna --
av landsvägsdamm, av skorstensrök!
Vart tog du vägen, sköna syn,
du längtans land, du drömmars?

Om blott en syn, jag vill dig återse
från snövit höjd, i glasklar luft --⁴²

He realizes now that the land which beckoned so seductively from the mountain heights was not the Isle

⁴¹ Skrifter, XI, 421: "A traveller in another's land / is always a stranger, alone."

⁴² Ibid., 421:

You little child, you one last lovely memory,
You're with me in the forest's gloom!
On my last journey to the distant land --
The land of realized desires,
Which beckoned from the mountain's top,
But was obscured down in the dales --
By highway dust and chimney smoke!
Where have you gone, most lovely sight,
Land of yearning and of dreams?

Even if a mirage, I want to see you again
From snow-capped heights, in glass-clear air

--

of the Living, but the Isle of the Dead, and he resolves to journey towards it, this time with no regrets, no looking back. He will join the Hermit on the mountain, and there await the release of his soul from its cage of ribs. He will be buried under the white blanket of the snow, upon which the Hermit will write his epitaph. The epitaph he composes for himself combines the two biblical characters with whom Strindberg has most strongly identified throughout his life: Ishmael, the son of the bondswoman (tjänstekvinnans son) and Jacob, who wrestled with God and would not release his grip until he had received a blessing:

Här vilar Ismael, Hagars son,
 som en gång nämndes Israel,
 emedan han fått kämpa kamp med gud,
 och släppte icke striden forrän nedlagd,
 besegrad av hans allmakts godhet.
 O evige, Jag släpper ej din hand,
 din hårda hand, förrn du välsignat!
 Välsigna mig, din mänsklighet,
 som lider, lider av din livsens gåva!
 Mig först, som lidit mest --
 som lidit mest av smärtan
 att icke kunna vara den jag ville!⁴³

⁴³ Skrifter, XI, 421-22:

Here lies Ishmael, Hagar's son,
 Who once was known as Israel,
 Because he dared to wrestle with his God,
 And did not waver until quite defeated,
 And conquered by almighty goodness.
 Oh Everlasting! I won't free your hand,
 Your steely hand, until you bless me!
 Oh bless me, your humanity,
 who suffers, suffers from your gift of life!
 Me first; I've suffered most --
 Have suffered most from anguish
 That I could not be that which I desired!

So ends Strindberg's last play. One would have liked Svarta handsken, with its mood of peace and reconciliation, to have been Strindberg's last dramatic statement, but "the greatest fire in all of Sweden" continued to rage right up to the end (which was still three years in the future). It is a play that contains much bitterness, but by means of the play he works through his bitterness and goes beyond it; it is significant that the blessing he seeks at the play's end is not sought in his own name, but in that of all humanity! And he himself continued to the end, sails set full and banners flying high, with the beacon of hope ever before him.

A final word about another kind of symbolism in the play. The great highway of Strindberg's life was Stockholm's Drottninggatan and its extension northward, Nortullsgatan: he was born at one end of the street, and is buried at the other, in Stockholm's Nya kyrkogården (the New Cemetery); his funeral procession was along its length. As it proceeded along this road, it passed many locations that had played a part in his life, including the Observatory park where he had played as a child, and Blå tornet, his last residence. It was on this street that he had first caught sight of Siri von Essen, and it was here he withdrew when his third and last marriage had failed. Ollén has pointed out (581-82) several other similar correspondences:

near Strindberg's childhood home, for instance, there were two windmills, which bore the names Stora Adam och Lilla Eva (Big Adam and Little Eve). The arcade in Scene 4 (Tophet) still exists; its L-shape runs between Birger Jarlsgatan and Smålandsgatan, near Stockholm's Norrmalmstorg, and is also mentioned in the short story "Lotsens vedermödor"⁴⁴ ("The Hardships of the Pilot"), where the shell shop and the perfume shop both figure in the action. The Crematorium with its columbarium was an up-to-the-minute reference: it had opened earlier in 1909. Finally, the Japanese may be based on part on a Japanese librarian with whom Strindberg worked while cataloging the Royal Library's Japanese holdings; the man's name was Sagisoka. These are not real symbols (Ollén calls them *anspelningar*: allusions), as they are not necessary to an understanding of the play's meaning, but perhaps they indicate that Strindberg was somewhat more attached to "Tophet" than he lets on through the Hunter!

⁴⁴ In *Sagor (Stories)*, *Skrifter*, V, 155-62.

Chapter 94

Språkvetenskapliga studier

Samlade skrifter collects Strindberg's five major philological works (shorter studies are incorporated into the four parts of *En blå bok*) under the title *Språkvetenskapliga studier* (Philological Studies). The five works are *Bibliska egennamn med ordfränder i klassiska och levande språk*¹ (Biblical Proper Names with Related Words in Classical and Living Languages, 1910); *Modersmålets anor: svenska ordfränder i klassiska och levande språk*² (The Ancestry of the Mother Tongue: Relationships to Swedish Words in Classical and Living Languages, 1910); *Världs-språkens rötter*³ (Word Roots of the World's Languages, 1911); *Kina och Japan*⁴ (China and Japan, 1911); and *Kinesiska språkets härkomst*⁵ (The Origin of the Chinese Language, 1912). The contributions of these works to an understanding of Strindberg's symbolism are very few, but significant: the last two works are discussed briefly in the chapter on *Stora landsvägen*; *Bibliska egennamn* in those on *His-*

¹ *Samlade skrifter*, LII, 5-137.

² *Ibid.*, 139-95.

³ *Ibid.*, 197-391.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 393-465.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 467-99.

toriska miniatyrer and En blå bok. Otherwise, the philological studies are of no interest here.

Of some interest, however, is what Strindberg saw as an overwhelming conclusion of his philological studies, a conclusion also hinted at in Historiska miniatyrer. The extract is from a newspaper article, "Svenska förskriftens stilar" ("The Characters of Swedish Handwriting"):

Den som vill veta mera må läsa min sista skrift om Kina -- Japan, där man även får veta att alla folk äro i släkt med varandra, och att man därför icke skall hata främmande folkslag, ännu mindre förgöra dem, ty då förgör man liksom sig själv och sina egna.⁶

⁶ Samlade skrifter, LIII, 538 (first published in Aftontidningen December 23, 1911):

Those who wish to know more may read my latest publication on China -- Japan, where one may also learn that all peoples are related to each other, and that one should therefore not hate foreign nations, even less destroy them, for doing so is like destroying oneself and one's own family.

Chapter 95

Efterslätter

Efterslätter (Second Harvest) was a title suggested by Strindberg for a collection of short stories and essays which was never published (in that form). It has been given by John Landquist to *Samlade skrifter* LIV, which, in his own words (translated) is

... a collection of stories, poems, and articles from Strindberg's literary career which includes both pieces written before 1900 that either did not fit into previous volumes or came to light during publication, and works published during the first decade of the twentieth century which correspond to those in the earlier collections in *Samlade skrifter*, *Prose Pieces from the 1880s* and *Prose Pieces from the 1890s* (485).

Several of the pieces in the collection have been dealt with in previous chapters and many are irrelevant to the present discussion. This chapter deals with those that remain: two short stories and six expository pieces.

"Sagan om Herkules (Ur: Det gamla riket)"¹ ("The Saga of Hercules, from The Old Kingdom") was published in a very limited edition (thirteen copies) in 1883, and later in a pirated edition. A satirical allegory or fable, it is an amusing if scatological account of Strindberg's battles against the social, political, and literary establishment (the title alludes ironically to

¹ *Samlade skrifter*, LIV, 115-18.

Det nya riket, published the previous year), told in terms of Hercules (Strindberg) and the cleansing of the Augean stables (Swedish society). Hercules succeeds in his task but, at the urging of the dung-beetles (critics), the oxen take revenge by inundating the hero in urine, from which he rescues himself by clinging to his club. At the close of the story, Hercules gives each ox a good thwack on the backside, claiming that this is not revenge, but only well-deserved punishment. Both the identification with Hercules and the closing protest are typical of the author, as is the obvious glee he takes in locking battle.

The last of the stories in the collection is "Armageddon (början till en roman)"² ("Armageddon: The Beginning of a Novel"), first published in the annual *Nordens jul* (Scandinavian Christmas) for 1908. It is an elaboration of the description in *En blå bok III* of the first stage of life after death, the Isle of the Blessed, here called Kirjath-Arim (translated as Vak-tarstad: Guardian or Shepherd City). As the story opens, one of the spirits, unable to adapt to his new surroundings, is about to be sent back to earth, through reincarnation; the second part of the story follows his experiences as a new-born infant who nevertheless possesses an adult's awareness. This descrip-

² Samlade skrifter, LIV, 145-63.

tion of the world as seen by an adult imprisoned in a child's body is very fine.

The description of the Isle of the Blessed is essentially the same as that in *En blå bok III*, but more detailed. Significantly, the chief Helper on the island is named Emanuel (i.e., Swedenborg). About half-way through the story, one of the spirits predicts what will happen to Fröjdkyss (literally, Kiss of Joy) when he returns to earth: the passage indicates that Strindberg had no intention of writing a complete novel (else why give away the whole plot in the first chapter?). Fröjdkyss' future can be regarded as Strindberg's past, or at least as a summary of his view of earthly existence as it had evolved by 1908:

-- ... jag känner hans blivande öde, som Hjälparen uppe på borgen redan diktat. Du vet att höga, milda, visa Siare och Diktare däruppe ordna skickelser, avväga skuld och straff, uträkna mödolönen och segerpriset. Nåväl, Fröjdkyss skall födas i medelstånd, och med från barndomen öppna ögon skall han strax genomskåda alla falskheter och ondskor; som otacksam son skall han straffa sina föräldrar, vilka själva varit otacksamma barn; han skall sättas i tillfälle att lära all mänsklig så kallad visdom och genomskåda dess skröplighet, men han skall även släpas omkring i villfarelser och laster; han skall få nästan allt, vad han vill, men upptäcka det jordiska godas relativa intighet. Och när han upptäckt detta, skall han, mogen av erfarenheter, lära människorna, att de äro fångar, men att de såsom kunna mildra sitt straff genom ett relativt anständigt uppförande, ehuru de ingenting stadigt kunna vänta därnere, emedan det enda sanna livet ligger häruppe. Vid uppnåd mannaålder, då han vaknar upp ur sin halvsömn, skall han märka att han tjänat de svarta magerna; och när han nu vill lämna deras trollkrets, så kan han

icke, ty de hålla honom fången och plåga honom. Endast hos dem hade han sitt stöd, och Världsfursten släpper icke de sina. Då skola både de Vita och de Svarta falla över honom, och han skall lida fast förskräckligt, då han icke får tillfälle utveckla sina nya strävelser mot det goda. Tvånget skall pina honom att dölja sitt sanna och sköna, men när han slutligen befrias genom döden, skall han medföra till denna sidan alla sina frön till renaste högsta, gudomliga mänsklighet, som här få slå ut till blomma och frukt.³

³ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 156-57:

"... I know his future fate, which the Helpers up in the castle have already cast. You know that lofty, gentle, wise Seers and Poets up there arrange dispensations, balance guilt and punishment, determine the rewards of labour and the cost of victory. Well then, Fröjdkyss will be born into the middle class, and, with eyes open from childhood, he will immediately see through all falsehoods and evils; as a thankless son, he will punish his parents, who themselves were thankless children; he will be put into a position to learn all human so-called wisdom and see through its frailty, but he will nevertheless be led astray in illusions and vices; he will get almost everything he desires, but discover the relative worthlessness of worldly goods. And when he has discovered that, matured by experience, he will teach people that they are prisoners, but that as such they can lighten their punishment by relatively good behaviour, although they can expect nothing stable down there, since the only true life is to be found up here. When he has reached adulthood and has awoken from his half-sleep, he will perceive that he has served the black [powers];* and when he now wishes to leave their magic circle, he is unable to do so, for they hold him prisoner and torment him. Only from them has he found support, and the Prince of the World does not release his own. Then both the White and the Black will beset him, and he will suffer most horribly, when he has no opportunity to develop his new tendencies towards the good. Necessity will force him to hide his good and beautiful qualities, but when finally he is freed by death, he will carry to this side all the seeds of his purest, loftiest, divine human-

It is all there: the vanity of earthly learning, the world as illusion, dissatisfaction with achieved desire (the net and fishing creel in *Ett drömspel*), the powers, redemption through suffering, and "the other side". The White and the Black are the forces of good and evil, "the helpers" and "the powers" respectively. Suffering consists of being drawn towards the former but held back by the latter, so that one is as it were continuously torn asunder. Only death puts an end to the rending pain of existence.

In 1894 a book of tributes to Strindberg was published, with the title *En bok om Strindberg* (A Book about Strindberg). Intended as a show of support during his exile on the continent, it contained contributions by several Scandinavian friends and a piece reprinted from *The Fortnightly Review*.⁴ Strindberg contributed an essay entitled "Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche"⁵ ("My Relation to Nietzsche"), in which he disclaims any influence from the philosopher prior to late summer,

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ity, which here will be able to break out in flower and fruit.

* The meaningless word *magera* in the text is presumably a misprint for *makterna* (the powers), which Strindberg may in fact have spelled *magterna*.

⁴ Vide Meyer, *Strindberg*, 290 et passim.

⁵ *Samlade skrifter*, LIV, 323-24.

1888, when he was introduced to his work by Georg Brandes. He specifically disclaims any influence on works written before that date and thought to be "Nietzschean": the 1887 works "De små", "De stora", "Hjärnnornas kamp" (all from *Vivisektioner*), *Fadren*, and *Hemsöborna*; and *Fröken Julie* (1888), claiming that the first genuine influence from Nietzsche can be seen in the Preface to *Fröken Julie* (written after the play) and in "Tschandala" (both 1888), when, he says, he had found support for his own ideas in Nietzsche's works. He acknowledges having read four of them: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886), *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*The Genealogy of Morals*, 1887), *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (*Human, All Too Human*, 1878) and *Die Götzendämmerung* (*The Twilight of the Gods*, 1889). Further, he denies ever reading *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 1883-92), in which Nietzsche developed his theory of the *Übermensch*. In the light of these revelations (and I see no reason to doubt them), Nietzsche should be regarded as a fellow-traveller rather than a direct influence on the Strindberg of the late 1880s and early 1890s. Presumably the ideas the two men developed in their own ways were "in the air" at the time. Besides the works Strindberg mentions, four others are involved: the short plays "Den starkare", "Paria", and "Samum" (all 1890) and the novel *I havsbandet* (1892).

Between February 20 and May 30, 1903, Svenska dagbladet published a series of articles by Strindberg with the collective title "Världshistoriens mystik"⁶ ("The Mystery of World History"). As he tells us at the end of the series, it is the outline of a book: *Historiska miniatyrer* (1905), to which work the series of articles makes, in fact, an admirable introduction: a discussion, in expository prose, of the concerns, directions, and themes which the later work treats in narrative prose. *Historiska miniatyrer* is far more interesting reading and has more literary value, but a few aspects of it are stated more clearly in "Världshistoriens mystik". The ending of the book at the dawn of the nineteenth century, for instance, is rather enigmatic: what was so wonderful about the nineteenth century that all of history should be seen as moving inexorably towards it? The answer lies in a theme not explicitly stated in *Historiska miniatyrer*, but implicit in the recurring formula, "One faith, One God, the Father of All": the direction in which history is moving is the union, both religious and political, of the world's peoples. "Världshistoriens mystik" goes right to the point in the first article:

På Sinai utbyter [Moses] de noakidiska buden mot de tio budorden. Det första av dessa bud utsäger, rätt tolkat, monoteismens stora hemlighet, enhetsläran, monismen -- en Gud,

⁶ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 337-401.

allas fader, i vilkens namn en gång alla folk skola förenas till ett.⁷

This coming together of the world's peoples, which began with the Great Migration and the concept of monotheism, is, Strindberg feels, particularly strong in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by such phenomena as the rise of socialism and international labour movements, world peace and religious congresses, the shifting of national boundaries so they reflect political rather than ethnic groupings, etc.:

Nationaliteterna upplösas och medborgarne i staterna bli världsborgare, liksom furstarne, sedan staterna blott blivit begrepp, svävande, växlande, utplånande sig. Begreppen Persien, Egypten, Indien kvarstå, men staterna och folken äro något helt annat.⁸

This process of assimilation is directed by God, but He acts through human agents. Chief among these is the Jewish people, whose very statelessness was a token

⁷ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 338:

On [Mount] Sinai [Moses] exchanges the commands given to Noah for the Ten Commandments. The first of these commandments, properly interpreted, expresses the great secret of monotheism: one God, the Father of All, in Whose name all people will one day be joined together in one.

⁸ Ibid., 383:

Nationalities are dissolving, and the citizens of states are becoming world-citizens, like the princes, since states have become mere concepts, shifting, expanding, obliterating themselves. The concepts Persia, Egypt, and India remain, but the states and the peoples are something entirely different.

of their unifying mission: they had to assimilate to whatever society they settled in, and simultaneously conferred upon that society an element of cosmopolitanism, openness to the rest of the world:

Judarna finnas utan land spridda i alla länder, enligt deras egen uppgift med mission att utbreda och uppehålla tron på den ende sanne guden, men de skulle även sprida österländsk vetenskap och filosofi, samt där bredvid uppträda som mästare i handelsvetenskap och penningväsende.⁹

This, of course, is one of the threads connecting the stories in *Historiska miniatyrer* (symbolized in Eleazar, the Helper of God). Another is that even historical forces which seem inimical to God and to God's people, nevertheless serve the larger design of history. But, as Strindberg points out, movements which seem tailor-made to achieve unity on earth, whether political (the empire-building of Alexander the Great, Attila the Hun, and Napoleon) or religious (the declaration of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Holy Wars of Islam, the efforts of Julian the Apostate to establish a universal religion),

⁹ *Samlade skrifter*, LIV, 373:

The Jews, who have no country, are to be found in all countries: according to their own representation, with the mission of spreading and maintaining faith in the One True God, but they also spread eastern knowledge and philosophy, and besides that, act as masters in business administration and finance.

all, ultimately, fail. The apparent contradiction is explained in "Världshistoriens mystik":

Men utveckling, rörelse framåt, kan endast följa på stridiga krafterns inbördes växelverkan, och vi ha sett att all mänsklig-hetens medvetna strävan att själv göra homogent strandat. Det ser ut som historiens ande hatat de dödliges universalmonarkier och universalreligioner, och likafullt visar sig utvecklingens mål vara just detta. Det var således icke målet, utan medlen som man var oense om.

.... Den ena samlar, den andra söndrar och tvärtom, men vid varje återgång till det gamla har något nytt kommit in.¹⁰

The final sentence in this extract is also a concise statement and explanation of the dual movement of history discernible in *Historiska miniatyrer*: both cyclical and forward-moving.

I have used the word God in the above discussion, but Strindberg, in fact, keeps mention of the divinity pretty much in reserve after the introductory article. *Historiska miniatyrer* has no such reticence, and we know from *En blå bok* that Strindberg's principal con-

¹⁰ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 396:

But progress, movement forward, can only be the result of the mutual interaction of opposed forces, and we have seen that all mankind's conscious strivings to create homogeneity by himself, have failed. It seems as if the spirit of history hated the universal monarchies and universal religions of mortals, while the goal of progress seems nevertheless to be just that. Thus, it was not the goal, but the means that were unsatisfactory.

.... One man brings together, another disperses, and vice-versa, but with every return to the old, something new has been added.

cern was to demonstrate "God in history", but in these articles he leads the reader along one step at a time, as it were: speaking of patterns, movements, forces, "the spirit of history", and so forth, until his demonstrations have reached the stage where the conclusion is inevitable. Nevertheless, he leaves the reader to supply that conclusion:

Med ett ord, de dödlige handlade omedvetet och utan kunskap om målet, men en medveten vilja begagnade alla stridiga krafter, andens höjdflykt och materiens jordsträvan, det goda och det onda, självisheten och uppoftningen, söndringen och samlingen; och stundtals visade sig målet skymta vid synkretsen för att åter vika undan och ånyo visa sig. Att människorna icke veta vad de göra är deras ursäkt, men detta skulle även lära dem inse att de äro redskap i någons hand, vars avsikter de icke kunna förstå, men vilken ser på deras bästa.

.... .. historiens gång visar en sådan förening av frihet och tvång att man å ena sidan måste erkänna den mänskliga viljans frihet till en viss grad, å andra sidan medgiva tillvaron av en nödvändighet, som efter omständigheterna begränsar den enskildes strävan och som utför syntesen. Den store synteisten, som förenar motsättningarna, löser motsägelserna, uppehåller jämvikten, är ingen människa och kan icke vara annat än den osynlige lagstiftaren, som i frihet ändrar lagarna efter ändrade förhållanden: skaparen, upplösaren och upprätthållaren, han må sedan kallas -- vad som helst.¹¹

¹¹ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 397-98:

In a word, mortals acted unconsciously and without knowledge of the goal, but a conscious will used all the conflicting forces: the upward flight of the spirit and the earthly striving of the material, good and evil, selfishness and self-sacrifice, dispersal and gathering; and sometimes the goal seemed to shimmer on the horizon, only to disappear and reveal itself once again. People have the excuse that they do not know

The work contains a striking symbol of this divinity who allows both good and evil to operate in the world but always maintains an equilibrium between them:

Det är ju som ett kolossalt schackparti av en ensam spelare som leder både vitt och svart, är fullständigt opartisk, tar när tas skall, gör planer för båda lägren, är med sig själv och mot sig själv, tänker ut allting i förväg, och har ett enda syfte: hålla jämvikten och rättvisan uppe, samt sluta partiet med remis!¹²

This is hardly the personal God of Christianity, but rather more like the impartial powers of Strindberg's

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what they are doing, but that should also teach them to perceive that they are tools in the hand of someone whose designs they cannot understand, but who acts in their best interests.

.... ... the course of history shows such a mixture of freedom and compulsion that on the one hand one must concede a certain degree of human free will, on the other admit the existence of a necessity which limits the strivings of private individuals according to the circumstances, and achieves synthesis. The great synthesist, who unites opposites, resolves contradictions, maintains equilibrium, is not a person and can be none other than the unseen law-maker, who is free to alter laws according to altered circumstances: the creator, the dissolver, and the maintainer of justice, he may then be called -- anything at all.

¹² Samlade skrifter, LIV, 353:

It is like an immense game of chess played by a single player, who moves both white and black, is completely impartial, captures pieces when they should be captured, makes plans for both sides, is for himself and against himself, thinks everything out in advance, and has but one aim: to maintain equilibrium and justice, and to finish the game in a draw!

past. There is a difference, however: maintaining equilibrium and justice is itself a positive act: the forces of darkness will not prevail. If the forces of good will not prevail either, that is because the Kingdom of God is not of this earth, but in the hereafter. And if man, who sees things primarily from his own limited and selfish perspective, can derive little comfort from a God Who views him impartially as a piece on a chessboard, he has the helpers to aid him in his own (relatively insignificant) problems of existence. One of these was Christ, one was Swedenborg, others are guardian angels, etc. Meanwhile, the world is not so terrible a place as it sometimes seems, and we ought not to give in to apprehensions that earthly life is Hell: "Världshistorien ser kanske grymmare ut än den är, och denna världens furste är nog icke densamme, som menas i bibeln."¹³

On Strindberg's final birthday (January 22, 1912), the Danish newspaper Politiken published an article by him in which he acknowledged debts to Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. That letter, however, says little about Andersen, to whom Strindberg had paid homage in the same newspaper seven years earlier, on the occasion of the centennial of Andersen's birth.

¹³ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 387: "Perhaps world history seems crueller than it is, and the Prince of This World is surely not who the Bible suggests."

There, he says that he first read Andersen as a child, and that the stories made a profound impression on him. The passage reflects his own unhappy childhood, but, writing a half-century later, he seems to see in his reaction to Andersen the beginnings of his disillusionment with the world: the sense that it is not what it ought to be, which informs *Ett drömspel*:

Detta förfärliga vardagsliv med dess småaktighet och orättfärdighet, detta trista enformiga liv i en barnkammare, där vi plantor stodo för tätt och trängdes, kivades om maten och gunsten, blev mig outhärdligt, ty jag hade i Andersens sagovärld fått visshet om tillvaron av en annan värld, en guldålder, i vilken det fanns rättvisa och barmhärtighet, i vilken föräldrarna verkligen smekte sina barn och inte bara drogo dem i håret, i vilken något för mig absolut okänt kastade ett rosenkimmer även över fattigdomen och förödmjukelsen, det skimmer som med ett nu oanvändbart ord kallas: kärleken.¹⁴

What he here calls certainty of the existence of another world is incorporated by the post-Inferno

¹⁴ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 443-44 (from the article "H.C. Andersen. Till Andersen-jubileet 2 april 1905": "H.C. Andersen: On the Andersen Centennial, April 2, 1905"):

That dreadful day-to-day existence, with its pettiness and injustice, that sad, monotonous life in a nursery, where we plants were crowded together and crushed, where we squabbled over food and favour, became unendurable to me, for in Andersen's fairy-tale world I had found certainty of the existence of another world, a golden age, in which justice and mercy existed, in which parents actually caressed their children and did not just pull their hair, in which something totally unknown to me cast a rosy glow over poverty and humiliation, a glow known by a name we can no longer use: love.

Strindberg into the whole symbolic system of the Isle of the Blessed, the other side, reincarnation, and the pre-existence of the soul: Andersen's fairy tales had such a profound effect on the child Strindberg because they awoke within him unconscious memories of a previous existence, which contrasted starkly with his actual circumstances. *Hövdingaminnen* was also written in 1905; this passage can be related directly to Dr. Hjärne's comments on pre-existence in "Elefantvalvet".

Strindberg claims to have reread Andersen several times during the course of his life, always with similar feelings: joy and delight at the tales themselves and a sense of disappointment at the world's failure to live up to their vision. As to his own writing, he cites *Sagor* (1903) as a work influenced directly by Andersen. Significantly, the first story in that collection, "I midsommartider" ("Midsummer Days"), deals with the verdant isle.

On December 24, 1905, *Dagens nyheter* published a series of articles describing Stockholm "round the clock". The author of the second article was Strindberg, and the hour assigned to him 7 A.M. This was a kind of writing at which he excelled, and the article, "Stockholm sju på morgonen"¹⁵ ("Stockholm at Seven in the Morning") is a particularly delightful example. In

¹⁵ *Samlade skrifter*, LIV, 448-52.

1905, Strindberg was living in "Röda huset" (The Red House),¹⁶ on Karlavägen, so the Stockholm he describes is mainly the eastern section of the city known as Östermalm, although he does wander as far west as Drottninggatan, the "great highway" which runs through his life. Besides being a delightful sketch of Stockholm, the article is of great interest to the student of Strindberg's plays, for it contains the source of the symbol of the growing castle in *Ett drömspel* (written, except for the Prologue, in 1901). Karlavägen was (and still is) almost on the edge of the main built-up area of the city, and just beyond it was the large open space Stockholmers call Gärdet (literally, The Field), with Värtan, an inlet of Lake Mälaren beyond that, and, in the distance, an island called Lidingö. This was the view Strindberg saw as he left on and returned from his morning walk. Gärdet, often used for military drill, was and still is surrounded by military establishments. One of these was a building Strindberg found particularly attractive, both in its architecture and its setting:

¹⁶ Karlavägen 40 (later renumbered 80, but torn down despite protests at the end of the 1960s), where Strindberg lived after marrying Harriet Bosse (May 6, 1901) until he moved to Blå tornet (July 10, 1908: Harriet and their daughter, Anne-Marie, had moved into their own apartment in August, 1903) (Levander, 188). It is conceivable that the move from Röda huset to Blå tornet may have had something to do with the naming of the Blue Books: the author himself has pointed out the contrast between *En blå bok* and *Röda rummet*.

Vid Banérgatans hörn, där om kvällarna världen synes ta slut och det stora mörkret vidtager, är en utmärkt observationspunkt för norra stjärnhimlen, som välver sig över Stockholms "vackraste byggnad", Hästgardeskasärnen, med dess krönte tak och fyra flyglar ovan skogstopparna.¹⁷

Significant features are the dome and four wings (which might appear as leaves surrounding a flower), and the fact that the building appears to rise from the tops of the trees. An hour later, the peripatetic author returns home, and again catches sight of the building; this time he indicates that it was the real model for the surreal castle in *Ett drömspel*:

... i hörnet vid Karlavägen ser jag havet (Värtan) och skären (Lidingön) och i nordväst över ekarna står "Det växande slot-tet" (Hästgardeskasärnen) i full illumination, ty solen har just tänt ljus i varenda ruta; gullkronan lyser högst upp, och under altanen står en vit gestalt ... Jag har aldrig fått reda på vad det är för vitmålat ting, vill inte veta't heller, för det är mycket roligare på det sättet.¹⁸

¹⁷ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 448-49:

The corner of Banérgatan [and Karlavägen], where, in the evening, the world seems to end and vast darkness to take over, is a remarkable point from which to observe the stars of the northern sky, which forms a vault over Stockholm's "most beautiful building", the Horse Guards' Barracks, with its domed roof and four wings, rising above the tops of the trees.

¹⁸ Ibid., 452:

... at the corner of Karlavägen I see the sea (Värtan) and the island (Lidingö), and in the northwest, above the oaks, "the growing castle" (the Horse Guards' Barracks) is fully illuminated, for the sun's light is reflected from every window-pane; at its very top, the golden dome shines, and beneath the

Three points are of note here: the dome is golden (i.e., flower-coloured, not black or verdigris, as many Stockholm domes are); the author obviously enjoys letting his imagination toy with this building; and the "castle", which seems to be borne up on a sea of green (at least when the trees are in foliage), itself bears a white figure, linking the growing castle of *Ett drömspel* to the verdant isle, with its castle inhabited by white-clad figures. No doubt the rising church in *Kronbruden* belongs to this same family of symbols.

An article entitled "Bevittna vi en upplösning eller en utveckling av den religiösa känslan?"¹⁹ ("Are We Witnessing a Dissolution or an Evolution of Religious Feeling?") was originally published (presumably translated into French) by *Mercure de France* in 1907. One passage is notable for its use of a symbol, drawn from the electrification of Stockholm, also used in the play *Midsommar* (1901), and for its reference to Strindberg's agnostic and atheist periods as results of youthful illusion:

... förra seklets barn ... vid 70-talets ingång upplevde de stora ekonomiska omkastningarna och sågo de största uppfinningar för vårt lekamliga välbefinnande ändra hela vår

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balustrade stands a white shape ... I have never been able to find out what that white-painted object is, and don't want to know either, for it is much more fun not knowing.

¹⁹ *Samlade skrifter*, LIV, 463-64.

materiella tillvarelseform. Vi förlorade kontakten med luftledningen och stannade jordbundna. Samtidigt inbillades vi (och ungdom kan man inbilla vad som helst) att de högsta problemen kunna lösas med bondförståndets quatuor species. Strauss, Renan och andra onämnda degraderade det gudomliga förnuftet, intuitionen, och upphöjde sens commun eller det enkla resonerandet, vilket vi äga gemensamt med djuren.²⁰

The last article to be dealt with appeared in *Bonniers Månadshäften* (Bonnier's Monthly) for January,

²⁰ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 463:

... the children of the previous century ... experienced the great economic reversals which occurred at the beginning of the '70s* and saw the greatest discoveries change our whole way of life. We lost contact with the overhead mains, and remained grounded. At the same time, we were made to believe (and youth can be made to believe anything at all) that the most lofty problems could be resolved by the quatuor species of common sense. Strauss,** Renan,*** and others I shall not name, degraded the reasoning of the godly, intuition, and elevated sens commun, or simple reasoning, which we share with the animals.

* The European economic crisis of 1873.

** David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74), German theologian whose *Leben Jesu* (Life of Jesus, 1835) attributed a secular, mythical origin to the gospel miracles (Benét, II, 968).

*** Ernest Renan (1823-92), French relativist whose *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme* (History of the Origins of Christianity, 1866-81) approached religion from a psychological perspective (Ibid., II, 849-50).

1909. Entitled "August Strindberg om sig själv"²¹ ("August Strindberg on Himself"), it comprises Strindberg's answers to eight questions. The end of his answer to the question "Vilket är ert starkaste barndomsminne?" ("What is your strongest memory of childhood?") throws light on such works as *Advent* (Amalia's mother, the White Lady) and *Hövdingaminnen* (Starkodd's mother), in which the mother has died but is seen by the child as a symbol of acceptance and redemption. It also illuminates the evil stepmothers in *Advent* and *Svanevit*, and explains Strindberg's early fascination and identification with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and perhaps his (and the hero of *Fadren's*) search for a mother-figure in his wives (see *Han och Hon*). The final two words indicate that he still finds the memory painful:

De starkaste intryck från barndomen äro naturligtvis min mors död, och styvmors uppträdande, innan sorgeårets slut. Det var obeskrivligt! Min mor hade icke tyckt om mig, hon hade andra favoriter bland barnen, men jag sörjde henne, kände som om med hennes bortgång jag upphört vara släkt med far och syskon, ja, främmande för hela människosläktet. Min far förnam jag alltid som en fientlig makt, och han tålde mig inte heller! Det var inte roligt vara ung! -- Nog sagt!²²

²¹ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 465-76.

²² *Ibid.*, 467:

The strongest impressions from childhood are naturally my mother's death and the appearance of a step-mother before the year of mourning was over. It was indescribable! My mother had not liked me -- she had other favorites among the children -- but I mourned her, felt as if with her passing away I had ceased to be related to my brothers and sis-

Part of his answer to the question "Av vilka författare (klassiska och moderna), personer, som ni råkat etc., hade ni då rönt det starkaste inflytandet?" ("Which authors -- classical and modern -- persons whom you met, etc. made the strongest impression on you at the time?") confirms the conclusions drawn above from his 1905 remarks on Hans Christian Andersen:

I barndomen beundrade jag Andersens sagor, och jag har på ålderdomen kallat dem astrala, ty de äro ingivna från en annan jord än denna; underbara med ett ord!²³

The answer to the question, "Hur kom det sig att ni fäste er särskilt vid Skärgårdsnaturen?" ("How did it come about that you became particularly fascinated with nature in the Archipelago?") is cited in its entirety, for it reveals the origin of the verdant isle symbol: an early impression so profound it assimilated the teachings of Swedenborg, Böcklin's painting, and Strindberg's own cloud symbolism, to become the dominant symbol of his post-Inferno career:

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ters, yes, was even a stranger to the entire human race. I always regarded my father as a hostile power, and he could not stand me either! It was no fun being young! -- Enough said!

²³ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 468:

As a child I admired Andersen's fairy tales, and as an adult I have called them astral, for they have been handed down from another world than this one: in a word, they are wonderful!

Det var som en uppenbarelse, då jag vid sjutton år (kanske) fick se vår skärgård första gången. Som skarpskytt (vice korpral) kom jag på fältmanöver till Tyresö. En tidig vårmorgon lågo vi på skyttelinje (tiralljerade) i en skog på ett högt berg; plötsligen vid en brant, mellan träden, fick jag se havet -- och skären. Men jag förstod inte vad jag såg; det blåa havet såg ut som himmeln och skären liknade ju stackmoln, simmande i detta blå! Jag föll i en extas och i gråt (ännu alltjämt). Det var icke jorden, det var något annat! Vad var det? Ett ancestralt minne? Vet inte! Men sen gick alltid min längtan dit; och går ännu, trots allt! Ännu för tre år sedan fick jag samma underbara intryck av de första stora fjärdarna; något överjorkiskt; och att de gingo uppåt, icke lågo efter vattenpasset! Ensamheten, den stora tystnaden, det rena (vattnet), där en herrgård, en stuga, en odling endast uppträder störande och fult! (Se i mina böcker!)²⁴

²⁴ Samlade skrifter, LIV, 468-69:

It was like a revelation when, at the age of seventeen (perhaps)* I saw our archipelago for the first time. As a volunteer in the militia (lance corporal), I went on field manoeuvres to Tyresö. Early one spring morning we were arranged in a firing line (en tirailleurs) in a woods on a high hill; suddenly, by a precipice, between the trees, I caught sight of the sea -- and the skerries. But I did not understand what I saw: the blue sea looked like the sky, and the skerries surely resembled cumulus clouds, afloat in that blue! I fell into an ecstasy and into tears (I still do). This was not earthly, it was something else! What was it? An ancestral memory? I don't know! But since then I have always yearned toward that place, and I still do, in spite of everything! As recently as three years ago, I received the same wonderful impression in the nearest large inlets; something superterrestrial: [the skerries] seemed to rise upwards, not lie on the surface of the water! Solitude, the great silence, purity (the water), where a manor-house, a cottage, a plantation would only seem disturbing and ugly! (Look in my books!)

* Levander (184) gives the date of Strindberg's entry

Here too, with the raised possibility of an "ancestral memory", there is a suggestion of the pre-existence of the soul. Indeed, the incident is also described in Tjänstekvinnans son, in terms much more explicit on this point:

Den tavlan gjorde ett sådant intryck som om han återfunnit ett land, han sett i vackra drömmar, eller i en föregående existens....²⁵

That treatment of the incident, however, lacks the descriptive details by which the interview links reality to symbol.

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into the militia as April, 1865; Meyer (17) as February, 1866. Depending on which is right, he would have been either sixteen or seventeen at the time of the events described.

²⁵ Skrifter, VII, 114 (from Ch. 9: "Han äter andras bröd": "He Eats the Bread of Others"):

The panorama made such an impression on him that he felt he had rediscovered a country he had seen in beautiful dreams or in a previous existence....

Chapter 96

Tal till svenska nationen and Other Newspaper Articles,
1910-12

This chapter deals with several series of newspaper articles Strindberg wrote during the final two years of his life. The most important of them comprised what has become known as *Strindbergsfejden* (the Strindberg Controversy), a virulent and far-reaching literary and social debate waged in the pages of Stockholm newspapers mainly during the spring and summer of 1910, culminating with the presentation to Strindberg (on his sixty-third birthday) of the sum of 45,000 Swedish crowns, which had been collected by national subscription and was popularly known as the Anti-Nobel Prize. Strindberg's contributions to *Strindbergsfejden* were published in four collections: *Tal till svenska nationen om olust i landet, levernet, litteraturen och lärdomen*¹ (Addresses to the Swedish Nation on Dissatisfaction in the Country, Life, Literature, and Learning, 1910); *Folkstaten. Studier till en stundande författningsrevision*² (The People's State: Studies for an Upcoming Constitutional Revision, 1910); *Religiös*

¹ *Samlade verk*, LXVIII, 7-139.

² *Ibid.*, 141-201.

renässans eller religion mot teologi³ (Religious Renaissance, or Religion vs. Theology, 1910); and Tsarens kurir eller sågfilarens hemligheter⁴ (The Tsar's Courier, or the Secrets of the Saw-Filer, 1912). Samlade skrifter LIII complements these with Strindberg's other newspaper articles from the period, grouped under four headings: "Intima teatern"⁵ ("The Intimate Theatre"); "Sveriges anor"⁶ ("Sweden's Ancestors"); "Varia"⁷ ("Miscellanea"); and "Uttalanden vid födelsedagsfesten 22 januari 1912"⁸ ("Remarks Concerning the Birthday Celebrations on January 22, 1912").

Old, lonely, and sick, Strindberg launched Strindbergsfejden in an attempt to claim the place in Swedish literary history he felt was rightly his. As John Landquist pointed out during the controversy,⁹ Strindberg was the most widely read and discussed Swedish author of his time, not only in Sweden itself but throughout Europe. And yet he was systematically isolated and

³ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 203-63.

⁴ Ibid., 265-88.

⁵ Samlade skrifter, LIII, 339-65.

⁶ Ibid., 367-463.

⁷ Ibid., 465-548.

⁸ Ibid., 549-64.

⁹ in an article in Aftontidningen (The Evening Paper) on July 7, 1910 (reprinted in Landquist om Strindberg, 41-46).

locked out by the Swedish literary and academic establishments, which ignored or denied his accomplishments, wrote short-sighted and overly critical reviews of new works, made it a matter of courage to publish his works or perform his plays, denied him all official honours and state support, and virtually excluded him from Swedish literary history. Quite naturally, Strindberg was upset. He did not wish personal honours or awards -- he had long accepted his rôle as son of the bondswoman -- but that his work should be ignored, misunderstood, and obstructed he could not accept. In his own words:

Jag söker varken befordran eller stipendium, men jag känner mig orättvist behandlad och därför har jag nödgats försvara min ställning, i svenska litteraturen.¹⁰

As he set about trying to put the record straight, his strategy was two-fold: to defend his works against unjust criticism, and to expose the worthlessness, even the danger, of the actual objects of official approbation and adulation. As the controversy continued, he began to champion the rights of a whole sector of Swedish society which, like him, was isolated and held

¹⁰ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 78-79 (from the article in *Tal till svenska nationen* titled "Abnorma skolan": "The School of the Abnormal", first published in *Aftontidningen* June 11, 1910):

I seek neither preferment nor financial support, but I feel that I have been unfairly treated, and so I have been forced to defend my position in Swedish literature.

down by elitist elements: the working class, which in the 1880's he had called the Underclass, but which now became *Folket* (the People). This was by no means a new direction for the author of *Det nya riket*, but there was a new element: his socialism was now motivated and informed by his Christianity. It was also, paradoxically, connected to his view of the world as illusion:

Eftersom jag nu är gammal vorden, så borde jag enligt tradition bli konservativ, men det tycks jag icke bli. Och jag förstår icke att gammalt folk i allmänhet bli konservativa. Hur kan man "hålla på det bestående", då intet äger bestånd. Allt flyter och ändrar sig....¹¹

Many of Strindberg's former allies in the Swedish Liberal and Social Democratic parties had been alienated by the vitriolic caricatures in *Svarta fanor*, and many distrusted his religious mysticism (the political left traditionally views religion as an instrument of the Overclass to anaesthetize and control the Underclass -- as indeed Strindberg himself had once done), but he was adopted as spokesman and champion by the Social Democratic Youth movement, among whose ranks

¹¹ *Samlade skrifter*, LIII, 509 (from the article "Litteraturens fri- och rättigheter": "The Rights and Freedoms of Literature", originally published in *Dagens nyheter* February 24, 1911):

Since I now have become old, I should, according to tradition, be conservative, but that I do not seem to be. And I do not understand why old people in general are conservative. How can a person "hold to the status quo" when there is no status quo? Everything flows and changes....

were many of his most avid readers and frequent patrons of Intima teatern. Strindberg became a national hero, but by the time recognition was finally won he was a dying man; he lived less than four months after the events which marked his birthday in 1912 (the presentation of the Anti-Nobel prize, six simultaneous productions of his plays in Stockholm alone, a torch-light procession of over fifteen thousand people to honour him at Blå tornet).

Despite its enormous significance in Swedish literary and social history (Jan Myrdal, for example, considers Sweden's decision not to enter World War I a direct result of the dispute¹²), Strindbergsfejden contributes only a few passages to an understanding of Strindberg's symbolism. In *Tal till svenska nationen*, for example, there is an article called "Religion",¹³ in which Strindberg explains how his religious beliefs have given him the courage to take on the entire establishment. Incidentally, he provides some insight into symbols in *Till Damaskus* and *Ett drömspel*:

... endast genom religion, eller hoppet om ett bättre, insikten om livets innersta mening såsom prøvotid, skola, kanske tukthus, är det möjligt att draga livets börda med lagom resignation.

Inseende de yttre livsvillkorens relativa värdelöshet, då man lever i hopp och

¹² "Bortom avfallet", 22.

¹³ *Samlade verk*, LXVIII, 20-23 (originally published in *Socialdemokraten* (The Social Democrat), July 19, 1910).

tro, erhåller man detta moraliska mod som den gudlösa aldrig får, att försaka allt, lida allt för att följa en Kallelse, sjunga ut, då andra tåga.¹⁴

Another passage in the same article sheds a little further light on the enigmatic figure of the Japanese in *Stora landsvägen*:

Japanerna i våra dagar leva visserligen icke som änglar, men deras orubbliga tro på livet efter detta, och det här såsom en resa genom främmande land, ger dem en sådan glad förtröstan i motgångar och livsfara, att de därför möta döden som en alls icke sorglig tilldragelse.¹⁵

The article "Abnorma skolan", referred to above, defends Zola as a highly moral writer, in symbolism borrowed from *Historiska miniatyrer*. There the forces of good, the children of light in a dark and pagan

¹⁴ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 20:

... only through religion, or hope in a better existence, insight into life's innermost meaning as a time of trial, a school, perhaps a house of correction, is it possible to bear life's burden with moderate resignation.

Perceiving the relative worthlessness of the outward circumstances of life, one who lives in hope and faith attains the moral courage which the godless never achieve, to give up everything, to suffer everything, in order to follow a Calling, to sing out where others are silent.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21:

The Japanese of our times certainly do not live like angels, but their unshakeable faith in a life after this one, which they view as a journey through foreign lands, gives them such a happy confidence in adversities and danger, that because of it they meet death as an event which is not at all sorrowful.

society, were identified with the worship of "the white Balder", who in turn was associated with "the white Christ". Here, Zola is identified with Balder, although his reputation has been so tarnished by a phillistine society that he no longer appears white:

Väldig stod [Zola] där mitt i sin tid, en Svärtad Balder (icke svart), som alla skulle skjuta på, men han ägde tjock lejonhud, och stod emot; han stod där bredaxlad mitt på vägen och var svår att komma förbi; några kröpo mellan hans ben, andra sökte med käringknep få honom omkull, men han stod kvar ändå.¹⁶

Truth, in literature as in all else, persists!

The articles in Folkstaten are of a radical political nature. In the title article, Strindberg explains the current social organization of his country in terms of a familiar symbol: that of sleepwalking. Nations as well as individuals are subject to this disorder:

... nationerna bli stundom trötta, slöa, och somna in. De tala i sömnen, och i sömnen

¹⁶ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 78:

[Zola] stood there colossal in the middle of his age, a Blackened Balder (not black), for all to shoot at, but he had the thick skin of a lion* and resisted; he stood there broad-shouldered in the middle of the road and he was hard to get past; some crept between his legs, others tried to trip him and overthrow him, but he remained standing all the same.

* The lion-skin also associates Zola with Hercules.

inbillas de vad som helst, från-narras sina
dyraste rättigheter, sin egendom, sin ära.¹⁷

One day they too may awaken to a reality of which they
have been unaware: a world of truth and justice.

The final article in Folkstaten, "Monoplan eller
biplan. Folkstat eller hovstat" ("Monoplane or Biplane:
People's State or Court State"), demonstrates Strind-
berg's continuing interest in modern inventions: having
observed that monoplanes were found to be lighter,
faster, and more economical than the biplanes they
replaced, he turns the biplane into an allegorical sym-
bol. The upper pair of wings is the Overclass, the
lower pair the People. The machine works, in its own
clumsy way, but would be enormously improved by doing
away with the upper wings altogether! The article
closes with an analogy from the natural world, and with
one more closely connected with his own activities:

Träd äro utomordentligt sköna, men i en
trädgård växer intet under sköna träd.

Toppa dem, eller rothugg dem!

Hov-Staten såsom biplan är oskön, oprak-
tisk, dyr; som ett bibliotek med idel duplet-
ter.

¹⁷ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 187 (first published in
Socialdemokraten September 14, 1910):

... nations sometimes get tired, grow drowsy,
and fall asleep. They talk in their sleep,
and in sleep are made to believe anything at
all, swindled out of their most cherished
rights, their property, their honour.

Duplettera den! och ställ dupletterna i källarn!¹⁸

Religiös renässans contains an article (originally published in Aftontidningen November 4, 1910) called "Bibelforskning" ("Biblical Research"), in which Strindberg gives an example of his method of biblical interpretation, derived from Swedenborg and related to his philological interests. Since the incident he has chosen to interpret, the Israelites' wandering in the desert, forms the underlying structure of his own pilgrimage plays, the article is of great interest. A similar exegesis appeared in *En blå bok II*,¹⁹ but this one is more complete and better written. The method consists in translating the Hebrew names mentioned in the Biblical account, which is then treated as an allegory (Strindberg did not doubt that the accounts described

¹⁸ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 201 (originally published in Aftontidningen September 16, 1910):

Trees are extraordinarily beautiful, but in a garden nothing grows beneath beautiful trees.

Cut off their crowns, or uproot them!

The Court-State, like the biplane, is unbeautiful, impractical, and expensive; like a library that has duplicates of everything.

By all means have duplicates! but keep them in the basement!

¹⁹ Samlade skrifter, XLVII, 628-29 (in the section ("Bibelförklaringar: Arcana coelestia": "Biblical Exegesis: Arcana Coelestia").

actual historical events, but he maintained that those events had an inner meaning which his method of interpretation could reveal):

Jag vill ge några prov på Bibeltolkning efter invärtes mening, i dess enklaste form, tagande Exodus eller utvandringen ur Egypten såsom utgångspunkt.

Befriade från Mörkret (Egypten) och Tvånget (Mizraim, Mazov) vandrade Herrens Eget (Israel) ut på Törnstigen (Öknens Sin). De vandrade genom Eld (Tabera) såsom Förgård (Hazerot) och kommo till Ostadig Helighet (Kades Bernea) i öknens Lusta (Paran).

Därför skickade de spejare in i det Förlovade Landet (Kanaan) eller Nådens Rike. Men när de ville intränga, slogos de av Moloksdyrkare (Amalekiter) och Ockrare (Kanaanéer). Då begärde de av Konungen i Mullen (Edom av Adama) fritt genomtåg, men nekades. Återvände därför till Friheten (Hur), där Aron dog.

Därpå tågade de till Jättarne (Ezion Geber) vid Förtryckets (Akubbas) vik, och sedan vidare över Domens Älv (Jeor Dan = Jordan) in i Nådens Rike (Hanah = Kanah).

Gången över Röda Havet kan tolkas av Jam Suph (Säv-Havet) såsom Yttersta Dagen, då Dag och Hav kunna opunkterat skrivas lika = Im; och enär Suph betyder både Säv och Slutet, stavat med S eller Z är likgiltigt. Därmed förfaller allt snack om Ebb och Flod såsom bortresonerande "underverket".

Öknens stationer likna Bunyans i Kristens Resa. De kommo till Bittert Vatten (Mara), råkade i Surdegen (Alus), i Frestelsen (Massa), i Kivet (Meriba), i Fattigdomen (Rissa), i Ångest (Harada) och i Sjukdomar (Maheloth), i Synd (Thachat); men vid Thara fingo de Vederkvickelse och i Mitka Hugsvalelse Ljuv. De fingo Tuktan igen i Mose-roth och råkade Bedrövelsens Söner (Bene Jaakan). Men hur de irrade återvände de till Det Heliga (Kades), som var huvudkvarteret.

Vad Moses' namn beträffar, så kan det betyda "utdragen", men kan även betyda Hjälpen (Moschaah = Muschgh) då Moses på arabiska heter Musa. Han var son av Folkupphöjaren (Amram) och Herrens Lov (Jockebeth). Till hustru fick han Kronan (Zippora). Men han dog på Höjden (Pisga) både Skådande och Profeterande (Nebo) när han stod vid Över-

gången (Abarim) vid Domens Älv (Jeor Dan) för att inträda i Nåden (Hanah = Kanah).²⁰

²⁰ Samlade verk, LXVIII, 232-33:

I want to give a few examples of Biblical exegesis according to the inner meaning, in its simplest form, taking Exodus or the wandering in Egypt as a point of departure.

Delivered from Darkness (Egypt), and Oppression (Mizraim, Massa), the Lord's Own People (Israel) wandered out on the Path of Thorns (the Zin Desert). They wandered through Fire (Taberah), which served as a Forecourt (Hazereth), and came to Inconstant Holiness (Kadesh-Barnea) in the desert of Desire (Paran).

From there they sent spies into the Promised Land (Canaan), or the Kingdom of Grace. But when they wanted to enter, they were attacked by the worshippers of Moloch (Amalekites) and Usurers (Canaanites). Then they sought safe passage from the King of the Earth (Edom from Adamah), but were denied. They therefore returned to Freedom (Hur), where Aaron died.

Then they marched to the Giants (Ezion-Gaber) by the bay of Oppression (Akkub), and then beyond, over the River of Judgement (Jeor Dan = Jordan), into the Kingdom of Grace (Hanan = Canaan).

The passage through the Red Sea can be interpreted, from Jam Suph (the Sea of Rushes), as the Last Days, for Day and Sea can both be written the same way in unpointed Hebrew = Im; and Suph means both Rushes and the End, whether spelled with an S or a Z. And with that collapses all talk of Ebb and Flood as explanations of "the miracle".

The stations in the desert resemble those in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. They came to Bitter Water (Marah), and went through Leaven (Alush), Temptation (Massah), Strife (Meribah), Poverty (Rissah), Dread (Haradah), Sickness (Mahalah), and Sin (Tahath); but at Terah they found Refreshment and in Mithcah Sweet Comfort. They received Chastisement again in Moseroth and met the Sons of Grief (Bene-Jaakon). But no matter where they wandered, they returned to Holiness (Kadesh), which was their headquarters.

As for Moses' name, it can mean "drawn out", but it can also mean Help (Moschaah = Muschgh), since Moses in Arabic is Musa. He

Strindberg's interpretation of Moses as help is partic-

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was the son of the Exalter of the People (Amram) and the Praise of the Lord (Jochebed). As a wife he was given the Crown (Zipporah). But he died on the Heights (Pisgah), both Observing and Propheying (Nebo), when he stood near the Crossing (Abarim) of the River of Judgement (Jeor Dan) at the entrance to Grace (Hanan = Canaan).

A modern Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names gives the following equivalents to the names mentioned:

<u>Egypt: black</u>	<u>Hanan: gracious</u>
Mizraim: (not defined)	<u>Marah: bitter</u>
<u>Massa: burden</u>	Alush: (not defined)
Israel: soldier of God	<u>Massah: temptation</u>
(?)	<u>Meribah: strife</u>
<u>Zin: thorn</u>	Rissah: a worm
<u>Taberah: burning</u>	<u>Haradah: fear</u>
Hazeroth: villages	<u>Mahalah: sickness</u>
<u>Kadesh: consecrated</u>	Tahath: substitute
Paran: cavernous	Terah: a station (?)
Canaan: low region	<u>Mithcah: sweetness</u>
Amalekites: descendants	<u>Moseroth: bonds</u>
of Amalek (not defined)	Bene-Jaakan: <u>sons of</u>
	Jaakon (one who turns)
Canaanite: a zealot	<u>Moses: to draw out</u>
Edom: red	<u>Amram: the people is high</u>
<u>Adamah: earth</u>	<u>Jochebed: Jehovah is</u>
Hur: (not defined)	<u>glorious</u>
<u>Ezion-Gaber: the backbone</u>	<u>Zipporah: bird</u>
<u>of a giant</u>	

ularly interesting in light of *En blå bok*'s theory of "the helpers", powerful beings from higher spheres who sometimes come down to earth to assist mankind, and his interpretations there of the names Jesus and Eleazar as also meaning help or helper.

"Sveriges anor" is a series of articles which appeared in *Aftontidningen* from late January to late March, 1911. In it Strindberg attempts to discover

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Akkub: insidious	Pisgah: a part, boundary
Jordan: going down	Nebo: a lofty place
Abarim: regions beyond	

The underlined items correspond well enough with Strindberg's interpretations, but some of these are rather forced or far-fetched, and others would seem to have little connection with the accepted meanings. These, however, were the interpretations Strindberg knew and used. I was unable to find a biblical reference to a place called Thachat; Tahath is my conjecture of Strindberg's intention. Question marks in the above list indicate scholarly disagreement over the meaning of the words so indicated; perhaps Strindberg's guesses in those cases (and in those for which I could find no meaning at all) are as good as anyone else's!

where the Swedish people came from, using a philological approach similar to that of his biblical exegesis, tracing place names and the names of historical characters back to what he takes to be their earliest occurrences. He concludes that the people who migrated to and settled in Sweden were originally Thracians, who he maintains were identical to the biblical Canaanites. One of his aims is to demonstrate the kinship of all peoples. Curiously, Eleazar makes another appearance, playing a rôle similar to that he has in *Historiska miniatyrer*, uniting, assimilating, synthesizing:

Paris hette hos Homerus Alexander; detta namn skrevs av etruscanerna Elchsnttr, vilket i den formen liknar hebreiska Elighzr opunkterat, vilket blir Elighezer, Elieser, punkterat, och betyder Gud hjälper; varav namnet Alexander icke blir så grekiskt, ty det är för övrigt macedoniskt, vilket är traciskt.²¹

A couple of the articles in "Varia" deal with Klara School, near which Strindberg lived as a child, and the first school he attended. None of his memories of it, here or elsewhere, is happy: his feelings of persecution and undeserved punishment go back very far indeed! Typical is the article "Icke för skolan utan

²¹ Samlade skrifter, LIII, 448:

Paris was called Alexander in Homer; by the Etruscans this name was written Elchsnttr, which in that form resembles the unpointed Hebrew Elighzr, which, pointed, becomes Elighezer, Elieser, and means "God helps". So the name Alexander is not so very Greek, for it is also Macedonian, which is Thracian.

för livet" ("Not for School but for Life"), first published in Aftontidningen June 17, 1911. It is an argument against corporal punishment in the schools, and is based on several very painful memories. The Inferno crisis was a long time indeed in the preparation:

Vad lärde 9-åringen av detta -- för livet? Jo, han fick den tidig uppfattningen, att livet var ett helvete och människorna, synnerligast lärarna, voro djävlar, och till denna mening ansluter Swedenborg sig också.²²

Towards the end of 1911, Strindberg had second thoughts about the vision of world history presented in "Världshistoriens mystik" and *Historiska miniatyrer*, and indeed, there is an inconsistency between their picture of the progressive realization of God's will on earth, and his fervent conviction that human happiness and perfection is only possible "on the other side". Perhaps, then, *Historiska miniatyrer* was a bit overly optimistic, perhaps the world really is a pretty hopeless place, and perhaps we ought not to expect perfection this side of the grave:

I *Historiska Miniatyrer* har jag visserligen genomvandrat hela världshistorien, och med ganska förhoppningsfullt sinne, uttryckt i formeln, "Allt tjänar", även det onda får tjäna det goda!

Men ibland misströstar jag om ett bättre tillstånd här på jorden; anslutande mig till

²² Samlade skrifter, LIII, 521:

What did the 9-year old learn from this -- for life? Well, he got an early perception that life is a hell and that people, most especially teachers, were devils, an opinion also shared by Swedenborg.

Origines' mening, att jorden är skapad till ett fängelse för fallna själar. Om då vår jord ständigt rekryteras med brottslingar, så kan den individuella förbättringen först yppa sig vid frigivningen: döden.

Dr Lundin synes vara adventist: liksom Swedenborg. Ohjälpligt för de kristna, som skola ha det surt under (Egyptierna) Nyhedningarna. Skulle de kristna segra här, så fingo de makten som alltid missbrukas. Nej, ju sämre, dess bättre; eljest skulle vi börja trivas i möljan och aldrig vilja härifrån.²³

²³ Samlade skrifter, LIII, 528 (from the article "Allt tjänar": "Everything Serves", first published in Svenska Morgonbladet, November 18, 1911):

In Historiska miniatyrer, to be sure, I wandered through all of world history with a rather optimistic outlook, expressed in the formula "Everything serves": even evil must serve good!

But sometimes I despair of better conditions here on earth, concurring with Origen's opinion that the earth was created as a prison for fallen souls. If, then, our world is constantly being settled by criminals, individual improvement cannot be possible before liberation: death.

Dr. Lundin* seems to be an Adventist,** as Swedenborg was. That is not much comfort to the Christians who must have a hard time of it under the New Heathens (Egyptians).*** If Christians were to be victorious here, they would achieve power, which is always misused. No, the worse things are, the better: otherwise we would begin to enjoy the muck and never wish to leave it.

* I have been unable to identify the person intended; it is unlikely to have been Claes Lundin, Strindberg's collaborator on Gamla Stockholm, who died in 1908.

** Adventism: a belief, shared by several Christian sects, that the Second Coming of Christ is imminent. Some, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, believe that this will be succeeded by a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

This is not to say, however, that we should not try to make the world a better place: conditions in prison can (and should) be improved, even if it can never become a desirable place to be!

Aware that he had not much longer to live, and touched by the tributes which poured in as his sixty-third birthday approached, Strindberg used that birthday as an occasion of reconciliation. One manifestation of this was an article in the Danish newspaper *Politiken* on the birthday itself. Here he acknowledges the hospitality Denmark showed him when he was *persona non grata* in Sweden, makes peace with Georg and Edvard Brandes, who had been close friends at one time but with whom he had since quarrelled, and acknowledges two Danish literary inspirations: Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. That Kierkegaard was an early influence is evident in the fragment "En berättelse från Stockholms skärgård"; but here he acknowledges a renewed influence on his thinking, claiming, indeed, that he never really abandoned his old master. This is as close as Strindberg ever gets to denying that he was ever really an atheist:

... mina vägar ha gått genom Inferno och Purgatorio utan att jag sett Paradiso; därför har Kierkegaard med sin konfessionslösa kris-

—
*** A reference to Israel's bondage in Egypt.

tendom åter blivit min fana, som jag egentligen aldrig övergivit, då tillvaron själv endast varit mig ett stort lidande.²⁴

Also of interest in this extract is Strindberg's use of the Italian rather than the Swedish words for Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise: an acknowledgement of Dante as another source of the symbolic structure through which he views life and the world. Inferno and Purgatory he has experienced in the world, but not Paradise, which lies beyond. Those who seek Paradise in this world, like Tekla in "En häxa", are chasing illusions. The reference to Kierkegaard's nonconfessional Christianity reflects Strindberg's continued dissociation from organized religion and his own symbol of the nonconfessional monastery as a haven from the suffering and illusion of the world: Kierkegaard's influence has not been so direct as Swedenborg's, but is discernible.

Also published on his last birthday was an article in *Aftontidningen* dealing with a recent illness: he had caught cold on Christmas Eve, 1911, and the following day came down with a high fever and pneumonia. Upon

²⁴ *Samlade skrifter*, LIII, 557 (the title of the article is "Minnen från Danmark": "Memories from Denmark"):

... my path has led me through Inferno and Purgatorio, without permitting me to see Paradiso; and so Kierkegaard, with his nonconfessional Christianity, has once again become my standard, which I have never really abandoned, when existence itself has been nothing but a great suffering for me.

subsequently learning that he had come close to dying, his thoughts turn once again to the afterlife, which he imagines in terms similar to the description of the first station after death (i.e., the Isle of the Blessed) in *En blå bok III*. The contrast with his present (earthly) condition arouses in him deep feelings of humility, which extends even to his literary talent:

Då började en mängd föreställningar om ett kommande själstillstånd att vakna. Först önskade jag tänka mig att minnet av allt ont och fult skulle förintas (Lethe); sedan, att ett nytt medvetande, uppbyggt av alla mina goda impulser i detta livet, skulle nybilda en stomme till en personlighet som jag kunde akta och trivas vid. Ett nytt minne, alltså, ett nytt medvetande och en ny personlighet. Men det gamla i verklighetens nu, som icke var förgånget, följde som skuggan, och livet låg tungt, mörkt bakom mig; icke en ljus punkt; även minnen som förut varit oskyldiga förvandlades nu till skuld. Det jag förut räknat mig till förtjänst fann jag vara relativt intigt; även de goda gärningarna voro bara plikter, som borde uppfyllas utan lön; den talang jag yvts över och mången (icke alla) beundrat var icke min, utan en gåva, kanske rent av ett lån ... Där fanns ingenting att beröma sig av.²⁵

²⁵ Samlade skrifter, LIII, 561 (the article is entitled "Betraktelser på födelsedagen med anledning av sjukdomen": "Observations on My Birthday, with Reference to Illness"):

Then a number of representations of a future condition of the soul began to awaken. First, I wished to believe that the memory of everything evil and ugly would disappear (Lethe); then, that a new consciousness, assembled from all my good impulses in this life, would generate the frame-work of a new personality, which I could respect and feel comfortable with. A new heart, then, a new consciousness, and a new personality. But the old one, in the reality of the present, which was not over, followed me like a shadow, and my life lay heavily, darkly behind me; not one bright

"The greatest fire in Sweden" had burnt itself out. The mood of this extract is entirely in keeping with the protest contained in the same letter that he is unworthy of the honours being organized to celebrate his birthday, and with the feeling, expressed two days later in an article conveying his thanks to all who had contributed to the celebration, that he had been "överskaffad" (over-valued). It is in keeping too with both traditions concerning his last words. According to his nurse these were "... jag finns ej mer!" ("... I no longer exist!"), but Svenska Dagbladet (The Swedish Daily Paper) reported him to have said "Nu har jag sagt mina sista ord, nu talar jag ej mer!" ("Now I have said my last words, now I will speak no more!")²⁶. The latter version takes on poignancy when one recalls the assertion at the end of *En blå bok I* that he had then (1907) said all he had to say, and the flurry of activity which followed, comprising the other Blue Books, Strindbergsfejden, other newspaper articles, and his

spot; even memories which had previously been innocent were changed now into guilt. What I had previously counted to my advantage, I found to be relatively worthless; even my good deeds had only been duties, which should be fulfilled without recompense; that talent on which I had prided myself, and which many (not all) had admired, was not mine, but a gift; perhaps, in fact, a loan ... There was nothing there to praise oneself for.

²⁶ Both versions are cited from Lagerkrantz, 458.

philological studies; when he submitted the article "Hov-stat"²⁷ ("The Court State") in mid-1910, an accompanying note to the editor indicated that by then there was a great deal yet to be said:

Jag är gammal, har ingen tid att förlora, svårt att vänta, då jag tycker mig ha så mycket osagt, som kunde klargöra min ställning både i litteraturen och eljest.²⁸

Strindberg's last words were not his last statement, however: he had arranged in advance two symbolic gestures to follow his death. One took place almost immediately: his daughter Greta removed the crucifix from his desk and laid it on his breast (Lagerkrantz, 458); the other was the black wooden cross bearing the words "O Crux Ave Spes Unica!" which marks his grave.

Passages from these newspaper articles which deal with specific works are discussed in the chapters dealing with those works: *Gillets hemlighet*, *Fadren*, *Påsk*, and *Kronbruden*.

²⁷ *Samlade skrifter*, LIII, 58-63 (first published in *Aftontidningen* May 25, 1910).

²⁸ Quoted *Ibid.*, 569 (in John Landquist's comments to the volume):

I am old, have no time to waste, find it difficult to wait, since I think I have so much unsaid, which could clarify my position, both in literature and otherwise.

English Titles of Strindberg Works Cited

Strindberg's works are listed alphabetically by their Swedish (or French) titles, followed by the English title adopted in this dissertation. Alternate English titles are given in parentheses.

"Abnorma skolan": "The School of the Abnormal"

"Absint": "Absinthe"

Abu Casems tofflor: The Slippers of Abu Casem (Abu Casem's Slippers)

"Adelsö och Björkö": "Adelsö and Björkö"

Advent: Advent

"Ahasverus": "Ahasuerus"

"Alkibiades": "Alcibiades"

Anno fyrtioåtta: Anno Forty-Eight

Antibarbarus: Antibarbarus

"Apostata": "Apostate"

"Armageddon (början till en roman)": "Armageddon: The Beginning of a Novel"

"August Strindberg om sig själv": "August Strindberg on Himself"

"August Strindbergs Lilla katekes för Underklassen":
"August Strindberg's Little Catechism for the Underclass"

"Autopsier och intervjuer": "Observations and Interviews"

"Bandet": "The Bond" ("The Link")

"Beskyddare": "Patron"

"Bevittna vi en upplösning eller en utveckling av den religiösa känslan?": "Are We Witnessing a Dissolution or an Evolution of Religious Feeling?"

"Bibelforskning": "Biblical Research"

Bibliska egennamn: Biblical Proper Names

"Biografiskt": "Biographical"

Bjälbo-jarlen: The Earl of Bjälbo (Earl Birger of Bjälbo)

Bland franska bönder: Among French Peasants

Blomstermålningar och djurstycken: Flower Paintings and Animal Pieces

"Blomstrens hemligheter": "Secrets of the Flowers"

Blot-Sven: Blot-Sven

"Blå bokens historia": "The History of the Blue Book"

"Bondeliv i en fransk by": "Peasant Life in a French Village"

Brott och brott: Crimes and Crimes (Crime and Crime; There Are Crimes and Crimes)

Brända tomten: The Burnt Lot (After the Fire; The Burned House; The Burned Site; The House that Burned)

"Brödet": "Bread"

"Början av Ån Bogsveigs saga": "The Beginning of the Saga of Ån Bogsveig"

Carl XII: Karl XII (Charles XII)

"Chrysäetos": "Chrysaetos"

"Claris majorum exemplis": "Claris Majorem Exemplis"

"Debet och kredit": "Debit and Credit"

"De kvarlåtne": "Those Who Remain Behind"

"De lycksaliges ö": "The Isle of the Blessed"

Den blödande handen: *The Bleeding Hand*

"Den fredlöse": "The Outlaw" ("The Outcast")

"Den litterära reaktionen i Sverige": "Literary Reactionism in Sweden"

Den sjunkande Hellas: *The Last Days of Hellas*

"Den starkare": "The Stronger" ("The Stronger Woman")

"De sju goda åren": "The Seven Good Years"

"De små": "The Small"

"De stora": "The Great"

Det nya riket: *The New Kingdom*

"De yttersta och de främsta": "The Outermost and the Foremost"

Dikter: *Poems*

"Djurens och växternas förstånd": "The Intelligence of Animals and Plants"

"Dygdens lön": "The Reward of Virtue"

"Då myrorna skulle grunda samhälle": "The Founding of the Society of the Ants"

Dödsdansen: *The Dance of Death*

Efterslätter: *Second Harvest*

"Eginhard till Emma": "Eginhard to Emma"

"Egyptiska trældomen": "The Egyptian Bondage"

"Elefantvalvet": "The Elephant Vault"

"En barnsaga": "A Children's Story"

"En berättelse från Stockholms skärgård": "A Tale from
the Stockholm Archipelago" ("A Tale from the
Archipelago")

"En blick mot rymden": "A Glance Towards Space"

En blå bok: A Blue Book (Zones of the Spirit)

En extra blå bok: An Extra Blue Book; A Blue Book IV

Engelbrekt: Engelbrekt

"En häxa": "A Witch"

"En kunglig revolution": "A Royal Revolution"

En namnsdagsgåva: A Name-Day Present

En ny blå bok: A New Blue Book; A Blue Book II

En ny extra blå bok: A New Extra Blue Book

"En ovälkommen": "An Undesirable"

"En själ över bord": "Soul Overboard"

"Eremiten Peter": "Peter the Hermit"

Erik XIV: Erik XIV

"Esplanadsystemet": "The Esplanade System"

"Estetiskt": "Aesthetic Matters"

Ett drömspel: A Dream Play (The Dream Play)

Fabler: Fables

Fadren: The Father

Fagervik och Skamsund: Fagervik and Skamsund (Fairhaven
and Foulport; Fair Haven and Foul Strand)

"Faraon-dyrkan": "Pharaoh-Worship"

"Flaccus och Maro": "Flaccus and Maro"

Folkstaten: The People's State

Folkungasagan: The Saga of the Folkungs

"Folkupplagan": "The People's Arsenal"

Fordringsägare: Creditors (The Creditor)

Fritänkaren: The Freethinker

"Från Fjärdingen och Svartbäcken": "From Fjärdingen and
Svartbäcken" ("Uppsala Stories")

"Från havet": "From the Sea"

"Från Italien (Sommarbrev i mars)": "From Italy (A Sum-
mer Letter in March)"

Fröken Julie: Miss Julie (Countess Julia; Countess
Julie; Lady Julie; Miss Julia)

"Fågel Fenix": "The Phoenix"

"För konsten": "For Art"

"Första varningen": "The First Warning"

Gamla Stockholm: Old Stockholm

"Gatubilder": "Street Scenes"

Genom öknar till arvland, eller Moses: Through the Wil-
derness to the Promised Land, or Moses; Moses
(Through Deserts to Ancestral Land)

"Genvägar": "Short-Cuts"

Giftas: Married (Getting Married)

Gillet's hemlighet: The Secret of the Guild

Gnat: Nagging

Guldets syntes: The Synthesis of Gold

Gustav III: Gustav III (Gustaf III)

Gustav Vasa: Gustav Vasa (Gustavus Vasa)

Götiska rummen: The Gothic Rooms

"Hallucinationer": "Hallucinations"

Han och Hon: He and She

Hellas, eller Sokrates: Hellas, or Socrates; Socrates
(Greece)

"Hemicykeln i Athen": "The Hemicycle in Athens"

Hemsöborna: The Natives of Hemsö (The People of Hemsö)

Hemsöborna: folk-komedi: The Natives of Hemsö: A Folk
Comedy

Hermione: Hermione

Herr Bengts hustru: Herr Bengt's Wife (Lord Bengt's
Wife; Sir Bengt's Wife)

"Herr Bengts hustru": "Herr Bengt's Wife"

"Hildur horgabrud": "Hildur, Blood Priestess"

Himmelrikets nycklar: The Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven
(The Key of Heaven; The Keys of Heaven; The Keys
to Heaven)

Historiska miniatyrer: Historical Miniatures

"Hjärnornas kamp": "The Battle of Brains"

"Holländarn": "The Dutchman"

Hortus Merlini: Hortus Merlini

"Hov-stat": "The Court State"

"Här och där": "Here and There"

"Högre existensformer; die Toteninsel": "Higher Forms
of Existence: die Toteninsel"

"Högre ändamål": "Higher Ends"

"Högsommar": "High Summer"

"Höst": "Autumn"

Hövdingaminnen: *Memories of Leaders*

I Bernadottes land (Au pays de Bernadotte): *In the Land
of Bernadotte*

"I Bärwalde": "In Bärwalde"

"Icke för skolan utan för livet": "Not for School but
for Life"

I havsbandet: *In the Outer Archipelago (By the Open
Sea; On the Seaboard)*

"I midsommartider": "Midsummer Days"

"Indiansommar": "Indian Summer"

Inferno: *Inferno (The Inferno)*

"Inför döden": "In the Face of Death" ("Facing Death";
"In Face of Death")

"I Notre-Dame och Kölner-Domen. Två ögonblick": "In
Notre-Dame and Cologne Cathedral: Two Moments"

"Intima teatern": "The Intimate Theatre"

Introduction à une chimie unitaire: *Introduction to a
Unitary Chemistry*

"I Rom": "In Rome"

"Ismael": "Ishmael"

I vårbrytningen: *In Early Spring*

"Jag drömde": "I Dreamt"

Jardin des Plantes (*Sylva sylvarum*): *Jardin des Plantes*

Kamraterna: *Comrades*

"Karantänmästarns andra berättelse": "The Quarantine
Officer's Second Tale" ("The Doctor's Second
Story")

"Karantänmästarns första berättelse": "The Quarantine Officer's First Tale" ("The Doctor's First Story")

"Karl Ulfsson och hans moder": "Karl Ulfsson and His Mother"

"Kaspers fettisdag": "Kasper's Shrove Tuesday" ("Casper's Shrove Tuesday")

Kina och Japan: China and Japan

Kinesiska språkets härkomst: The Origins of the Chinese Language

Klostret: The Cloister

"Konstens martyrer": "The Martyrs of Art"

Kristina: Kristina (Queen Christina)

Kronbruden: The Virgin Bride (The Bridal Crown; The Crown Bride)

"Kråk-sång": "Crow Song"

Kulturhistoriska studier: Studies in Cultural History

"Kungshamns-gisslan": "The Kungshamn Hostages"

"Kvarstadsresan": "Journey in Bond"

"Kvinnofrågan": "The Women's Question"

"Kvinnosaken enligt Evolutionsteorin": "The Women's Question in the Light of the Theory of Evolution"

"Kärleksjukan": "Love-sickness"

"Lammet": "The Lamb"

Lammet och Vilddjuret: The Lamb and the Beast (The Lamb and the Wild Beast)

"Landsflykt": "Exile"

"La société de Stockholm": "Stockholm Society"

"La synthèse de l'iode": "The Synthesis of Iodine"

"La terre, sa forme, ses mouvements": "The Earth, Its
Shape and Movements"

Legender: Legends

"Leka med elden": "Playing with Fire"

"Leontopolis": "Leontopolis"

Le plaidoyer d'un fou: A Madman's Defence (The Confes-
sion of a Fool; The Defense of a Fool; A Madman's
Manifesto)

"Lettres de Stockholm": "Letters from Stockholm"

"Likställighet och tyranni. (Strödda anmärkningar till
"Giftas")": "Equality and Tyranny: Miscellaneous
Notes on Giftas"

"Livsglädjen": "Joy of Life"

"Ljusets fiender": "The Enemies of Light"

"Lokes smädelser": "The Defamations of Loki" ("Loki's
Blasphemies")

"Lotsens vedermödor": "The Hardships of the Pilot"

"Lyckliga människor": "Happy People"

Lycko-Pers resa: Lucky Per's Journey (Lucky Pehr; Lucky
Peter's Travels; The Journey of Lucky Peter)

"Lärda saker": "Learned Matters"

"Maktfrågan eller mannens intressen": "The Power Ques-
tion, or the Interests of Man"

"Marcus Larsson advokat": "Marcus Larsson, Lawyer"

Memorandum till meddlemmarna av Intima teatern: Memo-
randum to the Members of the Intimate Theatre

Midsommar: Midsummer

"Min värsta ovän": "My Worst Enemy"

"Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche": "My Relation to
Nietzsche"

"Mitt och Ditt": "Mine and Yours"

"Moderkärlek": "Mother Love" ("Motherlove"; "Motherly
Love"; "Mother's Love")

Modersmålets anor: The Ancestry of the Mother Tongue

"Moln-Bilder": "Cloud Pictures"

"Monoplan eller biplan. Folkstat eller hovstat": "Mono-
plane or Biplane: People's State or Court State"

"Moralen": "Morality"

"Mystik -- tills vidare": "Mysticism -- for the Time
Being"

"Måsarne" ("La Mouette"): "The Seagulls"

Mäster Olof: Master Olof

"Nationalitet och svenskhet": "Nationality and Swedish-
ness"

"Natura ...": "Natura ..."

"Nemesis divina": "Divine Nemesis"

Nutidens guldmakeri: Modern Alchemy

Nya svenska öden: New Swedish Destinies

"Nya vapen": "New Weapons"

"Nybyggnad": "Under Construction"

Näktergalen i Wittenberg: The Nightingale of Wittenberg

Ockulta dagboken: The Occult Diary

"Odlad frukt": "Cultivated Fruit"

"Om det allmänna missnöjet, dess orsaker och botmedel":

"On the General Discontent, Its Causes and Cures"

"Om modernt drama och modern teater": "On Modern Drama
and Modern Theatre"

"Om musiken i Kronbruden": "On the Music in Kronbruden"
Ordalek och småkonst: Wordplay and Small Art (Word Play
and Minor Art)

Oväder: Storm (The Storm; Storm Weather; Stormy
Weather; The Thunderstorm)

"Paria": "Pariah" ("The Pariah")

Pelikanen: The Pelican

"På gott och ont": "Both Good and Evil" ("The Martyr of
Stockholm")

"På kyrkogården": "In the Cemetery"

Påsk: Easter

"På vandring efter spåren till en svensk kulturhisto-
ria": "In Search of Evidence for a Cultural His-
tory of Sweden"

"Religion": "Religion"

Religiös renässans: Religious Renaissance

Resor: Travels

Riksföreståndaren: The Regent

"Rom på en dag": "Rome in a Day"

"Rosa Mystica": "Rosa Mystica"

"Räfst- och rättarresan": "The Settling of Accounts"

Röda rummet: The Red Room

"Sagan om Herkules (Ur: Det gamla riket)": "The Saga of
Hercules, from The Old Kingdom")

"Sagan om Stig Storverks son": "The Saga of Stig, Son
of Storverk" ("Stig Storverk's Son")

Sagor: Stories (Fairy Tales; In Midsummer Days and
Other Tales; Tales)

"Samum": "Simoom" ("Simoon")

"Samvetskval": "Pangs of Conscience"

"Segling": "Sailing"

"Silverträsket": "Silver Lake"

Siste riddaren: The Last Knight (The Last of the
Knights)

"Själamord (Apropos Rosmersholm)": "Psychological Mur-
der (à propos Rosmersholm)"

Skärkarlsliv: Life in the Archipelago (Life in the
Skerries)

"Sokrates": "Socrates"

"Solnedgång på havet": "Sunset at Sea"

"Solrosen": "The Sunflower"

"Solrök": "Heat Haze"

"Sorgespelet på Örbyhus": "The Tragedy at Örbyhus"

Språkvetenskapliga studier: Philological Studies

Spöksonaten: The Ghost Sonata (The Spook Sonata)

"Stadsresan": "The Trip to the City"

"Stockholm sju på morgonen": "Stockholm at Seven in the
Morning"

Stora landsvägen: The Great Highway (Apologia; The
Highway)

"Stormar": "Storms"

"Stråmannen": "The Man of Straw"

Svanevit: Swanwhite

Svarta fanor: Black Banners (Black Flags)

Svarta handsken: The Black Glove

Svenska folket: The Swedish People

Svenska öden och äventyr: Swedish Destinies and Adventures (Swedish Fates and Adventures)

"Svensk natur": "Swedish Nature"

"Sveriges anor": "Sweden's Ancestors"

Syndabocken: The Scapegoat

"Sårfeber": "Surgical Fever"

Sömngångarnätter: Sleepwalking Nights (Sleepwalker Nights; Sleepwalking in Broad Daylight)

"Taga rävar": "Dealing with Foxes"

Taklagsöl: The Roofing Celebration (The Roofing Feast)

Tal till svenska nationen: Addresses to the Swedish Nation (Talks to the Swedish Nation)

Till Damaskus: To Damascus (The Road to Damascus)

"Tjänarnas tjänare": "The Servant of the Servants"

Tjänstekvinnans son: The Son of the Bondswoman (The Son of a Servant; Son of a Servant Woman)

"Trefaldighetsnatten": "Trinity Sunday Night"

Tryckt och otryckt: Published and Unpublished

Tsarens kurir : The Tsar's Courier

"Tschandala": "Chandala"

"Tusenåriga riket": "The Thousand-Year Kingdom"

"Tvekamp": "Duel"

"Två fabler": "Two Fables"

Typer och prototyper inom mineralkemien: Types and Prototypes in Inorganic Chemistry

"Underklassens svar på de viktigaste av Överklassens fraser": "The Response of the Underclass to the Most Important Clichés of the Overclass"

"Ungdom och ideal": "Youth and Ideals"

Uppsatser: Essays

"Urarva": "Waiver"

"Ur det cyniska livet": "From the Cynical Life"

Utopier i verkligheten: Realized Utopias (Utopias in Reality)

"Uttalanden vid födelsedagsfesten 22 januari 1912":
"Remarks Concerning the Birthday Celebrations on January 22, 1912"

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Öppna brev till Intima teatern: Open Letters to the Intimate Theatre (The Open Letters to the Intimate Theater)

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"Övertro": "Blind Faith"

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