

Michael Stern

# Nietzsche's Ocean, Strindberg's Open Sea



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Herausgegeben von  
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## The Landscape: »As my father I am dead«

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1888, August Strindberg received a letter post-marked: Torino, via Carlo Alberto 6. The writer of the letter was an itinerant philosopher, a pensioned professor of classical philology from the University of Basel. It opens:

Hochgeehrter Herr,  
ich denke unsre Sendungen haben sich gekreuzt? – Ich las zwei Mal mit tiefer Bewegung Ihre Tragödie; es hat mich über alle Maaßen überrascht, ein Werk kennen zu lernen, in dem mein eigener Begriff von der Liebe – in ihren Mitteln der Krieg, in ihrem Grunde der Todhaß der Geschlechter – auf eine grandiose Weise zum Ausdruck gebracht ist.

(My esteemed sir,  
I believe our postings have crossed? I have read your tragedy two times and was deeply moved; it has surprised me beyond all measure to discover a work that expresses my own conception of Love – as a medium of war, as the deadly hatred of the sexes – brought to expression in such a grandiose manner.)<sup>1</sup>

The name of Strindberg's correspondent was Friedrich Nietzsche and the tragedy he was referring to was *Fadren* (*The Father*). Written in 1887, Strindberg's ironically entitled drama depicts the struggle between a cavalry officer with serious scientific ambition and his more strategically capable wife. The most immediate and concrete manifestation of the couple's troubles is the direction of their daughter's education. Laura employs a strategy against her husband that creates a sense of uncertainty in his mind about the paternity of their daughter and plants seeds of doubt in the minds of others about his sanity. Commonly held to be inspired by both the French sociologist Paul Lafargue's warning about the coming matriarchy<sup>2</sup> and a momentary infatuation with Prussian martial patriarchy, the collision between the Captain and Laura involves much more than a fearful reaction to the possibility of rule by women. Although

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<sup>1</sup> Found as letter 1160 in NIETZSCHE: 2003, 493.

<sup>2</sup> Strindberg read Lafargue's *Le Matriacat* which was published in *La Nouvelle Revue*, 15.3 1886. For a different perspective than mine, see Margaretha Fahlgren's excellent discussion of *The Father* in her monograph *Kvinnans ekvation: Kön, makt, och rationalitet i Strindbergs författarskap* (FAHLGREN: 1994, 85). For a discussion about the implications of the Captain's doubts about paternity, see Ross Shideler's *Questioning the Father: From Darwin to Zola, Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hardy* (SHIDELER: 1999, 99–135). Fahlgren analyzes the depictions of gender difference in the play and how the subsequent determinations relate to power. Shideler analyzes the role of biological understanding as refracted through Darwin in Strindberg's depiction of marriage.

it is often read in light of Strindberg's preoccupation with his own sanity and as the shadow of his own marital unrest, this tragedy resists a biographical reading. Giving voice to a wide range of discourses, *The Father* speaks the languages of science, law, religion, passion, madness, and mythology. Most importantly, the staging depicts the symbols of masculine power only to allow the discourse to drain them of their meaning. From the military jackets and weapons hanging on hooks, the Strindbergian tropes of masculinity abound. From the Captain's spectroscope to his straight jacket, these tropes represent the collision of reason and its other.

While these props have most often been read as representing power, their signification refracts through a discourse that interrogates the possibility of knowing paternity, and of knowing scientifically; in other words, the relationship between the discourse and the staging weakens epistemological categories as it questions psychological certainty. In the discourse, maternity remains the only given. The staged symbols of male power are shown as ossified objects belonging to another moment in time. The nihilistic environment casts a shadow on what a symbol can bring to light, revealing the Captain as a figure who has seen his day.

Moreover, despite its pre-occupation with family roles and questions of paternity, the play entitled *The Father* gives the penultimate word to the *mother* and the *last* word to *the mother's brother* who happens to be a preacher. As the play concludes, the Captain finds himself wrapped in a straight jacket, exclaiming his likeness to Hercules when betrayed and enslaved by Omphale.<sup>3</sup> Almost immediately thereafter he succumbs to a

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3 The Captain's reference to Omphale has a few interesting implications. According to myth, Hercules had murdered his friend Iphitus and his punishment was to serve Queen Omphale for three years. During this time he dressed as a woman and spun wool with Omphale's hand-maidens while Omphale wore his lion skin. The punishment for inappropriate violence is cross dressing or perhaps gender reversal. In this case, masculine aggression taken to its extreme brings about the loss of masculine privilege and converts the symbols of masculine power to trans-gendered objects. See FULLER: 1957, 121–122. Another more speculative suggestion comes from an etymological cousin of the Queen's name. The omphalos or »navel-stone« is a common world-wide symbol. The *Dictionary of Symbols* tells us that: »The cosmic omphalos has been contrasted with the cosmic EGG as the male with the female principles of the universe. The world was born from their sacred marriage in the same way as the child is born from sexual intercourse.« (CHEVALIER and GHEERBRANT (eds.): 1982, 718–719.) In other words, perhaps Strindberg is using Omphale as both a symbol of gender inversion brought on by over-reaching aggression and as an agent of cosmic regeneration. And Omphale is a queen

heart attack. The last two lines of the drama seal the mother's possession of the child as the death of the father is punctuated by Laura's exclamation, »Mitt barn! Mitt eget barn!« (My child, my own child) immediately sanctioned by the pastors »Amen!«<sup>4</sup> A mythological and cosmological allusion precedes taking possession with a word, which is followed by sanctification as the curtain falls. The patriarch has recourse to a classical myth of a fallen hero, but the matriarch has the power of both inevitability and institutional religion behind her. This turn of events, the rise of the mother at the father's expense is reinforced by the trans-gendered aspects of the Captain's re-naming of himself and Laura as Hercules and Omphale.

This denouement indicates that while *The Father* depicts the »deadly hatred of the sexes,« this motif is certainly a metaphor for a larger struggle, a collision between a discourse of alienated reason and a discourse of power operating under the signs of fate and Christian propriety. The Captain, the man of science finds no discursive justification for the exercise of his power. He is forced to assume a mythological mantle, which constricts his possibilities as the discourse of the mother derives its power from the engine of historical change and the offices of the church. So while on the surface, it seems that Nietzsche's admiration for *The Father* emerges out of his identification with Strindberg's depiction of *bitter struggle between man and woman* and the creation that emerges from this struggle, there is more to the story as we are presented with the colliding discourses of classical antiquity and Christian modernity. The quarrel between the ancients and the moderns re-emerges as a family affair. The first aspect of Nietzsche's appreciation of Strindberg, his admiration of the Swede's depiction of marriage, emerges as a common complaint about modernity and a critique that makes use of the metaphor of procreation as an after-image of the creation of a world.

Perhaps our point of entry opens to view when we realize that all of our colliding discourses are given form within a family drama that offers

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named after a masculine principle. While the implications of this are not within the confines of my inquiry, it is rather interesting to note for this builds on Strindberg's oft mentioned fear of the »coming matriarchy,« as it is apparent that Strindberg considers this event to be a moment of the death of the father as such and the birth of a new cosmic order in which the symbols of the father become the reinforcing agents of the power of the mother.

4 STRINDBERG: 1984a, 98. The English translation is from JOHNSON: 1976, 63.

us a genealogy only to question its stability. Certainly, Nietzsche's first major contribution to aesthetic discourse, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (*The Birth of Tragedy*), opens with a discussion using the metaphor of procreation and the use of this substitution of sexual reproduction for poetic production will re-emerge in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*), and again in *Ecce Homo* in the form of Nietzsche's supposition that his profundity emerges from a certain riddle, to which my subtitle, »as my father I am dead,« alludes and to which we will return in a moment. Strindberg for his part entitles his four part »autobiography,« *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*The Son of a Servant*), and despite the titular prominence of his mother, the cycle ends with his depiction of his overcoming of his maternal inheritance, which he claims is the source of his divided self and his occasional slavishness. For both Nietzsche and Strindberg, one dies as his father only to be born again posthumously as recurrence regulates an economy of subjectivity that pauses before its ontological enshrinement as being.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than using genealogy to convey a sense of biological predestination, both Nietzsche and Strindberg use genealogical metaphors to disentangle notions of subjectivity from deterministic models.<sup>6</sup> They do this while maintaining the tension between foundational and anti-foundational models, between, as Nietzsche would later articulate the problem, the need to love one's fate and the fact of endless becoming. These paradoxical genealogical pairs – for Nietzsche: Apollo and Dionysius, theoretical and instinctive man, the *decadent* and the *overman*, the Crucified and Dionysius (once again), and for Strindberg: the serving woman and the aristocrat, Hercules and Omphale, the star of Bethlehem

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5 Kelly Oliver makes an interesting comment on the relationship between the death of the father, gender inversion and what I call pausing before being. She remarks: »Nietzsche's Dionysian *Übermensch*, on the other hand, is a strong new type who can bear the excesses of pregnancy without individuation. These are for the weak who cannot bear life's excess, for those who cannot affirm pain and difference. The *Übermensch* is truly eternally pregnant: the one who does not need to give birth; the creator without creations; the artist without works of art; life becomes creative; son becomes mother, both sublime and abject.« See OLIVER: 1994, 59.

6 Sarah Kofman comments: »In order to deny all connection and affinity with those closest to him, in favor of exclusively »elective affinities,« Nietzsche substitutes an economic hypothesis for biological or racial hypotheses of kinship. Birth is conceived as the result of an accumulation of energy necessitating the build up of capital that will burst forth or explode all the more strongly for the time it is kept in check.« This statement is found in BURGARD 1994, 48, »A Fantastical Genealogy: Nietzsche's Family Romance«.

and star of Hercules – all are masks for the twin parameters of subjectivity: *amor fati* and the need to place a name upon constant change.

In any case, it is genealogy as figure and as symbol that regulates both men's understanding of the emergence of themselves as individuals and subjectivity as a performance whose contours are brought into relief by the act of *self-overcoming*. This helps to explain Strindberg's letter to the Danish playwright and parliamentarian, Edvard Brandes on September 4, 1888, where he writes: »Emellertid mitt aandsliv har i sitt uterus mottagit en förfärlig sädesuttömning af Friedrich Nietzsche, så att jag känner mig full som en hynda i buken.« (Meanwhile, my intellectual life has received a terrible stream of seed from Friedrich Nietzsche in its uterus, so that I feel intoxicated like a bitch in the belly.)<sup>7</sup> For both Nietzsche and Strindberg, intellectual encounters were productive collisions and these collisions were genealogically regulated, tragic in nature, and metaphorical in valence. For both of these men, epistemological considerations lead to descriptions impregnated with subjectivity's very possibility, and what is born from the encounter is never identical to either one of its parents. Creation is not a form of cloning, but rather the inflection of random recombination.

Nietzsche addresses this issue himself in Aphorism 248 from *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is here that he states that there are two types of genius, »eins, welches vor allem zeugt und zeugen will, und ein Andres, welches gern befruchten lässt und gebiert« (the kind which above all begets and wants to beget, and the kind which likes to be fructified and to give birth).<sup>8</sup> He expands his analogy to a classification of national cultures, but my concern is with the *individual subject*. Nietzsche concludes by stating: »Diese zwei Arten des Genie's suchen sich, wie Mann und Weib; aber sie missverstanden auch einander – wie Mann und Weib.« (These two kinds of genius seek one another, as man and women do; but they misunderstand each other as man and woman do.)<sup>9</sup> If we extend the metaphor here to Strindberg, we can understand that his encounter with Nietzsche involved a period of »Gestaltens, Ausreifens, Vollendens« (forming, maturing, perfecting).<sup>10</sup> Strindberg's pregnancy, his gestation

7 STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1632 to Edvard Brandes, September 4, 1888. Translation by Stefanie von Schnurbein.

8 NIETZSCHE: KSA 5, 1993, 191. The English translation is from HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 180.

9 Ibid. for both the original and the translation.

10 Ibid. for both the original and the translation.

involves a fictional enactment of the possibilities of Nietzsche's philosophy as it relates to tragic subjectivity. This monograph concerns itself with Nietzsche and Strindberg's conceptions of the possibility of the emergence of the individual under the sign of nihilism; that is as an affect of the death of God the father, as the loss of the guarantee, as what Nietzsche would call the *dangerous perhaps*.

It was Edvard's brother, Georg Brandes, the Danish literary maverick, who had arranged the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg. Brandes, Nietzsche's first champion, had written him about Strindberg on the 3rd of April 1888 stressing that the philosopher shared a commonality with the person whom he considered to be Sweden's only genius: »Wenn Sie über die Frauen schreiben, sind Sie ihm sehr ähnlich.« (When you write about women, you are very similar.)<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche had initially responded to Strindberg's writing in a letter to Brandes dated November 20 (a week before his letter to Strindberg) where he remarked: »Vorgestern las ich, entzückt und wie bei mir zu Hause, *les mariés* von Herrn August Strindberg. Meine aufrichtige bewunderung, der nichts Eintrag thut, als das Gefühl, mich dabei ein wenig mitzubewunderen.« (The day before yesterday I read, with rapture and feeling altogether at home, *Les Mariés* by Herr August Strindberg. My most unreserved admiration, which is marred only by the feeling that in admiring him I also admire myself a little.)<sup>12</sup> On the surface, this reads again as if the commonality between the two thinkers begins and ends with their rather unfortunate understanding of gender relations; however as I have suggested, the register of male and female is de-centered and commutes across gender lines and we must remember that Nietzsche repeatedly debunks the concept of identification.<sup>13</sup> It is also clear that Nietzsche thematizes his appropriation of Strindberg's text, as he takes possession of its attributes (he describes them, then names them as his own).

<sup>11</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 183. Collected as letter 533. My translation.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 483. See also NIETZSCHE: 1996b, 327, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, for the English translation.

<sup>13</sup> Janet Lungstrum comments on what she calls the »metonymic, antagonistic desire between the sexes«: »It is a desire that Nietzsche internalizes or bisexualizes within his own text ...« (LUNGSTRUM: 1994, 137.) Lungstrum argues that because of this, Nietzsche provides a model of a woman's empowerment despite his utterances about woman. My point is that Nietzsche unmoors essentialist positions from the dock, setting them adrift.

Yet, despite Nietzsche's appreciation of Strindberg's depictions of gender politics, there is something much more esoteric about Nietzsche's understanding of Strindberg's tragedy. He seems to admire both the idea and its tragic expression. What is curious about this is that the gender conflict, the collision between Laura and the Captain happens *onstage*. You may well ask why this would create a curiosity. Allow me a slight, explanatory digression.

Just a few months before writing his first letter to Strindberg, Nietzsche had published *Der Fall Wagner (The Case of Wagner)*. In section 9 of this book, Nietzsche appends a footnote, which reads:

Es ist ein wahres Unglück für die Aesthetik gewesen, dass man das Wort Drama immer mit »Handlung« übersetzt hat. Nicht Wagner allein irrt hierin; alle Welt ist noch im Irrthum; die Philologen sogar, die es besser wissen sollten. Das antike Drama hatte grosse *Pathoscenen* im Auge – es schloss gerade die Handlung aus (verlegte sie vor den Anfang oder hinter die Scene).

(It has been a real misfortune for aesthetics that people always translate the word ›drama‹ as ›plot.‹ Wagner is not the only one to make this mistake; everyone does it; even philologists who should know better. Classical drama had *scenes of great pathos* in mind – it specifically excluded the plot (which it placed *before* the beginning or *behind* the scenes).)<sup>14</sup>

The footnote goes on to explicate the Doric etymology of the word drama, explain its religious origins, and to claim that drama means a happening and not a doing. The doing, so to speak, occurs *offstage*.

Nietzsche's comments on Strindberg's *The Father* clearly indicate that he understood the essential tragic collision in the drama to have happened offstage. Nietzsche's reading must have been right on the mark as Strindberg would later make good use of this Nietzschean perspective on drama and in an article published in the journal, *Nya Jord*, in 1889. In *Om modernt drama och modern teater* he would claim:

Drama lär i äldre grekiskan ha betytt tilldragelse, icke handling, eller vad vi kalla medvetna intrig. Livet passerar nämligen icke alls så regelmässigt, som ett konstruerat drama, och medvetna intrigörer få så ytterst sällan tillfälle att i detalj utföra sina planer, så att vi ha förlorat tron på dessa lömska ränksmidare, som få obehindrat styra och ställa med människors öden, att teaterboven redan i sin medvetna falskhet endast väcker vårt löje såsom osann.

(Drama seems to have meant event in older Greek, not plot, or what we call conscious intrigue. Life does not actually pass so predictably, like a constructed drama, and conscious schemers so seldom have the opportunity to set

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<sup>14</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 32. English translation from NORMAN: 2005, 249.

their plans into motion in detail, so we have lost our belief in these underhanded plotters who can play with human destiny unhindered. We have lost our belief in the theatrical villain who already with his conscious deception only awakens our scorn for being untrue.)<sup>15</sup>

This claim has a history as well. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1888, Strindberg had written Georg Brandes thanking him for having sent a copy of *The Case of Wagner*. While Strindberg wrote *The Father* a good year and a half before he read this text and his correspondence with the philosopher began, he must have felt that Nietzsche's theoretical principles applied to his own production. For less than a year after reading *The Case of Wagner*, Strindberg had re-articulated Nietzsche's position on drama and even reproduces his etymological explanation of drama's origination. He began to understand his own production retrospectively and Nietzsche became his theorist. As he explained to Brandes: »Eget att jag genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap att ›opponera mot allt.‹ Jag omtaxerar och sätter nya värden på gamla saker! Det har man ej förstått. Knappt jag sjelf.« (Strange, through Nietzsche I find the system for my madness in opposing everything. I re-evaluate and place new values on old things. No one has understood this; I have hardly understood this myself.)<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, in a letter to Ola Hansson on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1889, he comments:

*Qvinnohat* är därför och blir aldrig poesi, utan måste bli filosofi. *Fadren* faller ännu under poesin därför att den innehåller qvinnodyrkan (= öfverskattning av qvinnans egenskaper) moderkult. Förhållandet mellan poesi och filosofi kan jag ej för tillfället utreda.

(*Misogyny* therefore is not and will never be poetry, but must be philosophy. *The Father* falls under the category of poetry still in that it contains a worship of women (= an overestimation of a woman's qualities), a mother cult. I cannot for the moment untangle the relationship between poetry and philosophy.)<sup>17</sup>

Strindberg's comment to Hansson despite its rather banal misogynist inflection carries some import; for it is just the relationship between poetry and philosophy, between lyrical and form-giving impulses that is at issue.<sup>18</sup> The letter to Brandes and the re-articulation of Nietzsche's position on drama indicates that the commonality between the two thinkers

<sup>15</sup> STRINDBERG: 1912, 298. My translation.

<sup>16</sup> STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1715 to Georg Brandes, Dec. 4, 1888. Translation mine.

<sup>17</sup> STRINDBERG: 1938. My translation.

<sup>18</sup> These impulses are represented in a gendered fashion as well.



revolves around a notion of the tragic, of tragedy as the retrospective emergence of the doer after the deed. The issue at stake is, as Peter Szondi would write in his essay on tragedy, the difference between a poetics of tragedy and the idea of tragedy. For if Nietzsche regarded the tragic collision in *The Father* to have happened offstage, and the onstage event to be an expression of the pathos generated by this doing, then perhaps this suggests that it is Laura and the Captain's daughter Bertha's conception that is the tragic happening, and the pathos, the interpretation that is depicted onstage involves a struggle for power, an interrogation of paternity and the rights to determine her education. Again, the question of significance arises, for while we certainly can read this power struggle symbolically as the collision between impulses, we need to ask: what is tragic about birth and what should it matter that Bertha's conception is not depicted? I believe that an answer emerges when we follow Szondi's suggestion and shift our attention to the idea of tragedy rather than its poetics, the idea, which for Nietzsche involves the emergence of the individual and falls under the sign of the ideology of return. Szondi reminds us that there is an ironic collision inherent in the idea of tragic drama and again I quote: »**At every point in the hero's fate, he is met with the unity of salvation and annihilation, a fundamental trait of everything tragic**«. <sup>19</sup> So for Szondi and for Nietzsche, the idea of tragedy is fundamentally linked to an ironic notion of subjectivity, for in its emergence are the seeds of its destruction, and in its destruction is the promise of salvation. This conception of the tragic provides a portal through which we can discern the significance of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg. It is my contention that this commonality supercedes any notion of influence as the issue at hand involves a process and not a recapitulation of ideas. Furthermore, I contend that it is the development of an idea of tragedy, and not just a poetics, that informs us of the movement in both Strindberg's understanding of subjectivity and his dramatic production from the naturalism in *The Father* to the more abstract expressionist dramas around the turn of the century. These dramas with their ideology of return retain the ironic subjective position expressed by Szondi's formulation, and in a sense they subvert ontology by pausing before being. Strindberg's prose production rides along the

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<sup>19</sup> SZONDI: 2002, 59 (my boldface).

same rails in this period. Let us turn back to Nietzsche in order to explicate this common notion of the tragic.

Nietzsche first addressed tragedy in 1870. He gave a series of lectures on the origin of what he called Greek music drama, published a few essays, and then in 1872 he published *Die Geburt der Tragödie (The Birth of Tragedy)*, the book many readers associate with Nietzsche's views on the subject. Suffice it to say for the moment that while Nietzsche expressed reservations about his conclusions, most notably in his 1886 preface to the second edition, his concern for the notion of tragedy would remain constant throughout his career, and a few concepts raised in the *Birth of Tragedy* (if one can call them concepts) remain crucial for his thinking. His opinion »dass die Fortentwicklung der Kunst an die Duplizität des *Appollinischen* und des *Dionysischen* gebunden ist: in ähnlicher Weise, wie die Generation von der Zweiheit der Geschlechter, bei fortwährendem Kampfe und nur periodisch eintretender Versöhnung, abhängt« (that the continuous evolution of art is bound up with the duality of the *Apolline* and *Dionysiac* in much the same way that reproduction depends on there being two sexes which co-exist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only occasionally by periods of reconciliation)<sup>20</sup> will develop into a series of genealogical collisions as his work progresses. Nietzsche will continue to make use of metaphors of procreation referring to art. These metaphors will often as not make reference to gendered conflict or misrecognition. It is also important to note that for Nietzsche, aesthetics was *aisthētikē epistēmē* or knowledge of bodily sensations, not merely a theory of artistic production and form.<sup>21</sup> Therefore it should come as no surprise that in *Ecce Homo*, his »autobiography,« he states that the riddle of his existence comes when one considers that as **his mother he is still living and as his father he is already dead**. We can see here how the biological becomes the genealogical metaphor, where origin is posited only to be effaced and where subjectivity falls under the sign of aesthetic knowledge.

The second enduring issue raised in the *Birth of Tragedy* is that tragedy originates as a masked actor representing Dionysus who steps out of

20 NIETZSCHE: KSA 1, 1988a, 2. The English translation is in SPEIRS: 2006, 14.

21 Martin Heidegger defines *aisthētikē epistēmē* as »knowledge of human behavior with regard to sense, sensation, and feeling, and knowledge of how these are determined.« See HEIDEGGER: 1991, 78.

the chorus. For Nietzsche, tragedy's content is emerging individuation and the subsequent demise of that individual. This view takes its most radical form in Nietzsche's retelling of the story of King Midas and the Satyr Silenus, and his citing of Silenus's response to Midas's question about what is best of all for humans:

»Elendes Eintagsgeschlecht, des Zufalls Kinder und der Mühsal, was zwingst du mich zu sagen, was nicht zu hören für dich das Ersprößlichste ist? Das Allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar: nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu sein, nichts zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich – bald zu sterben.«

(Wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation, why do you force me to tell you the very thing which it would be most profitable for you *not* to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.)<sup>22</sup>

The birth of tragedy is equated with the emergence of the dream of individuated subjectivity. While Nietzsche will abandon such a radical pessimism, he will later depict his philosophy as a tragic philosophy and himself as a follower of Dionysus. Even Zarathustra will be depicted (in the 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*) as a Dionysian monster, thereby being marked as a tragic figure whose *Untergang*, going down or demise, will be depicted as the beginning of the tragedy. In any case, the notion of a strictly individuated subjectivity will remain an apollonian fiction even for the mature Nietzsche, and a critique of subjectivity will remain in the indices of his critique of morality and religion throughout his corpus.

The third enduring aspect of the Nietzschean version of tragedy's inception comes in the depiction of the two myths: the Judeo-Christian myth of the fall, and the Promethean myth of culture creation through transgression. This will later emerge as the non-gendered aspect of Nietzsche's historical genealogies, returning as the rational and instinctive man in *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (*On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense*), the two species of tragedy in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*), the noble and the man of *ressentiment* in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*) and as the last line of *Ecce Homo* as *Dionysus versus the crucified*.

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<sup>22</sup> NIETZSCHE: KSA I, 1988a, 35. Translation by SPEIRS: 2006, 23.

The last aspect that reappears in the Nietzschean corpus is his complaint about Aristotle, whom Nietzsche claims got it wrong when he advanced the theoretical notion that the intended affect of tragedy was catharsis and its vehicle was mimesis. Nietzsche advances the counter claim that tragedy was not conceived to discharge us of discomfort, but rather as a creation of strength, which celebrates the abundance of its vitality by staring unflinchingly into a terrific world of infinite chance and becoming.

Nietzsche's mature idea of tragic philosophy has the following elements. It made use of genealogical metaphor for the creation of both individuals and worldviews. It depicts the emergence and demise of the individual, though please note that the pessimistic notion of the tragic as expressed by the anecdote about Silenus transforms with the writing of Zarathustra. As you may recall, the figure of Zarathustra is introduced in the last aphorism in the 1881 edition of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)*.<sup>23</sup> This pivotal text in the Nietzschean corpus opens by linking poets to morality and declares that we still live in a tragic age where these teachers of morality will arise time and time again. This is also the text that announces the death of God and depicts the environment of his shadow. This is the context in which the last two aphorisms are enunciated. Aphorism 341 posits the eternal return of the same as an experimental position. The last aphorism in the original text, number 342, is entitled *Incipit Tragoedia*, the beginning of the tragedy and it is here that the narrative of Zarathustra's *Untergang* begins. Suffice it to say here, that when Nietzsche wrote a preface to the second edition in 1886, he claims: »*Incipit tragoedia* – heisst es am Schlusse dieses bedenklich-unbedenklichen Buchs: man sei auf seiner Hut! Irgend etwas ausbündig Schlimmes und Boshafte kündigt sich an: *incipit parodia*, es ist kein Zweifel.« (*Incipit Tragoedia*, we read at the end of this suspiciously innocent book. Beware! Something utterly wicked and mischievous is being announced here: *incipit Parodia*, no doubt.)<sup>24</sup> As Nietzsche announces his own form of tragedy, he announces the beginning of parody, the poem besides the poem – as he introduces the bearer of the ide-

23 The 1881 edition of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)* ends in Book 4 with Aphorism 342.

24 NIETZSCHE: KSA 3, 1988c, 346. The English translation is by NAUCKHOFF/DEL CARO: 2001, 4.

ology of return, for Zarathustra, the *dionysian monster*, is the teacher of the *eternal return*, he lets us know that another discourse will run along side, another discourse of return, and the opposition of two gods that return, Christ and Dionysus are the genealogical companions in this parodic tragedy. This tragic parody, this collision of poems carries great weight, for Nietzsche declares that poets are the handmaiden's of some morality or other and the Nietzschean conception of morality suggests that an internal organization of drives for morality is the domination of one drive over the others.

In any case, Nietzsche's hostility towards notions of catharsis and mimesis will remain, as he never resolves this conflict ending *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* where it begins, with his down going, and his authorship with a colonization of the narrative of the crucifixion, *Ecce Homo*, which ends with the opposition between Dionysus and the Crucified, a genealogical moment that began with his mother and father and ended with two metaphorical stand-ins for an internalized agon that happens off-stage, the tragic collision between internalized and competing perspectives on death and re-emergence. In the Nietzschean genealogy of self, there is a colonization of religious texts, and *the ideology of return is the bearer of hostility towards notions of stable subjectivity, as it pauses before decision by the oppositions whose collision provides the raw material for the emergence of the individual as an affect of repetition.*

So it is no wonder that Nietzsche did not understand the tragic aspects of *The Father* in its mimetic fidelity to recognizable experience. He understood the death of the father as the pathos required by individuation and he recognized the need *to be born posthumously*. If the idea of tragedy for Nietzsche is closely connected to the masked emergence of the individual and the parodic conflation of the possibility of his demise and his salvation, then he could only possibly read the intrigue that leads to the Captain's heart attack as merely an element of pathos, not as tragic action. Therefore I would like to introduce a postulation – that the movement in Strindberg's understanding of his dramatic production, and his notion of subjectivity have a distinct commonality with the mature Nietzsche's understanding of a parodic and tragic philosophy that pauses before its genealogical moment, before its birth, before its emergence into determinant being. This commonality is not restricted to the dramatic production as it commutes to the prose works as well, being especially prominent in Strindberg's *autobiographical* works. I call the communal-

ity in Nietzsche's philosophy and Strindberg's literary production a genealogy of self, which is a form of tragic autobiography. This genealogy of self is an agonistic conflation of autobiography and history, of family drama and religious narrative, of necessity and contingency.

Earlier, I claimed that Strindberg's notion of subjectivity ran parallel to his conception of tragic drama. I have organized my findings around the categories explicated as comprising Nietzsche's idea of the tragic. These categories are the personal and impersonal genealogical construction, the emergence of an individual whose subjectivity is ironic, carrying within the seeds of both his annihilation and his salvation, a hostility towards mimesis and the cathartic discharge resulting in the use of a parodic colonization of a pre-existing narrative and a pausing before ontological determination.

Seeing that both Nietzsche and Strindberg considered themselves to be living under the sign of the death of the father, the death of God the father, and the end of the ontological guarantee, it is no wonder that they regarded the subject as a species of fiction. For following Aristotle, if only in this moment, fiction, like philosophy is the seat of possibility. If Nietzsche saw the subject as being retrospectively poeticized into the deed (*hinzugedichtet*),<sup>25</sup> it is because the subject is a metaphorical substitution for experience under the guise of the proper name. The subject organizes itself like a society (*Gesellschaftsbau*),<sup>26</sup> and is a nexus of relations, and social relations at that; however Nietzsche and Strindberg seeing themselves in a nihilistic age never got past the idea of recurrence as the re-appropriation of experience through the enunciation of the proper name. Both writers inform us about how description organizes possibilities in their relationship to subjectivity and perspective.

The genealogical oppositions in Strindberg's work appear as both biological and cultural oppositions. In the last chapter of volume 4 of *Tjänstekvinnans son*, in what he would later call his *befrielsekrig* (war of liberation), Strindberg writes himself into the position of being a *spiri-*

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25 Translation: KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 45. The translators use the term »fiction added to the deed,« Nietzsche writes that »... »der Thäter« ist zum Thun bloss hinzugedichtet ...« in the original, implying that the subjectivity is a retrospective poeticization and thereby tied to both aesthetic and moral action. For the original see NIETZSCHE: 1993, 279.

26 See NIETZSCHE: 1993, 33, for the original and HOLLINGDALE (tr.): 1990, 49 for the English. The German reads: »... unser Leib ist ja nur ein Gesellschaftsbau vieler Seelen.«

*tual aristocrat* through the dialog between the unveiled pseudonym *Johan* and a character designated simply as *X*. Just prior to this dialog the narrator (the autobiography is written in the third person) declares that »jaget är en mycket bräcklig form av en liten i rörelse varande kvantitet kraft, eller materia om man hellre vill, som under de och de givna förhållandena utvecklar sig så och så« (the I (ego) is a very fragile form of a small quantity of existing force or material in motion, if one prefers, that under such and such given relationships develops one way or the other).<sup>27</sup> The conditions for this state of »constant development« are »contradictions« for »the author is an experimenter«.<sup>28</sup> While *Tjänstekvinnans son* was written prior to the encounter, this notion of a subjectivity in constant development and experimental contradiction crept into Strindberg's theory of tragic drama in the Preface to *Fröken Julie* (*Miss Julie*, 1889),<sup>29</sup> where the understanding of the emerging tragic individual as *karakterslösa* (characterless), as »konglomerater av förgångna kulturgrader och pågående, bitar ur böcker och tidningar, stycken av människor, avrivna lappar av helgdagskläder, som blivit lumpor, alldeles som själen är hopflickad« (conglomerations of past and present cultures, bits out of books and of newspapers, pieces of human beings, torn-off shreds of holiday clothes that have become rags, exactly as the human soul is put together).<sup>30</sup> Though it is important to mention, at this point in Strindberg's development, these patchwork subjectivities are explicated in an environment of determinant notions of rising and falling, of class and gender conflict. The preface to *Miss Julie* is supposedly one of those texts written under the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy, but it is rather plain to see that Strindberg's understanding of the subject predates the encounter and the crux of the matter is not the reception, but the perspective on the relationship between the individual and the historical moment that the two men share. However, by the time we get to *By the Open Sea* (*I havsbandet*) (1890), Strindberg openly places Nietzsche's philosophy under experiment. This experiment comes in the form of a novel. The protagonist of *By the Open Sea*, Axel Borg is faced with another genealogical decision at the book's close, for he must choose which star to follow, the

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27 STRINDBERG: 1996, 214. My translation.

28 Ibid., 215. I have translated the Swedish.

29 The play was written in 1888, the preface in 1889.

30 STRINDBERG: 1984a, 105. The translation is found in JOHNSON 1976, 77.

star of Bethlehem or the star of Hercules. He chooses Hercules, but the novel ends with him pausing before tragedy; as unlike Julie, his demise is either left to reader's imagination, takes place outside the text, or is a circular regeneration as the book begins and ends with Borg on the open sea. The scholarship on the encounter has generally seen this novel as the apex of Nietzsche's presence in Strindberg's work; but if one eschews speculations about influence and favors commonality as a methodological category, it becomes apparent that a study of Strindberg's work at the close of the nineteenth century allows a glimpse into an extended interplay between the idea of tragedy theoretically articulated by Nietzsche and its possible permutations.

It is with *Inferno* (1897) that the parodic aspects of a Nietzschean idea of tragedy emerge with an ironic conception of subjectivity that carries both the means of its annihilation and salvation, knowledge and love. This type of parodic individual is exemplified by the character of *Den okände* (The stranger) in *To Damascus 1* (*Till Damaskus 1*) (1898). It is here that a divine narrative is parodied, as *Den okände* in a sense inhabits the story of Saul's transformation into Paul, although he pauses before the decision. Again, the protagonist's awareness of his own transgressions is refracted through the prism of a family drama, and it is that awareness of transgression that moves the subject through a circuit of repeating stations until he ends up in the same place he began, on the street corner, outside of a gothic church. At the drama's end he is unable to decide between Christ and the madhouse as Arne Garborg's decadent protagonist from *Trætte mænd* (*Weary Men*) (1891)<sup>31</sup>, Gabriel Gram had put it. It is here that the ideology of tragic repetition does not allow for a cathartic resolution. It is here that Nietzsche's two species of tragic regimes, the Judeo-Christian and the Dionysian converge and diverge in moments in a manner that »härma drömmens osammanhängande men skenbart logiska form« (imitate[s] the incoherent but ostensibly logical form of our dreams) as Strindberg will later describe *To Damascus 1* in his author's note (*Erinran*) to *Ett drömspel* (*A Dream Play*).<sup>32</sup> For it is in *To Damascus 1*, perhaps Strindberg's most Nietzschean play that the idea of tragedy merges with the idea of parody, as the poem doubles and is mirrored in that »[p]ersonerna klyvas, fördubblas, dunsta av, förtätas, flyta ut, sam-

31 The modern Norwegian *bokmål* spelling of this title is *Trette menn*.

32 STRINDBERG: 1988, 7. The translation can be found in SPRINCHORN: 1986, 646.



las« ([t]he characters split, double, multiply, dissolve, condense, float apart, coalesce).<sup>33</sup> It is here that the possibility of the individual's salvation and annihilation stand before him, and a decision awaits him on another stage, as the ideology of return pauses before determination in a genealogical moment.

So this is our landscape where tragic and sacred narratives collide with family drama, where the modern individual emerges only to claim a fictional status, where lyrical impulse is given philosophical form, where biological determination is undermined as it is posited, and where the belief that there lacks a foundation unites atheistic and religious perspectives. Up until recently, Strindberg's production and especially his use of repetition is often seen as an anticipation of Freud. I hope that my reading at least raises the question whether the Freudian notion of repetition compulsion as being determined by the desire to return to an inorganic state, as a symptom, is not inadequate for describing what is happening in Strindberg's work. Perhaps a Nietzschean notion of return, repetition as the possibility of subjective affirmation and possibility serves the texts as well or better.

That said; this book is an attempt to rescue this encounter from the marginalia. As a literary historical problem or in an influence driven model of interpretation, the encounter is a collection of letters, a few texts by Strindberg, and a *received* interpretation of Nietzsche, which guides the ensuing analysis.<sup>34</sup> It is my contention that the importance of the encounter resides in a process that is common to both men's work, *the genealogy of self*. I take distance from the previous scholarship in that I argue that it is not a matter of influence, but an articulation of commonality that matters here. I leave each writer to his own strength – Nietzsche provides our theory and Strindberg dramatizes the theory's possibilities in verse, in prose, and on stage. This dramatization of the theory opens a window to the existential dimensions of Nietzsche's philosophy and its relationship to human suffering and subject formation. If one eschews influence theory, it is no longer an issue of whether Strindberg gets Nietzsche »right«: the issue commutes illuminating the ramifications of

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. for both the translation and the original.

<sup>34</sup> The extant literature on the encounter performs very little explication of the Nietzschean corpus. Nietzsche's work is reduced to three basic concepts: *Der Wille zur Macht* (*the will to power*), *der Übermensch* (*the overman*), and *Individuality*. I will review the scholarship in the fourth chapter.

the philosophy's possibilities as seen by a contemporary without the burden or the benefit of a body of scholarship.

Consequently, this study is divided into two sections. The first section is an archeological survey of the environment of the Nietzsche reception in Scandinavia. This section will include an analysis of the discursive environment immediately before and contemporary to the philosopher's reception in the North. This is intended to accomplish the following tasks: Chapter one will establish the vitalist and perspectival elements of the discourse on *realism* in the Scandinavian *modern breakthrough*. An excursus at the end of this chapter situates Strindberg's conception of *naturalism* within the debates. Chapter two will explicate the notions of primacy and authenticity in the Nietzsche reception itself. Chapter three will elaborate upon the polemical elements of the anti-realist discourse of 1889 and discuss the use of Strindberg and Nietzsche as tropes within this discourse. The first section is designed to illustrate the superficial aspects of the commonality between the two men by showing their similar positions within the discursive environment. This is not an attempt to lay claim to a definitive reading of the *actual* position each man inhabited in the intellectual environment of the time. Instead, this section explains how the environment defines and redefines »realism,« »naturalism,« »origination,« and »authenticity« in relationship to both »Strindberg« and »Nietzsche« The citation marks are provided by the discourse itself as neither man is cited directly, but each becomes a trope grafted upon pre-existing ideological positions.

The second section of the study removes the inverted commas of citation and turns its attention to the encounter between Strindberg and Nietzsche. Chapter four examines the relationship between the primary source materials and the scholarship of the encounter. This analysis is designed for the purpose of illustrating how the notions of primacy and authenticity that permeated the discourse of the reception are carried over into the commentary on the subject of Strindberg's relationship to Nietzsche. I will retell the story of the encounter with the intention of showing the limitations of this approach. Chapter four includes an embedded excursus that critiques the use of a negative model of influence in the scholarship and offers an alternative methodological optic, *commonality*. Chapters five and six are devoted to an extended elaboration of the commonality in Strindberg and Nietzsche's authorial projects, *the genealogy of self*. Chapter five is an analysis of Nietzsche's genealogical method,

and it is here that I connect the discrete elements of genealogy and polemic in order to discern how description appears as a manifestation of *Selbstüberwindung* (self-overcoming). Chapter six applies these findings to Strindberg's descriptions of nature and self. A discussion of the contemporaneity of Strindberg and Nietzsche's genealogies of self, and their relevance to our own notions of subject formation conclude my investigation of their encounter. Here, I pay close attention to the significance of recurrence in the authorships of both men.

## Section I: The Environment of the Nietzsche Reception in Scandinavia

### Introduction

*Gewählte Wirklichkeit.* – Wie der gute Prosaschriftsteller nur Worte nimmt, welche der Umgangssprache angehören, doch lange nicht alle Worte derselben – wodurch eben der gewählte Stil entsteht –, so wird der gute Dichter der Zukunft *nur Wirkliches* darstellen und von allen phantastischen abergläubischen, halbredlichen, abgeklungenen Gegenständen, an den frühere Dichter ihre Kraft zeigten, völlig absehen. Nur Wirklichkeit, aber lange nicht jede Wirklichkeit! – sondern eine gewählte Wirklichkeit!

(Select Reality. – Just as the good prose writer employs only words that belong to common speech, but by no means all the words that belong to it – this is precisely how select or high style originates – so the good poet of the future will depict *only reality* and completely ignore all those fantastic, superstitious, half-mendacious, faded subjects upon which earlier poets demonstrated their powers. Only reality, but by no means every reality! – he will depict a select reality!)<sup>1</sup>

What did Nietzsche see in Strindberg's *Fadren* (*The Father*)? He saw a landscape that had been abandoned by God the father still dominated by his shadow, the signs of reason confronted by the possibility of madness, the surety of paternity undermined by recent scientific observation, and the human father confined to a straight jacket. For certainly the symbols of masculinity and reason brought to light in what Strindberg called his »naturalistic tragedy« are emptied and obscured by the penumbra cast by nihilism; and so we are confronted with a literature colored by a certain anxiety, a literature that simultaneously calls itself realistic and interrogates the cornerstones of what its environment called the real. For if we agree with Nietzsche and claim that any depiction of reality is the depiction of a »select reality,« it is important that we ask what did Strindberg and his Scandinavian contemporaries regard to be real when he encountered Nietzsche in 1888?

At the time, Strindberg was living in exile in Denmark and had lost his faith in the progressive political programs advocated by the writers of »young Sweden«. He was now a controversial figure marginalized within these progressive circles as he was excluded from the established critical

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<sup>1</sup> NIETZSCHE: KSA 2, 1988b, 426, Aphorism 114. The English translation comes from HOLLINGDALE: 1996, 2:114, 239–240.

institutions. He had run afoul of both the authorities and those who claimed to oppose authority. For a brief period, during his 1884 trial for blasphemy,<sup>2</sup> he had enjoyed a ground swell of popular support. But his stance on women's issues and his rejection of industrial socialism for an agrarian model soon left him isolated.<sup>3</sup> With his autobiographical novel, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*), Strindberg seemed to subordinate his exploration of social questions and his work took what most commentators call an inward turn.

However, perhaps his critics have hypostatized this turn inward. For Strindberg's new concerns paradoxically brought the appearances of the world outside into sharper relief. The more naïve »realism« of the early Strindberg, where the author intentionally created the illusion of reality through depicting only the »viktigaste av den mångfald detaljer varav bilden är sammansatt« (most important of the manifold details of which the image is composed)<sup>4</sup> was in the process of becoming the »select reality« of his »greater naturalism«. For Strindberg had now realized with Nietzsche that »[v]ärldens största författare hava varit realister« ([t]he world's great authors have been realists)<sup>5</sup>, in that their view of reality became superimposed upon the world as text, imposing the illusion of a stable reality on a world in the process of becoming. Strindberg began to appreciate that the issue was the very process of appropriation and that this entailed the organization and masking of motivation. The »real« as such is not the issue. The issue was what Strindberg considered to be the »humbug« of his times, the residual idealism that claimed a trans-historical purchase and gave lie to changes brought on by modernity.

Considering this, and remembering that Georg Brandes introduced Nietzsche to Scandinavia in the spring of 1888 in a moment when the

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2 STRINDBERG was put on trial for blasphemy for an ironic paragraph referring to communion in his short story, »Dygdens lön« (The Wages of Virtue). He was acquitted. »Dygdens lön« is collected in *Giftas I* (*Married I*).

3 Sven-Gustaf EDQVIST's *Samhällets fiende: En Strindberg studie* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1961) is the definitive study of Strindberg's politics in the 1880's.

4 STRINDBERG: 1912, 192. The article from which this citation is taken, *Om realism* was first published in *Ur Dagens krönika* 2 in 1882. The complete formulation in the original reads: »Realism kallas den riktning inom alla konstområden, då framställaren söker att göra det åsyftande intrycket, det vill säga giva illusion, genom att utföra de **viktigaste av den mångfald detaljer varav bilden är sammansatt.**« The excerpt in bold is translated above. The translation of the excerpt is mine.

5 Ibid., 194.

revolt against realism was at its height, any analysis of the environment of the initial Nietzsche reception must address this struggle against idealism and engage with the concept of the *real*. For it was in this moment that the authors who had answered Brandes' call to place the problems of their societies under debate nearly two decades earlier were now a disillusioned group who were beginning to question the very same aesthetic and philosophical assumptions that had guided their work during the previous decade.

Henrik Ibsen was in self-imposed exile and had abandoned his realism and the social problem play. As early as 1884, with the writing of *Vildanden* (*The Wild Duck*), his attention shifted to an interrogation of the very possibility of a shared conception of reality. This drama marked a turning point in his production on both the level of form and content. The rather straightforward staging and plot development of his early prose dramas gave way to a divided stage and characters that contested each other's understanding of the basic events that unfolded outside of the spectator's field of vision. This play also added the concept of *the life lie* to the catalogue of Ibsenian motifs. With *Rosmersholm* in 1886 and *Fruen fra havet* (*The Lady from the Sea*) in 1888, Ibsen's concerns turned to the power of psychic suggestion and the ability of one mind to dominate the conception of reality held by another.

J. P. Jacobsen had died in 1885. This novelist, who had translated Darwin into Danish and whose work oscillated between scientific exactitude and lyrical abundance, had become the object of a debate about religion upon his death.<sup>6</sup> In 1888, Victoria Benedictsson, the Swedish novelist, committed suicide in a hotel room in Copenhagen. In a time where the male arbiters of progressive culture had called for freedom for women, her work had been criticized by these men for not being radical enough. The program forwarded by the party of progress had become programmatic indeed. The creators of what Nietzsche called »a select reality« had committed what he would later regard as the deficiency of the »bad philologist«: they had mistaken their texts for actuality.

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<sup>6</sup> Strindberg comments on Jacobsen's death in the fourth volume of *Tjänstekvinnans son* in a chapter entitled »Han blir ateist« (1885) (He becomes an atheist). He writes: »Så kommer Jacobsens död, då man slåss om liket och diskuterar frågan, om han var troende eller ej.« My translation reads: »When Jacobsen died, they fought over the corpse and discussed the question of whether or not he was a believer.« Original citation found in STRINDBERG: 1996a, 193.

Keeping this in mind, I will now trace the parameters of the debate about realism that took place in Scandinavia at the time of Nietzsche's emergence as a philosophical force in Scandinavia. For certainly the discourse of what we call realism depends upon a certain illusion that there is congruency between language as a symbolic interpretation of the world and the world itself. And certainly, Strindberg's *The Father*, designated as a naturalist tragedy by its subtitle, alerts us to our own retrospective over-determination of what realism and naturalism actually were. I contend that Scandinavian realism and naturalism made the bed upon which the Nietzsche reception could lie, and that the vitalist and perspectival aspects of Scandinavian realism contain the seeds of the subsequent loss in faith in realist display. Having lost their faith in the *real*, many Scandinavian literary artists took recourse to a rather dubious notion of authenticity. It is in this environment that Nietzsche enters. If *nihilism truly knocked on the door as the uncanniest of guests*, he wore the mask of Friedrich Nietzsche. For this reason, he is both the timeliest and most untimely of modernity's philosophers. He represents the bourgeois uncanny, offering the appearance of individuality while undercutting the foundation of the subject's grasp on a stable identification.

The seeds of Nietzsche reception in Scandinavia gestated within the particular brand of Scandinavian realism,<sup>7</sup> a realism that is both bourgeois and attacks the bourgeoisie. This will be the first point of analysis. After this, we will turn to the reception proper and following this, the anti-realist polemic that takes place on the heels of the Nietzsche's introduction to the north will be addressed. It is here that the *Scandinavian Nietzsche* will be depicted. Through this analysis, the position of August Strindberg within the context of the Scandinavian literary environment will be established and Nietzsche's role as a symbol of rupture will be elaborated through a discussion of Scandinavian realism and the subsequent anti-realist revolt.<sup>8</sup>

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7 Just as Nietzsche's thought has been received in philosophical terms as a revolt against positivism, in literary terms it can be seen as a revolt against realism. In either instance, in Nietzsche reception it is often the case that the limitations of a claim of objectivity are confronted by the untenability of an absolute claim of subjectivity.

8 I use the term »symbol of rupture« in order to emphasize that Nietzsche takes on a discursive status in the literary production after the spring of 1888 in Scandinavia. The effect of his work does not establish a discourse, but rather is an element of one already established. This is my theoretical bias: like individuals, individual discourses are born in relationship to that which precedes them.

## Chapter 1: The Discourse of Realism in the North: Two Perspectives

If the name Nietzsche spread in the North through Denmark and Georg Brandes, so previously had the initial theoretical impulse for modern Scandinavian realism. The discussion that follows will attempt to introduce the complexities of the particular brand of nineteenth century Scandinavian realism as presented by two of its more clearly defined theorists. The program put forward by Brandes, and the objections to this program articulated by Herman Bang, do not necessarily depict the actuality of the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough. These two theories of realism were chosen because they illustrate the complexities of any claim to represent the *real* in a society where the desire to be modern carries with it the embrace of change. For how can one claim to depict the actual if actuality is seen to be evanescent? Brandes and Bang both factor change into their programs, but provide different answers to this question. Our analysis of their attempts at finding a solution brings us to two more questions germane to the problem of realism: namely, what is the relationship of realist art to the life of the community whose likeness it claims to depict, and what is the relationship of the artist to the community he addresses? For the notion of the real is conventional and dependent upon social agreement.<sup>1</sup> These questions can be seen to be the essential problematic of realism as a piece of modernity,<sup>2</sup> and it is within these parameters that Scandinavian realists theorized. It is the tenor as well as the substance of their solutions that open the door for the breakdown of the realist imperative of the initial phase of Scandinavian literary modernity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> No matter what theory of realism one accepts, it is a common notion that realist display needs recognition of its »reality effect« (Roland Barthes) by the audience. As this study is not about realism, per se, I will define the term as understood by two theorists of Scandinavian realism, Georg Brandes and Herman Bang.

<sup>2</sup> For another about discussion of the relationship of realism to Scandinavian modernity, see MOI: 2006, 17–36.

<sup>3</sup> While the substance of both Brandes' and Bangs' theories differs, they shared a belief that modernization had created the conditions for an aesthetic based on the notion of the »real« and the »new«.



### Brandes and Bang: Political versus Aesthetic Realism

Realism came late to the north. Though it certainly can be argued that there is an earlier realist tendency, the terms »realism« and »naturalism« had a polemical resonance in the cultural debates of the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Scandinavia. Due to a prolific expenditure of energy by Georg Brandes, the terms were employed to connote the use of cultural production as an agent for social change. Brandes saw the structure of his society as calcified by a reaction against the cataclysmic changes brought on by the French Revolution, the rebellions of 1848, and the ascendancy of the natural sciences. He looked to literature as an important source of cultural enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> For Brandes, the writer had an active role to play in shaping the history of his time.

Theorizing in the 1870's about the social impetus for a realistic depiction of society in the North, Brandes' writings had a clearly stated political intention.<sup>5</sup> Moved by his teacher, Hippolyte Taine and his own translations of John Stuart Mill,<sup>6</sup> he crafted the polemic that inspired the literary avant-garde's turn to realism, calling for a literature that debated the problems of society. As a result, realist literature would come to be seen as democratic, oppositional, and feminist. Ironically, Brandes himself held a lifelong reservation towards the »advisability of majority

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4 Brandes makes a Kantian gesture by connecting writing with the public responsibility of the intellectual. The enlightened writer is the mature writer who contributes to the maturation of his society. See Immanuel Kant, »Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?«.

5 The general depiction of the politics of Scandinavian modern realism is liberal, democratic, and oppositional. Strindberg is often painted as the exception, more radical until 1886, more reactionary thereafter, with a return to *Christianity and socialism* in his later years. Brandes is often painted as the champion of individual rights and a feminist. His embrace of Nietzsche is treated as a change, a charge which he denied. It is important for our study to realize that, like other liberals such as Mill and Toqueville, there is an elitist element to Brandes' conception of freedom which gives us something to grasp when we see that his work consists of a gallery of literary portraits. His conception of literary history is a depiction of its great *men* (Nietzsche's monumental history). See also Pil Dahlerup, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder*, for a criticism of Brandes' paternal feminism.

6 See KNUDSEN: 1985, ASMUNDSSON: 1981, and Brandes own memoir, *Levned* (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1908) for depictions of Brandes formative intellectual years. Brandes called Taine »master« and translated Mill's *The Subjugation of Women and Utilitarianism* into Danish. He wrote an essay on Mill in 1879.

rule,<sup>7</sup> yet despite his concerns he waged a steady battle against what he regarded as conservative forces in Denmark.<sup>8</sup> Brandes' lectures were almost always well attended and as often as not, a source of heated debate.

The first compelling theoretical reaction to Brandes' programmatic description of realist activism which was not driven by personal and political animosity was articulated by the novelist Herman Bang, who objected to what he saw as a conflation of aesthetic and ethical impulses. While both men sought to encourage a Scandinavian connection to larger European tendencies, the difference in their emphases is symptomatic of the divergence of their positions on what is *real*. Bang saw the realist imperative as an aesthetic adjunct to the positivistic claim of objective observation, yet his rejection of any possibility of a unified perceptual field skewed this paradigm. As a result, Bang posited a perspectival positivism where the contradictions between the observer and the observed serve to undermine the very truth claim of realist depiction itself. Therefore, Bang saw realism as merely an aesthetic adornment that provides the appropriate form for the literary artifact, which serves as a historical fragment of a moment in a culture's development. His theoretical conception of a realist depiction of everyday life defines the literary artifact as a shard found amongst the ruins of the recent past. The fragmented consciousness of the modern writer, however, prevents the pot from being reconstructed. Both Bang's and Brandes' positions need to be elaborated upon to illustrate what is at stake when the validity of a realist aesthetic is questioned when Nietzsche's thought arrives in Scandinavia at the tail end of the nineteenth century.

### Georg Brandes: Living and Dead Literature

Vor Litteratur er som et lille Kapel i en stor Kirke, den har sit Alter, men Hovedalteret findes ikke her.

(Our literature is like a little chapel in a great church, it has its altar, but the main altar is not found here.)<sup>9</sup>

7 ASMUNDSSON: 1981, 215.

8 Brandes' most formidable target was the Lutheran state church. Brandes' position was precarious, as he was a Jew by birth and an atheist by choice. Some of the most violent opposition to Brandes' lectures and writings was colored by anti-Semitism.

9 BRANDES: 1984, 21, »Indledning til Emigrantlitteraturen« (1872). Translation mine.

Ich höre mit Vergnügen, dass unsre Sonne in rascher Bewegung gegen das Sternbild des Herkules hin begriffen ist: und ich hoffe, dass der Mensch auf dieser Erde es darin der Sonne gleich thut. Und wir voran, wir guten Europäer!

(I'm glad to hear that our sun is moving rapidly towards the constellation of Hercules: and I hope that the people of this earth will act like the sun. With us in front, we good Europeans!)<sup>10</sup>

In 1872, Brandes gave a series of lectures on a subject that was to become the most pressing preoccupation of his long and influential career. These presentations, which would become a part of Brandes' magnum opus, *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes europæiske Litteratur*, addressed the state of the relationship of Scandinavian letters to the progressive elements of European thought. Believing that the scientific and political revolutions of the early part of the nineteenth century formed the basis of a common European culture, he conceived the role of the author as a localized engagement with larger, more universal historical movements. It is here that we can discern the origins of the paradox that would later inflect the Nietzsche reception in the north: on the one hand he was regarded as a continuation of a shared pan-European Project called the Enlightenment, on the other he represented the particularity of the individual set against the moribund propriety of the collective. In other words, Nietzsche was seen as an exemplar of inevitable collective movement and the epitome of a unique personality in opposition to the herd. Brandes was blind to this paradox, as he understood this contradiction from the standpoint of the avant-garde, from the urge to move forward. He believed that there are some individuals who are in advance of a changing notion of reality. These individuals create values that will later shape the collective understanding of reality in any given point in time. Even in the early 1870's Brandes' realists were in vital anticipation of a »select reality« to come. The depiction of reality was for Brandes in anticipation of its own manifestation in concrete social practices.

A good fourteen years before Nietzsche would write the second of our epigraphs, Brandes saw the imperative of an expanding sense of identity, a European identity. When Strindberg read Nietzsche's aphorism, he was so moved by the notion that he would write the word *framåt* (forwards), a military expression, in the margins of his own copy of *Beyond Good*

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<sup>10</sup> NIETZSCHE: KSA 5, 1993, 183, Aphorism 243. The translation is from NORMAN: 2005, 134.

*and Evil*.<sup>11</sup> While Nietzsche's words would fuel Strindberg's aspirations in late 1888, Brandes planted the seeds of this militancy many years earlier and it was his imperative that would delineate the parameters of a program that was to shape Scandinavian literature until the close of the 1880's. The movement that began to chart the course of the *good European* has come to be known in Scandinavia by a phrase of Brandes' own coinage, »The Modern Breakthrough«.

Det, at en Litteratur i vore Dage lever, viser sig i, at den sætter Problemer under Debat ... At en Litteratur Intet sætter under Debat er det samme som, at den er ifærd med at tabe al Betydning.

(That a literature can be considered to be living in our day, is shown by the fact that it places problems under debate ... That a literature does not place anything under debate is tantamount to it being on the way to losing all meaning.)<sup>12</sup>

Brandes set up a polemical opposition between the literature of the late romantic period and what he saw as the imperative of contemporary letters. This opposition was described as the difference between a living and a dead literature. For Brandes, a living literature carries meaning that it derives by virtue of its engagement with existentially relevant, collective issues. This gives literature a historical relevance, which it attains through active social intervention. The failure to enter into debate is the marker of a dead literature. In other words, the quality of a dead literature is its social irrelevance.

Brandes' strategy of opposing a living to a dead literature reflected his belief that the literary arts had a role to play in shaping the direction of political development. He believed that a living literature had the power to influence the course of historical development towards the inevitability of what we can easily understand as the bourgeois paradox: as national societies become more universal, (in Brandes mind, here read more European), the possibility for individualization increases.<sup>13</sup> In other words, a living literature intervenes in and helps shape the course of contemporary events, which are moving towards the age of individual freedom, while a dead literature remains in the past, wears the mask of pro-

<sup>11</sup> Strindberg's copy of the book can be found in the Birger Mörner collection housed in the library at the University of Örebro.

<sup>12</sup> BRANDES: 1984, 24.

<sup>13</sup> This is certainly in anticipation of the ideology of globalization, or more properly defined, global capitalism.

priety, and is politically and socially quietist. It is as if he said with Nietzsche in a quintessential modernist moment: »As my father, I am dead.«

The specific target of Brandes' attack was the *biedermeier* aesthetic that accompanied *idealism*. He argued that this species of literature no longer possessed the vitality necessary to address the complexities of the contemporary world. He considered the majority of his contemporaries to be in reaction to the larger European Enlightenment and he claimed that the great revolutionary movements in social, political, and literary life had yet to take hold in Scandinavia. According to Brandes, the effect that these movements had heretofore had on local culture was through the reactive structure of resistance that permeated society on all levels of social intercourse. In confrontation with this reactive structure, Brandes hoped to spawn a countermovement whose »Slagord var den frie Tanke« (slogan was freedom of thought).<sup>14</sup> In other words, the resistance to the changes brought on by the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the social upheavals of 1848, and the rise of the natural sciences, had permeated society and contributed to a type of cultural production that no longer had any vitality. Brandes understood this resistance to be a type of intellectual deafness, closing off the possibility of the use of the knowledge and development from the outside. The first result of this deafness was the inability to address relevant issues. The second result was that literary culture had been arrested and the effect of this dormancy was that »intet Problem af almindelig human eller social Natur formaaer at vække nogen Interesse« (no problem of collective human or social nature is able to awaken any interest).<sup>15</sup> According to Brandes, Scandinavia was asleep.

Brandes polemicized for a poetic production that was not a source of comfort, but instead took part in a struggle for social change: a literature

<sup>14</sup> BRANDES: 1984, 22. Translation mine.

<sup>15</sup> See pg. 24 of »Indledning til Emigrantlitteraturen«: The complete citation reads: »Den poetiske Production er saagodt som fuldstændigt standset, og intet Problem af almindelig human eller social Natur formaaer at vække nogen Interesse eller fremkalde anden Discussion end Dagpressens og Døgnlitteraturen. En stærk original Productivitet have vi ikke nogensinde besiddet, nu er en næsten fuldstændig Mangel paa Tilegnelse af fremmed Aandsliv traadt til, og den aandelig Døvhed har som Døvheden hos den Døvstumme medført Stumhed.« (Poetic production is as good as completely arrested, and no problem of collective human or social nature is able to awaken any interest or call forth any discussion besides that in the popular press. We have never been able to call a highly original productivity our own, now there is nearly a complete lack of the influence of foreign intellectual life, and this intellectual deafness has like the deafness of the deaf mute brought with it muteness.)

that lives, that asserts its vitality by virtue of addressing the life led by those who read it, a literature of flesh and blood, not a literature of the abstract ideal.<sup>16</sup> For Brandes, this necessitated a political realism designed to break through the barriers erected by literary norms inflected by an abstract idealism, which he felt merely echoed the conditions of established social intercourse. He called for works that attempted to break through the complacency, thereby creating a breach in the wall of containment erected by a culture of reaction. He urged his fellow Danes to realize that their little chapel is contained within the secular church of enlightened thought and rational action. He demanded that literature express the ideals of the Enlightenment through a concrete representation of everyday life written by a cadre of authors who created values as good *Europeans*.

Brandes' version of a living literature was embodied. He criticized poetic production that abstracts bodies and souls and condemned such literature as decadent. He appealed to the »we« of the younger generation to create a poetry that serves freedom of thought and a free humanity.<sup>17</sup> These young writers were, for Brandes, the avant-garde that could break with a literature whose »Opgave historisk er endt« (task has ended historically).<sup>18</sup> In order to accomplish this, these young representatives of the avant-garde must pay heed to the tangible aspects of the world in which they lived with full knowledge that their understanding of reality was only

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<sup>16</sup> See footnote 37 and pg. 31 of Georg BRANDES: 1984.

<sup>17</sup> »... vi ville den frie Tanke og den frie Humanitet ... Det er ikke saameget ydre Love, der behøve at forandres, om end ogsaa de, som det er den hele Samfundsbetragtning, som den yngre Slægt fra Grunden af maa omforme og opløie, før en ny Litteratur kan skyde op.« This translates: » ... we want free thinking and a free humanity ... It is not so much external laws that need to change, though this as well, but the entire way of viewing society, which the younger generation may re-shape and prepare from the ground up before a new literature can emerge. Georg BRANDES: 1984, 32. Brandes goes on to say that this task can come about from the flowing of many streams whose source is the ideas of progress and revolution. Their task is to halt reaction. It is important to note that Brandes emphasizes the diversity of expression from a central source. He sees the Enlightenment as a point of freedom. He does not call for one way of forwarding his cause nor does he posit a confluence of the many streams that flow from the source. His critics, however, will polemicize against what they present as the one-dimensionality of Brandes' program.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 32.

in anticipation of something to come.<sup>19</sup> Brandes' notion of a living literature demanded that poetic production engage with *life* as it is lived, not as it is abstractly conceived in the mind. He called for an avant-garde literature of praxis. This is not, however, a simple materialist conception of culture. There was a dialectical component to Brandes' program that cannot be ignored. This dialectic informs us that Brandes did not hold the view that realism merely reflects the ideology of the culture in which it is produced.

Brandes' dialectic of literary production unfolded as follows: Social interaction conditions the cultural production of a given society's poets, but these authors can influence actual change through an active self-conscious engagement with the conditions of their material life. In this way, the abstracted notion of the individual is brought down to earth and the province of conceptual thought is enlivened through its embodiment in a realistic depiction of the quotidian. In this movement of thought lay the difference between Brandes' political realism and a realism that merely claims to depict things as they *actually exist*. Brandes did not call for a realism that held a mirror up to society, but one that could change what was considered to be real.

His program rested upon the belief that the historical purpose and the ideals of an epoch are found in the reevaluation of the conditions of everyday life, and it is only through the depiction of this that an author can tap into the stream of historical change. As he wrote in his essay on Shakespeare of 1870, »Udformet indtil *det uendeligt Smaa som Sansningen sammenfatter, indeholder den det uendeligt Store, i hvilket Tanken udmunder*, naar den søger en hel historisk Epokes Aarsag og Ideal« (Up to now the elaboration of *the infinitely small, which the senses re-assemble, contains the infinitely great in which the thought concludes*, when it seeks an entire historical epoch's cause and ideal).<sup>20</sup> Realism was, for Brandes, a political act that could transform the society that it depicted. However, the ideas that are to carry this transformation must break through the slumber of detached abstraction in order to exert their force »re-assembling« the concrete details of the particularity of experience in thought.

19 This aspect of Brandes' program carries a Hegelian idealistic residue where consciousness and self-consciousness anticipate the concrete manifestation of *geist* (spirit or intellect).

20 Georg BRANDES: 1984, 18, *Det uendeligt Smaa og det uendeligt Store i Poesien*.

We can now answer what was modern about Brandes' conception of the »Modern Breakthrough« and what it purported to break through. Brandes called for a sharp break from the literature of the previous era. This new literature was to be political, embodied, and directed by the ideals of the Enlightenment. It was to depict contemporary life in the spirit of free scientific inquiry and to contribute to the unfolding of individual freedom. This was a literature that would be produced by authors aware of their historical situation and who actively participated in and influenced the direction of societal change. These authors were to attempt a merger of literature and the social life from which it was created.<sup>21</sup> This merger, in turn, would create a new form of social interaction that Brandes hoped would break through the wall of containment erected by the localized reaction to the currents of change in European history. In this way, he hoped to inspire a movement that would leave the little chapel of Danish literature and enter the great secular church of Enlightenment thought. For Brandes, the vitality of this species of realist literature resided in its ability to remove the mask from the face of propriety in order to anticipate what would be considered *real* at some future date.

The weakness of Brandes' program resided in his belief that history involved a necessary progression and that literature had a mimetic property that could manifestly effect real change in a linear fashion. His own disappointment over the inability of his program to attain the results that he envisioned would later color his concept of »Aristocratic Radicalism«. By the time he wrote his essay on Nietzsche at the end of the 1880's, the significance of individual resistance would take on a new meaning in his work. In a sense, for Brandes, Nietzsche would become a figure who represented the tragic individual, doomed to be ignored because of his very individuality, whose power becomes the wellspring of both his value for posterity and his demise in his own historical moment. Brandes' ambivalent reception of the philosopher shows the effects of a collision between his own work and the social *reality* whose depiction he sought to inspire. His reassessment of the possibilities and efficacy of an interventionist literature in the spring of 1888 will mark his own understanding of the »failure« of political realism in Scandinavia.

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<sup>21</sup> See Peter BÜRGER: 1984 for a depiction of the avant-garde's attempts to make art that crosses over into »life«.



### Herman Bang: The Realist as Aesthetic Historian, History as a Novel of Fragments

Realism er en Form, ikke en Tendens; en Methode, der kan sætte gamle Ting i en ny Belysning, ikke en Opdagelse, paa hvilken Forfatterne har taget Patent.

(Realism is a form, not a tendency; a method, which can place old things under new light, not a discovery on which authors have taken out a patent).<sup>22</sup>

Herman Bang belonged to the generation of writers to whom Brandes directed his appeal for a new literature. Though he was primarily a novelist, his critical reflections on the theoretical conditions of realist literary production anticipated an aesthetic reaction to Brandes' program by the generation of the 1890's. In 1879, seven years after Brandes' *Indledning til Emigrantlitteraturen*, Bang published a series of articles, which collectively bear the title, *Portrætstudier og Aforismer (Portrait Studies and Aphorisms)*.<sup>23</sup> Three of these articles were grouped together and given the name *Realisme og Realister (Realism and Realists)*. Bang introduced this series of articles by stating that they are tied to the struggle for and address the burning questions of »den nye litteratur« (the new literature). Like Brandes, his stalking horse was idealism, but he had another target in mind as well: Brandes' notion of a self-consciously political realism. The point of disagreement lay in the question of what is a living and what is a dead literature, in the very notion of how an author attains historical significance. If Brandes urged authors to take an active role as shapers of history, Bang regarded the historical significance of literature to reside in its choice of style. One could say that if Brandes called for literature to break through into modern life, Bang called for literature to allow modern life to determine its form. Bang's objection to Brandes' program consisted in what he saw as the latter's insistence on a content-driven literature. For Bang, the effect of modern historical conditions could be discerned by the form of the novel itself; he saw history as a novel of fragments, and the novel as one of the fragments of this history.

The question of values was the crux of Bang's disagreement with Brandes. While they both agreed that realism is the form that best conveys the historical conditions of the society in which they lived; they

<sup>22</sup> Herman BANG: 1879, 17. Translation mine.

<sup>23</sup> This is also the year that saw the publication of Strindberg's *Röda rummet (The Red Room)* and Ibsen's *Et dukkehjem (A Doll House)*.

disagreed about how literature could manifest its significance as a historical force. Like Brandes, Bang felt that idealism was an attempt to stand above the conditions of the contemporary world. He argued that a writer engages with the historical specificity of his contemporary environment and that it was a mistake to try to rise above these conditions.<sup>24</sup> However, Bang implicitly criticized Brandes for inserting ethics into the debate. For Bang there was a difference between realism and the literature of political tendency. From Bang's perspective, realism was detached from ethics; it is an aesthetic theory, not an ethical determination.<sup>25</sup> It follows that the prime characteristic of realism is its concern with technique. Thus Bang argued indirectly that the novelist contributes to writing the history of his times through his use of a form that is a reflection of the characteristics of his contemporary world. Realism does not break through into contemporary life; as a form it reflects its conditions. The writer does not shape history; he creates an artifact of his time. In an inversion of Brandes' avant-gardist ideology, Bang argued the literary artifact is most representative of its contemporary world when life breaks through into aesthetics and determines its form. However, despite this, realist display does not necessarily depict a true likeness.

Bang stated that realism is not a photograph of society. He urged the novelist to learn from the painter and create work that has »en Portrætmalers Omhu« (the care of a portraitist).<sup>26</sup> The realist's stylistic choices should factor in the relationship between the life depicted and the aesthetic limitations of the medium used for this depiction. For Bang, it was the same insights into the human condition that have accompanied modernity that highlighted the inability of the author to accurately depict the emotional life of his characters.

Bang argued that Realism is by its very nature a reduction of the »reality« it attempts to portray, and as a consequence, the realist cannot depict the motivations behind the actions of his characters.<sup>27</sup> The realist is not a

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24 BANG: 1879, 12.

25 Ibid., 13: »Realism er en Kunstscole.« This translates: »Realism is a school of art.«

26 Ibid., 15. Whether this was his intention or not, this is an ironic choice of terminology when one considers that Bang was opposing Brandes who organized his work into portraits of literary personalities.

27 Ibid.15. »Hvad man opdagde, var det, at alle Følelser er sammensatte, og Følelselivet er uendelig mere kompliceret, end man tidligere antaget ... Det gjælder derfor ikke blot om at opfinde, men om at fortælle; Livet er, ret betragtet, langt rigere end vor

scientist as suggested by Émile Zola; he is a portraitist, and as such, he allows the complexity of his subject to manifest itself through suggestion, through coloration and tonality. According to Bang, realist authors do not speak for their characters, »Forfatterne lader tale, de tale ikke« (authors allow speech, they do not speak).<sup>28</sup> This is a key point for understanding Bang's notions of the aesthetic reduction of life, the internalization of historical conditions that lead to the production of a fragmentary historical artifact and how it would differ from a Nietzschean notion of »select reality«. This is the fulcrum upon which his criticism of Brandes was balanced. For if realism is a conscious reduction of the complexity of modern life, then ethical commentary and determination in the fictional life of a realist novel are a species of idealism, which fails to respond to the demands of realist representation. These demands are of the senses, a matter of form rather than content. Bang understood realism to be a literature determined by a realism of perception, rather than by engagement with social conditions from the distance of omniscient narration. »Livet moralisere[r]« (Life moralize[s]), not the authors, »... fordi de tror, at Livs Fakta ere mere overtalende end deres private Udtalelser og Fremførelsen af deres private Mening.« (... for they believe that the facts of life are more convincing than their private pronouncements and the forwarding of their private opinion.)<sup>29</sup>

Bang's position can be summarized in the following manner: the realist necessarily reduces the complexity of life in order to depict a fragment of its totality. Furthermore, because of this necessary reduction, realism should be a purely aesthetic principle that takes distance from value judgments in order to represent life without the distortion of ethical determination. Realism demands that the author allow phenomena to pass through the realm of the senses and consequently realism is a matter of the construction of a style, which reflects the state of human perception in the modern world. Judgment is limited to these stylistic considerations,

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Fantasi.« My translation reads: »What one discovered, is that all feelings are composite, and the life of the feelings is infinitely more complicated than one previously assumed ... This entails not only invention, but also narration. Life is, when rightly regarded, much richer than our imagination.«

28 Ibid., 16.

29 Ibid., 16.

and ethical determinations are left to »life« broadly defined.<sup>30</sup> The realist work reflects a fragment of »life« and becomes an artifact that reflects the nature of the time in which it was composed. This is how Bang's theory of realism delimits its own claim to depict the real. If the realist cannot create a photograph, an objective representation, the very notion of verisimilitude is reduced to a claim for the accurate representation of a perspective. For Bang, this was the condition of the possibility of knowledge allowed by the modern social environment. This is what he considered to be *real* for the modern subject. It was as if he posited: *life provides the possibility of creating a limited textual understanding of its manifold events*. From this perspective, realist representation is the depiction of the fragment experienced by the artist as it is aestheticized by formal considerations or style. In addition, style is subject to historical considerations, and changes in artistic form have an organic teleological trajectory. The work of the author is determined by his historical condition. Literature gives an era its aesthetic shape and style is an ever-changing reflection of the contemporaneous world.

En nutids Forfatter digter ikke ud af en Stemning, der næste Nu kan forsvinde og forflygtes, saa at, den ufødte Digtning's Ophav er vidsket ud og blevet borte; han skriver ud af en Skat af Erindring, Minder, og Iagttagelse, hvis Konsekventer han nøjagtig søger at uddrage; og en Samvittighedsfuld undersøgelse af et Fænomen er hans befrugtende Inspiration.

(A contemporary author does not compose from a mood, for the next moment is fleeting and can disappear, so that the unborn writing's origin is whispered and is then gone. He writes from a trove of memory, recollection, and observation whose consistency he carefully tries to evince. A conscientious examination of a phenomenon is the fertility of his inspiration.)<sup>31</sup>

The citation above reveals the logic of Bang's approach. The reduction of life that aesthetic realism performs is now given its location in the individual informed by his past experiences. The artist's perception of his environment is inconstant and subject to the transience of modern life.

<sup>30</sup> This is a key aspect for understanding Bang's quarrel with Brandes. Bang's realists would be at worst politically quietist and at best indirectly critical. For if the author allows »life« to determine ethics and his work is the result of his perception of this, then he would re-produce the ideological structures of his environment without interrogating them. This is not unlike the later Lukács's reading of bourgeois realism and Balzac in particular. However, Bang's notion of the fragmentation of perception brought on by modernity sets him apart. Unlike Lukács he does not see realism as constructing a totality constructed with contradictions.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 85. My translation.

As a result of the ever-changing nature of this environment, the artist must take recourse to a more reliable perspective. Bang posited that this could be found in a trove of memory and observation. He argues that the realist must then use this perspective, which he finds in his own experience, to consciously draw out the consequences of his own experience of phenomena. This process should have »paa samme Tid Scenens Kraft og Livets Sandhed« (simultaneously the power of Theater and life's truth).<sup>32</sup> Representation of the *real* requires the dramatization of the individual's perspective. Despite his perspectivalism, Bang's realist is Nietzsche's modern decadent, the artist as an actor. To understand this, we only need to recall Nietzsche's critique of Wagner and theater in 1888.<sup>33</sup>

Bang called for a literature that represented bits and pieces of everyday life, a literature that would tell the story of individual lives in the manner that they are experienced, with a »nervøse Form« (nervous form).<sup>34</sup> In other words, »mer eller mindre fragmentarisk at fortælle et Livs Historie er jo Realismens Opgave« (realism's task is to narrate a life's history in a more or less fragmented way).<sup>35</sup> For Bang, realism shed new light on old things; it was a narrative style in which the evanescent flickering of the moment seemingly emitted a steady light by virtue of an illusion illuminated through the screen of the author's recollection. Representation of phenomena is anchored in the perspective of the perceiver. The task of composition is to order the fragmentary nature of perception into a composite. For Bang, the historical conditions that shape the understanding of the necessity of a realist aesthetic had forced the realist to rely on the self as the location of constancy in the face of the changes brought about by modernity. It was in this manner that Bang anticipated the revolt of the generation of the nineties against Brandes' program. With his claim that the novel is a historical artifact and his location of reality in the perceptions of the individual, Bang opened the door for the notion of the individual as the authentic bearer of historical memory.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 37. My translation.

<sup>33</sup> See *Der Fall Wagner*, NIETZSCHE: KSA 6, 1988d.

<sup>34</sup> BANG: 1879, 28. My translation.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 105. My translation.

### The Discourse of Scandinavian Realism Anticipates the Nietzsche Reception

The theories of Georg Brandes and Herman Bang illustrate the complexities of any claim to represent the *real* in a society where the desire to be modern carries with it the embrace of change. For how does one depict the actual and the individual's relationship to it if actuality is seen to be evanescent?<sup>36</sup> Brandes and Bang both factor change into their programs, but provide different answers to this problem. Our analysis of their attempts at finding a solution brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of the section on realism: namely, what is the relationship of art and the artist to the life of the community whose likeness it claims to depict? It is the tenor as well as the substance of their solutions that open the door for the breakdown of the realist imperative of the initial phase of Scandinavian literary modernity.

Brandes assumed an activist stance in the 1870's. He envisioned a literature that acted as an agent of change in a society where cultural and social life had calcified. This called for an activated authorial subjectivity that engages with its environment and creates a literature that breaks through into life, thereby imbuing the cultural imagination with an image of what is real. But a problem arose when Brandes described his cultural environment as being deaf, moribund, and shackled by the chains of propriety: How can a realist literature avoid the snare of merely doubling the state of social relations as they stand? How could it avoid containment?

Brandes understood the history of his times to be a struggle between the forces of the Enlightenment and the forces of reaction. When he turned his gaze to the literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he denigrated what the great Hungarian critic Georg Lukács would later call the »abstract idealism« of late romantic letters.<sup>37</sup> Instead, Brandes posited an author who

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36 Brandes and Bang's insistence on depiction as opposed to performance is symptomatic of the problematic aspects of their theories. While both men pointed to the performativity of »modern realism,« they failed to fully articulate this aspect of their conception of realist literature. The notion of performativity is also obscure in the anti-realist polemic.

37 See LUKÁCS: 1971, 97–III. According to Lukács, the protagonist of abstract idealism is marked by »[t]he complete absence of an inwardly experienced problematic [that] transforms such a soul into pure activity« (99). This condition is due to the misrecognition of the external world for the internal world of contemplation. In this way the eter-

had a very different relationship to his place in history. He imagined a group of artists who could revitalize their societies through appropriating the concept of the *real* for the future by placing the mask of being on becoming through naming, thereby transforming the collective understanding of actuality.

Brandes' answer to the question of containment informs us about the meaning of his term, *the Modern Breakthrough*. For the realist, according to Brandes, creates a literature that breaks through the propriety, the habitual interaction of his society and modernizes his environment. This is why Brandes called this species of production a living literature. He envisioned a literature that vitalizes its environment by exposing the deadness of habitual interaction, and attacks propriety in social production. In theory, Brandes' literary realist is an active participant in the historical process. He names actuality and thereby shapes it. Brandesian realism is an agonistic form, which debates and takes possession of a claim to actuality for the sake of the future. It unmasks propriety, only to mask social relations once more by imposing a shape upon them, pointing to a future possibility. The realism Brandes envisioned creates the conception of the *real* for a free society yet to be realized. But it was not such an oxymoronic figure as a Utopian realism would be. It is anchored in describing concrete social relations as they were. He called for a literature that actually engages the present in order to create an unspecified future shaped by adherence to a specific value, the freedom of the individual. The realist's task was to create values.

Brandes championed realism in an attempt to bring modernity to the social life of Scandinavian society. The ideal role of the Brandesian author was that of any agent of change for he conceived the realist author as a man of his times, an educator, a shaper of values, and a critic of social relationships. It is only a short distance from these concepts to Brandes' notion of *aristocratic radicalism*. It is this concept that structures his essay on Nietzsche in 1888. Brandes' own work reflects this typology as well. He wrote about the personalities of the men who he believed shaped their times. It was as if he were saying that *the only history worth writing is the history of those individuals who contribute to change,*

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nality of the environment is doubled and masked as interiority. Brandes sees Ibsen's *Brand* in a similar light, as a protest against prevailing conditions that doubles these conditions through its protest, thereby creating a cultural event that contributes to the containment and normalization of the self-same protest.

*the aristocratic radicals, the men who oppose prevailing thought and reject it – in the name of reality.* Implicit in his theory of realism was the thought that individuals make history and collective reality is born from the efforts of exemplary men, »det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd«.<sup>38</sup>

Bang's notion of a mimetic depiction of actuality was form driven. In Bang's conception, realism is a result of an internalization of the form of social relationships and a subsequent individuation of the experience of this form through a perspective that factors in the conditions of modern life. As he saw the effect of these conditions as a fragmentation of an individual's understanding of the world, his species of realism delimited the realist claim for verisimilitude. For Bang understood realism as a process that reduces the totality of life, and the realist subsequently presents the reader with a text that represents a fragment and not an actuality. His understanding about what is *real* about realism can be drawn from this postulation – *historical conditions cannot be understood, they can only be reproduced by using a form appropriate to the times, the use of this form reflects the delimitation of understanding in the modern world.* In other words, the only aspect of life that can be represented is already an interpretation, and an aesthetic interpretation at that. Bang's realism admitted to its own status as an approximation. He posited a type of perspectivalism, which he then labeled as a depiction of the *real*.

Fiction, for Bang, had historical value. It maintains continuity despite the evanescent quality of modern social forms. It preserves the fragments of reality and as a result, realism accentuates the limitations of its own claim to represent an actuality. From Bang's perspective, the possibilities of modernity allow only what Nietzsche would call *perspectival seeing*; as a result, he considered the assignment of universal value to a character as a species of idealism. The authority of a realist perspective resides in the creative individual and »reality« is re-created from the individual perspective. The novel is a fragment of history, a fragment that is filtered through the sentient individual. Taken to the extremities of this logic, literary realism is a product of the autobiography of an author's perceptions.

The differences between Brandes and Bang's positions on realism can be abstracted further in order to illustrate the fundamental disagreement

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<sup>38</sup> *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* is the title of Brandes' book on the authors of the modern breakthrough. Published in 1883, the book is a series of portraits.



between the two men on the relationship of the individual artist and his art to his culture and its history. For Brandes, the space of realism was the contemporary social world in its function as a prelude to a future. Realism demands engagement in the public sphere. For Bang, realism was determined by the accuracy of the depiction of phenomena by the perceiving subject. The location of realism lies within the creative artist, residing within his memory.

Brandes called for the realist to actively engage his contemporary world. By virtue of this demand for the artist to contribute to social change while depicting his environment, we can understand that Brandes favored a view of the present with an eye directed towards the future. For Bang, the perspective of the modern author was fragmented by the acceleration of his perception of the present. As a result, Bang called on the realist to rely on the capital of his stored experience. The realist then depicts his experience as preserved in the storehouse of memory. The realist sees the present with one eye directed towards his own past. Bang's postulation that the role of realism is to set familiar things in a new light is congruent with this notion of the time of realism.

It follows that while both men saw realism as an embodied rather than an abstract form of representation, their respective positions on realist space and time inform us how their notion of what is abstract differed. For Brandes, the embodiment of realism was in the body politic, the social world, and the public sphere. The individual in isolation is the abstract term, because for Brandes the isolated individual was not free. Bang placed what is real in the perceiving subject. He considered any claim to be able to depict social relations in an objective manner to be both an abstraction and a symptom of idealism.

As a result there was a radical difference in how each critic depicts the role of the author. Brandes gave the author an active role in the creation of a collective memory yet to be established. His species of realism is an avant-garde gesture, entering life and simultaneously depicting what is *real* and changing the shape of what will be perceived as *real* in the future. The writer is a creator of values. Bang saw the role of the realist author in a different light. The realist's task is to purge the collective memory of abstract value-laden judgments of things that persist. Bang advocated a type of perspectival positivism. The writer is a chronicler of a perspective.

Because of their respective positions on these issues, Brandes and Bang's notions of realism expressed divergent understandings of the historical process. Brandes saw his contemporary world as a time of historical rupture in which political values expressed in works of literature could re-form the mode of social intercourse, and Bang regarded modernity as part of a progressive movement of increasing individuality where the conditions of possibility for human understanding are historically bound. In modern times, these historical conditions lead to a fragmentation from which aesthetic judgment can provide a fictional notion of form. Brandes sought to radically alter the course of Scandinavian history, Bang sought to change perceptions in order to conserve an understanding of social discourse as it »actually« exists. Brandes' program for the modern breakthrough can be seen as a politics of aesthetics; Bang's theory of realism can be seen as the separation of aesthetic judgment from the spheres of political consideration and ethical determination.

Bang's argument for a type of perspectival positivism anticipates the withdrawal of many of the Scandinavian authors from the notion of a political realism. His postulation that the novel acts as a historical document, which gives the fragmented perceptions of modern life an aesthetic shape, assumed that the realist has the ability to make stylistic choices free of values. The weakness of this position lies in the realization that even stylistic choices are value laden. The literary polemicists of the nineties would not repeat Bang's mistake. They would also rebel against Brandes' notion of a politically active authorship, and would confront Brandes' values with an alternative set of values that emphasize the individual and national identity.

The problems inherent in these two realist positions open the door for the reaction that followed. Neither position was abandoned completely, but aspects of both were sublated in the emerging forms of literary production. Brandes' notion of a vitalistic literature capable of creating values and Bang's conception of an aestheticized depiction of *real life* both remained present in a literary production that claimed to reject their respective positions. Brandes' realism was literature that represented a trajectory of thought. His notion of literature was interest driven, politically motivated, and interventionist; it contained the notion of the poet as the unseen legislator of the future. While the political component of Brandesian realism will be blatantly rejected by the generation of the nineties, the vitalistic component will be retained. Bang's notion that

»reality« cannot be perceived in its totality and that realism is located in the individual proved to be fertile ground as well. While his prohibition against moral judgment would be honored, his claim of a value-free art was rejected. In a sense, the anti-realist discourse sublated aspects of both Brandes' and Bang's positions; it retained the idea that literature was a vital force that could combat decadence, although Brandes' notion of social antagonism would either be translated into a disengaged sense of hierarchy or it would be turned inwards. In any case the seeds that gestate in the realist discourse bear fruit in an activated authorial subject who seeks to overcome the decadence of his historical moment through the primacy of form over content. In them gestated the idea of the creation of a »select reality«.

#### Excursus:

#### A Brief Word on Strindberg, Autobiography, and Realism

*Der beste Autor.* – Der beste Autor wird der sein, welcher sich schämt, Schriftsteller zu werden.

*(The best author.* – The best author will be he who is ashamed to become a writer.)<sup>39</sup>

August Strindberg's relationship to realism, and in his case, in a stricter sense, naturalism, was as complicated as any other aspect of his work. Early on in his career, he was interested in the work of the French realists and as early as 1875 Strindberg wanted to translate Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.<sup>40</sup> His debut novel, *Röda rummet* (*The Red Room*),<sup>41</sup> has been called the north's first naturalistic »samhällsroman« (social novel)<sup>42</sup> and it is apparent that Strindberg's early production answered Brandes' call to actively engage in social debate. Strindberg wrote history and social criticism proper as well. However, a seminal influence is impossible to discern due to Strindberg's voracious appetite for ideas. He read extensively in the natural sciences, history, and philosophy. A list of his literary influ-

39 NIETZSCHE: KSA 2, 1988b, 164, Book 1, Aphorism 192. The English translation comes from HOLLINGDALE: 1996, 93.

40 See LAMM: 1963, 63.

41 *The Red Room*, Strindberg's breakthrough novel, was first published in 1879.

42 LAMM: 1963, 64. The original citation reads »... samhällsroman och i denna egenskap tjäna som mönster för senare författare som Kielland och Garborg.« »Samhällsroman« is difficult to translate, but it is best rendered as »social novel«.

ences would have to include Balzac, Daudet, Dickens, Flaubert, Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Zola, and the American humorists among others.

In the essay *Om realism* (*On Realism*), which first was published in the Swedish journal *Ur dagens krönika* in 1882 and later collected in *Likt och olikt* in 1890, Strindberg went so far as to say: »Världens största författare hava varit realister.« (The world's greatest authors have been realists.)<sup>43</sup> At this point in his career, he understood realism to be a technique that responded to human understanding in the epoch it depicted. He saw the necessity for a critical realism in his own time as he considered himself to be living »mitt i den epok, som fått sitt namn från Amerika, humbugens« (in the midst of that epoch, which got its name from America, the time of Humbug).<sup>44</sup> The realist response to this was, in Strindberg's meaning, the excoriation of the ideal. He reasoned: »Våra herrar idealister hava bedragit oss, därför övergavo vi dem!« (Our Kind sirs the idealists have cheated us, so therefore we have abandoned them!)<sup>45</sup> Like Brandes and Bang, he saw the opposition to be between realism and idealism. Like Brandes, Strindberg's opposition to idealism was political. He believed that the idealists justified the institutionalization of hypocrisies that were foisted upon society by the interests of the upper class.<sup>46</sup> For this reason, a realist abandoned the aesthetics of the beautiful for »de hava lärt oss att vämjas vid det slags skönhet, som äger sin tillvaro på andras bekostnad« (they [the idealists] have taught us to be disgusted by this type of beauty that owes its very existence to the price paid by others).<sup>47</sup>

It was in this essay that Strindberg would give one of his earliest definitions of naturalism:

Man har beskyllt våra realister att vara något ändå värre: naturalister. Det är en, hederstitel för oss! Vi älska naturen. Vi vända oss med vämjelse från de nya samhällsförhållanden, från polisstaten, från militärstaten, som säger sig värna

43 From »Om realismen« (*On Realism*) collected in STRINDBERG: 1912, 194.

44 Ibid., 195. Strindberg also uses this term in his satirical social critique, *Det nya riket* (*The New Kingdom*, 1881).

45 STRINDBERG: 1912, 195.

46 See »August Strindbergs Lilla katekes för underklassen« printed in *Likt och olikt I* (1884). An example of Strindberg's reasoning: »Vad är historia? Berättelsen om det forflutna, försåvitt det framställes i en för överklassen förmånlig dager.« My translation. »What is history? The narrative about the past, provided that it is presented in an advantageous light for the upper class.« Found in STRINDBERG: 1912, 186.

47 STRINDBERG: 1912, 196, *Om realismen*.

nationen, men endast skyddar de styrande; därför att vi hatar det förkonstlade, tillskarvade, älska vi *att nämna vår sak vid dess namn*, och vi tro att samhällen skola störta samman om icke den första överenskommelse, på vilken samhällena vila, ärligheten, blir återställd.

(People have accused our realists of being something even worse: naturalists. That is a mantle of honor for us! We love nature. We turn away from the new social order with disgust, away from the police state, away from the military state, which claims to protect the nation, but only shields the ruling class. Because we hate the artificial, the manufactured, we love to *name our cause by its name*, and we believe that society will come crashing down if the first agreement, on which society rests, honesty, is not restored.)<sup>48</sup>

For Strindberg, naturalism was a form of realism that valorized the »natural«. His early understanding thus reveals itself to be inflected by Rousseau's notion of the social contract.<sup>49</sup> Strindberg saw naturalism as an unmasking that pointed to a return to the »honesty« of the *originary* agreement that bound people together in a society. Naturalism was a form of realism that was necessitated by the corruption of beauty and ideals by the »humbug« of the prevailing social order.

Furthermore, Strindberg argued that the naturalist depicts life in a way that *names things by their rightful names*. This is an important aspect of his early understanding of the role of the author and the meaning of naturalism. In a fractured social climate, the naturalist combats the hypocrisy of the ruling classes by giving things their proper appellation. This act of naming recalls the basic justification for human society; for the early Strindberg; honesty is the main component of the social contract and the naturalist writes for the cause of reinstating truthfulness as the guiding principle of social relations. The association between calling a thing by its right name and the desire to reinstate the primal conditions for the legitimation of the state can be found elsewhere in Strindberg's production in 1882. The poem *Solnedgång på havet* (Sundown at Sea), written in the same year, is a prime example. Though Strindberg temporarily subordinated his social activism to autobiographical concerns in the mid-1880's, the tension between naming and selective forgetfulness is an important component of his naturalism and provides a window through which we can view his agonistic notion of subject formation where the individual combats the internalization of an inherited histori-

48 Ibid., 196. My emphasis.

49 See EDQVIST: 1961, especially 89–101.

cal narrative. Even when Strindberg turned inward, the stakes remain the same.

This brings us to Strindberg's conception of the relationship between naturalism and autobiography. Strindberg wrote a mock interview that he intended to be the preface to the first part of his »autobiography,« *Tjänstekvinnans son (Son of a Servant)*.<sup>50</sup> His publisher, Bonniers forced Strindberg to repress this preface and the manuscript is extant in the archives.<sup>51</sup> Strindberg had used the same technique two years before in *Giftas 1 (Getting Married 1)*, and these two »interviews« provide us with some insight into the progression of his own understanding of his art. It is this understanding that enabled Strindberg to consider himself a naturalist, and to be used by others as a trope in the anti-realist discourse.

Each of these interviews has two characters, an »interviewer« and the »author«. The interview in *Giftas 1* starts ironically with the two characters inhabiting antagonistic positions. The *author* states that literature is inconsequential and the *interviewer* chides him for deriding *belles lettres* while authoring books himself. The *author* admits that this is true and he states that he regards himself to be inconsequential by extension. Then, the *author* tells of his plans to give up literature because he is tired of guessing what people think. He claims that the remedy for his lack of consequence resides in his desire to become an interviewer himself for then he could ask questions directly. The *author* then turns the tables and asks the *interviewer* if he liked his book. The *interviewer* responds that the book is badly written, that it is fragmented.<sup>52</sup> The *author* agrees with a difference so to speak:

Om herrn visste hur rätt herrn har! Den är inte utförd! Det var just meningen det. Jag hade nämligen för avsikt att skildra ett rätt stort antal fall, vanliga fall, av förhållandet mellan man och hustru, ville icke skildra fyra undantagsfall som fru Edgren, eller ett vidunders fall som Ibsen, vilka sedan tagas såsom norm för alla fall. Därför har jag icke utfört mer än en sexa på Stallmästargården, där ni har två sorters lax, med dill, färska pressgurkor, små

<sup>50</sup> Autobiography is set in quotation marks here for reasons that will become more apparent as this study progresses. At this moment suffice it to say that *Tjänstekvinnans son* is a *genealogy of self*.

<sup>51</sup> It is also reprinted on pp. 370–375 of the National Edition of his collected works. See STRINDBERG: 1989.

<sup>52</sup> The phrase the interviewer uses reads: »Jag tycker för det första att den är illa gjord. Den är inte utförd.« This translates as: Firstly, I think that it is poorly done. It is not completed.« STRINDBERG: 1982a, 9.

biffstekar med spansk lök, kyckling och jordgubbar. Dessutom har jag kräftor (honkräftor) på Rejners, pannkakor på Djurgården; en trädgård på Norrtullsgatan med ett blommande äppelträd, sex sorters blommor och ett par nattskärar. Vidare har jag Adolf Fredricks kyrka och en florett och minst trettio sjömanstermer, som jag tagit ur nautisk ordbok! Är det icke realistiskt, va?

(If the gentleman only knew how right he is! It isn't whole! That was the intention! I had the intention, namely, to depict a large number of case studies, common cases, of the relationship between man and wife. I did not want to depict four exceptional cases like Mrs. Edgren or a miraculous case like Ibsen, which later is taken to be the norm in all cases. Therefore, I haven't executed anything more than supper at Stallmästergården, where you have two types of salmon with dill, fresh pickles, small beef steaks with Spanish onions, chicken, and strawberries. Furthermore, I have crayfish (the hen) at Rejners, pancakes on Djurgården; a garden at Norrtulls Street with an apple tree in bloom, six kinds of flowers and a pair of nightjars. In addition, I have Adolf Fredrik's Church and a fencing foil, and at least thirty sailor's terms that I took from a nautical dictionary, Isn't that realistic, huh?)<sup>53</sup>

The irony is pointed and unmistakable. Our citation starts out straightforward enough; the *author* has the intention of depicting a series of case studies on marriage. Realism is not the exceptional or the miraculous and he has no intention of depicting anything but the ordinary. Then irony creeps into the discourse. The *author* piles up inconsequential details in order to show that the names of physical properties do not realism make. This dense descriptive passage is intended to prove that the »reality effect,« the representation of known aspects of the real world in a fictional universe, does not signify the *real*. This raises a question: if the created illusion of an environment's materiality does not connote the *real*, what does?

The *author* provides us with a glimpse of an answer when he responds to the *interviewer's* accusation that his book is immoral. He submits that »om sedligheten är vad den blivit, ett brott emot naturen, då min bok osedlig, ty den är enligt och efter naturen« (if morality is what it has become, a crime against nature, then my book is immoral, for it is also according to and taken after nature).<sup>54</sup> The *author*, who expressed that he was unable to guess what people thought, analyzed human behavior through depicting the contradictions between social conventions and what he understood to be natural drives. For Strindberg, Naturalism did

53 Ibid., 9–10.

54 Ibid., 10.

not imitate prevailing morality and did not hold social relationships up to a mirror. It was not an effect of that which could be seen. He claimed that Naturalism depicts that which drives human behavior in conflict with that which inhibits desire. The *real* was not an image of thought. It could not be recognized in the exteriority of the world inhabited by both the author and the reader.

As mentioned, Strindberg was to later employ a similar dialogic strategy to introduce his »autobiography,« *Tjänstekvinnans son*. He set up this second fictional interview in the same manner as in the introduction to *Giftas I*. The »dialog« starts out with an attempt to define what type of book *Tjänstekvinnans son* might be and progresses into a heated discussion about the nature of the *author's* opposition against »den nuvarande samhället« (contemporary society).<sup>55</sup> After the author's screed, the *interviewer* returns to the subject of how to define the book. He says: »Det är ingen roman; det skall sålunda vara något nytt.« (This is no novel; therefore it would be something new.)<sup>56</sup> The *author* responds that it is an attempt at a literature of the future. He continues by damning and praising Zola, who is called a great master, and who, according to the *author*, had overestimated the effect of an environment on the development of the individual. The *author* reasons as follows:

Hur skall man veta vad som passerar i andras hjärnor, hur skall man veta de invecklade motiven till en annans handling, hur kan man veta vad de sade i en förtrolig stund? Jo, man konstruerar. Men hittills har homologien, vetenskapen om människan, varit litet odlad av författarne, som med tarvlig kunskaper i psykologien givit sig ut på skildring av det så väl dolda själslivet. *Man känner icke mer än ett liv, sitt eget.*

(How would one know what passes through another's brain, how would one know the complicated motives behind another's action, how can one know what another said and did in an intimate moment? Sure, one constructs. But up to now homology, the science of man, has been hardly cultivated by authors, who with vulgar knowledge of psychology have thrown themselves at depicting the well concealed life of the soul. *One knows no more than one life, his own.*)<sup>57</sup>

With this insight, Strindberg had found his *gaya scienza*, his naturalism as memoir, where the conflicting forces of nature and society could be displayed in intimate struggle within the one person that he felt it was

55 STRINDBERG: 1989, 370–371.

56 Ibid., 372.

57 Ibid., 373. My emphasis.



possible to know, himself.<sup>58</sup> Bang's notion that realism resides in the individual perspective had become so radicalized in Strindberg's work that he could not even consider the possibility of being able to depict another except in relationship to himself. Brandes' notion of the external struggle of »life-affirming« and »decadent« historical trajectories would be pushed to their extreme and depicted as the factors in the development of the »soul«.<sup>59</sup>

With the writing of his »autobiography,« Strindberg's concerns turned to the understanding of his own behavior and motivations; he turned his gaze inwards in an attempt to discover *how one becomes who he is*. It is here in *Tjänstekvinnans son* that the notion of the *genealogy of self* took root in Strindberg's work, and it is here that we can discern that he understood self-description as being highly compatible with his understanding of naturalism, which he understood to be a species of realism. This explains how Strindberg would later find his authorship's theoretical justification in Nietzsche's work and still considers himself to be a realist.

Even during his »Nietzschean« period, Strindberg found his own appropriation of the philosopher's writings to be compatible with naturalism. The form of this compatibility can be found in Strindberg's notion of *greater naturalism*. A clearly rendered definition of this term can be found in the essay *Om Modernt drama och modern teater* (On Modern Drama and Modern Theater)<sup>60</sup>, published in *Ny jord* in 1889, written shortly after his encounter with Nietzsche. Strindberg writes that through »den stora naturalism« (the greater naturalism) the *greater naturalist* is one who

söker de punkter, där de stora slagen stå, som älska se det man icke får se vardag, som glädjes åt naturmakternas kamp, antingen dessa makter heter kärlek och hat, revoltandet eller sociabla instinkter, som finner skönt eller fullt likgiltigt, endast det är stort.

(seeks those points where the great battles take place, who loves to see that which one does not get to see everyday, who enjoys the struggle of natural forces whether these forces are called love and hate, revolt or the instinct for

58 Babette E. Babich defines Nietzsche's gay science as an »alliance of science (necessity) and art (creativity) ...« Here, Strindberg pays heed to the necessity of scientifically inflected self-observation in order to create a merger of the fictional and autobiographical in an artistic manner. See Babich's »Nietzsche's ›Gay‹ Science« in ANSELL-PEARSON: 2006, 97.

59 Strindberg uses the word »själ« or soul.

60 »Om modernt drama och modern teater« is collected in STRINDBERG: 1912, 281–303.

sociability, who finds beauty and ugliness to be a matter of indifference, providing that the struggle is great.)<sup>61</sup>

With this formulation, Strindberg's conception of naturalism had transmuted. The *greater naturalist* seeks out the great struggles that are masked by the banality of the everyday. He is beyond the beautiful and the repulsive, a master of the *grand style* of the constant collisions that lie beneath daily life, and he names this struggle by its *proper* name. It is my contention that Strindberg's conception of *greater naturalism* arose out of his own notion of subject formation developed in the writing of *Tjänstekvinnans son* and further articulated in his *Vivesektioner*. This is an essential point of his later claim to have anticipated Nietzsche and an indication of the futility of using an influence model to describe the encounter between the two.

Strindberg's understanding of naturalism as a collision between socially embedded narratives and primal drives helps to explain why he was able to find compatibility between naturalism and Nietzsche despite the latter's general antipathy towards Zola<sup>62</sup> and the naturalist movement. We now turn to Nietzsche's initial reception in Scandinavia and the anti-realist discourse in order to illustrate how both Nietzsche and Strindberg enjoyed a discursive commonality as they came to represent both continuity and renewal; thereby straddling the abyss opened by the aporia of modern realism. Strindberg, like Nietzsche, had become ashamed of being an author thereby becoming a vivisectionist. Like Nietzsche, he had turned his scalpel on himself.

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61 Ibid., 289.

62 Nietzsche's attitude towards Zola was actually rather ambivalent. Julian Young argues that while Nietzsche thought that Zola's concentration on the ugly was a depressive element, he also reasoned that the pleasure that Zola gained from this fascination was admirable. See YOUNG: 1994, 131–134. See also Reinhold GRIMM: 1983, »The Hidden Heritage: Repercussions of Nietzsche in Modern Theater and Its Theory.« Grimm remarks on pg. 356: »Of course, Nietzsche and Naturalism differ enormously; yet likewise, we have to realize that they were not merely opposed to each other, but rather complemented each other. And not only did they interact, they were able to merge ...«

## Chapter 2: The Nietzsche Reception: Questions of Primacy and Authenticity

Über Dänemark geht Nietzsches Name um die Welt. Das ist allgemein bekannt. Mit den Voraussetzungen für seinen Erfolg und mit der Geschichte seiner Rezeption in Skandinavien ist man weniger vertraut.

(Nietzsche's name went out to the world from Denmark. This is common knowledge. People are less familiar with the preconditions for his success and the history of his reception in Scandinavia.)<sup>1</sup>

As Steven E. Aschheim points out, Nietzsche had enjoyed a small and devoted readership in Austria as early as the mid 1870's<sup>2</sup> and prior to 1890, a »kind of subterranean influence in Germany, appealing to individual readers or specialized obscure societies such as the Leipzig Genius Club founded in 1886 or a medley of radical fringe groups«.<sup>3</sup> However, the Scandinavian reception and interpretation of Nietzsche preceded his entry into the main currents of the cultural debate in his homeland, and it is generally accepted that the translation of Brandes' essay on Nietzsche and several essays by the Swede, Ola Hansson were the first published texts on Nietzsche in German to reach a wider audience.<sup>4</sup>

Even though Brandes delivered a series of lectures on Nietzsche in April and May of 1888, Hansson's German texts published in 1890 preceded the translation of Brandes' subsequent essay and there was some controversy as to which Scandinavian was the first to introduce Nietzsche to the wider world. In his memoir *Levned (Life)* Brandes complained that Hansson's fiancée Laura Marholm (born Mohr) had delayed her translation of his work into German therefore enabling Hansson to reach a German audience first.<sup>5</sup> The dispute that ensued was very much

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1 BRANDL: 1983, 387. My translation.

2 ASCHHEIM: 1994, 17. Aschheim cites William J. McGrath's *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), and points out that members of the Austrian Pernerstorfer circle, whose members included Gustav Mahler and Viktor Adler, »were inspired by NIETZSCHE as early as 1875–1878.«

3 ASCHHEIM: 1994, 18.

4 See FAMBRINI: 1997.

5 Georg Brandes, *Levned: Snevringer og Horisonter* (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1908). This is volume three of Brandes' memoirs. See *Levned*, 270–273, and Brandes' addendum to *Friedrich Nietzsche. En Afhandling om aristokratisk Radi-*

about authenticity. The battle over the right to represent Nietzsche's thought occurred on two levels: the first being epitomized by what Alessandro Fambrini calls Hansson's »rassische Postulat« (racial postulate)<sup>6</sup> and the second being best viewed as a generational confrontation. Suffice it to say for the moment that Hansson used his Nietzsche essays to directly attack Brandes, and the older man's defense was much more dismissive. His reference to Hansson in the 1899 postscript to a new edition of his Nietzsche essay gives us an indication as how little credence Brandes gave Hansson's work. He wrote: »I en Artikel af en fortysket Svensker, der gerne vilde være saare onskabsfuld, blev jeg rost, fordi jeg i hin Afhandling havde brudt med min Fortid og resolut fornegtet det Sæt af frisindede Tanker og Ideer, jeg hidtil havde forfægtet.« (In an article written by a Germanized Swede, who wanted desperately to be cuttingly wicked, I was praised for having broken with my past with this essay. He resolutely denied how I had always supported free thoughts and ideas.)<sup>7</sup> Brandes did not mention Hansson by name and was more concerned with defending his own authenticity by stating that his Nietzsche lectures were a continuation of his previous work. This claim of consistency proved to be an important aspect of Brandes' own perception of his role in introducing Nietzsche to Scandinavia.

Even if Hansson reached a German audience first, there is no denying that Georg Brandes acted as midwife for the Nietzsche reception in Scandinavia. Hansson became passionately interested in Nietzsche only after Strindberg fanned the flames, and it was Brandes who introduced Strindberg to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is said to have heard about Brandes' interest in his work as early as 1883,<sup>8</sup> but it was not until 1886 that

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*kalisme*, 645, found in BRANDES: 1901. Also, see Fambrini's article for a rather thorough narrative of the controversy. For more on Laura Mohr/Marholm see BRANTLEY: 1991.

6 FAMBRINI: 1997, 46.

7 Georg BRANDES: 1901, 2:645, *Friedrich Nietzsche. En Afhandling om aristokratisk Radikalisme* (December 1899).

8 Two sources confirm this date. The first is Harald BEYER: 1958. Beyer writes: »Elizabeth Förster – Nietzsche sier at hennes bror alt i 1883 hadde hørt om Brandes interesse for Ham. Og Brandes skriver i et brev av 7 Mars 1888 at han ikke minst har gledet seg over NIETZSCHES første bøker ...« Volume 1 58. »Elizabeth Förster – Nietzsche says that her brother had already heard of Brandes' interest in him in 1883. And Brandes writes in a letter dated March 7, 1888 that he had particularly enjoyed Nietzsche's first books ...« Förster-Nietzsche is a rather ironic source for Beyer, for in a letter to her brother dated September 6, 1888 she writes: »Ich persönlich hätte dir einen anderen Apostel als Hr. Brandes gewünscht, er hat in zu vielerlei Töpfchen geguckt und

Nietzsche sent the Dane some of his writings.<sup>9</sup> Brandes described the arrival of Nietzsche's books in his memoirs, *Løvned*, and from his description we can discern that Brandes had heard of Nietzsche quite a while before he had actually seen a Nietzschean text:

Længe var det siden der i den Menneskevrimmel, der Aar efter Aar bølgede mit Øje forbi, havde været et Aasyn, som fængslede mig ved overlegen Aand. Dag ud, Dag ind skyllede Posten Bøger og Tryksager ind over min Tærskel. Men længe var det sidste, der iblandt disse havde været et enkelt skrift, som bragt mig bud fra en beslægtet Aand og tillige fra en lærig og mægtig, som var mig ny. Da kom de første, betydningsfulde bøger fra en Tænker, jeg tidligt havde hørt tale om i Anledning af hans Skrift mod den alderstegne Strauss's Bog *Den gamle og den nye tro ...*«

It had been a long time since I had been captivated by the sight of a superior spirit emerging from the swirling mass of people that passed before my eyes year after year. Day in and day out the postman slid books and printed materials over my threshold. But it had been a long time since there had been a single work among these things that brought me bidding from a kindred spirit, one who was also so powerful, erudite and new to me. Then came the first meaningful book from a thinker, who I had previously had heard spoken about in connection to his writing against the elderly Strauss' book *The Old and the New Belief ...*<sup>10</sup>

Brandes' retrospective comments date his awareness of Nietzsche to the discussions he had heard around the first of the latter's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (Untimely Meditations), *David Strauß der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller*, which had been published in 1872. While it is uncertain

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von zu vielen Tellern gegessen, indeßen man kann sich seine Verehrer nicht wählen und ganz sicher ist es: er wird Dich in Mode bringen, denn das versteht er.« Collected as letter 574 in Nietzsche's *Briefwechsel III: Briefe an Nietzsche*, eds. Colli and Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 295. Brandes' Jewish background is most probably the source of Elizabeth's objection. At the time she was living in Nueva Germania, a colony in South America set up by her rabidly anti-Semitic husband. Our second source is ADMUNDSSON: 1981. On page 234, Admundsson writes, »As far back as 1883, and again in 1886, Nietzsche had heard of Brandes' interest in him, which prompted him to send Brandes two of his books.«

9 The most probable identification of which books were sent comes from Brandes himself. In his first letter to Nietzsche dated November 26, 1887, Brandes wrote: »Vor einem Jahre erhielt ich durch Ihren Verleger Ihr Werk *Jenseits von Gute und Böse*; vor kurzem kam mir durch denselben Weg Ihr neuestes Buch zu. Ich besitze ausserdem von Ihnen »Menschliches Allzumenschliches«. Ich hatte eben die beiden Bände, die ich besass, nach dem Buchbinder geschickt, als das Werk *Zur Genealogie der Moral* ankam, ich habe es also nicht mit den früheren vergleichen können, wie ich es thun will.« This letter is collected in NIETZSCHE: 1984b as letter 500, 120.

10 Georg BRANDES: 1908, 228–229. This is the third volume of his memoirs. The reference is to David Strauss' *Der Alte und neue Glaube* (1872).

as to exactly when or what Brandes had heard about Nietzsche's »medi-  
tation« on Strauss, we can safely assume both that it was prior to 1883  
and that his first impression was not altogether favorable. Brandes re-  
spected Strauss and before he received Nietzsche's books he »kun havde  
hørt lidet fordelagtig; mig selv havde det dengang forekommet haardt og  
grusomt at slaa sig til Ridder paa en saa fortjent og udmærket Mands  
Alderdomsværk« (could hardly have heard anything positive; it struck me  
at that time as being rough and gruesome to attack such a deserving and  
remarkable man's late work).<sup>11</sup> Brandes' mind was changed, however,  
when he read Nietzsche's work for himself. He was immediately capti-  
vated upon reading his first Nietzschean text, having simultaneously  
experienced the contradictory feelings of identification and alienation  
that were to mark his thoughts on Nietzsche right from the start.<sup>12</sup>  
Brandes had the sensation that Nietzsche had put some of his more po-  
lemical thoughts into words, yet he was able to keep his distance and  
never became »Nietzschean«. Strindberg would experience the same  
attraction and repulsion for the philosopher's work, but internalized the  
conflict, and this internalization, as a mode of valuation is the very heart  
of his commonality with Nietzsche.<sup>13</sup> Hansson identified strongly with  
Nietzsche and his reception was colored by a species of hero worship  
that did not allow him to take any distance from the texts. Hansson  
would suffer the blurred vision that occasionally accompanies strong  
intoxicates.

Despite his reservations, Brandes was convinced that Nietzsche was a  
great writer and a rare personality.<sup>14</sup> Following this conviction, he kept to

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11 BRANDES: 1908, 229.

12 Ibid. »Nu mødte jeg mig i Nietzsches Bøger Tanker, jeg selv polemisk havde tænkt  
og med hvilke jeg var fortrolig, ligesom prægede i højt Relief, andre, som var mig  
fremmede, men som fristede mig til begrundet Afvisning eller Tilegnelse.« My transla-  
tion. »Now I came upon in Nietzsche's books, thoughts stamped in high relief, thoughts  
which I had myself thought polemically, and thoughts that I was both familiar with, and  
other thoughts that were alien to me, which for that reason tempted me to either reject  
or adopt them.«

13 Suffice it to say for now, that it is my conclusion the internalization of contradic-  
tory elements in a polemical mode from the *pathos of distance* is the hallmark of the  
Nietzschean genealogical method. This issue will be addressed in Chapter 4 and in even  
greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

14 Georg BRANDES: 1908. »Hurtig forstod jeg, at Manden ragede op blandt de  
Ypperste og Ejendommeligste i Samtiden. Saa betydelig og selvstændig var blandt mine  
Venner eller Velyndere vistnok kun Ibsen og Taine, men ingen af dem havde hans

his practice of introducing unknown writers to the world. »Jeg følte det som Pligt at gøre for ham, hvad jeg en Snes Aar forinden havde gjort for Ibsen, senere for Klinger, for Jacobsen og talrige andre, henlede Læseverdenens Opmærksomhed paa denne Kraftkilde og Tankekilde, der sprudlede og randt uagtet, denne geniale Røst, der raabte uden at møde det savnede mangedobbelte Ekko, det endnu slumrede, som sikkert kunde vækkes.« (I felt it was my duty to do for him what I had done for Ibsen a score of years before, then for Klinger, for Jacobsen, and for countless others: that is to direct the reading public's attention towards that power source and idea source, that bubbled and ran unobserved, that genial voice that cried out without meeting the missing multiplied echo that still slumbered and surely could be awakened.)<sup>15</sup> This was the basis of Brandes' ability to take distance from Nietzsche. He saw a certain constancy in his own role and never considered himself to be another's acolyte. Just as he had introduced the Scandinavian reading public to the works of the »modern breakthrough« and many of the leading European writers and thinkers, he would awaken the public to this new source of intellectual vitality. Brandes claimed to have introduced Nietzsche for the very same reason he had introduced others, and by extension with the purpose of breaking through the »slumber« into which the reading public had fallen. Brandes considered his introduction of Nietzsche to be a continuation of his efforts to present the works and the personalities who were exceptional to the age. These personalities were to be the creators of values in an agonistic public sphere.

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endnu ungdommelige Lidenskab for at gøre sig gældende, ingen hans *impetus* og ingen af dem hans betagende, mig saa kære dristighed.« My translation: »I quickly understood that the man ranked up with the greatest and most original men of his time. Certainly, the only ones among my friends or well wishers who were so meaningful or independent were Ibsen and Taine, but none of them had his still youthful passion for asserting himself, none had his *impetus*, and none had that which was so seductive – his endearing boldness.«

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Georg Brandes and Nietzsche:  
The Authenticity of the Aristocratic Radical

Brandes entered into a correspondence with Nietzsche by sending a letter on Nov. 26, 1887. His first letter to the philosopher contained what was to prove to be a felicitous turn of phrase:

Ich verstehe noch nicht völlig was ich gelesen habe: ich weiss nicht immer wo Sie hinaus wollen. Aber vieles stimmt mit meinem eignen Gedanken und Sympathien überein, die Geringschätzung der asketischen Ideale und der tiefe Unwille gegen demokratische Mittelmässigkeit, *ihr aristokratischer Radikalismus*.

(I do not fully understand what I have read: I do not always know what you want to accomplish. But quite a bit agrees with my own thoughts and sympathies, the disparagement of the ascetic ideals and the deep resistance to democratic mediocrity, your aristocratic radicalism.)<sup>16</sup>

Brandes used the term, »aristokratischer Radikalismus« (aristocratic radicalism) to entitle his essay on the philosopher. More importantly for our purposes, this turn of phrase provides a crystallized description that allows us to understand how Nietzsche fit into Brandes' conception of the need for a »modern breakthrough«. Seeing that Brandes' call for a vitally interventionist and realist aesthetic in the 1870's was addressed to a phalanx of writers, who were later depicted in a gallery of portraits in *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* (*The Men of the Modern Breakthrough*) (1883), *Aristocratic radicalism* can be defined as the self-assertion of the exceptional personality in the shaping of a collective notion of reality.<sup>17</sup> However, despite his claim that his project had a clear and consistent trajectory, Brandes thought was received very differently by his opponents, who regarded his Nietzsche lectures as an indication of the failure of his earlier program.<sup>18</sup> The ironic aspect of Brandes' contemporary reception is epitomized in the anti-realist polemic of 1889, which associated the Brandesian author as tendential and democratic even though Brandes was to state, »I have never been and will never be a de-

<sup>16</sup> Collected as letter 500 in NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 120. Emphasis and translation mine.

<sup>17</sup> This conception dovetails nicely with Nietzsche's notion of »monumental history« though Brandes would certainly take some distance from the philosopher's assessment of the purpose of this species of historical writing.

<sup>18</sup> Though the main philosophical objections to Brandes' Nietzsche readings were made by the Danish philosopher Harald Høffding (1843–1931), I am concerned with the reaction of literary figures to the Nietzsche reception in this monograph.



mocrat. I have one god in politics: Caesar, and one aversion: Brutus.«<sup>19</sup> The atmosphere in Scandinavia was so charged that even if Brandes' introductory lectures on Nietzsche provided an important impetus for a second generation of Scandinavian modernists, they could not prevent his own work from being a popular target for the polemics of the »new literature«.

These attacks on Brandes' work and the facile association of his call for authors to debate the problems of their societies with democratic principles and leveling alert us to three aspects of the anti-realist revolt in Scandinavia. First, it was based more on polemic than actual differences. Second, a strong motivating factor was a revolt against the first wave of modernity, which can be read as a generational revolt. Third, the revolt against realism took on the aspect of a call for authenticity, which in turn was expressed along either personal or »racial« lines. In a sense, a polemic directed against realist aesthetics was against a straw man, and the association of Brandesian *Tendenzlitteratur* with leveling was a mask for an attack on growth of state institutions and the bourgeoisie, both of which Brandes also opposed. Suffice it to say at this moment that these aspects of the anti-realist revolt can certainly be seen as being congruent with Brandes' notion of *aristocratic radicalism*. This explains how Nietzsche could be received favorably by both Brandes and the anti-realists who polemicized against him.

*Aristocratic radicalism* is the term in which the movements of our analysis of the environment of the reception converge. It explains an aspect of the initial realist impulse in Scandinavian realism in its Brandesian moment and brings us back to the question posited in Chapter One: namely, what is the relationship of the realist author to the society that he claims to depict? It helps to clarify that Brandes' notion of the activist author who debates existentially relevant issues was colored by his understanding of this action as an anticipatory and vital form of value creation. In his mind, the author that Brandes had envisioned in 1872 was cut

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19 Brandes in a letter to the Danish writer Sophus Schandorph, cited and translated by ASMUNDSSON: 1981, 235. The original letter is collected in BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 233. The entire citation reads: »Jeg for min Del har jo altid skilt mig fra Jer andre (og døjet nok derfor) at **jeg aldrig har været og aldrig bliver Demokrat. Jeg har i Politik én Gud: Cæsar, og en Afsky: Brutus**, det Fjols af en Aagerkarl, som ikke kunde andet end stikke en Kniv i en Mand.« I have set in boldface type the excerpt that I have translated in the body of the text.

from the very same cloth as Nietzsche, and he used this material to tailor his notion of the *aristocratic radical*.

Unlike many others at the time, Brandes did not take Nietzsche at his word, believing that the philosopher's thought had rent a fissure in the landscape and that this demanded a radical intellectual turn; instead, he understood Nietzsche to be part of a progression of thought that he had been part of himself for decades. This explains how Brandes could remark: »Nietzsches Skrifter befrugtede mig ikke; men de indgød mig Mod.« (Nietzsche's writings did not inseminate me, they instilled me with courage.)<sup>20</sup> The salient issue for Brandes was not insemination but dissemination. Herein lay his understanding of the formal aspect of his own project as well:<sup>21</sup> the *aristocratic radical* is the one who debates, the one who wrestles with his own conception of *reality* and who through the force of his own personality publishes this conception.

Jeg skrev for mig selv: »Jeg leser stadig i min gale ven Nietzsche klemmer ham, krænger ham, presser og endevender ham, ælter ham om og om, saa han faaer snart et Fysiognomi, snart et andet. Jeg holder af Nietzsche. *Er hat mir's angethan*. Der er denne ene store Mand, som Tyskland har, og Ingen vurderer ham i Tyskland, næsten Ingen kender ham. O denne universelle Dannelsekretinisme!«

(I wrote for myself: »I read my mad friend Nietzsche constantly. I squeeze him, turn him inside out, press and turn him on end, knead him over and over until he quickly has one physiognomy then quickly another. I am fond of Nietzsche. *He has taken my fancy*. He is the only great man that Germany has, and no one values him in Germany, nearly no one knows him. O that universal educated cretinism!«)<sup>22</sup>

Because Brandes believed that Nietzsche had *articulated his own thoughts in their polemical moments*, he identified with the philosopher in the same agonistic and creative manner that he had hoped the authors of the modern breakthrough would engage their society – in a way that had the characteristic of mutual recognition and engagement. It is no accident that Brandes used a sculptural metaphor to express his encoun-

<sup>20</sup> Georg BRANDES: 1908, 230.

<sup>21</sup> The term *aristocratic radical* was self-referential as well. Brandes expressed this in his letter to Nietzsche of December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1888: »Ich gebrauchte das Wort ›aristokratischer Radikalismus‹ weil es so genau meinen eigenem politischen Überzeugungen entspricht.« Collected as letter 505 and found on page 131 of NIETZSCHE: 1984b.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Note: *Dannelse* is the Danish equivalent of the German word *Bildung*. There is no real English equivalent. *Education* is the closest we come.

ter with the philosopher. The Brandesian realist in Brandes takes in Nietzsche's text and experiments with its appearance. Like a sculptor using soft clay, he wrestles with it and shapes its aspect. The vitality of his endeavor comes through revealing the unknown to the public, by making it known through the transformation of his touch.<sup>23</sup> This is how we can understand how a critic who had embraced realism could embrace Nietzsche and imagine himself consistent. It is here; in his essay on Nietzsche that Brandes bared the device, and it is with this that we begin our own analysis of the initial Nietzsche reception. For if the concept of the *aristocratic radical* germinated within the Brandesian conception of the activist author and the *modern breakthrough*, it is from under the umbrella of these concepts that Brandes now called for a renewal for a second time. It is to these lectures that bear the name, *Friedrich Nietzsche: En Afhandling om aristokratisk Radikalisme* (*Friedrich Nietzsche: An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism*), in their published form, that we now turn.

Brandes footnoted his essay's title with an excerpt from Nietzsche's answer to his letter of November 26. The footnote reads »Der Ausdruck ›aristokratischer Radikalismus‹, dessen Sie sich bedienen, ist sehr gut. Das ist, mit Verlaub gesagt, das gescheuteste Wort, das ich bisher über mich gelesen habe.« (The expression, ›aristocratic radicalism‹, which you use, is very good. That is, if I may say so, the shrewdest remark I have read about myself till now.)<sup>24</sup> This was an interesting strategy that established authenticity immediately on two levels. First, the subject of the essay himself speaks to the reader through a footnote, remarking that the writer of the essay has written, in this context, the most measured of descriptions, that he employs the »shrewdest« of terms. Brandes hoped to convey that this was an essay that emerged from a personal exchange and one that caught the ear of its subject. Secondly, by separating his text from Nietzsche's, Brandes was establishing himself as an independent, original voice on his subject; one that could take distance and disagree with the »great« man he was presenting. With this footnote, he emphasized that had the respect of the philosopher whose work he addresses

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23 Perhaps Brandes like Nietzsche believed that it is interpretation that allows things to appear in the world.

24 Georg BRANDES: 1901, 596. The original letter is collected in NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 206 as letter 960. The English translation comes from MIDDLETON: 1996, 279

and that he was engaged in a dialogue with him.<sup>25</sup> He was showing that this concept, *aristocratic radicalism*, was his and his alone. With this simple act of footnoting, Brandes establishes an aura of both personal and intellectual authenticity. This act gives us an inkling to Brandes' rhetorical strategy and how he attempted to link himself to the notion of *aristocratic radicalism* as well. Authority was established through an intersubjective process of mutual recognition and respectful debate. For Brandes, this debate was the essential component of a »living literature,« a literature open to changing currents that ebb and flow, acting as a medium of exchange between individuals and cultures.

This motivation resembles the earlier impulse to bring the Scandinavian literature in touch with the »great church« of continental European thought. Brandes remarked:

Jeg har villet henvise till ham især, fordi det forekommer mig, som om Nordens Skønlitteratur nu vel længe har tæret paa Tanker, der blev fremsatte og drøftede i det forrige Aarti. Det ser ud som om Evnen til at undfange geniale Ideer var taget af, ja som om Modtageligheden for dem var ved at svinde; man tumler stadigt med de samme Lærdomme, visse Arvelighedsteorier, lidt Darwinisme, lidt Kvinde-Frigørelse, lidt Lykkemoral, lidt Fritænkeri, lidt Dyrkelse af Folket osv. Og hvad vore »Dannedes« Dannelse angaar, ligger Faren nær, at den Højslette, som omtrent betegnes ved det franske Tidsskrift *Revue des deux mondes*, bliver Højdemaalet for de højslette Dannedes Kultur. Det synes ikke endnu at være gaaet op for de Bedste, at den finere, den eneste virkelige Kultur begynder hinsides *Revue des deux mondes* i den store, idæfyldte Personlighed.

(I have wanted to point him out especially because it occurred to me that for a good while now that belles lettres in the North have corroded the thoughts that have been presented and discussed in the last years. It appears that the capacity to grasp genial ideas has diminished, yes it as if the receptivity for these ideas was about to disappear. One grapples constantly with the same teachings, certain theories of inheritance, a little Darwinism, a little Feminism, a little Utilitarianism, a little free thinking, a little worship of the people, etc. And regarding the education of our »educated« class, the imminent danger being that the plateau that is defined by the French journal *Revue des deux mondes* becomes the highest goal of the most highly educated. It does not yet seem to have occurred, to the best, the finer, that the only true culture begins beyond *Revue des deux mondes*, in the great personality filled with ideas.)<sup>26</sup>

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25 Brandes expressed his disagreement with Nietzsche on two levels: he disagreed with the philosopher's high opinion of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and he questioned Nietzsche's critique of pity. Brandes explicitly took distance from Nietzsche's »politics«.

26 Georg BRANDES: 1901, 643. My translation.

Once again, Brandes called for a cultural renewal. This is the key to understanding how Brandes linked the notion of personal and intellectual authenticity. His stated purpose for introducing Nietzsche to the North resided in his belief that Scandinavian literature had ceased to utilize ideas from the outside. As a result the letters of the North had stagnated and become formulaic even when citing the main currents of the moment. It is important to recall that Brandes' understanding of the cultural situation in Denmark in 1872 was similar. In his *Indledning till Emigrantlitteratur* he had postulated that Danish culture was in reaction to revolutionary changes in Europe. He saw two distinct trajectories to history: the first the movement of freedom that emerged from the French Revolution, and the second being the reaction to this movement where social conservatism wore the mask of freedom. Nietzsche represented a continuation of Enlightenment thought for Brandes, despite the philosopher's critique of the French revolution, and he regarded Nietzsche's introduction as a continuation of his own project to bring the Enlightenment to the Scandinavia. It is important to note here that this does not mean that Brandes endorsed Nietzsche's position wholeheartedly. He considered the German to be »en Aand af betydelig Rang, som tilfulde fortjener at studeres, at drøftes, at bekæmpes og tilegnes« (a spirit of considerable standing, who fully deserves to be studied, to be debated, to be struggled against, and to be appropriated).<sup>27</sup> Brandes placed Nietzsche's texts under debate and used his dissemination of the philosopher's work to forward his own agenda. He considered himself to be a full partner in this project. This is why Brandes reacted when Nietzsche wrote him and included the Dane among his admirers: »It is a real joy to me that such a good European and missionary of culture such as yourself should wish henceforth to belong among them; I thank you with all my heart for your goodwill.«<sup>28</sup> Brandes' response to being designated a *cultural missionary* reads as follows:

Sie dürfen mich sehr gern einen »guten Europäer« nennen, weniger gern einen »Cultur-Missionär«. Alle Missionsthätigkeit ist mir ein Greuel geworden – weil

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 596.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Nietzsche to Brandes dated December 2, 1887. NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 205. Collected as letter 960. The German reads: »Es machte mir eine aufrichtige Freude, daß ein solcher guter Europäer und Cultur-Missionär, wie Sie es sind, fürderhin unter sie gehören will, ich danke Ihnen von ganzem Herzen für diesen guten Willen.« The English translation is from MIDDLETON: 1996, 279.

ich nur moralisierende Missionäre gesehen habe – und an das, was man Cultur nennt, fürchte ich nicht recht zu glauben. Unsere Cultur als ganzes kann nicht begeistern, nicht wahr? und was wäre ein Missionär ohne Begeisterung! D. h. ich bin vereinzelter als Sie glauben.

(You may certainly call me a »good European,« less gladly a »culture missionary.« All missionary activity has become detestable to me – as I have only seen moralizing missionaries – and regarding that, which one calls culture, I am afraid that it is not right to be a believer. Our culture as a whole cannot enthuse, is this not so? And if one were to be a missionary without enthusiasm! I. e., I am more isolated than you believe.)<sup>29</sup>

Brandes' conception of his own role as a public intellectual was in stark contrast to the notion of the *cultural missionary*. His objection to this designation occurred on two levels. Primarily he distanced himself from the moral implications of the term. A missionary serves and transmits a doctrine originally disseminated by a higher power, be it Church, State, Deity, or in this case, Philosopher. Secondly, Brandes considered himself to be more isolated (*vereinzelter*), or in a nuance of the word, more of an individual standing alone. Rejecting the role of a *missionary*, Brandes attempted to re-establish himself as a creator of culture. He took the role that he had assigned to the realist of the *Indledning* upon himself, the role of the *aristocratic radical, the bearer of culture who stood in opposition to philistinism*. He regarded his introduction of Nietzsche's work to be part and only parcel of his project of enlivening the literary culture of Scandinavia. He continued to valorize the future, and continued to link his own role to the notion of *dannelse (Bildung)* as opposed to *dannelse cretinism (Bildungsphilisteri)*.

If we recall our previous discussion of Brandes' project, then a metaphor comes to mind. Brandes saw his own task historically; he was to divert the course of Scandinavian intellectual life by connecting the current, which carried its thought to the flow of Enlightenment thought on the continent. The electricity generated by this connection would perhaps illuminate Scandinavian cultural obscurity. Brandes saw both Nietzsche and himself as examples of *good Europeans*, thinkers whose concerns were not delimited by the parochial interests of nationalism and the preservation of established cultural mores.

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from Brandes to Nietzsche dated December 17, 1887. NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 131. Collected as letter 505. The English translation is mine.

Subsequently, Brandes valorized two aspects of Nietzsche's project: his critique of morality and his notion of culture. However, he was not uncritical. He placed Nietzsche's critique of conventional moral thinking in the context of the contemporary intellectual environment and even questions whether Nietzsche had not been influenced by Paul Rée, despite Nietzsche's critique of the same man in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to the early Nietzsche's claims of »untimeliness,« Brandes saw the philosopher's thought as part of a larger European movement, one that questioned the cultural containment of the dynamic of Enlightenment thought and he contextualized Nietzsche's work within his own understanding of this tradition. For Brandes, the important aspect of Nietzsche's work lay not in the »originality« of its content, but in the force with which he expressed who he was:

Saadan er han da, denne stridbare Mystiker, Poet, og Tænker, denne Immoralist, som ikke kan blive træt af at forkynde. Naar man kommer til ham fra den engelske Filosofer, staar man som ført ind i en helt anden Verden. Englænderne er allesammen taalmodige Aander, hvis Væsen gaar ud paa Sammenlægning og Omspændning af en Masse smaa Kendsgerninger for derigennem at finde en Lov. De bedste af dem er aristoteliske Hoveder. Faa af dem fængsler personligt eller synes meget sammensatte som Personer. De virker mere ved hvad de gør end hvad de er. Nietzsche derimod er (som Schopenhauer) en Gætter, en Seer, en Kunstner, mindre fængslende ved hvad han gør end hvad han er.

30 Nietzsche criticized Rée in Section 4 of his »Vorrede« in the Genealogy. The beginning of this section reads: »Den ersten Anstoss, von meinen Hypothesen über den Ursprung der Moral Etwas zu verlautbaren, gib mir ein klares, sauberes und kluges, auch altkluges Büchlein, in welchem mir eine umgekehrte und perverse Art von genealogischen Hypothesen, ihre eigentlich englische Art, zum ersten Male deutlich entgegentrat, und das mich anzog – mit jener Anziehungskraft, **die alles Antipodische hat. Der Titel des Büchleins war »der Ursprung der moralischen Empfindung«; sein Verfasser Dr. Paul Rée; das Jahr seines Erscheinens 1877. Vielleicht habe ich niemals Etwas gelesen, zu dem ich dermaassen, Satz für Satz, Schluss für Schluss, bei mir Nein gesagt hätte wie zu diesem Buche ...**« NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 250 (my boldface). On page 620 of his Nietzsche essay, Brandes pointed out that Nietzsche had criticized an early book by Rée and ignored his 1885 *Die Entstehung des Gewissens*, which he sees as quite similar to Nietzsche's own work. In addition Brandes wrote of the friendship between the two German writers and concluded: »Det er mig derfor ikke muligt at se, hvem af de to der har paavirket den anden, og hvorfor Nietzsche i 1887 berører sin Uvilje mod Rées i 1877 udtalte Anskuelse uden at nævne, hvor nær denne staar hans egen Opfattelse i det et Par Aar før hans eget udgivne Værk.« (It is therefore not possible for me to see which of the two had influenced the other, or why in 1887 Nietzsche had expressed his aversion to Rée's observations of 1877 without naming how close Rée's was to his own understanding of the question a couple of years before the publication of his own work.) See also HOLUB: 1999, 149–171.

(He is that type of combative mystic, poet, thinker, this immoralist, who never tires of preaching. When one approaches him after reading the English philosophers, it is as if one is lead into a completely different world. The English are all patient spirits, whose nature puts together and reevaluates a mass of small actions to come upon a law. The best of them are Aristotelian heads. Few of them are personally fascinating or seem well integrated as persons. They function more by what they do than by what they are. Nietzsche, on the other hand, is (like Schopenhauer) an enigma, a seer, an artist, less fascinating because of what he does than for who he is.)<sup>31</sup>

While this citation provides us with good indication that Brandes felt that it was the subjective inflection of Nietzsche's writings that mattered, it also indicates that it is still important to explore the question of who Nietzsche was in Brandes' eyes. However, this question leads us down a slightly digressive path for the sake of arriving at a satisfactory answer.

We began our analysis of Brandes' Nietzsche essay by pointing out that the Dane was concerned with *Dannelse* or *Bildung*, and that the trope, *aristocratic radicalism*, connoted the individual as a creator of culture. Ironically, Brandes borrowed a term that Nietzsche used in his meditation on Strauss; the German *Bildungsphilister*<sup>32</sup> was directly translated into Danish by him as *Dannelsefilister*. For both Brandes and Nietzsche, the *Bildungsphilister* is one who is educated by a system that leaves him barbaric despite his erudition. The *Bildungsphilister* is not a creator of culture, but a moribund parrot in a stagnant society, a symbol of a false consciousness. For the Brandes of 1888, the antidote to the *Bildungsphilister* was the *aristocratic radical*, and so depicted, Nietzsche represented the personality that bears within him the possibility for cultural renewal. This individual personality stands in contradistinction to the state:

Af Staten kan de fremragende Enkelte ikke vente Meget. Den gavner dem sjældent ved at tage dem i sin Tjenste; den gavner dem kun sikkert ved at

31 Georg BRANDES: 1901, 639–640.

32 See NIETZSCHE: KSA I, 1988a, *David Strauss der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller*, especially pp. 165–184. On page 165, Nietzsche writes: »Das Wort Philister ist bekanntlich dem Studentenleben entnommen und bezeichnet in seinem weiteren, doch ganz populären Sinne den Gegensatz des Musensohnes, des Künstlers, des ächten Kulturmenschen. Der Bildungsphilister aber – dessen Typus zu studiren, dessen Bekenntnisse, wenn er sie macht, anzuhören jetzt zur leidigen Pflicht wird – unterscheidet sich von der allgemeinen Idee der Gattung »Philister« durch Einen Aberglauben: er wähnt selber Musensohn und Kulturmensch zu sein; ein unbegreiflicher Wahn, aus dem hervorgehe, dass er gar nicht weiss, was der Philister und was sein Gegensatz ist: weshalb wir uns nicht wundern werden, wenn er meistens es feierlich verschwört, Philister zu sein.«



skænke dem fuld Uafhængighed. Alene virkelig Kultur vil modarbejde, at de for tidlig bliver trætte eller udtømte, og vil skaane dem for den oprivende Kamp mod Dannelsesfilisteriet. Nietzsches Værdi beror paa, han er en saadant Kulturbærer: en Aand, der selv uafhængig meddeler Uafhængighed og som vil kunne blive for andre den frigørende Magt, som Schopenhauer i hans Ungdom var for ham.

(Significant individuals cannot expect much from the State. It seldom rewards them by giving them a position; it surely rewards them only by giving them full independence. Only real culture would struggle against their becoming spent or emptied, and wants to spare them from the lacerating struggle against cultural philistinism. Nietzsche's value depends upon his status as a bearer of culture: a spirit, whose very independence communicates independence and as such wants to become for others that liberating power, that Schopenhauer was for him in his youth.)<sup>33</sup>

For Brandes, Nietzsche was an *aristocratic radical* because he was a bearer of culture who was independent of the cultural philistinism engendered by state sponsorship. The Brandesian call for a literature that debated the problems of society now had transmuted into a valorization of the authentic individual who stands in opposition to cultural complacency. While on the surface this may seem to be a shift in priorities, I contend that we must approach his position as a paradox as there is both a change and a consistency in Brandes' position. Brandes' essay on Nietzsche should be placed within the discourse of the public intellectual in Scandinavia in 1889. To do so, we must recall that the seeds of the initial Nietzsche reception in Scandinavia gestated within the discourse of modern realism in the north. The anti-realist discourse that accompanied the reception was the result of a dialectical sublation of the two positions articulated by Brandes and Herman Bang. In order to explicate these positions in Chapter one, we interrogated both positions by asking the same two questions of them, namely: what is the role of realist art in the community whose likeness it claims to depict? And what is the relationship of the artist to the community he addresses? In Brandes' essay on *aristocratic radicalism* these two questions merge into one and become: what is the relationship of the artist to the questions he addresses? Now seen as a deterrent, community seems to have dropped out of the equation: the discourse of the real had become the discourse of personal authenticity; the questions had become self-reflexive. Brandes' earlier

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<sup>33</sup> Georg BRANDES: 1901, 607. It is significant that Brandes could well be describing his understanding of his own trajectory as well, That is, if one replaces Schopenhauer with Hegel, Kierkegaard, Taine, and Mill.

elitism, where he anticipated the creation of a social understanding of reality created by an avant-garde movement, now became more apparent. His own sense of speaking in an unpopular voice alerted him to the shortcomings of his agenda, yet he continued to believe in the need for the individual who stood apart from the crowd. This is the reason that Brandes saw his project as consistent, his essay on Nietzsche being another chapter in a monumental literary history depicting the leading personalities of the nineteenth century. His Nietzsche was the author whose understanding of his role was subjectively determined: his engagement with the world resulting from a radical self-vivisection that revealed the process of an internal negotiation and appropriation of »reality«.

Brandes' self-reflexive notion of authenticity, in which he saw himself as an *aristocratic radical* as well, was not shared by his critics. Ola Hansson, in particular, was to exploit the very idea of authenticity in his polemic against Brandes. It is here that we can discern the implications of Nietzsche's initial reception in Scandinavia for the history of his reception proper. For if Brandes regarded Nietzsche's authenticity as being synonymous with his notion of the *aristocratic radical* as a *good European*, Hansson was to take a more essentialist position, seeing Nietzsche as an exemplary pan-German.<sup>34</sup> Certainly this is the great irony of Nietzsche reception; the philosopher who declared that »there is no ›being‹ behind doing, effecting, becoming; the ›doer‹ is merely a fiction [poeticized] into the deed – the deed is everything,«<sup>35</sup> is often read as a great »doer« behind the »deed« of his text. For Nietzsche, the doer is merely written into the deed, *hinzugedichtet*. The Nietzschean text, which highlights the fictional construction of the subject named Nietzsche,<sup>36</sup> was

34 For another perspective, see BRANTLEY: 1987. Brantley's fine essay concentrates on the more positive aspects of Hansson's attempts to search for an alternative to a naturalist aesthetic.

35 NIETZSCHE: KSA 5, 1993, 279, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Essay I, Section 13. The German reads: »es gibt kein ›Sein‹ hinter dem Thun, Wirken, Werden; ›der Täter‹ ist zum Thun bloß hinzugedichtet, – das Thun ist Alles.« The English comes from KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 45. I substituted the word poeticized for their translation to better reflect the implications of the German »hinzugedichtet«.

36 For a point of view that construes Nietzsche's project itself as the creation of the self as a literary figure, see NEHAMAS: 1985. My point is not identical to Nehamas' notion. Here, I only wish to point out that a strong misreading of Nietzsche in one direction leads to the conflation of author and text and to illustrate that the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Scandinavian version of this reading resulted in a hypostatic notion of personal authenticity.

read in Scandinavia as the work of a great individual, a great spirit whose authenticity exemplifies the ideological position shared or reviled by the particular reader. But a conception of authenticity based on a notion of agon is a double-edged sword for the question arises: if one is authentic, who is inauthentic? It is to the danger of this notion that we now turn.

### Interlude: The Double Edge of Authenticity:

#### Hansson's »Rassisches Postulat«

If Brandes' notion of the *aristocratic radical* can be seen as a crystallization of his notion of the creative individual and a continuation of his project in a formal sense, his conception of the term was not essentialist in the least. He envisioned a type of cross-cultural fertilization in which authentic and authoritative individuals would serve as exemplars. His notion of authenticity was based on the ability of an author to forward works of culture that furthered a trajectory of thought (or certainly seen in the terms of the Hegelian residue in Brandes' own thought, spirit or *Geist*), which contributed to the movement of European culture towards the ideal of freedom for the individual. His reading of Nietzsche was grafted onto and inflected by an already existent ideology of an intellectual vanguard that would create the cultural signposts for future *aristocratic radicals*. Nietzsche became a figure in the Brandesian pantheon of the great personalities of cultural renewal who would create new possibilities for *Dannelse* (Bildung) outside of the auspices of institutional *philistinism*, and struggle for the freedom of the individual against the state. Cultural production was still to be judged by its »vitality« deriving value from the subjective relationship of the artist to his art. Herein lay the authenticity of the work and the individual who produced it; the *aristocratic radical* was to have an international effect; he is a confluence in the currents of an international movement of thought. He should constitute a locus of debate. In a sense, Brandes' notion of authenticity was con-textual, and in both meanings of the prefix, both with and against the text. The concept of authenticity would take on a different meaning for Ola Hansson. However, please forgive another digression involving Brandes and Nietzsche; one designed to illustrate through example how the trope of authenticity has the element of variability, and in itself, contains the seeds of essentialism.

The correspondence between Brandes and Nietzsche was partially reproduced in a Danish translation at the back of his essay on the philosopher. Brandes published only Nietzsche's letters to him and failed to publish his own replies. Brandes would later comment on Nietzsche's reaction to the lectures: »Det vandt Nietzsches Hengivenhed og gav ham den sidste Trøst. Mine Foredrag var det første Forbud om Verdensry, der naaede ham, før Sindssygdommen opslugte hans Bevidsthed.« (They gained Nietzsche's devotion and gave him his last comfort. My talks were the first intimation of world renown that would reach him before his mental illness would devour his consciousness.)<sup>37</sup> This retrospective comment reveals an aspect of Brandes' reading of Nietzsche as a great individual who suffered a tragic fate and his own almost paternal understanding of his own role as a trustee of new literary impulses, a role that was both personal and intellectual. His compassion allowed him to feel for his subject, to provide him with his last comfort, and this enabled Brandes to approach Nietzsche. Yet, Brandes was also able to keep his distance, to recognize the tragedy and weave a narrative that fit his own ideological position of the moment, which pointed to the destruction of the great individual by mass society. But this still told only half of the story. The challenge to Brandes' authenticity as a reader of Nietzsche has its origin in the possibilities of reception generated by the work of the man he championed.

Auf das Buch hin gab es nur zwei Briefe, allerdings sehr schön: einen von Dr. Fuchs; und einen von Dr. Georg Brandes (der geistreichste Däne, den es jetzt giebt d. h. Jude). Letzterer ist Willens, sich mit mir gründlich zu befassen: er ist erstaunt von dem »ursprünglichen Geiste,« der aus meinen Schriften spreche und gebraucht, zu deren Charakteristik, den Ausdruck »aristokratischer Radikalismus«. Das ist gut gesagt und empfunden. Ah, diese Juden!

(There were indeed only two quite nice letters about the book, one from Dr. Fuchs and one from Dr. Georg Brandes (the most richly intellectual Dane, that is, a Jew). The latter is willing to occupy himself with me thoroughly, he is amazed with the »original mind,« articulated in my writings and he uses the expression »aristocratic radicalism« to describe them. This is well founded and said. Oh these Jews!)<sup>38</sup>

Die Juden scheinen auch hier bloß »Vermittler« – sie erfinden nichts.

<sup>37</sup> Georg BRANDES: 1908, 230. Translation mine.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Nietzsche to Heinrich Köselitz dated December 20, 1887. Collected as letter 964 in NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 212–213. Translation mine.

(The Jews here appear only as »mediators« – they invent nothing.)<sup>39</sup>

Nietzsche's own position towards Brandes was much less self-servingly compassionate and much more self-interested in a practical sense. News of Brandes' lectures inflamed his sense of self importance and he spread the word. He regarded Brandes as a popularizer of his work. Between the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December of 1887 and December of the following year, he mentioned Brandes or his lectures over twenty times in letters to friends, family, and professional contacts.<sup>40</sup> Although he certainly admired Brandes and was incredibly excited over his recognition by a respected figure in European letters, he admired him in a way that he admired the Jewish people as a whole, with an ambivalent mixture of respect, disdain and stereotypicality. While on one hand, he respected and even identified with Brandes, on the other hand he saw Brandes as a »Vermittler« (mediator). His postulation that the Jews mediate rather than create would have its echoes in the pan-Germanic ideology forwarded by Hansson. This view would reverberate many more times in the reception of Nietzsche, and the danger of this ambiguous position would become painfully evident in the Nazi interpretation of the philosopher.<sup>41</sup> The notion of the Jewish abstract appropriation of German creativity and the subsequent circulation of this production was just one of the branches

39 Letter from Nietzsche to Köselitz dated May 31, 1888. Collected as letter 1041 in NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 324. Translation mine. Nietzsche was discussing a French translation of the lawbook of Manu. This excerpt comes from a digression where Nietzsche entered into a discussion about the historical development of law and the intrusion of »decadent races« into the process. This comment is interesting for our discussion when one considers that Nietzsche was well aware of Brandes' Jewish blood. This lends us some insight as to how Nietzsche perceived Brandes' forwarding of his work.

40 See NIETZSCHE: 1984a, letters 961, 964, 1006, 1007, 1015, 1018, 1022, 1026, 1027, 1034, 1035, 1039, 1042, 1048, 1050, 1061, 1078, 1087, 1096, 1130, 1148, and 1210.

41 See HERF: 1984, 226–227. In his conclusion, Herf produces an interesting chart that juxtaposes the ideological conception of the »Jew« in comparison to »German.« He states that »[t]his ideology is presented in the following list of conceptual opposites comprising a cultural system.« Here is a sampling of some of these oppositions. The »German« is described by the term to the left, the »Jew« by the term to the right.

Concrete Immediacy	Abstraction
Experience	Analysis
Soul	Mind
Feeling	Intellect
Productivity	Parasitism
Production	Circulation
Creative labor	Finance Capital

upon Nietzscheanism could be grafted, and this limb would form the challenge to Brandes' authenticity as a reader of Nietzsche in Scandinavia.<sup>42</sup> This challenge came on two levels: a generational shift and racial difference.

Ola Hansson is a case in point. His critical production in the years 1889–1891 is a location where the generational conflict and the racial nuancing of the trope of authenticity converged. While his essay on Nietzsche itself did not directly treat either of these themes, his other essays serve to provide us with a context for his reception of the philosopher. It is within this context that Hansson's position becomes clear: *Nietzsche represents a radical break in the history of cultural movement, and this moment of rupture calls for a cultural renewal along generational and racial lines.*

Hansson agreed with Brandes' assertion that there was a struggle between two trajectories of thought: the Enlightenment and its perceived »other«. Hansson also shared Brandes' conviction that a culture needed exemplars, »great men,« to create its future values. But there was an *essential* difference in the two men's positions. Brandes valorized Enlightenment thought and denigrated what he perceived as the quietist politics of Romantic literature and the Bildungsphilisteri of his contemporaries in turn. Hansson saw the predominance of Enlightenment thought, as ushered into the cultural arena in Scandinavia by Brandes, as precipitating »den dogmatiska nykterhetens tidevarv« (the age of dogmatic sobriety).<sup>43</sup> He claimed that the cultural phenomena that regulated this era originated from the French Revolution's institutionalization of Enlightenment principles. These were listed by Hansson as »likhetsprinciperna med avseende på klasser och kön, kosmopolitismen, massherraväldet, judebörsen, miljonstäderna, proletariatet, teorien om en objektiv diktning, specialisteriet inom vetenskapen, avogheten emot personligheten och subjektiviteten« (the principles of equality with respect to class and gender, cosmopolitanism, mass rule, the Jewish stock market, big cities, the

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42 This is certainly not a claim that Nietzsche was anti-semitic; it is merely an acknowledgement that his philo-semitism carried an ambivalence that allowed variable readings in reception. For a nuanced reading of Nietzsche's relationship to the Jews see Yirmiyahu YOVEL, »Nietzsche, The Jews, and Ressentiment« (1994, 214), or Tim MURPHY's (2001) defense of Nietzsche in »Nietzsche's Narrative of the ›Retrospective Confiscations‹ of Judaism«. See also SANTANIELLO : 1994, and GOLUMB: 1997.

43 HANSSON: 1920, 292. My translation to English.

proletariat, the theory of an objective poetry, specialization in science, [and] an aversion towards personality and subjectivity).<sup>44</sup> These phenomena resulted in a cultural life stripped of its color, reduced to an abstract »grått i grått« (gray on gray).<sup>45</sup>

Hansson proposed a solution to this »lifeless« literature.<sup>46</sup> He called for a literature infused with the spirit of anti-materialism and anti-naturalism.<sup>47</sup> This spirit, »lika genuint germansk till ursprung och väsen som den andra varit fransk« (just as genuinely German in origination and being as the other had been French) found its most genuine expression »in two German men: in the production of Friedrich Nietzsche and in the book *Rembrandt als Erzieher*«. <sup>48</sup> If Brandes saw his time's history as being subject to a pan-European struggle between the forces of individual freedom and the repression of this movement, Hansson understood the

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44 Ibid., 292. My translation.

45 Ibid. My translation of »grått i grått«. This could well be a reference to Brandes' alleged Hegelianism and an attack on his abstraction through the offices of Goethe's famous statement in *Faust* uttered through Mephistopheles: »Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie/Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.« *Faust* 1, lines 2038–2039. For Hansson's take on Brandes' Hegelianism, see HANSSON: 1921b, 18, *Den nya riktingen (Georg Brandes)*. It is also interesting to note both the vitalist implications of Mephistopheles' statement and the connection of abstraction to Jewishness in Herf's paradigm. Also, considering the role that Nietzsche plays in Hansson's text, it is also rather ironic that Nietzsche was not enamored with *Faust*. See »Der Wanderer und sein Schatten,« Aphorism 124.

46 It is interesting to note, that even while Hansson attacked Brandes, his analysis echoed the older man's opposition between a living and a dead literature.

47 HANSSON: 1920, 294.

48 Ibid. The entire citation reads: »... en anda, vilken för övrigt synes vara lika genuint germansk till ursprung och väsen som den andra varit fransk och som i överensstämmelse därmed erhållit sina hittills fylligaste uttryck hos tvenne tyska män: i Friedrich Nietzsches alstring samt i boken *Rembrandt als Erzieher*.« (... a spirit, which moreover seems just as genuinely Germanic in origination and essence as the other had been French, and in concert with this has found its fullest expression to date in the work of two German men: in the production of Friedrich Nietzsche and in the book *Rembrandt als Erzieher*.) My translation. Hansson read Julius Langbehn's *Rembrandt als Erzieher* in the spring of 1890. While this reading fueled Hansson's pan-Germanic ideology and his anti-Semitism, it is beyond the scope of this study to address Langbehn's influence on the Swede. Suffice it say that Hansson retrospectively fused his reading of Nietzsche (1889) with his reading of Langbehn. For an account, see Ingvar HOLM: 1957, 223–391. There is also reference to Hansson's anti-Semitism in these pages. In 1890, Hansson published an article entitled *Rembrandt als Erzieher* in German in *Kunstwart* (Nov.-Dec., Dresden) and in *Ur dagens krönika* in Swedish. For an analysis of Langbehn's work in its ideological context, see Fritz STERN: 1974, 97–153.

same historical progression in quite a different way. He understood this conflict in essentialist cultural terms, the French inspired Enlightenment stood in the way of an authentic expression and actualization of a pan-German culture, a culture of the future. Nietzsche took on the aspect of a prophet in Hansson's work, and it was within this conception that Hansson gave Nietzsche the attribute of being an anti-Enlightenment thinker. For Hansson, Nietzsche's work heralded things to come. The name Nietzsche became a trope connotating cultural renewal within the context of German *Innerlichkeit*.

Three works by Hansson epitomize this position: *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* published in the Viennese daily, *Neue Freie Presse* on October 15, 1889, *Georg Brandes und die Skandinavische Bewegung* which reached the public through the offices of the Berlin-based *Freie Bühne* on March 26, 1890, and *Materialism i skönlitteraturen* written in the summer of 1891 and first published in German by Encke of Stuttgart under the title *Gegen den Materialismus* in the same year.<sup>49</sup> A composite of *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* and the essay on Brandes was published in Hansson's collected works under the title *Den nya riktingen (Georg Brandes)* in 1921.<sup>50</sup> I will begin my analysis with these texts and discuss Hansson's attack on Brandes' authenticity.

Alessandro Fambrini comments on Hansson: »In seiner Streitschrift *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* (1889) sah er in Brandes' Entwicklung vom utilitarischen Polemiker zum Kunder einer heroisch-aristokratischen Lebensauffassung den Versuch, sich Nietzsches Philosophie zu eigen zu machen.« (In his polemic, *Nietzscheanism in Scandinavia*, he saw Brandes' development from a polemical Utilitarian to a adherent of a heroic-aristocratic life-philosophy as an attempt to appropriate Nietzsche's philosophy.)<sup>51</sup> Hansson not only accused Brandes of appropriating Nietzsche's work, he challenged the older man's claim of consistency, and he questioned the Dane's authenticity. In *Georg Brandes und die Skandinavische Bewegung* (Georg Brandes and the Scandinavian Movement), Hansson attacked Brandes on two fronts. On one hand, he condemned him with faint praise, and on the other, he

49 We will use the Swedish text, which was published in 1892 by Albert Bonnier in *Populrvetenskapliga avhandlingar* 3, Stockholm 1892.

50 This can be found in HANSSON: 1921b, 8–22.

51 FAMBRINI: 1997, 424–425. My translation.



attacked the »naturalist« from a naturalist perspective. He praised Brandes for having had the foresight to twice bring fresh literary impulses to Scandinavia. The first time came with his attack against romantic literature in 1872. The second instance was his lectures on Nietzsche. For Hansson, the irony of this second introduction was that it alienated Brandes from the movement that he had called his own. According to Hansson, Brandes did not fully accept Nietzsche's perspective and the philosopher's work precipitated the effect that »den av honom framkallade andliga rörelse utbredde sig över Norden och trängt ner i folket, kände sig allt mer främmande gent emot det som man kallade hans eget verk« (the intellectual movement called forward by him spread itself throughout the North and penetrated into the people, and soon found itself to be all the more and more alien to what one had called his own work).<sup>52</sup> Hansson argued that Brandes had failed to maintain a cultural continuity and could not rein in the effects of what he had started. This charge led to the Swede's second line of attack and his »rassisches Postulat«.

Georg Brandes föddes i Köpenhamn i en judisk familj. Den dubbla personlighetsprägel, vilken härmed är given, bildar det tudelta hjärta, som fyller med blod de bägge stamådrorna i hans ande.

(Georg Brandes was born in Copenhagen to a Jewish family. This double aspect of his personality, which is thus given, forms the divided heart that fills with blood from both of the tribal arteries in his soul.)<sup>53</sup>

Brandes saw the origin of Nietzsche's greatness in the uniqueness and completeness of his personality rather than the originality of his work. Hansson shared this view of the philosopher's personality, but, turning the trope of authenticity around, he saw both Brandes' rise and his downfall as a result of his »doubleness,« his lack of completeness. For Hansson, this »doubleness« was a function of race. According to Hansson, Brandes' Jewishness was both to his advantage and to his detriment. On the one hand, Brandes' otherness allowed him a critical freedom.<sup>54</sup> His

<sup>52</sup> HANSSON: 1921b, 10.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 14. Apparently Hansson did not quite understand Nietzsche's postulations about the »good European« being someone who was no longer anchored to national interests. Though as usual, Nietzsche's formulations are ambiguous enough to be appropriated in the interests of seemingly divergent ideologies. Nietzsche was always much more historically savvy than his right-wing admirers.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 15: »Hade han varit ren dansk skulle Brandes säkerligen varken haft så mycken nykterhet eller så mycken brutal fördomsfrihet eller – så oförskräckt uthållighet

independence enabled him to act as a conduit through which outside influences could flow into Scandinavian cultural life. On the other, Brandes was conflicted and his actions exacerbated latent conflicts within his environment. These characteristics enabled Brandes to create a sensation: »Larm och strid ha omgivit hans namn, såsom intet annat namn i Skandinavien under de senaste årtiondena.« (Clamor and dispute have surrounded his name, like no other name in Scandinavia during the last decades.)<sup>55</sup>

However, Hansson came not to praise Brandes, but to bury him, and it is here that Hansson's strategy comes to the fore. He argued that the Brandesian movement could not provide a home for the Scandinavian authors who passed through its door, for in the moment »är det nästan tyst omkring honom, en tystnad som blir djupare dag för dag« (it is nearly silent around him, a silence that becomes more profound day by day).<sup>56</sup> This was certainly a polemical move on Hansson's part. Though Brandes' work was always at the center of debate, and his introduction of Nietzsche was a focal point of contention, he was in no sense of the word on the road to obscurity. Brandes was and remained a controversial figure, and controversy implies recognition. The discourse of authenticity and the anti-realist (read anti-naturalist here) discourse converge in Hansson's polemic against Brandes. For Hansson posited the reason for the »silence« around Brandes; the very same »doubleness« that allowed him to connect international currents to Scandinavian literature was the cause for the lack of the congruity of Brandesian literature for the Scandinavian people in a time that called for a cultural renewal along pan-German lines. It is in this manner that Hansson sought to undermine Brandes authority on both an intellectual and personal (read racial) level.

Hansson's reasoning unfolded as follows.

Brandes was inauthentic for exactly the same reason that he was able to act as a catalyst for the revolt against the state of Scandinavian letters in 1872. According to Hansson, those times demanded a figure that embodied the conflicts present in the historical environment. Because of the conflicts that Brandes carried within him, the contradictions created by

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och en sådant trots på sig själv.« My translation: »If he had been a pure-bred Dane, Brandes surely would have had neither so much sobriety or such a brutal lack of prejudice nor such an uncowed endurance and such defiance.«

55 Ibid. My English translation.

56 Ibid., 16. My English translation.

his racial »doubleness,« he became the man of the hour. Commenting on the Brandesian impulse in literature, Hansson wrote:

Det är givetvis tiden själv, som framalstrad denna brokiga företeelsemängd: det är Skandinaviens andliga liv, som i den tagit konkret form. Men det egendomliga är; att precis samma process med sina differentieringar och med sin rikedom på motsägelse även röjt sig i Georg Brandes personligen ... Och alla dessa motsatser av sympatier och tankar lågo likaså lösa, spridda och utan samband i honom som i tiden själv; **han ägde icke den slutna, enhetliga personligheten, vilken i sig omfattar dem alla och i dem alla giver blott sitt eget väsen.**

(Given, it is the times themselves that brought forth this motley medley of events: it is in them that Scandinavia's spiritual life had taken concrete form. What is strange is that precisely the same process, with its differentiation and with its richness of contradiction, was betrayed in Georg Brandes himself ... And all of these contradictions of sympathies and thoughts lay just as loose, spread, and without connection within him as in the times themselves; **he did not possess the self-contained, integrated personality, which in itself encompasses all these contradictions and gives them all only the mark of its own nature.**)<sup>57</sup>

Hansson conflated three separate aspects here: historical environment, cultural production, and Brandes' personality. With this move he connected Brandes to both foreign influence and an »unsatisfactory« past. On the personal level, we must remember that Hansson saw Brandes' personality as determined by the »doubleness« of his position as a Jew in Denmark. He understood this to be a matter of »blood« or in other words, he posited the conflation of Brandes' »personality« and his work through the optic of a racial essentialism.

In the three essays published around the time of his Nietzsche reception, Hansson forwards a naturalistic and dialectical view of cultural history despite himself. His narrative of Scandinavian cultural development takes the following path: In the 1870's, the moribund condition of Scandinavian culture is injected with the impulses of English utilitarian philosophy, Darwinian teachings, and French thought.<sup>58</sup> Enter Brandes, who reflected the motley condition of the Scandinavian spirit at a point

<sup>57</sup> HANSSON: 1921b, 16–17 My emphasis and translation.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 10: »De idéer, som Brandes satte i omlopp och i kurs i Skandinavien, låta sig sammanfatta i två huvudgrupper, vilka representeras av två namn i den europeiska kulturen: Mill och Taine.« My translation: »The ideas, that Brandes initiated and circulated in Scandinavia, can be summarized by placing them in two main groups, which are represented in European culture by two names: Mill and Taine.«

in its development, embodied this condition concretely in his person, and introduced a Hegelian will to synthesis to the equation.<sup>59</sup> These international influences, which created contradictory impulses, eventually resulted in a dominance of »materialistic« thinking in the cultural environment. This materialistic thinking, inspired by foreign thought, eventually led to a deadening of the literary and cultural production. However this deadening contained the seeds of its own revitalization due to Brandes' understanding of the German notion of historical progression expressed as his championing of a species of Hegelian cultural movement. The next infusion of German thought appeared with Nietzsche. This new infusion was for Hansson the moment where the need of a pan-Germanic cultural renewal was revealed.<sup>60</sup> The absorption of the alien influences had roused Scandinavia out of her slumber, but their time had passed and the North once again was in need of an awakening. Hansson implied that Brandes reflected a time of cultural confusion, that he was caught in the naturalist mire of being controlled by his environment, and that he thereby was not up to the task of reinvigorating the culture. According to this logic, Brandes was a man of the past. Hansson called for a figure that could have the type of personality that could sublimate the con-

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59 For Hansson's ideas on Mill's influence in Brandes thought, see pages 9, 10 and 20, in HANSSON: 1921b. For his statements concerning Brandes' Hegelianism, see 21: »Från Tyskland utgick Brandes; i Tyskland har han slutat. Hans utgångspunkt var Hegel; hans sista station betecknas tills vidare av Nietzsche.« My translation: »Brandes came out from Germany, in Germany he has stopped. His point of departure was Hegel, his last station is marked by Nietzsche for the time being.«

60 Hansson's own particular understanding of pan-Germanism had a rural, primitivist element. A letter to Hans Larsson written on September 2, 1891 (just after he finished writing »Materialismen i skönlitteraturen«) is quite revealing: »Det finns väl också andre bondstuder, som i vår judiskt-galliskt-teoretiskt-demokratiska tid ännu bibehållit oberörd inom sig den jordandens individualistisk-aristokratiska instinkt, hvilken dock, när allt kommer omkring, är allas vårt kulturella raison d'être, vår lifsbasis, vår historia och vår framtid. Vi, som sträfvat efter att kläda naken inför oss vår individuella egenart, böra till detta ändamål vara betänkta på att lära känna de djupaste schakten i rasen. Egensjäl, folksjäl, stamsjäl, o.s.v.« Letter excerpt taken from HOLM: 1957, 310.« My translation: »There are certainly other rural students, who in our Jewish-gallic-theoretical-democratic time have still retained untouched within them the spirit of the land's individualistic-aristocratic instinct, which nonetheless, when all comes around, is all of our cultural raison d'être, our basis for life, our history, and our future. We, who strive to bare our individual character, ought to for these ends learn the deepest levels of race. The soul of self, the soul of the folk, the soul of the tribe, etc.«

traditions internally. That figure was Nietzsche. It was time for a generational shift and that shift needed to occur along racial lines.

Let us return to the notion of Jewish appropriation and how Hansson used this ideology to discredit Brandes. According to Hansson, while Brandes twice brought German ideas to the North, he was unable to bring them forward purely for he was beset by the contradictions of his own state of being as a Danish Jew. Furthermore, »[f]rån de franska estetikererna Sainte-Beuve och Taine lånade Brandes för sin egen räkning den kritiska metod, genom vilken allena för sig han står som en verklig nyskapare inom den nordiska litteraturen« (Brandes borrowed critical methodology from the French aestheticians Sainte-Beuve and Taine, and it is through this alone that he took credit as a true creator of the new in Northern literature).<sup>61</sup> Hansson's key phrase in the original passage reads »för sin egen räkning« (for his own credit) and with this he charges Brandes with appropriating German philosophy and French literary criticism under his own banner. Hansson's point is further accentuated when we consider his discussion of Brandes and his teacher, Hippolyte Taine, in *Materialismen i skönlitteraturen* (Materialism in Belles Letters).

Det finns en himmelsvid klyfta i rang emellan dessa tvenne största nu levande litteraturkritiker. Taine är som individualitet och som ande ojämförligt mera betydande än Brandes. Han är en manlig intelligens i högsta potens, Brandes en kvinnlig. Han är som en blank metallspegel, där den andre är som en orolig, skiftande, grumlad vattenyta. Han tumlar materialet och ordnar det till ett system, vilket i sin storslagna arkitektonik påminner om medeltida katedraler, medan Brandes står mitt inne bland sitt material, konfus i oredan, sätter samman och slår sönder.

(There is a world of difference in rank between these two greatest living literary critics. As an individual and as a spirit, Taine is incomparably more important than Brandes. He is a masculine intellect; Brandes is a feminine intellect. He [Taine] is like a shiny metal mirror, where the other [Brandes] is like an uneasy, shifting, muddy watery surface. Taine reins in his material and then arranges it into a system, which in its magnificent architecture is reminiscent of a medieval cathedral, while Brandes stands in the midst of his material, confused in disorder, puts together and breaks apart.)<sup>62</sup>

Hansson's comparison of the two men is telling: Taine is masculine, has a clear surface for reflection and he builds. Brandes is feminine, muddy, in a state of disorder and he breaks things apart. Taine, the Frenchman, is

61 HANSSON: 1921b, 21. My translation.

62 HANSSON: 1920, 323–324. My translation.

creative. He represented a branch of naturalism that brought out the importance of environmental factors in cultural production. Though Hansson criticized the overdetermination of Taine's theory, he regarded it as an important aspect of understanding a people. According to Hansson, the limits of such a theory in its practical application can be compared to the limits of a landscape or a genre painting.<sup>63</sup> Individuality is sacrificed for the sake of the depiction of a typical environment. Characteristics are still legible, but stereotypical. The nuancing of character is sacrificed in favor of an emphasis on the environment. Brandes, however, was typified as representing »den orimligheten i den naturalistiska litteraturen, som man benämnt objektivitet. Det finns ingen sak och ingen term, som ställer begreppsförvirringen och snedvridenheten i den moderna konsten i så bjärt dager« (the absurdity in naturalist literature, which one has named objectivity. There is no other thing and no other term that presents the conceptual confusion and distortion in modern art in such a glaring light).<sup>64</sup> For Hansson, the difference between the two was clear: Taine is an authentic product of a trajectory of thinking and he is creative within that context. Brandes is destructive, he is conflicted and he appropriates the work of others in an inauthentic manner. The logic of this comparison can be best understood if it is measured against the cultural code of anti-Semitism. This code was the optic through which Hansson read Nietzsche.

Hansson's anti-materialism depended on naturalist criteria in order to enforce his notion of authenticity along racial and generational lines. He understood Brandes as being a product of both a conflicted time period and an impure heredity. Though Hansson called for a departure from a naturalist aesthetic and objective science, he employed aspects of the racial categorization that developed out of this movement. This is a salient aspect of his methodology, and it was no accident that he wrote the following at the end of his Nietzsche essay:

Har man iakttagit och fixerat arten av Nietzsches verkande, seende och skapande, är det dubbelt intressant att konstatera, hurusom en annan modern ande, som är en fullblodsrepresentant för den nyktra, faktiska, långsamma detaljforskningen, med användning av en helt annan metod kommit till – som det synes – ungefär liknande resultat.

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63 Ibid., 325.

64 Ibid., 326. My translation.

(If one has observed and fixed the species of Nietzsche's activity, seeing, and creating, it is doubly interesting to note that another modern spirit, who is a full-blooded representative for the sober, factual, slow detailed research, with the use of a completely different method has come to – as it seems – nearly the same result.)<sup>65</sup>

Hansson was referring to the Italian, Cesare Lombroso.<sup>66</sup> Lombroso was a criminologist and a phrenologist, who measured skulls and faces to determine type. Hansson's comparison chills when we consider the history to come. In the end, Hansson understood the »subjectivity« of Nietzsche's work and the »objectivity« of the natural sciences as meeting at the moment of biological typing. Here is an example of the conflation of rational and irrational impulses meeting at the extremities of the Enlightenment and its »other«. This is the importance of Hansson's reading of Nietzsche for our narrative. For it is within this reading that naturalist theories of environment and race meet their counterpart in a neo-romantic call for a cultural authenticity carried within the subjectivity of the racially pure representative of the folk. This meeting of rational and irrational elements is eerily reminiscent of Horkheimer and Adorno's warning about the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*.<sup>67</sup> This is the dark side of the conflation of history and a racially understood notion of subjectivity.

### Hansson's Nietzsche Essay: Nietzsche Is the Ocean

Hvad tycker du om min Nietzscheartikel? Hvad jag velat ge är en résumé i formen af en dikt.

(What do you think about my Nietzsche article? I wanted to present a résumé in the form of a poem.)<sup>68</sup>

Ola Hansson structured his Nietzsche »résumé« as a prose poem intersected by a survey of the philosopher's writings. His Nietzsche essay was published first in German, partly in *Unsere Zeit*, Leipzig, in the fall of 1889 and partly in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on March 9 and 11, 1890. In

65 HANSSON: 1921a, 173. My translation.

66 In one of history's many ironies, Lombroso was born Jewish.

67 See HORKHEIMER and ADORNO: 1995. The German edition is: *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969.

68 Ola Hansson, letter to August Strindberg dated November 2, 1889. Collected in STRINDBERG: 1938, on pg. 65. My translation.

1890, the entire essay appeared in brochure form and was published by E.W. Fritsch in Leipzig under the title: *Friedrich Nietzsche. Seine Persönlichkeit und sein System*. The same year, the brochure was translated into Norwegian by Arne Garborg and published by Cammermeyer in Kristiania. A somewhat abbreviated version was published in Swedish, appearing in the June issue of *Ur dagens krönika* in 1890. It was entitled *En framtidssiare. En essay öfver Fredrich Nietzsche*.<sup>69</sup> The version I am analyzing is from Hansson's collected works and was published as a chapter of *Tolkare och siare* (Interpreters and Prophets) in 1921. The essay opens: »Det finns ingenting som Nietzsches diktning liknar så som havet, det stora havet.« (There is nothing that Nietzsche's writing resembles as much as the ocean, the great ocean.)<sup>70</sup>

If Brandes' Nietzsche essay had a measured, even sober quality, Hansson's *Friedrich Nietzsche* had a worshipful, even intoxicated air about it. If Hansson's *Brandes* was the muddy surface of the turbulent waters of racial doubleness, his *Nietzsche* was the ocean, the source of infinite possibility. The later comparison between Brandes and Taine in *Materialismen i Skönlitteraturen* was an extension of an aquatic metaphorical complex in Hansson's critique. In his Nietzsche essay, He developed this comparative progression in which simile moves to metaphor and this movement designates degrees of authenticity and inauthenticity. The significance of this seemingly minor point is that the »as« of the simile expresses the relationship of a noun with another in comparison, while metaphor is the replacement of one thing by another. In simile, a comparative dynamic between elements remains in force, while metaphor suggests a merger of characteristics and a conflation of identities.

According to Hansson, »[i]nom mänsklighetens elit, som bildas av de banbrytande andarne, kulturheroerna, finns det två huvudgrupper och två grundtyper« ([w]ithin the human elite, which is comprised of pioneering spirits, cultural heroes, there are two main groups and two main types).<sup>71</sup> The first group of these »cultural heroes« brings the characteristics of already existing trajectories of thought in sharper relief. These men move with the current, they are just a short step ahead of the masses, »deres verksamhet är **såsom** en liten bölja på den stora utveckling-

69 My translation. »A prophet of the future: An essay on Friedrich Nietzsche.«

70 HANSSON: 1921a, 128. My translation.

71 Ibid., 128. My translation.



soceanen, vilken bildar sig fjärran från den centrala stormhård, varutur de stora vågorna framgå« (their activity is **like** a little wave on the great ocean of development, a wave which builds far from the center of the storm, out of which emerge the great waves).<sup>72</sup> The work of these men is delimited by time and space, is historically and racially determined. They build upon what is already existent, what is within the range of vision. They have discernible predecessors and will live to see intellectual progeny who build upon their work. They are represented by Taine in France, and by Mill and Darwin in England.<sup>73</sup> They are what Hansson referred to as »tolkare« or interpreters. Their work is *compared* to small waves on the surface of the ocean.

Nietzsche belonged to a different breed of thinker. For Hansson, Nietzsche's »diktning,« his poetry, was **like** the ocean, and the ocean is »oändlighets symbol, det för öga och tanke gränslösa« (eternity's symbol, that which is for the eye and the mind without limit).<sup>74</sup> Hansson gave the following characteristics to the ocean: it is eternally changing, immortal, seductive, solitary, fertile, proud, a source of health, and performs an endless soliloquy.<sup>75</sup> For Hansson, Nietzsche was a »siare,« a prophet, independent of historical conditions.

While his essay opened by comparing Nietzsche's »poetry« to the ocean, by the end of the essay, Nietzsche had merged with his production, and the movement of simile to metaphor is telling. »Nietzsche **är** den egentliga centrala stormhård, ur vilken de stora böljorna utgå« (Nietzsche **is** the center of the storm, from which all the great waves find their source).<sup>76</sup> Nietzsche has become the ocean and all of its characteristics become his. In Hansson's comparative system, the representation of Nietzsche has moved from a discussion of his work through use of a simile to the substitution of the name Nietzsche for his poetic production. In this way the comparison, »Nietzsche is the ocean« has a metaphorical resonance. Nietzsche represented the merger of subjectivity and poetic production for Hansson, and this was the highest rung of his hierarchical ladder, the quintessence of authenticity. In the end, Hansson represents

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72 Ibid., 131. My translation and my boldfacing.

73 Ibid., 130.

74 Ibid., 127. My translation.

75 Ibid., 127–128.

76 Ibid., 172. My translation. My boldfacing.

Nietzsche as a proto-cultural force from which intellectual movements derive.

This highest level of authenticity is achieved by the poet through his metaphorical merger with a natural force. Nietzsche depicted by Hansson as this natural force expresses both an integrated subjectivity and reveals a process of subject formation achieved through writing. Hansson's definition of Nietzsche's methodology reads as follows:

Han anteciperar det kommande genom intuitiva syner. Han reproducerar detta intuitivt undfågna innehåll uti dikterisk form. Som alla andar av den grupp och av den art som han tillhör, ernå han den nya, allmänt mänskliga och allnaturomfattande sanningarna genom fördjupning av det egna jaget: han är den subjektivaste bland dem alla.

(He anticipates that which is to come through intuitive visions. He reproduces this intuitively received content in poetic form. Like all spirits of this group and of the species to which he belongs, he achieves the new, universal human and all encompassing natural truths through a deepening of his own »I«: he is the most subjective of them all.)<sup>77</sup>

That is who Nietzsche was for Hansson, a poet who gives subjective form to his intuition and thereby creates what are to be universal truths from a subjective core that transcends individuality through its merger with the creative power of a vast dionysian ocean. He becomes the metaphor of the textual self as a timeless dynamo that reproduces the vision of a way of life yet to come. He is a source, a signpost for a humanity that will not come in the near future, for »vad han giver, är blott ett litet frö, vilker behöver oöverskådliga tidsträckor för att växa sig stort« (what he gives is only a little seed, which requires incalculable stretches of time to grow large).<sup>78</sup> The fruits of his thought will emerge through the work of the others who are the interpreters (tolkare) of his work. These interpreters are not objective; they do not reproduce his meaning, they follow his praxis. This reproduction is not the same as the unfathomable depths of the »master«; the interpreter's works are the waves on the surface of the great ocean. Only Nietzsche can escape the bounds of time and place. The prophet is beyond history.

This raises two questions: who is to be Nietzsche's interpreter among the living – the creator of waves in Scandinavia? – and how is he to be interpreted? Hansson's hierarchy of authenticity answers our questions.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 173. My translation.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 172. My translation.

If we refer to our previous discussion of Hansson's racial postulate, we can state our first premise: Hansson saw Scandinavian literature from a pan-Germanic perspective. From this perspective, he regarded Taine, Mill, and Darwin as authentic representatives of foreign thought. He viewed their work from a naturalist perspective as being the product of racial temperament and historical conditions. Their work, seen from Hansson's perspective has two qualities: first it lacks the inwardness, the subjectivity which is prerequisite for a source that would knit Scandinavian culture into the fabric of the greater German whole, and secondly, it was an alien influence that only gained ascendancy in Scandinavia due to the conflicted condition of the Scandinavian cultural environment in the 1870's. They represented the true creators of naturalism for Hansson. They were the creative interpreters of the spirit of their age influenced by their specific cultural context.

Brandes, according to Hansson, inhabited the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder. He was the embodiment of the predominance of foreign cultural influence on Scandinavian soil. Though, like Nietzsche, Brandes' subjectivity merged with his production, Hansson differentiated between the two. If Nietzsche was the ocean in all its depth, Brandes was the indiscernible surface, unable to merge his subjectivity creatively with his work; he was merely the muddied reflection of a troubled soul in a troubled age. In other words, in Hansson's critical thought the name Brandes stood in for the concept of naturalist literature as a foreign plant on Scandinavian soil.

Hansson read Brandes as the embodiment of the »materialist« principle in Scandinavian cultural life, and from this we can derive his second implied premise: Hansson regarded the rise of the naturalist literature in Scandinavia to be an effect of the inauthenticity of a culture that was unable to generate an exemplar to guide its own renewal. The name Brandes became a trope representing this inauthenticity.

This brings us to our third premise: according to Hansson, Nietzsche's interpreter must be »Germanic« and have the same subjective relationship to his work as the »master«. Since we are immersed in the discourse of authenticity, a question arises: If the prophet needs an interpreter, and the interpreter needs to be racially congruent to Scandinavian culture, who did Hansson see as being authentic enough for the task? He asks:

När skall han komma, den nya tidens förstfödde, kulturens cäsariske tuktare, den onde, den förfärlige, den tyranniske, halvt rovdjur, halvt orm, tacksam mot

Gud, djävul, får och mask i sitt inre, nyfiken ända till last, forskare ända till grymhet, ensamhetens förståare och dess vän! – när skall han komma, som spelar segerdansen på tillvarons strängar och får livet att sjunga? – den nye Zarathustra, den förste av arierna, – när skall han gå opp, den blonde herren, lik morgonrodnaden över havet?

(When will he come, the new era's first born, culture's Caesar-like punisher, the evil one, the terrifying one, the tyrannical one, half predator, half snake, inwardly thankful to God, devil, sheep, and worm, curious to a vice, researcher even to cruelty, understanding of solitude and its friend! – when will he come, who will play the victory dance on the strings of existence and make life sing? – the new Zarathustra, the first of the Aryans, – when will he ascend, the blond master, like the red sky at dawn over the ocean?)<sup>79</sup>

I read Hansson's question rhetorically, as a poetically posed expression of a romantic longing that is typical of his reading of Nietzsche. Even if we read Hansson's merger of the blond beast of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* with Zarathustra as a rhetorically convenient misreading of a doer and another deed, and even when we consider that Fambrini sees Hansson's reading as placing »den Nietzsche des *Zarathusthra* und *Götzendämmerung* in den Vordergrund« (the Nietzsche of *Zarathustra* and *The Twilight of the Idols* in the foreground)<sup>80</sup>, the answer comes only when we consider that Hansson valorized the merger of subjectivity and poetic production.

There can be no doubt that Hansson's polemic against Brandes' authenticity as a reader of Nietzsche provides us with a clue as to how he viewed his own position as an interpreter of the philosopher. His choice of style of a »poetic résumé« is informed by his contention that »truth« was a subjective enterprise and that the appropriate reading of Nietzsche was a poetic response.<sup>81</sup> If Brandes sought to reestablish his authenticity

79 Ibid., 170. My translation.

80 FAMBRINI: 1997, 427, Translation mine. Note: Fabrini is mistaken about Hansson's valorization of *Götzendämmerung*. Hansson remarks: »Nietzsches yngsta, under loppet av år 1889 utkomna bok: »Götzendämmerung oder: Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert,« betecknar intet framsteg i hans produktion och lämnar inter nytt bidrag till hans karaktäristik.« (Nietzsche's newest production, *Götzendämmerung: oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*, which came out during the course of the year 1889, represents no progress in his production och leaves no new contribution to his characterization.) My translation. Hansson goes on to criticize the diffuse style of the book and calls it a »genial tourists dagboksanteckning,« a »clever tourist's diary entry.«

81 It is interesting to note here that Brandes urged Nietzsche to read Kierkegaard, mentioned Kierkegaard in his Nietzsche essay, and used a Kierkegaardian term »denne Enkelte« (the singular individual) to indirectly compare the two thinkers. Brandes saw

with his reading of Nietzsche, Hansson attempted to raise himself through the ranks of the Scandinavian literary elite. In Brandes' essay, the name Nietzsche acted as a self-reflexive trope, the *aristocratic radical*, representing the need for a continuation of the struggle against established cultural institutions, and reflecting back on Brandes' view of his own enterprise through time. In Hansson's essay, the self-reflexive quality of the trope remained, for the poetic aspect of his reading of Nietzsche turned the name Nietzsche back onto the writer of the *poetic résumé*. However, there is a significant difference in both men's use of the trope. Brandes employed the name Nietzsche in a metonymic fashion, as a representative for an aspect of thought, as a reduction of the conflict between this aspect of thought and its »other«. For Hansson, Nietzsche was a figure that represented the need for the transformation of Scandinavian culture. In his essay, the name Nietzsche was given a metaphorical valence, and this valence helps to create the romantic quality of the representation of the philosopher as a poetic merger of subjectivity and the word. The philosopher's »poetry« is vitally likened to a natural force and the philosopher/poet himself eventually becomes that force, a substitution of man for text. For Hansson, that which lies beyond history provides the exemplary poetic autobiography written by the most »Germanic« of all souls. This was his conception of the source of a pan-Germanic cultural renewal in Scandinavia.

The subplot of the initial Nietzsche reception in Scandinavia is the story of a split in the avant-garde. This split occurred along generational lines with one notable exception. August Strindberg, despite his self-proclaimed naturalism, would remain a figure of considerable weight even in the circles that attacked realism. We will now embark on an exploration of the tropical affinity that the names Nietzsche and Strindberg enjoyed within this discourse.

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both men as being subjective thinkers. He did not disagree with Hansson there. But for Brandes the question of his own authenticity was hinged upon regarding himself as sufficiently distanced from the thinker he read. For Hansson, authenticity was a question of subjective immersion in Nietzsche's thought.

### Chapter 3: Strindberg and Nietzsche as Tropes in the Anti-Realist Discourse: Two Swedish Examples and a Norwegian Interlude

Ich will keine »Gläubigen,« ich denke, ich bin zu boshaft dazu, um an mich selbst zu glauben ...

(I do not *want* any »true believers,« I think I am too malicious to believe in myself ...)<sup>1</sup>

Man vergilt einem Lehrer schlecht, wenn man immer nur der Schüler bleibt.

(One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil.)<sup>2</sup>

A strange essentialism marks the end of the last chapter; one based on a notion of blood and culture on the one hand, and an elitist reaction to foundational and collective claims on the other. Nietzsche anticipated that in matters of his reception belief would always create distortion. In the late nineteenth century, the Nietzsche legacy was often colored by the image of Nietzsche either as prophet or as a madman. Yet time and time again, even in his most megalomaniacal moments, Nietzsche makes a gesture, an existential gesture that pushes away thoughts of imitation or emulation.

Perhaps the most profound teaching that his Zarathustra shares comes when he sees his own image distorted in the mirror.<sup>3</sup> The Nietzschean gesture creates an empty space for reflection and into this void, the Scandinavians, whom Nietzsche called »Meine natürlichen Leser (my natural readers),«<sup>4</sup> leapt and proclaimed their own authenticity,

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1 NIETZSCHE: KSA 6, 1988d, 365. The English comes from NORMAN (tr.) 2005, 144.

2 NIETZSCHE: KSA 4, 2002, 101. English translation, HOLLINGDALE: 1969, 103.

3 See NIETZSCHE: 2002, 105–108: »Das Kind mit dem Spiegel.« See HOLLINGDALE: 1969, 107, »The Child with the Mirror« for an English translation. In this section, Zarathustra dreams that a child brings him a mirror, which he looks into and sees his reflection distorted into a devilish aspect. At that moment he understands that his teachings have been distorted through their dissemination in the world. For a reading of this section in term of »Zarathustra's Will to Truth,« and his fear of the »repetition« of the »Christian-Platonic Man« see GOODING-WILLIAMS: 2001, 151–152.

4 NIETZSCHE: KSA 6, 1988d, 360. The English translation comes from NORMAN: 2005, 141. Nietzsche writes: »Meine natürlichen Leser und Hörer sind jetzt schon Russen, Skandinavier und Franzosen, – werden sie es immer mehr sein? (My natural readers and listeners are now the Russians, Scandinavians, and French, – will it always be this way?)«

thereby repeating the mistake of overdetermination made by Zarathustra's admirers. In any case, Nietzsche's reception by Georg Brandes and Ola Hansson alert us to two prominent strains in late stages of the long nineteenth Century that have implications up to our own time: namely the notion of the »good European« as a type of transnational citizen and the national romantic notion of the essential racial type.<sup>5</sup>

In the previous chapter, we interrogated these two ideological positions: Brandes' notion of the great personality as a conduit for *dannelse* (Bildung) and Hansson's protestations against »materialistic« thought and his call for the revival of Scandinavian culture along essentialist lines. Despite the differences between the two men's positions, the pre-existent discourse of authenticity was shown to be the stock upon which Nietzsche was grafted in the discourse of his reception. These early readings inflected the discourse that shaped the various meanings attributed to the name Nietzsche in the Scandinavian literary environment. The salient exception to this was the performative reading by the man who shared Nietzsche's madness, his method, and his fear of being deemed a holy buffoon. I am thinking of August Strindberg whose encounter and reception of Nietzsche is the subject of the second half of this book.

However, despite my earlier claim that Nietzsche and Strindberg were treated in a common fashion in the anti-realist discourse, the latter was conspicuously absent from the discussion of the reception in Chapter two. This omission was purpose for two reasons. First, I wanted to establish first that the concept of authenticity in the Nietzsche reception was a *strong misreading* of the philosopher. In other words, I wanted to show how »Nietzsche« as the doer was *hinzugedichtet* (poeticized back) into the deed of his text. It is this species of reading that integrated Nietzsche as a »great personality« into the literary discourse of second-wave Scandinavian modernists, and it was within this environment that the surface aspects of the intersection of Nietzsche and Strindberg's authorship are linked. For the names Strindberg and Nietzsche are utilized in a paradoxical manner in this discourse. They are employed as the representations of both a radical break with the past and of a reemergence of essential characteristics, acting as stand-ins for two seemingly contradic-

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps we now live in an age where the sublation of these two types remains fluid in a dynamic tension where globalization and fictive racial essentialities clash tragically and violently.

tory terms at once, namely, continuity and the appearance of the radically new.

With this in mind, it is my intention to illustrate how this worked, to show how both men functioned as tropes in a discourse that had larger concerns than allowed for in an analysis based solely on a study of influence. For a model of analysis that relies upon a one-sided notion of influence as its guiding principle repeats this *strong misreading* of the Nietzschean text in two moments. In the first moment the construction of a personality called »Nietzsche« is poeticized into his own text, and in the second moment the force of this personality colonizes the text of the writer said to be under its influence. Instead, my interest here is how the names »Nietzsche« and »Strindberg« fit into the ideological interests of the parties involved in the reception and the anti-realist discourse, and how the aestheticized notion of the self in the discourse of authenticity set the parameters for the scholarship on the encounter. Once this is established, we will turn to the encounter between the two men and explore their deeper commonality, the *genealogy of self*. Therefore, my intention in this chapter is twofold: to illustrate how the anti-realist discourse shares the concern for authenticity with the Nietzsche reception and to discuss the place that Nietzsche and Strindberg occupy in the debate.

In order to accomplish this task, I will analyze four texts that were initially published within two years of each other. The first of these texts to appear was Verner von Heidenstam's pamphlet *Renässans*, whose publication was closely followed by Hansson's *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* (Nietzscheanism in Scandinavia) in October of 1889. Hansson also wrote an essay on Strindberg that was published as part of *Das Junge Skandinavien (Young Scandinavia)* in 1891.<sup>6</sup> Knut Hamsun's *Lidt om Strindberg (A little about Strindberg)* was first published in two installments in December of 1889, and Arne Garborg's *Den idealistiske Reaktion – Ny-idealismen (The Idealistic Reaction – New Idealism)* was written the following year. Our analysis will start with Verner von Heidenstam's *Renässans*. We will then violate the chronology, briefly discuss Arne Garborg's response to Heidenstam, use Hamsun's Strind-

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<sup>6</sup> This excerpt was not published in Swedish until 1921 when it appeared as the eleventh volume of Ola Hansson's collected works.



berg essay as a bridge to Hansson, and conclude with the Swede's conflation of the Nietzsche reception and the anti-realist discourse.

Verner von Heidenstam: Egotism, »The Joy of Life«:  
The Artist as the Bearer of Aristocratic Values

Var Stund av glädje är en stund av egotism, ty den är utan medlidande med de tusen, som samtidigt lida

(Each moment of joy is a moment of egotism, for it is without compassion for the thousands who simultaneously suffer.)<sup>7</sup>

The Nobel Laureate, Verner von Heidenstam<sup>8</sup> belongs to a generation of Scandinavian writers who connected realism to democratic political values and the subsequent »leveling« of social positions. Like Ola Hansson, he characterized this connection negatively. It is no accident of literary scholarship that the pamphlet *Renässans* is collected in the eighteenth volume of his *Samlade verk* under the rubric of *Stridsskrifter* (Polemics). For the generation of writers who followed the initial modern breakthrough, an attack on realism was part and parcel of a rejection of Brandes' seventeen-year-old demand for authors to engage their work politically and to join Scandinavian culture to the main currents of European development.

Heidenstam rejected the notion of a pan-European literature. If the early exemplars of the modern breakthrough were pan-Scandinavian, even pan-European in outlook, the second wave of modernists who emerged in the »nineties« often brought forward an expression of enhanced national feelings. Denmark and Brandes were no longer the center of the literary critical impulse. Heidenstam, like Hansson, was of the opinion that realist or naturalist aesthetics were a foreign element brought into Swedish letters. It follows that Heidenstam's polemic included a call for a Swedish national literature. In Sweden, where a stronger aristocratic tradition existed, this decentering of the source of literary impulses led, in Heidenstam's view, to an association of Swedishness with the emergence of a re-created aesthetic nobility. Heidenstam placed his hope for a re-emergent literary nobility in the exceptional indi-

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<sup>7</sup> HEIDENSTAM: 1944, 20. My translation.

<sup>8</sup> Heidenstam won the prize near the end of his long career in 1916.

vidual. He utilized Strindberg in this discourse as both an example and as a warning.

Curiously and despite Heidenstam's protestations, elements of the original paradigms for a realist aesthetic were retained in his theory of an »idealist« literature. Both Brandes' vitalist notion of the writing subject and the perspectival qualities of Bang's theory of realism strongly inflect Heidenstam's conception of the »new« literary imperative of Swedish letters. These aspects remain essential in a discourse that hinges on the notion of an authentic literature, a literature born from the seeds of what its propagators saw as the »failure« of Scandinavian realism. For Heidenstam, this »new« literature was distinguished by the aristocratic qualities that reflect the »best« of the nation.

Heidenstam wrote *Renässans* in August of 1889 during the tail end of a period of close contact with Strindberg. The height of their friendship was in the mid-1880's and Heidenstam was an instrumental figure in Strindberg's turn away from his socialist past. However, by the time of the writing of this pamphlet, their relationship had cooled considerably. Strindberg had written to Heidenstam about Nietzsche, but there is no evidence that the philosopher's work played any role in the latter's production. This provides additional credence for the claim that the name Nietzsche was utilized in a pre-existing discourse and did not initiate a new discourse by the force of his influence. An analysis of Heidenstam's text allows us to understand this discourse without the intellectual interference that the pedigree of a name like Nietzsche engenders.

Despite the absence of a »Nietzschean« *influence*, Heidenstam forwarded an argument that depended on a hypostatic notion of taste. Like the Nietzsche of *Beyond Good and Evil*, he equated »bad« taste with a lack of discernment that comes from the juxtapositions of high and low culture within modern public culture.<sup>9</sup> Heidenstam argued for the revi-

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9 See for example NIETZSCHE: KSA 5, 1995 and its translation by NORMAN: 2002. Aphorism 224, »Der historische Sinn« (The Historical Sense) can be found on pp. 157–160 (114–116 in the English). See also Aphorism 244 in the same text found on pp. 184–186 (134–137 in the English), especially »Will man die ›deutsche Seele‹ ad oculus demonstrieren, so sehe man nur in den deutschen Geschmack, in deutsche Künste und Sitten hinein: welche bäurische Gleichgültigkeit gegen ›Geschmack! Wie steht da das Edelste und Gemeinste neben einander! Wie unordentlich und reich ist dieser ganze Seelen-Haushalt!« (If you want a demonstration of the German soul *ad oculos*, just look at German taste German arts and customs: what a boorish indifference to »taste!« How the noble stands right next to the most base! How disorderly and rich this whole psychic

talization of an aristocratic sense of style and individuation. *Unknowningly* demonstrating that the anti-realist discourse was a rather pregnant environment for the Nietzsche reception, Heidenstam's *Renässans* contained many of the motifs that would be associated with a Nietzschean *influence* in Scandinavian letters: vitalism, an opposition between health and exhaustion, perspectivalism, and a call for a modern aristocratic literature. However, it has already been demonstrated that these elements were already part of the Scandinavian literary debate and Heidenstam's work was a derivative of a tendency that already existed in the letters of the North.

This discussion of vitality in literary production dates back to Brandes' early theories of realism and belongs to the set of qualities of Scandinavian realist discourse that set the table for the Nietzsche reception and the anti-realist discourse. For Brandes, the creation of a vital literature was a particular challenge for Scandinavian modernists challenged by reactionary social formations. The problem of modernity remained for Heidenstam despite his change in emphasis. Brandes' question of how one could represent reality and embrace change had transmuted into a question of how one could claim to be authentic without a stable foundation. Though Heidenstam was to invert the Brandesian parameters of what was a »living« and what was a »dead« literature, he nonetheless opened his polemic by stating »Så väl inom litteraturen som inom de bildande konsterna äger endast en skola sundhet och livskraft så länge hon hyser hopp att i *sin* riktning kunna utföra något, som ännu är ogjort.« (In literature as well as in the plastic arts, a school has health and life force only so long as it carries the hope that its course can lead to the accomplishment of something yet to be done.)<sup>10</sup>

For Heidenstam, the state of a literary movement's health is determined by the power it has to contribute something new. Vitality clearly emerges as an aspect of authentically modern literature for Heidenstam; generated by the uniqueness of expression, and the ability to say the previously unsaid, or more specifically, to say things in a way that they have not been said before. He argued that the source of inimitable literature

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economy really is!) 186 (136 in the English). Nietzsche is more nuanced than Heidenstam, seeing »bad taste« in its form as the juxtaposition of high and low culture as a historical condition that one could not rise above and that was of some use intellectually. Nietzsche, of course, associates »good taste« with nobility as does Heidenstam.

10 HEIDENSTAM: 1944, II. My translation.

resides within the creating subject, whose taste and thirst for the joy of life imbues the artwork with life force. Once again, the notion of an authentic literature was being tied to the qualities of the individual artist.

However Heidenstam attacked Brandes' notion that a living literature derived its life-force from its contact with socially relevant issues, Heidenstam's notion of artistic vitality revolved around notions of an isolated self-centeredness, the development of an individual's taste, and the expression of the aristocratic aspects of his personality through the originality of his work.<sup>11</sup> It is clear that Heidenstam's individual is not the politically empowered author-citizen conceived by Brandes, but rather one who is able to look away from the problems of the society in which he lives.<sup>12</sup>

Heidenstam's conception of the need for individuality was so strong and his rebellion against the notion of imitation was so radical, that he denied the authenticity of mimetic acts on two levels. First, his notion of the artist as an individual creator excluded the author as an adherent of a stylistic school. Heidenstam declares: »En skola blir med tiden ett vilsledande, urvattnat porträtt av mästeren.« (With the passing of time, a school becomes a misleading, watered down portrait of the master.)<sup>13</sup> On the level of form, Heidenstam rejected traditional principles of the literary school in a rather interesting way. The vital artist does not perfect an exemplary form; he realizes that »litteraturen inom den närmaste framtiden blir sammansatt av de mest heterogena element« (literature in the nearest future will become a blend of the most heterogeneous elements).<sup>14</sup> Agreeing with Bang's premise that realism reflects the modern condition, but placing a negative valence on this shared understanding, Heidenstam argued that the modern author has the ability to create an inimitable literature only by utilizing a mixed style determined by his own sense of taste and after his own pleasure, thereby escaping the imperatives of his environment. He rejects the importance of the mimetic illusion of a realist aesthetic and he denigrates the principle of a mimetic adherence to a tradition of artistic production. Heidenstam claimed that the reproduc-

<sup>11</sup> Heidenstam polemically attached the notion of originality to the »aristocrat.« This rhetorical move was designed as a criticism of mass society.

<sup>12</sup> This is certainly not an apolitical gesture, but rather a typical case of politics by omission.

<sup>13</sup> HEIDENSTAM: 1944, 27–28. My translation.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. My translation. Is this a post-modern gesture?

tion of social conditions in art destroys the quality of that art, and that any attempt to emulate the form of the »master« creates a mere shadow of the original. Heidenstam was not, however, proposing an anarchistic view of artistic production in which the individual creates principles of content and form ex nihilo; he borrowed Brandes' notion of the free individual and disengaged this individual from a social realm which he then denigrated. His argument was based on an essentialist notion of an aristocratic privilege, and on the constructs of taste and refinement. The weakness of his argument lies in the absence of a legitimization of these principles; he extolled the aristocratic while denying the value of following a tradition. He called for an art that expresses the essential qualities of an ennobled personality through an exclusion of those aspects of human intercourse that can only be commonly experienced. He was calling for a delimited sense of commonality with an aesthetic vanguard. These aesthetes, while not quite Brandes' *aristocratic radicals*, were, at least in Heidenstam's mind, aristocratic.

If in *Realisme og Realister*,« Herman Bang pushed the possibility of a literary positivism to an absurd extent by claiming that the creative subject can suspend value judgment through the use of a style that accurately reflects the fragmentary nature of perception, Heidenstam agreed that perspective was an imperative but rejected the possibility of a value-free aesthetic. He called for a return to a species of aesthetic values that he believed to be self-legitimizing: the principles of uniqueness, pleasure, wit and beauty. If Bang located realism in the everyday experience of the individual expressed through the deferred modality of memory, Heidenstam revolted against realism by claiming that it is the quality of an experience that determines its value as the raw material of literary creation. In other words, Heidenstam rejected Bang's call for a modern literature that reflects the human relations of a society in a value-free manner. Instead, he called for a creative renewal, which would remain true to the values of egotism and the »joy of life«. Heidenstam's ideal author did not concern himself with the problems of everyday life. He believed that after almost two decades of literary production dominated by a realist aesthetic:

Tiden törstar efter glädje ... Vår tid har blickat alltför djupt in i naturens hemskaste kaninkällrar och har dessutom på det rent sociala området blottat ett alltför stort svalg mellan ideal och verklighet, för att icke de känsligaste och mest begåvade författare i förstone skulle gripas av svärmod och förtvivlan.

(The times thirst after joy ... Our contemporaries have gazed all too deeply into nature's terrible rabbit holes and as in addition have opened far too great a gulf between the ideal and reality in the purely social realm. It follows that the most sensitive and the most gifted authors would be seized by melancholy and despair.)<sup>15</sup>

This indicates Heidenstam's rejection of mimesis on the level of content. He rejected realism because of his view that everyday life was but lead in the wings of creation. As a result of this judgment, Heidenstam once again broached the issue of an opposition between the ideal and *reality* once again. However, in *Renässans* the weight had shifted. Idealism, formerly the favorite stalking horse of the realists became the favored term. Heidenstam's ideal, however, did not have the eternal characteristics of Platonic form nor was it a shared value; he defined it merely as an attempt by the individual to transcend the conditions of daily life in order to create.<sup>16</sup> For Heidenstam did not reject Bang's reflection theory outright. He agreed that the bulk of the literature of his time truly reflected the state of his society. However, rather than valorize this reflection, Heidenstam claimed in the name of health that literature must look away from social conditions.<sup>17</sup>

It is here that Heidenstam's critique of naturalism found its moorings in an aristocratic elitism. He claimed that »naturalism« reflects the contemporary fascination with rooting out the workings of human nature. However, this spirit of inquiry has resulted in the fixation of the creative gaze upon the »colorless« depths of human misery and despair. Heidenstam's diagnosis reads: Literature is suffering from the spirit of the times; it is enervated and joyless. He contended that Brandes' living literature

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 21. My translation.

<sup>16</sup> Heidenstam's conception of idealism was not a product of a nostalgic longing for a time when there was a shared consensus based on ethical formulations. It was more of an aesthetic principle whose distinguishing characteristic was the right to selfishness. For an interesting commentary, see (1944), 20–21 in *Renässans* for a discussion of altruism. It is there that Heidenstam's modernism is most apparent, as he flatly denies the possibility of recapturing the past and illustrates how the concept has changed with the passage of time.

<sup>17</sup> This reflects the polemical nature of Heidenstam's *Renässans*. Martin Jay has reminded me that Zola connected the notions of health and vitality to »naturalism«. I would like to add that Georg Brandes did this as well, by means of his notion of realism as »living literature«. Heidenstam used his attack on »naturalism« as a springboard for his own agenda. His criticism of »naturalism« is by no means an accurate portrayal of the movement. He simply inverts Brandes' notion of health through engagement.

has been desiccated through its contact with the impulses of democratic politics and the mass-market economy. His logic: if every moment of happiness is an egotistical moment that excludes considering those masses who suffer, then the demand of the times for happiness requires that the artist disengage from the issues of the day. Heidenstam called for the artist to distance himself from compassion, to separate himself from the values of a society that equates one human being with another. The realist/naturalist practice of addressing mass social issues was, Heidenstam argued, a constituent factor in creating a common set of aesthetic responses.

Man kunna parodiera naturalismen på följande sätt. Naturalismen är en arbetskarl i blus – Leve jämlikheten! ropar han. Det är en orättvisa att ödet begåva några med snillets privilegium och icke alla. Vi avsätter ödet. Vi besluta, att kvickheten, inbillningskraft, skönhetssinne och alla sådant där aristokratiskt djävulstyg är tecken på talangslöshet.

(One could parody naturalism in the following manner. Naturalism is a worker in a blouse – Long live equality! he cries. It is unfair that destiny gives some the gift of a genius' privilege and does not give it to everyone. We dethrone destiny. We conclude that wit, the power of imagination, the sense for beauty, and all aristocratic deviltry are the sign of a lack of talent.)<sup>18</sup>

Heidenstam justified his notion of egotism aesthetically and employed naturalism as an example of what can happen to art when it comes too near to the masses. First, he stated that literary engagement with society has only served to thrust the best of authors into a state of lifeless depression. Next, he posited that contemporary democratic values have destroyed any aesthetic sense. Heidenstam's polemic equated naturalism with »leveling,« and he critiqued the effect that demands of the mass market had on the quality of literary production. In his parody of the literary climate, he represented naturalism as a worker who decried the very qualities that Heidenstam valorized: wit, imagination, and a sense of the beautiful. He condemned the market for its tendency to demand self-replication and its perpetuation of mediocrity. He delineated how this »mediocrity« occurs on two levels and again connected a set of aesthetic deficits to his critique of mimetic principles. For Heidenstam, both the imitation of social conditions and the attempt to extend the work of the »master« through an appropriation of a formal aesthetic innovation that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 23. My translation.

had succeeded in getting the acclaim of the public lead to a loss of literary vitality.

Unlike the Brandes of the 1870's, who understood realism to be in opposition to the prevailing order, Heidenstam connected realism to what he claimed were the prevailing social conditions and to the dominance of the market place. He justified his predilection for idealism with the claim that realism already dominated society in the form of »den fete, materialistiske penningkungen« (the fat, materialistic money king).<sup>19</sup> This species of material realism results in a society that judges an individual by his income. As an effect, exceptional authors »som leva i små land, där deras ekonomiska ställning blir ytterst tryckt och där den tid, som behandla människor efter hennes inkomst, bemöter dem med intolerans och öppet ringaktning« (who live in a small country, where their economic position is pressing to the extreme, and in these times that treat people according to their income, these authors are met with intolerance and open contempt).<sup>20</sup> Heidenstam argued that these conditions resulted in the relegation of art to work and subsequently the subordination of artistry to craftsmanship. Heidenstam wrote: »Författarna böra akta sig, att icke deras produktion nedsjunker till hantverksmässig, själlöst efterbildande, till ett skriftställer, som förtjänar öknamnet: skomakarerealism.« (Authors ought to be careful that their production does not sink to the level of soulless imitation, to craftsmanship, to a type of authorship that has earned the nickname, shoemaker realism).<sup>21</sup> Heidenstam saw the realistic impulse as tied to and denigrated by market forces. He used the character »Herr Fotografman«<sup>22</sup> to illustrate what he saw as the market-driven will to replication, criticizing the economic conditions of literary production for what he regarded to be the lack of variety in contemporary letters. For Heidenstam, the pressures of living off one's pen, which created this desire to copy exactly, also had created

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19 Ibid., 25. My translation. An interesting statement on Heidenstam's part when one considers that even the initial thrust of modern Scandinavian realism was quite critical of the social conditions that accompanied the economic ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and the dominance of money in the economy as a whole.

20 Ibid., 21. My translation.

21 Ibid., 25. My translation.

22 Ibid., 24. »Mister Photographer.«



the loyalty of authors to an anachronism, namely the literary school.<sup>23</sup> The »realism« of a literary culture driven by economics had created the impetus for authors to reflect the very society that suffocated their ability to create original work. In this way, Heidenstam's critique of realism functioned as an attack on the bourgeoisie and their dominance in the public sphere.

At this point in his argument, Heidenstam's reconfiguration of the debate between the idealist and realists derives from his understanding of bourgeois society as the material base for realist production. If both Brandes and Bang criticized idealism, albeit with a different definition of the term, Heidenstam called for a return to idealism as a countermovement to the dominance of the realism of the market place. True to his claim that the literature of the future will be composed in a mixture of styles, he recognized that even »det naturalistiska framställningsättet är ju dessutom aldrig kunnat befria sig från all idealisering« (the naturalistic mode of representation certainly could never free itself completely from all idealization).<sup>24</sup> For Heidenstam, *Idealism* and *Realism* are not mutually exclusive terms. Literature is not a matter of either ideality or reality, but a matter of the *proper* mixture of both elements.

It is here that Heidenstam's polemic revealed itself in its true light. He saw all literary form, including naturalism, as a site of both realistic and idealist impulses. His argument that an author should look away from the suffering of the masses was not a call for a flight from *reality* towards the romantic ether of a previous generation. Heidenstam was not overtly nostalgic,<sup>25</sup> and the reader is left wondering about the principles that would guide the author whom Heidenstam exhorts to rise above the me-

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23 Actually the situation was not quite as anachronistic as Heidenstam imagined – his critique points to a future where the »brand name« crept into mass produced literature. Think only of the JT Leroy controversy in the US, where the books of said author were marketed through the compelling biography of a person who probably did not write the books and may not even exist. See the »Arts and Leisure« section of *The New York Times* on August 23, 2007.

24 HEIDENSTAM: 1944, 26. My translation.

25 Heidenstam's lack of nostalgia is evident in the following citation: »Utveckling är tidens lösen, också på det rent estetiska området. Vi måste gå vidare, gå beständigt framåt och aldrig betvivla, att det som nu anses fullgott kan ersättas av något ännu bättre.« Ibid., 33. My translation: »Development is the solution of time, as well in the purely aesthetic realm. We must go further, go steadfastly forward, never doubting that what is considered to be perfected can be replaced by something even better.«

diocrity of a literature tied to the mass market. This wondering leads to a question: if taste determines the proper balance between idealist and realist elements in Heidenstam's conception of *renässans* literature, what is the foundation for his notion of taste if a mimetic adherence to tradition is a denigrated concept in his polemic?

Smaken är ett hjul, som går runt och plötslig lyfter i dagen den sida, som nyss vändes mot marken. I vår tid, som utmärker sig för nervös brådska, tycks detta hjul snurra ännu fortare än tilföre.

(Taste is a wheel that spins round and suddenly lifts that side to the light, which was most recently turned to the ground. In our time, which has distinguished itself by its nervous haste, it seems that this wheel spins even faster than before.)<sup>26</sup>

Heidenstam's claims a historically cyclical conception of taste. Its relativity is further compounded by a cult of the new and by his belief that the findings of the natural sciences are the intellectual property of all nations. He cited the example of Darwinism, which he characterized as »alla civiliserade folks gemensamma tillhörighet. Den förblir ett vetenskapligt faktum i Ryssland likaväl som i Frankrike« (the possession of all civilized people. It remains a scientific fact in Russia just as in France).<sup>27</sup> Heidenstam's program was not nearly as radical as Hansson's, who saw the need for a complete break with what he saw as foreign, materialist thinking. His views on the progression of scientific thought have more of a family resemblance to Brandes' understanding of the trajectory of the Enlightenment.

However, the complications that arise when we try to make sense of Heidenstam's seemingly foundationless argument are lessened when we realize that the object of his polemic was a matter of form and not content. For it follows that if the progression of human understanding was common intellectual capital and that every instance of creation utilized a mixture of *Realism* and *Idealism*, then the content of a work of literary art did not determine its quality. In a world of common facts, it is interpretation and inflection that distinguish. For Heidenstam, it was form that allows the individual artist to escape from the demands of the public and to avoid the *danger* of having his work reflect the daily life of his society. The vitality of a piece of literature emerges when the author

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 13. My translation.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 34. My translation.

forms his work in a way that does not reflect the historical environment in which he lives.<sup>28</sup>

According to Heidenstam, form was the area of individuation, and individuality is the means by which an author can transcend the imperatives of his era's fascination with an environment that only suppresses his creativity: »Självständighet är emellertid mer att söka i framställningssättet än i innehållet.« (Self reliance is, however, found more in the manner of representation than in the content.)<sup>29</sup> Yet Heidenstam's conservatism is so evident that even his conception of self reliance and uniqueness was relegated to a perspectival imprint: »All andlig självständighet är ju relativ, alldenstund den huvudsakligen endast kan yttra sig i ett omgestaltande, ett kombinerande, ett utvecklande av något redan befintlig.« (All spiritual independence (autonomy) is certainly relative, in as much as it chiefly can only express itself in a transforming, a combining, and a developing of something already existing.)<sup>30</sup> Despite all of his posturing on the subject of autonomy, Heidenstam still needed to find a ground upon which his program and its emphasis on the »new« could stand in order to avoid falling into the abyss of the infinite regress of absolute relativity and re-packaging. He found this piece of ground underneath his own feet, on his native soil.

Vad Sverige angår, få vi emellertid säga, att någon naturalistisk skola utbildats inte därstädes. Många, ja, de flesta yngre författarna ansluta sig till den naturalistiska riktningen, men någon verklig skola ha de icke förenat sig till. Naturalismens framställningssätt torde över huvud taget alldeles icke passa för svenskt lynne.

(Concerning Sweden, allow us to say, that a naturalist school in a real sense has hardly been formed. Many, yes, mostly young authors have traveled with the naturalist current, but they have not united into an actual school. Naturalism's mode of representation does not at all seem to fit the Swedish temperament.)<sup>31</sup>

28 As if this were possible. Heidenstam's mistake emerges when we realize that his idea of history hypostatically monochromatic.

29 HEIDENSTAM: 1944, 54. My translation.

30 Ibid., 29. My translation.

31 Ibid. My translation. Strindberg's reaction to Heidenstam's nationalism is interesting to note in this context. In a letter dated October 9, 1889, he wrote: »Det synes mig som om Sverige med dess atmosfer hade lagt sig tungt öfver dig. Jag har känt det och har endast genom att isolera mig och i böcker (utländska) umgås med förstklassiga andar hållit mig oppe.« (It seems to me that the Swedish atmosphere has laid itself

Like Hansson, Heidenstam regarded naturalism to be a foreign germ on Swedish soil. However, in contrast to Hansson, he did not regard Sweden to be part of a larger German nation. While he certainly distinguished between native and foreign elements he did not romanticize or essentialize this distinction. For Heidenstam, there was an international commonality of intellectual and social movement, but each nation gave this common content an individual form. Individuality was expressed by the balance of common content and distinctive form, a relationship that he likened to a marriage: »Av alla naturstridiga äktenskap, som den moderna litteraturen skildrat, skulle intet bliva mer ohållbart än ett äktenskap mellan naturalismen och svenska linnet.« (Of all of the unnatural marriages that modern literature has depicted, none would be more untenable than the marriage between naturalism and Swedish temperament.)<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, Heidenstam's notion of national character also factored in historical change. After a description of the character of Swedish poets past, he added: »Emellertid är vårt lynne en gång sådant, och det skall näpperligen lyckas oss att göra om det. Vi få alltså taga hänsyn till vårt lynne sådant det nu är, då vi försöka att leta oss till vilket framställningssätt, som lämpar sig bäst för oss.« (However, our temperament is simply such and it will hardly succeed to try and change it. We must therefore consider how our temperament is now when we attempt to find which manner of representation is best suited to us.)<sup>33</sup> Working within the paradox of a nationalist modernity dependent upon a creation of its own attributes, Heidenstam proposed a construction of national character in the present that comes about only through an observation of one's fellow countrymen not in order to master the formal parameters of a school, but in order to see »åt vilket håll hans eget och hans landsmäns lynne pekar och vart samtidens strömningar styra sin kosa« (in which direction his own temperament and his countrymen's point and where our contemporary currents steer their course).<sup>34</sup> However, remembering

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heavily upon you. I have felt that and have only held myself up through isolation and through books (foreign) and thereby keeping the company of first class spirits.) My translation. STRINDBERG was responding to Heidenstam's manuscript of »Renaissance.« The letter can be found in STRINDBERG: 1961, 377. Collected as letter 1894.

32 HEIDENSTAM: 1944, 29. My translation.

33 Ibid., 31. My translation.

34 Ibid. My translation.

Heidenstam's admonition against taking heed of the masses, it is plain to see that he was calling for a brotherhood of aesthetic aristocrats, a counter-movement to Brandes' »good-Europeans,« the men of the modern breakthrough.

However, as we have seen, the construction of a national literature based on an aristocratic distance from the marketplace and on a particularly Swedish sense of form needed exemplars.

Ingen av vår inhemska författare är i så högt grad påverkats av naturalism som **August Strindberg**, men ingen har heller så subjektiv omstöpt den efter sin egen temperament. Någon naturalist, i strängaste mening har han heller aldrig blivit. Utan gensägelse speglar hans författarskap svensk lynne, men detta framträder långt mindre fram i t. ex. verklighets skildringen *Hemsöborna* än i andra arbeten, där renässansdraget lyser fram eller där infall och kvickheter stänka åt alla sidor som gnistor från ett smältstycke under hammaren.

(None of our native authors has been influenced by naturalism to the extent of **August Strindberg**, but neither has anyone so subjectively molded it after his own temperament. He has never been a naturalist in the strictest sense. Without doubt, his authorship mirrors Swedish disposition, but that emerges much less in, for example, the reality tale *The People of Hemsö* than in other works, where the renaissance strain shines forth or where fancy and wit are splashed on all sides like sparks from a piece of smelt iron under the hammer.)<sup>35</sup>

For Heidenstam, Strindberg, who had suffered as much as any Swedish author from the vicissitudes of the market, was the prime example of how national temperament could function as a prism through which a foreign influence could be refracted. He attributed the *aristocratic* qualities of wit and imagination to Strindberg and compares his composition to the forging of a piece of steel, thereby emphasizing the form-giving power of temperament. Strindberg was depicted as the most subjective of form-givers, a designation reminiscent of Hansson's economy of the ideal poet. It is important to remember that the mark of the individual in Heidenstam's program was impressed upon his writing by the ability to give subjective form to the raw material of commonly held content. In this way it seemed that Strindberg becomes »Strindberg,« a metaphor, his name a substitute for the form giving power that is the mark of individuation in the Swedish literary aristocrat. However, it is not that simple, for the question of how the example Strindberg became the trope »Strindberg« remains unanswered.

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35 Ibid. My boldfacing, my translation.

Heidenstam's »Strindberg« defies naturalism despite himself. There are two key phrases in our citation. The first is that no Swedish author has been as influenced by naturalism as Strindberg, but no one has recreated it so fully in his own image. The second is an implicit criticism of the novel, *Hemsöborna* (*The People of Hemsö*). These two statements are keys to understanding how »Strindberg« functioned as a trope in Heidenstam's anti-realist discourse. An exploration of how this process of changing Strindberg to »Strindberg« works will allow us the opportunity to amplify our previous claim that the anti-realist discourse had three characteristics: that it was a polemic rather than a debate about actual differences, that it was a generational revolt, and that the notion of authenticity was a linchpin in the discourse.

Our entry into this discussion is Heidenstam's implicit criticism of Strindberg's 1887 novel *Hemsöborna*<sup>36</sup> for having less of the aristocratic aesthetic qualities, and a series of letters written by Strindberg about *Renässans*. One letter in particular inform us of Strindberg's reaction to Heidenstam's essay, and Heidenstam's choice of an object of criticism opens up our understanding of how Strindberg functioned as a trope in this discourse rather than merely an example.

Heidenstam's use of this novel as a negative example is quite extraordinary in the context of our inquiry. It illustrates both the complexity of the Nietzsche reception in the particularities of Scandinavian literary environment and ties together the strands of our discussion of Strindberg's significance as a trope in the anti-realist discourse.

The excursus at the end of the first chapter concluded with an explanation of how Strindberg could consider his naturalism compatible with his reading of Nietzsche. This explanation hinged on an elaboration of Strindberg's conception of »greater naturalism« as developed in his essay *Om modernt drama och modern teater* published earlier in the same year as Heidenstam's *Renässans*. In this essay, Strindberg defined »greater naturalism« as the depiction of the psychological struggles that lie beneath everyday life. The naturalist, according to Strindberg, enjoys these struggles and does not look away. But Strindberg was careful to distinguish between *photographic* realism and his own method.<sup>37</sup> Strind-

36 *The People of Hemsö*.

37 See STRINDBERG: 1912, 289: »Om modernt drama och modern teater.« Two statements on this page are of interest here. The first reads: »Detta är det objektiva, som är så

berg also made a distinction between the literature of the *small*, who created a literature that used realism to uphold a conventional view of *reality*, and the literature of the *great*, who employed naturalism to explore their own lives. Strindberg read Heidenstam's essay unsympathetically less because of the latter's criticism of his novel than because he felt that Heidenstam had stolen his ideas and had reduced them. In a letter to Ola Hansson dated November 9, 1889, he wrote:

Men kleptomaniern Heidenstam, som griper hela kakan som vi bakat, och helsas som Renässansmannen, oakad jag skrivit *Lifsglädjen*, *Giftas* 1, *Hemsöborna* och *Modernt drama* der jag afsäger dualismen som De Smås lilla konst för att predika naturalismen som den Stora Konsten, dit jag räknar *Fröken Julie* och *Creditorer*.

(But the kleptomaniac Heidenstam, who has grabbed the entire cake that we baked, and is greeted as the Renaissance man, regardless that I had written *The Joy of Life*, *Getting Married* 1, *The People of Hemsö*, and *On Modern Drama and Modern Theater*, where I renounce dualism as the art of the small in order to preach naturalism as great art. I count *Miss Julie* and *The Creditors* in this number.)<sup>38</sup>

Strindberg regarded *The People of Hemsö* to be in anticipation of Heidenstam's *Renässans*. For Strindberg, naturalism was an elastic concept, and he recognized that the narrowness of Heidenstam's use of the term was of polemical import. He also shared Heidenstam's notion that innovation was a hallmark of individuality and that individuality was authenticity, therefore he claimed to have anticipated Heidenstam. This claim was not unique; it would be echoed by a similar statement that Strindberg would make with regards to Nietzsche. In our next chapter, we will discuss Strindberg's 1894 essay, *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* (My Relationship to Nietzsche), where he cites the very same novel *The People of Hemsö*, as a piece of evidence in a proof that he had anticipated the

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älskat av dem som sakna subjekt, av de temperamentslösa, själlösa som de borde kallas.« The second: »Detta är fotografi, som tar med allt, till och med dammkornet på kamerans glas; detta är realismen, en arbetsmetod upphöjd till konststart ...« My translations. »It is the objective that is so loved by those who lack a subject, by the temperamentless, the soulless as they ought to be called.« and »This is photography, which captures everything, even the speck of dust on the camera's lens, this is realism, a working method glorified as an art form ...« Thus, it is with some justification that Strindberg felt that his position was misrepresented by Heidenstam who by failing to acknowledge Strindberg's earlier statements on the limits of an »objective« realism had, in Strindberg's mind, appropriated his ideas. See also LAMM: 1963, 232–235 for a precise explanation of the events.

38 STRINDBERG: 1938, 66 . My boldfacing and translation.

philosopher.<sup>39</sup> In this essay, Strindberg cited a number of his works and concluded his list: »och romanen *Hemsöborna* försöksvis intagit den ståndpunkt som numera betecknas såsom Nietzsches« (and the novel *The People of Hemsö* experimentally took the perspective that nowadays is attributed to Nietzsche).<sup>40</sup> While it is not unusual that an author who is concerned about his own authenticity claims to have anticipated another's work, it is of considerable interest that the same text that was criticized by Heidenstam was used by Strindberg to claim primacy in both an anti-realist polemic and »Nietzscheanism«. In other words, Strindberg conflated the two discourses in his own understanding of his intellectual environment.

This issue will be addressed in much greater detail in the next chapter. For our purposes here, it is important to note that Heidenstam had little interest in Strindberg's own thoughts about his development as a naturalist. He was much more interested in creating a »Strindberg« who would serve as an example of both the best of Swedish letters and as a warning about the use of naturalist techniques. This explains why Heidenstam's definition of naturalism was much narrower than Strindberg's own understanding of the term. Heidenstam was not unaware of Strindberg's position,<sup>41</sup> and just as he used Brandes' opposition between a living and dead literature to declare naturalism to be post mortem, he used an aspect of Strindberg's authorship, his »naturalism« to create his »Strindberg«. For despite Strindberg's understanding of the naturalist imperative, and his radicalization of it to the extreme where he declared that one could only depict one's own life in a »naturalist« sense,<sup>42</sup> Heidenstam used *The People of Hemsö* as an example for the purpose of showing how even the *most Swedish* of authors could be negatively influenced to his detriment by foreign principles. While I wish to avoid speculations about Heidenstam's intentions, it is clear that his text was much more of a bid for primacy, than an actual statement on new ideas. For if Strindberg were merely employed as an example, then he can rightfully claim to have anticipated Heidenstam, even by the latter's own logic, but if

39 August Strindberg, *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche*, first published in *En Bok om Strindberg* and collected in STRINDBERG: 1918, 323–324.

40 Ibid., 323. My translation.

41 The two were frequent correspondents, Heidenstam had several of Strindberg's manuscripts in possession, and he certainly read his work. They were literary intimates.

42 See my first excursus, which starts on page 50.



Strindberg were the trope »Strindberg,« then he was merely a function of the individualizing effect of form-giving and served in Heidenstam's polemic as an example of the theory of form-giving in praxis as part of a bid for authentic individuality through the act of appropriation. In other words, Heidenstam gave Strindberg a new form, »Strindberg,« in order to individualize himself further. Heidenstam's argument is not aristocratic at all; it is once again the paradox of the bourgeois uncanny: one sees oneself as an individual through identification with a generalized image that is collective; in this case, Heidenstam chooses the image of the individual ennobled by his revolt against the masses.

It follows that »Strindberg« functioned as a metonym, a representation of Heidenstam's argument by virtue of a substitution of part for the whole in *reductio*. The use of this name represented the possibility of an aristocratic literature and the danger of falling prey to a fascination with the masses. Like Brandes' trope of the aristocratic radical, Heidenstam's »Strindberg« was self-reflexive, pointing back to Heidenstam as a newer and *healthier* force in Swedish letters who was able to see the mistakes of the previous generation of authors. In this sense, »Strindberg« did not function as an exemplar, but as a justification for the authenticity of Heidenstam's own production, acting as a trope representing continuity and the possibility of renewal despite the lack of any real foundation in the argument presented in *Renässans*.

#### Interlude: Two Norwegian Voices: Arne Garborg and Knut Hamsun

Up to now, our discussion about the Nietzsche reception and the anti-realist discourse has revolved around the categories of authenticity, appropriation, and origination. We have established that a concern with authenticity was a commonality in the work of the writers we have treated thus far, and when employed as a connotation of a trope, authenticity functioned self-reflexively despite its various ideological nuances. The notion of appropriation was given both a positive and negative valence. While it was given a negative connotation in Hansson's polemic against Brandes, it also enjoyed a positive valence when connected to the notion of creative form-giving. This form-giving process was attached to notions of national character, inwardness or »personality«. The category of origin carries the most variable meaning, but a commonality in the

work of Brandes, Hansson, and Heidenstam becomes evident when we consider that all three men posited twin trajectories of thought that acted upon each other in the Scandinavian cultural environment. All three men had in some way discussed the overcoming of cultural duality, but their use of the concept of origins was largely underdeveloped. Instead, in rather circular argumentation, they relied upon the notion of authenticity to represent the individual who was in himself an originator, a »personality«. This is the metaphysical aspect of each of these men's thought delineated by the terms: the *aristocratic radical*, the *pan-Germanic prophet*, and the *Swedish aristocratic author* in turn. I suggested that perhaps a better formulation would read *the bourgeois uncanny*. I also concluded that this reliance on the notion of personality was a strong misreading of Nietzsche, one in which the doer was *hinzugedichtet* into the deed. Strindberg would not make this mistake. Instead he would highlight the fictionality of this process, the poeticization of the self.

At this point, our argument would be well served by a glimpse at one specific aspect of the status of truth in the anti-realist discourse. It is not my intention to discuss the philosophical ramifications of the relationship of any truth claim to authenticity, but rather to illustrate the movement in the locus of the truth claim in the specific discourse under discussion. The reason for this decision is twofold. First, the purpose of our inquiry at this stage is to delineate the superficial commonality in the anti-realist discourse that provides the receptive environment for Nietzsche. A claim that the trajectory of thought upon which »Nietzsche« was grafted in Scandinavia was concerned with a secularization of any claim to truth is particularly demonstrated by the anti-realist discourse, where even the notion of a commonly held social agreement is questioned. This is certainly evident in both Hansson's and Heidenstam's attempts to construct two different notions of the authentic artist. Second, our claim that the seeds of this discourse germinated within the aporia of the discourse of Scandinavian modern realism finds additional substantiation when we recall that the status of truth within this discourse was dependent on either an agonistic model in Brandes' case or a retrospective, perspectival model in Bang's theory of realism. Hansson's valorization of Nietzsche and denigration of Brandes were dependent on an argument that credited the »Germanic« with creative interiority. In addition, Heidenstam's polemic derived its »foundation« from a similar position: here, »Swedishness« was a construction of a form-giving power which arose from a re-

shaping of common European elements through a process of individuation that came from a form-giving interiority. In Hansson's case, we have an agonistic and perspectival model; in Heidenstam's paradigm of »Renässans« literature, we have the call for a constructed national perspective that integrated foreign elements under a model of subsumption. In either case, whether it is Hansson's notion of a deferred experience of truth, or Heidenstam's conception of a constructed truth, the truth is based on interpretation and the validity of this interpretation is determined on the level of authenticity. Authenticity here is defined as the claim of possessing the quality of either having primacy of voice for a group of individuals or having the quality of being an exemplary individual. In Heidenstam's case, the authentic writer was exemplary of a notion of »Swedishness« predicated upon a rather vague construction of national temperament. The concept of authenticity was mutable in the anti-realist discourse, however. The commonality of usage resides on the level of the conflation of »personality« and text.

The anti-realist discourse had an antecedent in Strindberg's notion of a naturalism that is delimited by self-observation, and found its own truth claim weakened by its dependence on a model of authorship based on an individual perspective legitimized by authenticity. The discourse of authenticity utilized representative examples through the office of self-reflexive tropes, which were in the form of proper names. These proper names functioned as predicates that authenticated the enunciator in a self-reflexive fashion. This is the surface of the »Nietzschean« element in Scandinavian literature. The deeper structure of this trajectory can be found in the *genealogy of self*. The *genealogy of self* is dependent on the internalization of a weakened truth claim, and a claim of authenticity that is dependent on constructed elements. Therefore, it is fitting that we illustrate how the commonality of a weakened truth claim functioned within the anti-realist discourse before we address this issue in Strindberg and Nietzsche's authorships.

In order to illustrate how this trajectory, the discourse of anti-realism, represented both an internalization and a vitalization of the notion of truth, we now turn to the example of two Norwegian writers, Arne Garborg and Knut Hamsun. Garborg provides us with some insight into the movement of the location of truth in the work of the Scandinavian writers who would be associated with *Nietzscheanism* and Hamsun's essay on Strindberg gives us a compelling example of a contemporary concep-

tion of the Swede's status as an interpreter, and internalizer, of his intellectual environment. We will begin with Garborg.

The Norwegian novelist, poet, and playwright, Arne Garborg translated Ola Hansson's Nietzsche essay in 1890. Garborg was quite a prolific essay writer as well and two of his pieces are of particular interest for our exploration of the development away from dominant naturalist tendency in the avant-garde in the latter part of the century. Both *Naturalismen – Fremskridt eller Forfald?* (1882) and *Den idealistiske Reaktion – Nyidealismen* (1890)<sup>43</sup> provide us with an interesting perspective on the changing status of an artist's truth claim in the second wave of the Scandinavian modern breakthrough. Let us begin with Garborg's position on the status of a naturalist truth claim:

Digtningen kann ikke løse problemet, og det gjør naturalismen heller ikke fordring på; men den kan og skal gjennom levende billeder holde sandheden således frem for os, at vi tvinges til at tænke.

(Literature cannot solve the problem, and naturalism does not lay claim to that; but it can and will hold the truth in front of us through presenting us with living images and in such a manner so that we are forced to think.)<sup>44</sup>

In *Naturalismen – Fremskridt eller Forfald*, Garborg created an interlocutor, »Prof. Dietrichson« and placed the stereotypical objections to naturalism (or Brandesian realism) on his lips.<sup>45</sup> Garborg objected to the good Professor's postulations that authors should not represent political interests and they should stand above the fray.<sup>46</sup> Garborg disagreed and regarded naturalist aesthetics to be part a progression as it represented the literature that stood in »levende forhold til åndsretningen i sin tid« (vital relationship to the spiritual trajectory of its time).<sup>47</sup> This position was not unique and suffice it to say that Garborg's perspective on natural-

43 GARBORG: 1998. *Naturalism – progress or decline?* is found on pp. 172–179, *The idealistic reaction – New idealism* is found on pp. 271–284.

44 Ibid., 176. My translation.

45 Though »Prof. Dietrichson« represented the »old guard« and not the »young turks« of the anti-realist revolt, his objections were, for the most part, similar to Heidenstam's: fascination with the »low,« with ugliness, involvement in politics, the poet should be above the strife of the masses etc. Garborg's work certainly reveals that while Heidenstam was an aristocrat, he was not an *aristocratic radical*.

46 GARBORG: 1998, 179. »den virkelige digter ikke bør være partimand, men stå udenfor stimmelen.« My translation reads: »the real poet ought not to be a man of the party, but stand outside the crowd.«

47 Ibid., 173. My translation.

ism in this essay is not particularly original. However, his emphasis helps us to understand how the naturalistic truth claim was legitimated by an argument that associated social engagement with progressive literature. Strangely enough the road to truth traveled through fiction.

As queer as this might seem, it can be explained when we realize that Garborg, like many other of his contemporary Scandinavian naturalists, exhibited a keen interest in the scientific method and its relationship to art. He argued that the naturalist employed the methodology of the natural sciences basing his depictions on empirical observation. However, for Garborg, the naturalist is first and foremost an artist, and as such he particularizes his findings through the use of images.<sup>48</sup> Therefore the goal of the naturalist is not to be objective, but to be as objective *as possible*.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, truth in naturalist literature is re-presented in »living images« that act as a catalyst for thought; it can only be represented as the after-image of an observation. It is contingent upon perspective and the collective recognition of this perspective as a particular aspect of a particular »living reality«. Naturalism, for Garborg, was the speculative depiction of life with a truth claim that is contingent upon the validity of the perspective of the observer. This paradox of the truth of fiction was determined by the confluence of several relationships: the relationship of writing to its time, the relationship of the observer to the phenomena, and the relationship of the image produced from this observation to the mind of the reader. This model is very similar in deed to Brandes' model of a living literature. It differed in that it did not stress the antagonism of competing perspectives.

Garborg was to change his position on this issue, but his perspective maintained one theoretical consistency. By 1890, Garborg considered himself to be living in a time when »[d]en forandrede kunstopfatning har naturligtvis sin sidste grund i en forandret livsanskuelse. Den positivistiske filosofi behersker ikke længe det moderne sind; vi lever i hypnotismens og

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48 Ibid., 177. »Den naturalistiske methodes »videnskabelighed« består blot i, at digteren, gående ud fra almindelig videnskabelig grundsætningen bygger sin skildring på *iagttagelser*, videnskabelig nøgtern – objektiv – i sin skildring. Han bygger på iagttagelse, men skildrer billeder, – han er og bliver kunstner.« (The naturalistic method's »scientificness« consists only in that the poet, working from common scientific principles, builds his depiction on observations, scientifically sober – objective – in his depiction. He builds on observation, but depicts images, – he is and remains an artist.) My translation.

49 Ibid., 175.

spiritismens alder.« ([t]he changed conception of art naturally has its utmost basis in a change in the way life is understood. The positivist philosophy no longer rules over modern sensibility; we live in the age of hypnotism and spiritualism.)<sup>50</sup> Art still had a direct relationship to its age and intellectual climate, but Garborg understood the atmosphere to have rarefied dramatically in eight years.<sup>51</sup> A writer no longer represented his observation in the form of living images that were representations of an observed collective ›reality‹: »[i] udtrykkene, ikke ›virkeligheden‹ blev kunstværkets gjenstand« ([i]n impressions, not ›reality‹ became the artwork's object).<sup>52</sup>

Garborg's truth claim had commuted and was no longer contained in a living image of an actuality; it now resided in the perception of the artist as he observed an actuality. The notion of truth became self-reflexive, as it was not dependent on the mutual recognition of an image, but on an artist's sense of the authenticity of his own impressions. When we compare the language that Garborg used to describe his sense of the ›object‹ of the artwork, this movement becomes even more apparent. In 1882, Garborg posited that the artist *built his depiction upon observation*, »iagttagelser« in Norwegian; literally, »a taking in the act«. For Garborg, in 1890, *the act of observing itself became the object of observation*. The realist emphasis on *what* became the impressionist fascination with *how*.

Ned med skolerne altså! Skrive, ikke for at være naturalist eller klassicist, men for at være sand, – det er opgaven. Om man skildre indtryk fra den indre eller ydre virkelighed, om man elsker at gjenfremstille eller at »skabe,« at tegne eller at fantasere, – hvis man stræber at nå sit eget ideal, at fyldestgøre sine fordringer til sig selv, så er man sand, det er den eneste regel som kan gives

(So down with the schools! Write, not to be a naturalist or a classicist, but to be true, – that is the task. If one depicts impressions from the inner or outer reality, if one loves to represent or to »create,« to sketch or to imagine, – if one strives to reach his ideal, to fulfill the demands he places on himself, then one is true. This is the only rule that can be given.)<sup>53</sup>

50 GARBORG: 1998, 274, *Den idealistiske Reaktion – Ny-idealismen*. My translation.

51 Like many of his contemporaries, Garborg understood modern history to be an accelerated process. His notion of taste can be likened to Heidenstam's wheel, and that wheel turned faster and faster as time passed.

52 GARBORG: 1998, 272, *Den idealistiske Reaktion – Ny-idealismen*. My translation.

53 *Ibid.*, 282. My translation.

For Garborg in 1890, the only rule worth following is to be true to the demands that allow you to reach your own ideal as an artist. It is here that he shared Heidenstam's two-fold revolt against mimetic principles. The truth of the living image was no longer at issue; the emphasis had shifted to the possibility of being *true to yourself*. This shift in weight lifted the onus of having to be an imitator of either an aesthetic school or the world outside of yourself. Garborg went even so far as to dispute Heidenstam's notion of taste as a ground for an aesthetic theory. »Man disputerar ikke med en smagsretning; den er en kjendsgjærning og ingen teori. Den former sine teorier, når den allerede er der.« (One doesn't argue about a type of taste, it is a fact and not a theory. It forms its theories, when it is already there.)<sup>54</sup> For the Garborg of 1890, theory was an after-image that came after the facticity of taste, which is now elevated to ontological status.

This rejection of mimetic principles led to a dissolution of the trinity of relationships that had determined Garborg's notion of the truth of the living image in his naturalist phase. Of the three only one remained unchanged, that of the relation of writing to its time. The relationship of the observer to the phenomena observed had slipped to a relationship of the observer to the act of observation. The relationship of the image produced to the reader had lost its importance, being replaced by the artist's self-reflexivity, by the notion of being *true to oneself*.

Garborg's solipsism, the circular argument that the only discernible truth is to be true to oneself was a rhetorical device. The key to understanding this strategy and its implications comes when we consider the use of Nietzsche as a trope in this essay and the relationship of »Nietzsche« to Garborg's »norsk-norske efterskrift«.<sup>55</sup>

I Tyskland er Fr. Nietzsche med sin forgudelse af den store individualitet og sin foragt for masserne en beslægtet fremtoning. Her i Norge har ny-idealismen endnu ingen representant. Men den kan få. Jordbunden er forberedt. Jeg tror, vi alle tænker mer eller mindre impressionistisk.

(In Germany, Fr. Nietzsche, with his deification of the great individualist and contempt for the masses, is a related phenomenon. Here in Norway, new ideal-

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54 Ibid., 279. My translation.

55 Ibid., 282–285. »The very Norwegian Postscript.«

ism has no representative, as yet. But we can have one. The soil is prepared. I believe, that we all think more or less impressionistic.)<sup>56</sup>

Though this was the only reference to Nietzsche in the essay, this passage acts as a semantic portal for the postscript, which functions as a key to Garborg's critique of naturalism, which he claimed acted as a barrier to the artist achieving the type of authentic relationship to his art that is called for in this essay. First, let us note that Garborg did not use Nietzsche as an exemplar for a revitalization of Norwegian literature. »Nietzsche« was merely mentioned as the representative of a related literary movement in Germany. The key is that »Nietzsche« was named as the representation of a literary movement based on individualism and *impressionistic thinking*, which for Garborg meant an emphasis on the only truth an author could represent, the authenticity of his own perspective. Garborg considered authors like »Nietzsche« to be as yet nonexistent in Norway despite the tenor of the times.

Let us turn now to the »norsk-norske efterskrift« keeping another thought in mind: Garborg translated Hansson's Nietzsche essay and in this essay, Nietzsche is the ocean. Garborg's essay was largely in response to Heidenstam and Oskar Levertin's *Pepitas Bröllop*, a brochure that was a continuation of Heidenstam's polemic in *Renässans*. Garborg opened his postscript by admitting that he read this brochure in despair, for he realized that in Norway there never was any naturalist literature in a proper sense, and that the critics who opposed naturalism, the very same critics who he represented in the figure of »Prof. Dietrichson« in 1882, had only benefited from Heidenstam's critique.<sup>57</sup> The problem in Norway, according to Garborg, was not naturalism, but the distance between theory and praxis. The imperative is to experience »[i]kke på anden hånd, ikke teoretisk, men praktisk, og selv« ([n]ot second hand,

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 274. My translation.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 283. »Vi har ingen naturalistisk litteratur. Vi har bare nogle spredt begyndelser. Og det virker næsten løjerligt at læse de stærke udfald mod den naturalistiske skolekritik; det er nemlig den, vi plages mest af. Vi ligger og puffes med den gamle førnaturalistiske efterliggerkritik – som allerede har begyndt at tage *Pepitas Bryllup* til indtægt forresten – det er vor situation.« (We have no naturalist literature. We have only some diffuse beginnings. And it seems nearly silly to read these strong objections to the naturalist school, it is namely this that we are plagued most by. We struggle with the old, archaic, pre-naturalist critique, that already has begun to take »Pepitas Bröllop« to its credit by the way. That is our situation.) My translation.



not theoretically, but practically, and for yourself).<sup>58</sup> When we think of his earlier statements about representation, his postulation of the *living* image being fiction's truth has now been transformed to the authenticity of the already *lived* image as represented in literary art.

Garborg saw the ability to represent this authentic image as being dependent on experimentation and risk. He summed up his critique of Norwegian literature with an equivalent to the phrase, »nothing ventured, nothing gained«. <sup>59</sup> He argued that this reluctance to take chances resulted in the formation of a barrier, »a sea-wall« that isolated his fellow Norwegians<sup>60</sup> For Garborg, the real problem with Norwegian letters was not the debate between the naturalists and the new idealists, but the barrier that prevented authors from swimming in a sea of praxis. For it is beyond the breakwater that authentic literature is created:

Der ude går havet frit og stort i tårnhøje bøljer, og menneskene svømmer og anspænder sine kræfter, når toppene og slænges ned i dalene; men kraftige svømmere blir de, og rigt og stærkt blir deres liv. Vi har bygget vor molo og vover os sjelden udenfor den, kommer aldrig til toppen af nogen bølge og aldrig til bunden af nogen dal, undgår de store yderligheder, skumples bare lidt hidt og didt af de brudte bølgers efterslag; vor lykke er, at vi har havt disse store urbegavelse; men der kommer en tid, da vi vil ønske, at moloen havde været pokker i vold.

(Out there the ocean is free and great in tower-high waves, and the people swim and tax their powers, reach the tops and are thrown down into the valleys; but they become powerful swimmers and their lives become rich and strong. We have built our breakwater and seldom risk ourselves outside of it, never coming to the top of a wave and never down to the bottom of a valley, avoiding the great extremities, jostled just a little here and there by the breaking of the great waves; our happiness is that we have had these great primeval talents; but there will come a time when we will wish that the breakwater had gone to the devil.)<sup>61</sup>

Garborg proposed a solution to this problem in his postscript. From his perspective, the breakwater enclosed the Norwegians in provincialism, kept them from merging with the great ocean and from experiencing its passions. Garborg took recourse to *dannelse* (Bildung) as remedy. The complexity of Garborg's rhetorical strategy and its place in the anti-realist

58 Ibid. My translation.

59 Ibid. »Vi har lidet vovet og lidet vundet.« My translation.

60 Ibid. My translation. »[d]et er den store molo,« literally, [i]t is our great breakwater.«

61 Ibid. My translation.

discourse becomes apparent when observing the particular tropes he employed. Like Hansson, he used the metaphor of the ocean to express a merger of self and text. Like Brandes, he called for an educational renewal that would bring larger European trends into local cultural life.<sup>62</sup> In addition, he employed the Brandesian motifs of cultural deafness and sleep.<sup>63</sup> Garborg's solution to the gap between theory and praxis that he saw in his cultural environment entailed a simultaneous outward and inward glance. From Garborg's perspective, the artist whose only truth is contained within himself did not yet exist in Norway. The ground was prepared, but the insular environment had yet to allow for the type of exposure to the outside world that could produce a new literature. The metaphor of the breakwater had a double significance: it prevented those behind it from swimming in the great ocean and it kept those from beyond from entering. Seen in the light of the postscript of this essay, »Fr. Nietzsche« takes on an added significance of representing that which lies beyond the breakwater, he represents the ocean. The proper name »Nietzsche« had become a stand-in for the predicate of a sentence that could read: the authentic literary artist of our times would be a local species of »Nietzsche«.

Garborg's turn from naturalism involved a movement from a belief that an artist could represent living images from observation that could be commonly recognized as real to an insistence on an authentic and self-reflexive literature. His conception of the truth of literature had shifted. He assumed a position of compromise in the anti-realist debate, a perspective which lay somewhere in between Brandes and Hansson. The salient aspect of his perspective is that Garborg pointed out the dependence of *inwardness* upon access to the outside world. Knut Hamsun's article *Lidt om Strindberg* developed this idea in a more radical form. It is here that we can find a contemporary account of how Strindberg proc-

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62 Ibid. See the bottom of 283 and the top of 284 for Garborg's complaint about the provincialism of the Norwegian University.

63 Ibid., 284. »Men hvad kan det nytte at klage? Det er ingen som hører på det.« and 284, »... han vil, som jeg selv har gjort, henvise til vort stortings bekjendte liberalitet overfor videnskab, til vore små forhold, til den mange krav ... og så vil han snu sig om på andre sia og snorke videre.« My translations: What is the use of complaining? There is no one who listens to it.« and »he will, as I myself have done, point to our parliament's known liberalism towards science, to our relative smallness, to the many demands ... and then he will turn himself over to the other side and snore some more.«

essed his many intellectual influences and turned them inward. It is to this article that we now turn.

Knut Hamsun's Strindberg essay was published in its entirety in *En Bok om Strindberg* in 1894.<sup>64</sup> However, it had been previously published in two parts by the newspaper *Dagbladet* on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of December in 1889. Though not an obvious part of the anti-realist discourse, Hamsun was a fierce critic of the preceding generation of authors, and as such, his essay allows us to explore a perspective on Strindberg written by a writer who was a member of the second generation of modernists.

Hamsun admired Strindberg greatly<sup>65</sup> and his essay is interesting more for its emphasis than for any other quality. Here, Hamsun shows great concern for both Strindberg's connection to the intellectual life of his times and the mercurial aspect of the Swede's authorship:

Blot tilnærmelsevis at følge Gangen i hans Udvikling er et enerverende foretagende. Den store Fart, hvormed han har bevæget sig, Nervositeten, Ustadiheden i denne Bevægelse, paavirket af en og anden hovedkuls Omstændighed, afbrudt af desperate Sidespring, er fremmed for os i Norden. Hans Udvikling er overalt rig paa Belærelse og interessant at følge; han er et *ejendommeligt* menneskeligt Eksempel, en rød Klud, den nordiske Litteraturs uforudseede Tilfælde

(Merely to approximately follow the course of his development is a nerve-racking enterprise. The great speed with which he has moved, the nervousness, the instability in that movement, influenced by one upside down situation or the other, interrupted by desperate digressions, all this is foreign for us in the North. His development is everywhere richly instructive and interesting to follow; he is a *strange* human *exemplar*, a red flag, the unforeseeable case in Nordic literature.)<sup>66</sup>

For Hamsun, the hallmark of Strindberg's authorship is its propensity for constant change and the breath of the erudition that it expresses. Strindberg's course of development appears random from the outside, consist-

64 HAMSUN: 1965, 14–33, *Lidt om Strindberg* (*A little about Strindberg*).

65 Ibid., 14: »Det er nu mindst fjerde Gang, jeg skriver om Strindberg. Jeg vender altid med Glæde tilbage til ham; han har sysselsat mig mer end nogen anden og lært mig mer end de fleste. For mig er han sit Lands, maaske sin Tids mærkeligste Forfatterskikkelse: et overlegent Talent, en Hjerne tilhest, ridende sine egne Veje og efterladende de fleste andre langt bag sig.« (This is now at least the fourth time I am writing about Strindberg. I always return to him gladly. He has occupied me more than anyone else and taught more than most. For me, he is his country's, perhaps his time's, most remarkable literary figure: a superior talent, a brain on horseback, riding his own path and leaving most others far behind.) My translation.

66 Ibid. My translation.

ing of sharp turns and reversals; he exudes a nervous energy that is both unforeseeable and unique. There is a twin movement to this development: »Han har undersøgt det meste og angrebet alt.« (He has investigated most things and attacked everything.)<sup>67</sup> Hamsun's »Strindberg« seeks (»undersøke«) the bottom of things and his grasp is violent, he attacks (»angribe«) by grasping on that which he goes under to seek. There is a paradox to Hamsun's description. »Strindberg's« way of approaching contains the seeds of his movement away from his object. This movement is the key to understanding the relationship between knowledge and change for Hamsun's »Strindberg«.

This process can be explained more concretely when we place Hamsun's Strindberg essay within a context. Hamsun wrote: »Strindberg er maaske ikke først og fremst en Tænkner. Men en Observator er han. En Observator maa være lydhør, maa kunne iagttage med smaa Øjne og opfatte hurtig, og Strindberg har lyttet, seet og husket fortræffligt.« (Strindberg is perhaps not first and foremost a thinker. But he is an observer. An observer must be sharp eared, must be able to take things in with squinted eyes and take up things quickly, and Strindberg has listened, seen, and remembered remarkably.)<sup>68</sup> This leads to a question: what is observed by the observer in such rapid succession and at such a nervous pace? The answer can be found in another essay by Hamsun, *Fra det ubevidste Sjæleliv* (From the Unconscious Life of the Soul), written in 1890.<sup>69</sup> In this essay, Hamsun used the same adjective, »Lydhørhed« (sharp eared) to describe a particular type of observation.

Man har et gammelt Ord, som siger: Der er mangt skjult i Naturen. For vor Tids nervøse, undersøgende og lyttende Mennesker forbliver færre og færre af Naturens Hemmeligheder skjulte, en efter en bringes de frem til Observation eller Genkendelse. Hos flere og flere Folk, der lever et anstrængt Tankeliv, og dertil er ømtallige af Gemyt, opstaar den ofte sjælige Virksomheder af det underligste Slags. Det kan være aldeles uforklarlige Sandsetilstande: en stum, aarsagsløs Henrykkelse; et Pust af psykisk Smærte; en Fornemmelse af at blive talt til fra det fjærne, fra Luften, fra Havet; en grusom, fin **Lydhørhed**, der bringer én til at lide endog af Suset fra anede Atomer; en pludselig, unaturlig Stirren ind i lukkede Riger, der slaaes op; Anelsen af en forestaaende Fare midt i en Sorgløs Stund[.]

67 Ibid., 15. My translation.

68 Ibid., 18. My translation.

69 »Fra det ubevidste Sjæleliv« was published in *Samtiden* in 1890 and is also collected in HAMSUN: 1965, 33–44.

(People have an old saying: there is much that is hidden in nature. For our time's people, who are nervous, researching, and listening, fewer and fewer of nature's secrets remain hidden. One after the other is brought forward to observation or recognition. There is a strained intellectual life in more and more people, and they are thereby fragile of disposition, and in them there often occurs a strange type of activity of the soul. It can be an altogether inexplicable state of the senses: a mute, causeless rapture; a breath of psychic pain; a sensation of being addressed from afar, from the air, from the sea; a gruesome, fine, **sharp hearing**, which brings one to suffer even from the whisper from dimly perceived atoms; a sudden, unnatural gaze into closed realms, that are opened up; the perception of an imminent danger in the middle of a carefree moment [...])<sup>70</sup>

For Hamsun, the sharp-eared observer was the one who perceived the »unconscious life of the soul«. His description of this observer in 1890 has quite a few parallels to his description of Strindberg's thinking process written just the year before. These parallels inform us about how Hamsun understood Strindberg's intellectual disposition. Hamsun saw a relationship between uncovering nature's secrets and an increasing sensitivity to the unconscious life of the mind. This suggests that the answer to our question resides in the simultaneous uncovering of external and internal secrets. Hamsun believed that an understanding of nature is the gateway to an increased sensitivity for the workings of the unconscious; the observer observes his own inner life as he observes. One has only to recall Hamsun's own early production, in particular *Sult (Hunger)* (1890), *Mysterier (Mysteries)* (1892) and *Pan* (1894) to observe a conflation between the emotional life of a radically subjective narrator and his environment. Once again, it would be one-sided to say that Hamsun was influenced by Strindberg. Instead he created a »Strindberg« crafted in the image of his own literary aspirations and the commonality of a movement away from the presuppositions of the preceding literary generation was a determining factor in the tropical nuance of the proper name. In any case, the perception of the secret realms of inner life required an observer whose mode of observation captured the mercurial and paradoxical sensations produced by the distance of observation and the proximity of experience. The movement produced by this process was sudden, violent and irrational. This process is remarkably close to Nietzsche's genealogical method with its oscillation between the pathos of distance and the

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70 HAMSUN: 1965, 41. My emphasis and translation.

proximity of engagement.<sup>71</sup> Without having Nietzsche in mind, Hamsun understood this method as his own and as Strindberg's.

In his Strindberg essay, Hamsun had expounded upon what he saw as Strindberg's hostility towards culture and his advocacy of a return to nature.<sup>72</sup> I read Hamsun's use of the word »nature« to connote all that cannot be reduced by language, all that lies outside of human reason. In other words, *nature* was used by Hamsun as a term that represented the connection between the world outside and inside a human being.

The result of this relationship between the sharp-eared individual who senses his wordless inner depths is the sensation of being addressed from afar by that which lies deepest within. Hamsun described a state marked by the confluence of inner and outer nature, the originary state of a wordless union between self and non-self that has been read by others through the optic of the »Nietzschean« notion of the dionysian. For Hamsun, this state could justifiably be called the »Strindbergian«. For Hamsun, the name »Strindberg« becomes a metaphor that stands in for a literature that expresses a hostility to all that reduces the irrational to a rationalized social convention.

According to Hamsun, the literature produced in this hyper-sensitive state had a peculiar truth claim. Hamsun saw Strindberg's project as a radical reaction to the »untruth« that is culture. This is the context from which he understood Strindberg's aesthetic strategy. »Et landskabsmaleri kan aldrig opveje selve Landskabet, og en Venus af Sten aldrig en Kvinde av Kød og Blod. Hvad Digtningen angaar, saa blir Fremtidens Digtning ene og alene Referatet; ti kun i Referatet er der Sandhed, og kun sandheden er varig.« (A painting of a landscape can never capture the self same landscape, nor can a Venus of stone capture a woman of flesh and blood. Concerning letters, the literature of the future will therefore be only a summary account, for only in a summary account is there truth, and only truth has duration.)<sup>73</sup> The truth of art is located in an approximation, something that only approaches that which is *real*. This »truth« is, by its nature, a paradox, the sensation of the distance of what is near-

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<sup>71</sup> An explication of the genealogical method is the subject of the fifth chapter of this book.

<sup>72</sup> See HAMSUN: 1965, 18, 19, 21, *Lidt om Strindberg*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. My translation.

est to hand, and this is how Hamsun understood »Strindberg's« truth.<sup>74</sup> For him, the power and durability of Strindberg's appeal was contained within these paradoxes: »Selv Modstanderne af Strindbergs Grundanskuelse vil ofte nødsages til at give ham Ret i mange af hans uvorne Parodoxer. De hævdes med saa megen Kraft og Originalitet, at man rent uvilkaarlig føler sig slagen af deres Sandhed.« (Even the opponents of his basic premises will often be forced to admit that he is right in many of his paradoxes. They are asserted with so much power and originality that one feels involuntarily and completely struck by their truth.)<sup>75</sup>

This is the uniqueness of Hamsun's contribution to the anti-realist discourse. His understanding of Strindberg's production as containing a »truth« expressed in palinodic and paradoxical terms leaves us with some insight into how Strindberg's production utilized a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory influences as raw material for the construction of an authorial subjectivity. We will return to this subject when we address the positing of dual origins in both Nietzsche and Strindberg's *genealogies of self*. Suffice it to say for the moment that Hamsun's reading of Strindberg ascribed a process of internalization and contradiction to the Swede's authorship. In this essay the Swede's production was characterized by the internalization of the weakened truth claim of the anti-realist discourse. The internal landscape becomes the site of antagonistic perspectives. For Hamsun: Strindberg »siger ikke, udtaler ikke sin Mening, han saa at sige *exploderer* den« (does not say, does not speak out his opinion, he *explodes* it so to speak).<sup>76</sup>

This Nietzschean all too Nietzschean dictum is reminiscent of the philosopher's own statement: »Ich bin kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit.« (I am not a man, I am dynamite.)<sup>77</sup> While it is impossible that Hamsun had this phrase in mind (*Ecce Homo* had yet to be published), his understanding of Strindberg's work underscores the easy associations that could be used to link the two men. The paradox of self-creation through

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74 Nietzsche opens his preface to *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, (*On the Genealogy of Morals*) with the following line: »Wir sind uns unbekannt, wir Erkennenden, wir selbst uns selbst: das hat seinen guten Grund.« (We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason). NIETZSCHE: KSA 5, 1993, 248. For the English see DIETHE (tr.): 2007, 3.

75 HAMSUN: 1965, 19, »Lidt om Strindberg.« My translation.

76 Ibid., 32. My translation.

77 NIETZSCHE: KSA 6, 1988d, 365: *Ecce Homo*, »Warum ich ein Schicksal bin« (I).

self-destruction will be addressed at a later moment, however, the conflation of »Strindbergian« and »Nietzschean« motifs is telling. We will now turn back to the work of Ola Hansson and his contribution to the anti-realist discourse, where the merger between Strindberg and Nietzsche is even more apparent.

### Strindberg as a Trope in Ola Hansson's Discourse: The Paradox of Continuity and Renewal

Zarathustra blir symbolen för den suveräne personlighet som han tidigare velat se hos Strindberg. I en uppsats från 1891 heter det om Zarathustra i överensstämmelse med den tidigare Strindberg-karakteristiken: »Han är icke av den grund tänkare, i vilka alla stjärna röra såsom i cykliska banor; när han blickar in i sig själv såsom i ett oerhört världsrum, finner han där vintergator, oregelbunda, förande in i hans tillvarons kaos och labyrint. Han är personligheten par préférence, blott och bart personlighet: värld, konst, vetenskap, moral; han står såsom tänkare i ett personligt förhållande till sina problem, så att han i dem ser sitt öde, sin nöd, men också sin bästa lika.«

(Zarathustra becomes the symbol for the sovereign personality that he previously wanted to see in Strindberg. In a paper from 1891, Zarathustra is described in agreement with the earlier Strindberg characteristics: »He is not at bottom a thinker in which all the stars move in cyclical paths; when he looks into himself as if in an unheard of world, he finds winter streets irregular, leading into his existence's chaos and labyrinth. He is the personality par préférence, purely and only personality: world, art, science, morality; he stands as a thinker in a personal relationship to his problems, so that he sees his fate in them, his need in them, and also his best likeness.«)<sup>78</sup>

According to Ingvar Holm, Hansson first became enamored with August Strindberg during the latter's *Giftas* trial in 1884.<sup>79</sup> However, the two men did not enter into a correspondence until the fall of 1888 and met shortly thereafter. They were to remain friends until 1892 when their relationship fell apart due to a rather bitter dispute.<sup>80</sup> Very soon after the start of their correspondence, the subject of Nietzsche became a staple of both their

78 HOLM: 1957, 121. My translation. Note: The citation referred to by Holm is found in Hansson's posthumous writings on page 124.

79 HOLM: 1957, 196.

80 Ibid., 192: »Bekantskap mellan Strindberg och Ola Hansson började med svärmisk kult från den yngres sidan, den fortsatte som åtminstone tidvis oskyntad och ömsesidig vänskap och slutade med en krasch.« My translation. »The acquaintance-ship between Strindberg and Ola Hansson began with a romantic cult from the younger man's side [Hansson], it continued at least occasionally as an open and reciprocal friendship, and ended with a crash.«



meetings in Holte, Denmark and their letters. The contents of these letters will play a substantial role in our next chapter. Suffice it to say for the moment, that Strindberg was very much a part of the development of Hansson's »Nietzsche cult« and in a sense; the German replaced Strindberg on the highest rung of authenticity as this »cult« developed into an integral part of Hansson's pan-Germanic romanticism.

Hansson's perspective on Strindberg's relationship to Nietzsche's work shifted after *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* in 1889, and this slight shift in his angle of vision was very much precipitated by the older man's protests. However, our purpose here is to clarify further a question raised in our previous discussion of Hansson's Nietzsche reception: within Hansson's bifurcated tropic of »tolkare« (interpreter) and »siare« (prophet), who were to be Nietzsche's interpreters in the North? Our initial response was that Hansson himself aspired to play this role on a pan-Germanic scale. However, let us recall his metaphor of Nietzsche as the ocean, and the work of the interpreter is like a wave, which forms at some distance from its source. Although Hansson never had any personal contact with the philosopher, he was aware that Strindberg had corresponded with Nietzsche, and this was added to the already high status that Strindberg enjoyed in Hansson's eyes. Because of these factors – Hansson's previous admiration for Strindberg, the latter's contact with Nietzsche, and the force of his personality – the name Strindberg would be turned into a trope in Hansson's discourse around Nietzsche.<sup>81</sup> There are three aspects to this trope: Strindberg as the great personality, as a producer of subjective literature that formed a bridge between Hansson's conception of two antagonistic generations of Scandinavian authors, and as an interpreter of Nietzsche. We will treat each aspect in turn.

In the epigraph at the start of this section, Holm claims that Hansson's understanding of the figure of Zarathustra was derived from a previous understanding of Strindberg. Since a study of mutability of Ola Hansson's heroes is not within the parameters of our exploration, we will simply note that Holm sees a connection in Hansson's conception of the two men and thereby restrict ourselves to a notation of the characteristics of this figure. Zarathustra (Strindberg) is first and foremost a »personal-

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<sup>81</sup> Note: the connection between Hansson's discourse on Nietzsche and his anti-naturalist discourse has already been discussed. For all practical purposes, they are one and the same.

ity«. His thinking is not systematic, but rather an opening to an inner world created by the force of his own subjectivity. The conditions of his life are met with equanimity, and yet his mode of expression is dominated by pathos. As Hansson puts it:

Där låg i hela hans väsen, i hans stämmas tonfall, i hans mimik, i hans ätbörder, i allt, ett på samma gång behärskat och intensiv patos, vilket egendomligt harmonierade med ovädret utanför och vilket i min uppfattning vidgade sig och sammanslöt sig till det nationella temperamentet, den svenska folkindividualiteten.

(There lay in his entire being, in his voice's tone, in his expression, in his gestures, in everything, a pathos that was at the same time mastered and intensive, which strangely harmonized with the storm outside and which according to my understanding expanded itself and united itself with the national temperament, the Swedish folk individuality.)<sup>82</sup>

Hansson's 1891 essay painted a dynamic picture of a Strindberg both passionate and controlled. The dominant figure in the description is the depiction of a pathos that both individualizes and engenders a merger with the environment. In Hansson's mind's eye, this pathos, an individual characteristic born of suffering, colors Strindberg's entire being, and plays a constituent part in an internal process that allows him to merge his individual temperament with the *national character* of the Swedish people. His inwardness is what leads him to this intersection of the individual and the collective.

Hansson's Strindberg, like his Zarathustra, was a personality par préférence. If Brandes, Hansson's trope of inauthenticity, was depicted as reflecting the conflicts in his environment, »Strindberg« harmonized his environment internally in order to project his own personality on the external world. If the source of this great personality's connection to the soul of his people is a pathos that creates equilibrium out of suffering without the loss of intensity, then how does Hansson's »Strindberg« create? Hansson's essay provides us with an answer. According to Hansson, despite the range of Strindberg's production which he listed as »historiska skådespel, dramatiska sagospel, psykologiska dramer, kulturhistoriska noveller, sociala noveller, polemiska noveller, en vidlyftig självbiografi, en utförlig svensk kulturhistoria, folklivsskildringar, dikter, satirer, essays, med mera« (historical dramas, dramatic fantasies,

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82 HANSSON: 1921b, 66. First published in German as *Das junge Skandinavien*. (Dresden: E. Pierson, 1891). My translation.

psychological dramas, culture historical novellas, social stories, polemical stories, an extensive autobiography, an exhaustive Swedish cultural history, stories of folk life, poems, satires, essays, and more),<sup>83</sup> there is a common feature in all of his work. This commonality has its origin in Strindberg's personality, which leaves an unmistakable imprint (»avtryck«) in whatever he writes.<sup>84</sup>

»Allt vad Strindberg äger, är förvärvat ur första hand: kunskaper, livserfaring, utveckling.« (All that Strindberg possesses, is acquired first hand: knowledge, life experience, development.)<sup>85</sup> Hansson's »Strindberg« uses that which is his and his alone by virtue of his individuality. His authorship is creative because that which he knows had a subjective base in an »original form« and his work is based on that which he experiences. In a sense, Hansson delimited a self-sustaining economy for his ideal poet: all that he writes comes from his own experience; and this experience is refracted through a subjectivity whose pathos is an individual extension of the folk. This pathos, in turn, is harmonized with an external world, which is created in its own image.<sup>86</sup> The world is subjectivized and the act of writing is merely a reaffirmation of the inner world of the authentic poet. He creates the world in his own image emanating out from pathos. »Och däri ligger grunden, varför varje Strindberg diktning har en doft av daggiga växtighet, medan så många andra böcker se ut som pressade blommor.« (And in this lies the basis of why every Strindberg work has the aroma of dewy vegetation while so many other books look like pressed flowers.)<sup>87</sup>

Despite the fact that he emerged as an author during the first wave of the modern breakthrough and he considered himself a naturalist, Strindberg's writing was depicted by Hansson as living. For Hansson like for Heidenstam and for Hamsun Strindberg was not a dead naturalist despite

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83 Ibid., 88. My translation.

84 Ibid. »Men så fullt utbildad var denna individualitet redan i sin ursprungliga form, att de avtryck, som var efterlämnad i alla dessa många diktverk, liknade varandra på ett hår.« My translation. »But this individuality was already so fully educated in his original form that those imprints, that were left in all these many poetical works, resembled each other to a tee.«

85 Ibid. My translation.

86 With these formulations, Hansson wonderfully describes his own creative work of the 1890s. See also ANDERSEN: 1992.

87 HANSSON: 1921b, 89. My translation.

his self-definition. The depiction of Strindberg as someone who made use of his own experience in his writing stands in sharp contrast to Hansson's depiction of Brandes' appropriation of foreign thought. It is important to keep this in mind, for our original inquiry was about who Hansson saw as an authentic interpreter of Nietzsche. Brandes, the initial interpreter, was deemed to be inauthentic on both racial and generational grounds. Hansson depicted this inauthenticity as deriving from Brandes' biological confliction, his being at the same time a Jew and a Dane. Strindberg, like Brandes, was depicted as being conflicted, but unlike Brandes, Hansson gave his »Strindberg« the qualities of *Innerlichkeit* and concreteness necessary to fit his ideological picture of a pan-Germanic author. Strindberg reconciled his disharmony harmoniously, for he carried the pathos necessary for the task.

As a result of these qualities, Strindberg was not subjected to the generational polemic delivered by Hansson. He saw the older man as »den mest utpräglade svensken inom hela det ›unga Sverige‹« (the most distinctive Swede within ›young Sweden‹).<sup>88</sup> Again the paradox of Hansson's racially driven reasoning emerges. Strindberg, who is »ensammare än någon annan man i Skandinavien« (more alone than any other man in Scandinavia),<sup>89</sup> is the most Swedish of all the Swedish authors. Hansson gives Strindberg's internalization of the conflicts in his environment the quality of a personal conflict. As a result of this reasoning, Hansson understood Strindberg's production to act as a bridge between the past and the future:

Den skönlitterära produktionen växer alltså i tre grener. *Det unga Sverige* i trängre mening målar med starkt personlig konst och med minutiös noggrannhet själslivets rörliga spel med dess ljus och skugga. De litterära koryfèerna för den så kallade kvinnofrågan kämpa för *sin* sak i böcker och från scenen med mer energi än talang. August Strindbergs mäktiga ande omspannar bäggedera. Han är den förste och den störste.

(The literary production grows therefore in three branches. *Young Sweden*, in a more narrow sense, paints with strongly personal art and with minute exactitude the life of the soul's dynamic play of light and shadow. The literary troops for the so-called women's question struggle for their cause in books and from

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88 Ibid., 91. My translation.

89 Ibid., 112. My translation.

the stage with more energy than talent. August Strindberg's powerful spirit spans both sides. Strindberg is the first and the greatest.)<sup>90</sup>

Within the ideological paradox of a call for renewal along age-old racial lines, a representative individual is needed to keep the paradigm from bursting asunder. Any call for a cultural revitalization based on racial or cultural purity needs to construct a figure that represents both continuity with the essential values of the nation and the promise of a better future. The name Strindberg played that role in Hansson's discourse. Hansson saw Strindberg's production as encompassing the essential characteristics of a personality that instinctively was united with his concept of »Swedishness« in the context of the greater-German cultural nation. As such, Strindberg had a distinct role to play in Hansson's understanding of the role of the authentic poet. For the young ones »visar han hän mot den dunkel höljda framtid, vilken den store diktaren är kallad att fatta med sin aning« (he points towards the unrevealed future, which the great poet is called upon to grasp with his foresight).<sup>91</sup> In Hansson's worldview, Strindberg would show the way to the future, and this future was determined by the current's return to the primordial ocean, Nietzsche.

For Hansson, the future of Scandinavian culture would be played out along pan-Germanic lines. This idea in all its complexity found its abbreviation in the name Nietzsche. The significance of Strindberg as metaphor here is telling on the level of a »logic« fueled by ideology. »Strindberg« as trope represented the essential modern Swedish writer for Hansson. In Hansson's anti-naturalist discourse, he was the figure who was able to integrate the conflicts of the age in a manner that reformed the agon of a conflicted social environment into a pathos that was both timeless and intrinsic to his blood. By fusing »Strindberg« to the philosopher, the Swede becomes part of a current flowing out from the great ocean that Hansson understood as »Nietzsche«.

We will leave the relationship between Hansson and Strindberg for the moment, only to return to it in greater detail in the next chapter. For Hansson's depiction of Strindberg's relationship to Nietzsche will have a telling effect on the scholarship on the encounter between the two. It is to this scholarship and its primary sources that we now turn.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 83: My translation.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. My translation.

## Section II: The Encounter between Strindberg and Nietzsche

### Chapter 4: The Impossibility of Influence or How the Story Has Been Told

The significance of this encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg falls along the fault lines of contemporary theoretical discourse. Questions concerning modernity and particularly the collision between religious and secular discourse emerge when we examine aspects of Strindberg's protean production through the prism of Nietzsche's thought. The problem of what it means to be a being in the flow of time is highlighted in the two men's work by the collision between two distinct ways of experiencing time: a linear, eschatological temporal construction and a circular, subjective experience of chronology. This collision expresses a modern, tragic view of existence. An understanding of tragedy refracted through a modernist lens shows itself to be the cornerstone of Nietzsche's philosophy and the basis for Strindberg's understanding of the self.

While the importance of the relationship between Nietzsche and Strindberg has elicited some interest, there is no comprehensive inquiry into the confluence of these aspects of their thought. There are a few sections of a few books that attempt to determine Nietzsche's influence on Strindberg, and all have concluded that the influence is minimal so the subject is of little importance.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I argue that the significance of Nietzsche's encounter with Strindberg resounds within the discourse of modernity, and furthermore, Nietzsche provides us with a theoretical explanation of Strindberg's notion of subjectivity while Strindberg consciously experiments with the fictional possibilities of Nietzsche's thought.

It is a bit puzzling that Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche has been largely glossed over, considering the place that the former holds in the history of modern drama. Perhaps this is explained by the inaccessibility of the bulk of Strindberg's prose works to a reader who cannot read Swedish, but in any case, even those who can read the language have relegated the encounter to an insubstantial moment. It is my belief that

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<sup>1</sup> In recent years, there seems to be a renewed interest in the encounter.

this scholarly neglect comes from a reliance on a rather fruitless analytical model. For the Swedish and German scholarship on the encounter has used a critical model based on notions of influence that has failed to register the importance of the commonalities in Strindberg and Nietzsche's work. I part company from this tradition.

Both the primary sources typically used to tell the story of the encounter between August Strindberg and Friedrich Nietzsche and the history of the scholarship which reconstructs this narrative present us with a quandary. How is one to read the seemingly contradictory statements made by the Swede about the effect that the philosopher had on his life and work? The information available to make this determination is indeed limited. The effect of the encounter is generally viewed as being defined by an exchange of correspondence and books. The letters between the two men are few in number and span a mere month and a half. Nietzsche was institutionalized shortly thereafter. Nonetheless, most scholars have relied on this correspondence and a thematically structured sample of Strindbergian texts to recount this tale and determine its significance. This has led to two lines of thought in the scholarship on the subject whose conclusions seem to merge: one which claims that the encounter was of little literary significance, the other which engenders a scholarly preoccupation with influence. As Nietzsche's productive life ended shortly after his last letter to Strindberg, interpreters of the encounter have turned to Strindberg's own statements about Nietzsche's influence on his work, and an analysis of a basic set of *Nietzschean* themes in Strindberg's work from the ensuing period. They have found Strindberg's statements to be contradictory and his *utilization* of the Nietzschean themes to show an *inadequate* understanding of the philosopher's thought. As a result, the general conclusion is that Nietzsche's influence on the Swede was rather trivial and that Strindberg exerted no influence at all on the German. While the first line of thought starts out from a psychological principle by claiming that Strindberg suffered from a sense of growing isolation and an acute inferiority complex, the second uses a textual base, searching for thematic congruity, and deems Strindberg to have *misread* and *misappropriated* the Nietzschean motifs of the *Übermensch* and *der Wille zur Macht*. In either case, the contradictory statements by Strindberg are smoothed out by positing that either he was on his way to the breakdown of his Inferno crisis or he was resistant to the influence of a more radical thinker.

### A Survey of the Scholarship: How the Story Has Been Told

The first prominent treatment of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg appeared as an appendix to Torsten Eklund's 1948 dissertation, *Tjänstekvinnans son, en psykologisk Strindbergsstudie*.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the notion of the *Übermensch*, Eklund allowed that the contact with Nietzsche might well have hastened Strindberg's development, but he posited that the philosopher's work had little or no significant impact on Strindberg's literary production as a whole. He substantiated his claim by stating that Strindberg's conception of the *Übermensch* was much too intellectual to have derived out of a direct influence from Nietzsche. He traced the Strindbergian inflection of this Nietzschean figure, with its most prominent example given as Axel Borg<sup>3</sup> through Max Nordau.<sup>4</sup> Rejecting Strindberg's reading of the philosopher as being too alien, Eklund took refuge in an analysis of the psychological predisposition which engenders this very concept: »Går man till botten med Nietzscheanismen, både hos mästeren själv och hos hans lärjungar, skall man överallt finna en likartad psykologisk bakgrund: en ömtålig diktarsjäl som med kränkt självkänsla tvingats att svälja orättvisor.« (If one goes to the roots of Nietzscheanism, one would find in both the master and his apprentices a fragile poetic soul, who must swallow injustice with wounded pride.)<sup>5</sup>

His conclusion can be summed up as follows: Strindberg's isolated position within the Scandinavian literary community occasioned an inferiority complex that left him predisposed to receive the work of the philosopher with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm, however, resulted in a feeling of compensation for the treatment he felt himself to have suffered at the hands of his contemporaries. His intellectual development was confirmed, perhaps accelerated, but not changed by his contact with Nietzsche.<sup>6</sup> Eklund's argument depends on the opposition between the

<sup>2</sup> EKLUND: 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Inspector Axel Borg is the main character in Strindberg's novel, *I havsbandet* (*By the Open Sea*).

<sup>4</sup> Max Nordau was a medical doctor, the author of *Entartung*, an early Zionist, and one of Nietzsche's harshest critics.

<sup>5</sup> EKLUND: 1948, 369. My translation.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Lamm, referring to Eklund, articulated this position well. He wrote: »Kanske borde man snarare säga att han [Strindberg] framförallt påverkad av Nordau –



notions of *application* and *misapplication*. In a stance that is quite similar to Heidenstam's conception of his naturalism, Strindberg is said to have *misread* his own Nietzscheanism.

In 1956, Harald Borland published his dissertation: *Nietzsche's Influence on Swedish Literature – With Special Reference to Strindberg, Ola Hansson, Heidenstam, and Fröding*. There is not much that differentiates Borland's reading of the encounter from Eklund's analysis. He argues that:

The suddenness and violence of the Strindberg-Nietzsche encounter in 1888 tend to make the other events in Strindberg's life and literary production in the eighties jolt out of perspective; it is very tempting to regard Strindberg as a predestined Nietzschean passing through a period of unconscious initiation. But it is truer to say that he was moving towards his own form of violent individualism.<sup>7</sup>

Borland reasons that Nietzsche became a justification for Strindberg's ideological turn, a turn that has primarily a psychological significance. If in Eklund's view this psychological dimension was the projection of a compensatory defense mechanism, for Borland, the issue was the justification of an earlier shift to an individualistic ideology.

The Norwegian scholar Harald Beyer's *Nietzsche og Norden* was published in 1958. There is a chapter on Strindberg in the second volume of this extensive treatment of Nietzsche's reception in Scandinavia. Beyer's analysis is based more on literary texts than either Eklund's or Borland's work, but this is less dissimilarity than a matter of emphasis. If Eklund analyzed Strindberg's psychological predisposition and supported his thesis by showing Strindberg's *misreading* of Nietzsche, and Borland built his argument on Eklund's evidence only to de-personalize his findings by moving from Eklund's claim to have access to Strindberg's internal state to a public justification, then Beyer used a survey of texts to make the same claim; Strindberg's *Übermensch* was not Nietzschean, but what he calls an »intelligensaristokraten« (intelligence aristocrat).<sup>8</sup> Beyer

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såsom Ekelund visat – föregripit sin egen Nietzscheanism.«(Perhaps one ought to sooner say that he [Strindberg], particularly influenced by Nordau – as shown by Eklund – anticipated his own Nietzscheanism.) My translation. Citation found in LAMM: 1948, 173.

7 BORLAND: 1956, 24.

8 BEYER: 1959, 58. The term *Intelligence aristocrat* was first used by Bengt Lindfors in 1908.

concludes that with the writing of both *I Havsbandet* (*By The Open Sea*) and an essay on Voltaire, »kulminerte Nietzsche-perioden i Strindbergs liv« (the Nietzschean period in Strindberg's life culminated).<sup>9</sup> Beyer's text based analysis limits Nietzsche's influence even further: to a period of less than two years.

Horst Brandl's *Persönlichkeitsidealismus und Willenskult. Aspekte der Nietzsche-Rezeption in Schweden*<sup>10</sup> is the main German contribution to the scholarship. He begins with a critique of Borland and Beyer's work, with his main complaint being the inadequate level of abstraction in both men's analyses. Beyer is criticized for not defining the terms of his analysis of reception, and Borland is taken to task for not showing how Nietzsche was used in the poetic production of the authors under his analysis. Brandl's own analysis starts out by tracing the notion of the individual in Sweden. Nietzsche entered the scene at a time when there was a revolt against the established bourgeois notion of the individual, a conception influenced by both Geijer and Boström who were in turn influenced by German Idealist Philosophy. His thesis that the fascination with Nietzsche in Swedish intellectual and artistic circles has its basis in »[d]ie Diskrepanz, die Nietzsche zwischen offizieller Kultur und dahinter sich verbergender politischer, sozialer und ökonomischer Realität aufdeckt« (the discrepancy between official culture and the hidden political, social and economic reality, which Nietzsche uncovers),<sup>11</sup> is compelling, but fails to explain why such disillusionment would not lead to a socialist or anarchist solution (to which Strindberg had been previously disposed) or any turn away from a stable notion of received truth rather than an intensified cult of individuality.

Brandl's treatment of Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche does not differ much from the others. As for Strindberg, Brandl's analysis emphasizes a different aspect of his reception of Nietzsche, but once again the results of his investigation resemble Beyer's<sup>12</sup>: Nietzsche represented a

9 BEYER: 1958, 83. My translation.

10 See BRANDL: 1977.

11 Ibid., 30. Brandl relies here on AHLSTRÖM: 1947, and footnotes his source. Translation mine.

12 BRANDL: 1977, 42–43, writes: »Nietzsche kann Erfahrungen, die Strindberg schon gemacht hat, allenfalls bestätigen oder verstärken. Auf seinen neuen Weg wird Strindberg nicht gewiesen. Seine Distanzierung von Nietzsche setzt denn auch schon bald danach, etwa ein Jahr später, ein. Zur Bekräftigung seiner Einsicht in das Untermensch-

»Durchgangsstadium« (transitional stage) in Strindberg's development. Brandl, however, makes an interesting point whose one-sidedness holds the key to understanding how to address an encounter, which has heretofore been written off as being of little importance. In his article, *Skandinavische Aspekte der Nietzsche-Rezeption*, Brandl writes: »Strindberg behält auch in Phasen scheinbarer Monomanie Distanz zu sich selbst. Seine wenigen Briefe an Nietzsche – vier an der Zahl –, die enthusiastische Bekenntnisse enthalten, vermitteln zugleich den Eindruck der Distanz zum Adressaten wie zu sich selbst.« (Strindberg maintains an apparent distance to himself even in phases of monomania. His few letters to Nietzsche – four in number –, which contain enthusiastic confessions give the impression of distance both to the Addressee and to himself.)<sup>5</sup>

His claim is based on a reading of the correspondence that does not allow for a contextualization of the Strindberg-Nietzsche correspondence through an analysis of the letters that they wrote to others about each other. In this way, a rather telling error is made. First, the fascination with influence disallows an analysis of the epistemology of Nietzsche's correspondence, as it is assumed that the effect of the encounter was one-sided. Though Nietzsche produced no work after the encounter, his letters to others about Strindberg reveal how he received and processed the Swede's work. Secondly, while it is impossible to determine whether

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liche des ›übermenschlichen‹ Individualisten verweist er dann Mitte der neunziger Jahre warnend auf Nietzsche.« Six years later in an article entitled *Skandinavische Aspekte der Nietzsche-Rezeption*, published in *Nietzsche-Studien* 12, Brandl writes: »Im ganzen läßt sich nicht davon reden, Strindbergs Denken wäre unter dem Einfluß Nietzsches qualitativ verändert worden.« (BRANDL: 1983, 417).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Translation mine. Interestingly enough, this postulation is echoed by the Swedish scholar Gunnar Brandell. In his three-volume Strindberg biography, BRANDELL (1985, 226) writes: »Nu infaller också den berömda korrespondensen med Nietzsche som börjar i förvirring och slutar med vansinniga utrop på grekiska och latin. Nietzsches dårskap visade sig äkta, medan Strindbergs var låtsad, och kontakten som sådan had mest symbolvärde.« (Now began the famous correspondence with Nietzsche, which started in confusion and ended with insane exclamations in Greek and Latin. Nietzsche's madness proved to be genuine, while Strindberg's was pretense, and the contact as such had mostly symbolic value.) My translation. Brandell conceptualizes a notion of real and feigned madness. The methodology here is problematic: the claim that Nietzsche's letters have a mimetic value proven by his institutionalization early in the next year and that Strindberg's letters are merely symbolic creates a methodological claim that Nietzsche as person equals his text and Strindberg's text remains to be interpreted as text.

there was any change in Nietzsche's thinking as a result of the encounter, a reading of both men's letters illuminates a commonality, a mode of valuation that can be traced philosophically through Nietzsche's statements about naming and *das Pathos der Distanz*. This is congruent with Strindberg's negotiation of his past throughout his authorship.

The encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg informs us about a process of subject formation; the issue of influence is impossible to negotiate. Facing this dilemma, the canonical scholarship on the subject has instead been about the impossibility of influence. The fascination with influence blinds these readers to the notion of a commonality, which I believe that both men recognized. This salient issue in the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg is a matter of process and not influence, or put in the Nietzschean terms, a matter of form and not content.<sup>14</sup>

It is my contention that the scholarship to date has not treated the significance of the dynamic of proximity and distance in Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche, nor has it considered the same phenomenon in the philosopher's reception of Strindberg's work. As we saw in our analysis of Hamsun's »Strindberg,« this movement was representative of an internalization process of a weakened truth claim that was intrinsic to Strindberg's engagement with his intellectual influences. On the fourth of December in 1888, Strindberg wrote:

Eget att jag nu genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap att »opponera mot allt«. Jag omtaxerar och sätter nya värden på gamla saker! Det har man ej förstått. Knappt jag sjelf.

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<sup>14</sup> Influence-based analyses of the encounter have attempted to read the »Nietzschean content« in Strindberg's production. Proponents of this methodology have compared a received reading of *Nietzschean thought* with a reconstruction of Strindberg's reading of the philosopher. In other words, they have read Strindberg's work in order to determine its proximity to *their own* understanding of Nietzsche's work. I am much more interested in a process of valuation that is common to both men. This process utilizes a dynamic between distance and proximity. This process has formal characteristics. The content, the metaphorical complex that results from this process is considered, but it is subordinated to the formal components of the commonality. In other words, I am not concerned with the degree of fidelity that Strindberg's work has to »Nietzschean content.« I am not concerned with whether »Johan« from *Tjänstekvinnans son* is an *Übermensch* or whether the »battle of the brains« is a species of *der Willie zur Macht*. I am concerned with the way that both men understand subjectivity as a creative process and not as a *fact*, and I am interested in the commonality of the way they perform this creative process.

(Strange, through Nietzsche I now find the system for my madness in opposing everyone. I re-evaluate and place new values on old things. No one has understood this, not even myself).<sup>15</sup>

The question of the relationship between Strindberg and Nietzsche concerns modernity and not the reified notion of individuality; it concerns intellectual history and not hero worship and influence.

As depicted in the first half of this monograph, Nietzsche's timeliness resides in the question: How can one depict the ephemera of contemporary forms of existence so that the depiction remains as a part of the constituent vocabulary for a yet to be determined future? Late nineteenth-century thinkers faced this problem with an acute sensitivity for the evanescence of a seemingly ever-changing world while exhibiting an equally strong and contradictory desire to create new and lasting ways to describe it. Strindberg found that Nietzsche had given him a »system« for his own confrontation with becoming, yet he understood modernity to be antagonistic to systems and categories. So despite the citation above, he remarked paradoxically: »Det är modernt af Nietzsche att ej göra system.« (It is modern of Nietzsche to eschew a system.)<sup>16</sup> Second-wave modernists tended to designate the times as transitory, as passing away; yet there was also a discernable impulse to create something that would survive its maker, what Baudelaire called the classic in the modern. Perhaps this is what is implied in our paired citations, Nietzsche's systemless system.

The elasticity of the Nietzschean text fits famously with the contradictory elements that confronted a second wave of modern thinkers as they sought to explode the straightjacket of reason. Declining either a return to the mystical yearnings of Romanticism or German Idealism's systemic enshrinement of rationality, a generation of authors was drawn to the flame of Nietzsche's thought, even if his fame came ironically after his own flame had been extinguished. We often learn of the Nietzschean contribution to contemporary debates through the extensions of his philosophy, through his legacy. As a result, we have a tendency to accept Nietzsche's claim that he was an untimely philosopher. Placing Nietzsche in dialog with Strindberg examines his initial impact in dialogic form, thereby illustrating just how timely Nietzsche was for his contemporaries and why he remains so for us.

<sup>15</sup> STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1715 to Georg Brandes, Dec. 4, 1888. Translation mine.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Letter 1718 to Ola Hansson, Dec. 7, 1888. Translation mine.

The *quarrel between the ancients and the moderns* seemingly settled by Enlightenment parties of progress in favor of those born late is reconfigured in Nietzsche and Strindberg's authorships as the anticipated triumph of those born posthumously. Bourgeois self-satisfaction gives way to a dynamic anticipation of a future outside of the laws of orderly progression. A consideration of the two authorships creates a window through which one can see the dilemma of the modern subject as he struggles to understand how to become who he might be in an environment devoid of the earthly guarantee of socially stable positions or the divine sanction of an interventionist God. Nietzsche and Strindberg both conceive of the self as a multiplicity and subjectivity as a negotiation between narratives.

This issue is not individuality, but the problem of modernity as it pertains to subjectivity. The cult of individuality is an ideological affect of the moment, not its truth. Nietzsche and Strindberg show us this as they concerned themselves with this antinomy of change and duration and how this sets the parameters for a process of self-description based on contradiction. Their encounter illuminates how the concomitant problem of becoming a modern subject is necessarily inflected by a sense of irony. Nietzsche's paradoxical claims that the world is in a state of infinite becoming and that one should love his fate thereby becomes a timely description of his historical moment. Because of this the name Nietzsche slips into the discourse of modernity with remarkable facility.

Strindberg was self-consciously »modern«. For the quixotic Swede, this meant living in anticipation of a future built with the contradictory raw material of his psychological and historical moment. Like many others of his generation, he regarded modernity as an ever growing complexity without reconciliation. A unified sense of the true or the good or the beautiful dissipated within a self-understanding epitomized by a line he would write in another letter in May of 1888: »Motsägelserna i mitt förfateri bero på att jag ställt mig eller stått på olika ståndpunkter för att få se saken från många sidor! Det är ju rikt och humant.« (The contradictions in my authorship result from my changing perspectives, from the desire to see things from many sides. This is certainly rich and humane.)<sup>17</sup> Strindberg had opened his previous letter to Heidenstam by urging his corre-

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Letter 1611 to Verner von Heidenstam, written around the 17th of May, 1888. Translation mine.

spondent to »Köp dig en tysk modern filosof som heter Nietzsche [sic] om hvilken G.B. hållit föreläsningar. Der står allt att läsa! Neka dig ej njutningen! N är skald också.« (Buy a German, modern philosopher named Nietzsche [sic] on whom G.B. has given some lectures. Therein is all that there is to read! Do not deny yourself the pleasure! N is also a poet.) Strindberg's self-understanding, his »modernity,« formed itself around a constellation of subjective values forged after the loss of an Archimedean point. Nietzsche provided him with his systemless system, which he believed to have articulated his own restless process of emergent multiplicity in a theoretical form.

The epistemology of the encounter is marked by a decided irony, a making proximate of the other through identification, and the taking of distance in order to judge. In other words the correspondence provides us with an actual example of how Nietzsche's *pathos of distance* has a counter-movement, an assimilation of the other through the modality of a polemic. The encounter and its aftermath shed new light upon both Nietzsche's philosophy and Strindberg's authorship. I would go as far to claim that this tale gives us new insight into how the ironic subjectivity of late nineteenth century letters anticipates psychoanalytic theory, while highlighting the narrative core of this irony, the collision of secular and religious discourses. For both men *the death of God* necessitated the narrative substitution of the self for Christ and in this way a study of the two authorships illuminates that the modern paradox of creating within the parameters of both continuity and renewal necessitates strategies based on irony and parody.

If as Jürgen Habermas claimed, modernity cannot »borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*,<sup>18</sup> then how can this self-legitimization function in an age all too eager to create progressive narratives of historical development? The salient issue is not a cult of the individual, but how the conflation of agonistic narratives is central to the genealogical conception of subjectivity shared by Nietzsche and Strindberg. The *genealogy of self* serves as a conceptual apparatus with which the irony inherent in modernism's acute sense of its own contradictions is internalized. It is my argument that these contradictions make Nietzsche and Strindberg our contemporaries.

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18 HABERMAS: 1987, 6.

### Excursus: The Problem of Nietzsche Reception

This excursus is concerned with developing a methodological alternative for analyzing the encounter between Strindberg and Nietzsche. The rather thin body of primary source material presents us with a problem right from the start. Two questions immediately arise: Knowing that Nietzsche's productive life ended right after his encounter with Strindberg, and seeing that the scholarly literature on the subject relies on a critical paradigm which provides us with little more than a marginalization of the effects of the exchange between the two men, how can we proceed? And how can we determine the broader implications of Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche? The general difficulty of Nietzsche reception is greatly compounded, in our case, by the enormous range of Strindberg's own reading and the great enthusiasm he expressed for a wide variety of intellectual figures during the course of his long career. Strindberg sang the praises of Darwin, Dickens, Kierkegaard, Rousseau, Poe, Schopenhauer and Swedenborg among others. He played the part of a pietist, a socialist, an anarchist, an atheist, a scientist, and a religious convert at various stages of his life. The diversity of these influences on Strindberg and the mercurial aspects of his production demand a new approach to the subject of his encounter with Nietzsche.<sup>19</sup> It follows that the answer to both of our questions is one and the same and is provided by a shift in the critical model. We can only fruitfully approach the encounter from a methodological perspective that factors in the *broader implications*. Therefore, my own approach is informed not by the degree of influence exerted, but by the category of commonality.

The discussion that follows will address this category, and I will attempt to justify my decision to favor commonality over an influence model of reception. It is my contention that an analysis of the encounter that utilizes commonality instead of influence has the advantage of being more applicable to Nietzsche reception in general and more fruitful in the

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<sup>19</sup> The breadth of Strindberg's erudition was great and colored his reception of Nietzsche. I am not treating the theoretical problems raised when applying a theory of influence to anyone; instead I employ an analysis of the particular case for two reasons: 1) the employment of the particular case is true to my theoretical claim that matters of reception are degraded if generalized, and 2) it is not within the scope of this study to make a general claim about Reception Theory; it is my understanding of the particular case that drives my methodology; if my findings are suggestive for other cases, it is a happy coincidence.



particular case of Strindberg. It addresses both the issue of the multiplicity of influences within a reception environment and points to the broader implications of an affinity between two thinkers. I will address both of these aspects in turn.

The name Nietzsche slips into the discourse of literary modernism with a remarkable facility. The ease with which Nietzschean motifs can be appropriated created a considerable range of reception. For despite the differences between those who claim to bear the mark of his influence, Nietzsche's critique of religion, exploration of the boundary between conscious thought and unconscious motivation, valorization of style, and insistence on philosophy as memoir resonate on the same frequency as the works of many of the authors we have come to call ›modernists.‹

Nietzsche's critique of religion accompanied by a genealogy of morals takes issue with the predominance of what he sees as otherworldly thought in all aspects of Western culture, and can be connected to a larger nineteenth century European movement towards a growing secularization of any claims to truth. His genealogical method itself, which attempts to ground unconscious motivation as the *origin*<sup>20</sup> of behavior, and sees consciousness as a later development, relegates conscious thought to an economy of misrecognitions and fictional representations thereby anticipating the psychoanalytic understanding of narrative as the means of subject formation. His valorization of style goes hand in hand with his claim for the primacy of form over content. Form becomes the primary determinant of value, and value is relegated to an opposition between vitality and decadence. As a result, the process of self-becoming is elevated, and taste displaces morality. Aesthetic considerations win out over ethical determinations, and the history of the self loses its grounding in a teleological trajectory; the individual thereby gaining freedom and facing uncertainty. These aspects of Nietzsche's project, along with his claim for the primacy of a philosopher's life in the development of his thought, splice together aspects of a philosophical autobiography self-

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20 The use of the word origin with regards to Nietzsche's thought is always problematic. The problem concisely stated: the impossibility of positing origins is compounded in two ways by Nietzsche's use of the term: historically through a metaphor employed polemically, and in the construction ›self‹ by the positing of dual origins. This issue will be explored in great detail later in the book.

conscious about the relationship of its own creation with the history of thought.<sup>21</sup>

Nietzsche's particular understanding of the history of Western thought colored his notion of the relationship between autobiography and history. His understanding of history was epochal; he believed that he was living in a nihilistic age, an age that had witnessed the »death of God«. This very event creates a problem for the subject in its moment of self-understanding. For how is the subject to understand his own formation in the absence of a creator? In his answer to this question, Nietzsche rejected the possibilities of biological or historical determinism. For Nietzsche, any absolute solution to this problem was merely a continuation of what he saw as the nihilistic trajectory of European history. The only possibility remaining for Nietzsche, in an attempt to overcome what he saw as a historical environment colored by nihilism, was the creation of a process of self-generation, a *genealogy of self*. For Nietzsche the self is not given; it must be performed. As his Zarathustra tells us: »dein Leib und seine grosse Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich.« (your body and its great reason: it does not say I, it performs I.)<sup>22</sup>

I use the term *genealogy of self* to describe this performance, this process of subject formation in both Nietzsche and Strindberg's work. The *genealogy of self* is a hermeneutic device for the construction of the subject. It is hermeneutic in that it factors in the optic of the present, sees the past as a text to be interpreted, and has a truth claim that is weakened by the absence of an absolute and timeless reference point.<sup>23</sup> A *genealogy of self* is a performative overcoming of origins in the moment. It self-consciously highlights the fictionality of the past through the conscious employment of metaphor, and it emphasizes the struggle between contradictory forces: between notions of heredity and self-creation, between the internalized social order and individual experience; in other words *the genealogy of self is the site of the conflation of autobiography and history*.

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<sup>21</sup> For some interesting observations on the way Strindberg relates history and autobiography see ROBINSON, »History and His-Story« collected in STEENE: 1990.

<sup>22</sup> NIETZSCHE: KSA 4, 2002, 39. My English translation follows the German.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of the weakened truth claim in modern hermeneutics, see VATTIMO: 1997. Vattimo's thesis relies on his reading of Nietzsche's »announcement of the death of God« as a non-metaphysical event.

The *genealogy of self* is the Eternal Return of the same as a hermeneutic circle. It is an attempt to subordinate history to a moment of ritual affirmation.<sup>24</sup> This affirmation, however, comes without the benefit of a divine guarantee. The self, itself, becomes a locus of ritual repetition, but there is an irony to this re-enactment. This attempt to subordinate history to the construction of an autobiography is necessitated by Nietzsche's understanding of his historical moment as being marked by the »death of God« and the subsequent poverty of the history of the self in the absence of the guarantee by a divine creator. The irony occurs on three levels that are dynamically related. First, historical conditions subject the individual to the conditions of a »nihilistic« environment, and he must overcome these conditions in order to become a subject. Second, subjectivity is constructed through a ritual, which cannot be shared; the ethos of the myth becomes pathos by wearing the mask of subjectivity as an affect of *der Wille zur Macht*. Third, the past is internalized, yet is subsumed in an agonistic construction that bears the mark of the moment. Competing interpretations that posit both necessity and contingency are in an oscillation, which explains the seemingly contradictory Nietzschean notions of *amor fati* and the chaos of the world. This oscillation comes to rest temporarily in the construction of the self.<sup>25</sup> In this manner, Nietzsche attempted to re-enchant the world through a »fabling of being,«<sup>26</sup> but he was ironically aware of the fictional nature of his own self-construction. He named his own »myth« and called it Nietzsche. With a radical gesture that both plays off and explodes the bourgeois notion of the individual,

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24 See ELIADE: 1991. On page 36, Eliade discusses the myth of the eternal return and its use of repetition. He states, »any repetition of an archetypal gesture suspends duration, abolishes profane time, and participates in mythical time.« While this formulation cannot be directly mapped on to the Nietzschean conception of the Eternal Return, it informs us on three levels: 1) for Nietzsche, the affirmation of the self is an act of creation that is archetypal in that it is a repetition of the initial creation of self-consciousness; 2) the temporality of this action is the moment (see *Also sprach Zarathustra*); and 3) there is a mythical aspect to this affirmation.

25 NIETZSCHE: 1988d. See *Ecce Homo*, »Warum ich ein Schicksal bin«. Nietzsche believed that his understanding of history as the revaluation of all values had a direct relationship to his construction of a *genealogy of self*. The key citation: »Die Entdeckung der christlichen Moral ist ein Ereigniss, das nicht seines Gleichen hat, eine wirkliche Katastrophe. Wer über sie aufklärt, ist eine force majeure, ein Schicksal, – er bricht die Geschichte der Menschheit in zwei Stücke.« The Citation is found in Section 8, on page 373.

26 Vattimo's term.

the genealogy of self leaves us with an ambiguous legacy and a plethora of divergent Nietzsche interpretations. As interpretation is a form of reception, we are also left with another problem: namely, how are we to understand his reception?

In a uniquely intense and immediate manner, Nietzsche touched upon what contemporaries regarded as the key experiential dimensions of their individual and collective identity. From the beginning, canonizers and condemners alike tended to regard him as a critic and maker of a new kind of European modernity characterized by the predicament of nihilism and its transvaluative, liberating and cataclysmic potential.<sup>27</sup>

In the first chapter of his study of Nietzsche's reception in Germany, Steven E. Aschheim attempts to construct a framework for understanding the philosopher's appeal to a wide variety of groups holding radically divergent interests. He points out that Nietzsche's writings became a symbol of renewal for his »appropriators« who »wore selective blinders«<sup>28</sup> and came to a variety of often-conflicting readings of his texts. Aschheim argues that the key to understanding such a wide range of reception lies in an understanding of the context in which the reception took place.

Aschheim sketches out the broad contours of the context for the initial Nietzsche reception in the 1890's in Germany: Nietzsche's critique of »the pieties and conventions of Wilhelmine Germany«<sup>29</sup> was »closely related to a broader shift in thought and disposition which marked significant areas of European life«.<sup>30</sup> He sees Nietzsche as an inspiration for this broadly based »cultural revolution«<sup>31</sup> precisely because of the elasticity of the philosopher's categories.<sup>32</sup> The advantage of this elasticity was that Nietzsche's thought could be appropriated by a variety of ideological positions, and it was this aspect that contributed most to his popularity

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27 ASCHHEIM: 1994, 10.

28 Ibid., 9.

29 Ibid., 11–12.

30 Ibid., 12. Aschheim sees this shift as »the revolt against positivism and materialism, as a generational rebellion against the liberal bourgeoisie, as the era of the discovery of the unconscious, and as an age of irrationalism and neo-romanticism.«

31 Ibid., 13.

32 Ibid., 14. »The Nietzschean impulse becomes a potent protean force precisely because it was diffuse and not organized.«

with a second wave of modernists who stood in radical opposition to what they saw as the failure of the first wave of modernization.<sup>33</sup>

As a result, Nietzscheanism was not restricted by or emblematic of any one particular ideology. It »functioned by virtue of its implantation into other pre-existent structures, it was not constitutive or autonomous.«<sup>34</sup> Nietzscheanism needed other impulses and already existent ideologies, and »acted variously as an inspirational solvent, leavener, catalyst, and a gadfly.«<sup>35</sup> According to Aschheim, Nietzsche's writings derived their power because he »had dwelled on what was to become a central and continuing fin-de-siècle European preoccupation: the perception of pervasive decadence and degeneration and the accompanying search for new sources of physical and mental health.«<sup>36</sup> He argues that it would be an overstatement to credit Nietzsche as being the sole source of this movement for »[t]here are always other forces and influences at work. Nevertheless, he was its central inspiration.«<sup>37</sup> Aschheim posits a Nietzsche who acts as a »prism« through which a rather diverse group of social and cultural »revolutionaries« saw their existential condition. Seen from this perspective, the problem of tracing a purely Nietzschean influence and reconstructing an ideal Nietzschean is an exercise in futility.

Building from Aschheim's findings, I contend that the key to understanding Nietzsche's reception is an examination of the discourses already existent in the environment of the reception. This necessitates an exploration of the pre-history of a thinker's encounter with Nietzsche in order to determine how the name Nietzsche functions as a trope in the discourse of the reception. Aschheim's discussion not only points the way to a model for our analysis, it also implicitly acts as a warning: any attempt to determine influence by measuring the degree of congruency of Nietzsche's thought to the receiver is misleading. For what does it mean

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33 What Aschheim calls the second wave of modernists had a wide variety of concerns and perspectives. It is important to make a distinction between modernism, modernists, and modernization. Modernism is an aesthetic movement, modernists are the diverse group of artists who consider themselves to be modern, and modernization refers to a social, economic, and political process. My concerns are with the modernist movement in aesthetics and, in particular, Nietzsche and Strindberg as modernists.

34 Ibid., 15.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 14.

37 Ibid., 13.

to be a Nietzschean? What is the possibility of being a disciple of a philosopher who feared the very idea of having followers? For if one is to follow Nietzsche and take his suggestion to read his corpus slowly and carefully, then the notion of being a pupil of a thinker who believes that a good teacher has no pupils is paradoxical at best. When this paradox is factored into the equation, an influence model of reception that is based on the receiver's consistent exposition of Nietzschean thought is doomed to conclude that the influence was negligible. It is impossible to be a Nietzschean and be ›true‹ to Nietzsche.

Aschheim's methodology suggests an alternative to the dead end of any attempt to map what amounts to an interpretation of Nietzsche's thought onto another interpretation of the same. My own methodology is informed by his findings. I have approached the problem of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg in two moments. The first section of the study explored the discursive environment into which Nietzsche was received. The initial point of analysis was Nietzsche's entry into the literary circles of Scandinavia. The aspects of the discourse of the environment of the reception were examined. I found that Nietzsche's entry into the discourses of the environment was greatly facilitated by the loss of faith in a realist model of depiction and a certain fascination with a vitalist, perspectival, and ›aristocratic‹ model predicated upon the concept of personal authenticity. Strindberg and Nietzsche enjoyed a common status as tropes within this discourse and came to represent the paradox of continuity and renewal.

Now, I will violate chronology and turn to Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche. It is in this moment that an influence model of reception will be eschewed. In its stead, the notion of commonality between the two men's authorial projects will be established. This commonality will be established as a specific aspect of both men's authorial projects. The analysis of their intellectual environment was a contextualizing act. There was and never is a homogeneous *Zeitgeist*.

The reasons for this methodological choice are as follows: the previous scholarship on the encounter has had the tendency to concentrate its energies on the similarities between the content of Nietzsche and Strindberg's thought. Following one influence model or another, the commentators have been content to measure the proximity of Strindberg's thought to their own understanding of Nietzsche's texts and pass judgment from this perspective. In any case, Nietzsche's influence on Strindberg has

been judged to be at best transitory, and at worst negligible. The study of Nietzsche's influence on Strindberg becomes in actuality a statement about the impossibility of influence. As a positive model of influence has proven to be untenable in this specific instance, the scholarship has heretofore relied upon a negative model of influence and has concluded that the encounter between the two men was of little importance.

The weakness of this approach to the encounter is twofold. If we recall, Aschheim's argument is informed by his observation that there is no such thing as a dogmatic Nietzscheanism. His approach to the reception of the philosopher is based on the understanding that the allure of Nietzscheanism resides in how Nietzsche's work speaks to a variety of ideological positions because of its experiential valence. Nietzsche's sensitivity to the multifaceted aspects of modernism precipitates a reception that grafts Nietzscheanism onto an intellectual predisposition colored by other influences and, in a dialectical movement, a reception that is individualized and never orthodox. The problem of Nietzsche's reception highlights the commonsensical notion that there can be no immaculate reception. This explains how Strindberg could so strongly identify himself with Nietzsche's thought while still carrying the influence of others, and how the content of his work can be seen as a misreading of the philosopher. In this way, the concentration of the influence model of reception on the proximity of the content of Strindberg's work to a dogmatic Nietzscheanism misses the point. There is another, more basic flaw as well. It is paradoxical to look for a proximity between the thought of these two thinkers and then to judge the degree of Strindberg's Nietzscheanism by the distance between the philosopher's thought and the Swede's appropriation of it. For the paradox of a Nietzsche reception resides in this very appropriation. The Nietzschean gesture itself takes distance in order to judge, and appropriates under the aegis of re-possession and self-creation. It is impossible to judge the degree of a receiver's debt to Nietzsche through an examination of the category of content.

*The notion of commonality should not be confused with the metaphorical concept of a Zeitgeist.* Its application concentrates upon the particular works under analysis and allows for an individual reception that factors in the historically informed, experiential valence suggested by Aschheim. In our case, the advantage that this approach enjoys over an analysis based on a model of influence lies in its fidelity to performative

aspects of Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche. A theory of commonality does not attempt to read the particularity of Strindberg's production under the false universal of a dogmatic Nietzscheanism. Instead it looks for points of intersection in the particularity of Strindberg's work and the particularity of the Nietzschean corpus. These points of intersection are derived from an analysis of an existing discourse in the historical environment of the reception. In this case, I have analyzed the discourse of realism and anti-realism in order to understand discrete aspects of status of the self as a creative force in the literary life of Scandinavia in 1889. This has revealed a commonality in both Nietzsche and Strindberg's status as tropes in this discourse.

The experiential valence of Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche can be found on the level of form and not content. The salient commonality between the two men on this level is their employment of a *genealogy of self* in lieu of a standard autobiography. The Swedish *Prometheus*,<sup>38</sup> August Strindberg identified strongly with Nietzsche and even claimed to have anticipated the philosopher. He regarded Nietzsche's work as a philosophical justification of his own position and left us with a fictional enactment of what he understood to be the existential possibilities of the German's philosophy. As mentioned, his reading of Nietzsche has disappointed most commentators, who insist that Strindberg either misread the philosopher or was hardly influenced by him at all. They point to the multitude of influences on Strindberg and relegate his encounter with Nietzsche to a passing interlude brought on by Strindberg's own sense of impending personal crisis.<sup>39</sup> This is the previously mentioned psychologism utilized by interpreters of the encounter. Conversely, it is the subject and the contention of this study that there is a strong commonality between the projects of these two men and that Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche has the markings of the uncanny experience of seeing oneself in another. However, the exploration that follows is not based on biogra-

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38 The Strindberg monument located in Tegnérunden (Tegnér grove) in Stockholm depicts Strindberg as a rather well-muscled figure, posed as Prometheus, sprawled heroically on a rock. I use this term ironically to connote the distance between retrospective and contemporary images of the life of an author.

39 Commentators such as EKLUND: 1948; BORLAND: 1956; and LAMM: 1963 all insist that the essential influences on Strindberg's thought precede his encounter with Nietzsche, and that the German philosopher largely served as a source of psychological confirmation for Strindberg's sense of isolation.



phy and does not attempt to sort out the invisible variables in Strindberg or Nietzsche's minds. Instead, our inquiry will be largely intertextual, examining the trajectory of both men's projects, looking for points of merger. With this in mind, I turn to the correspondence.

To Both Be and Not to Be Nietzschean:  
This Is the Possibility<sup>40</sup>

Der Erste Proselyt, den der erste Kritiker des Nordens machte, war der erste Dichter des Nordens. Es gibt auch keinen, dessen Leben eine solche Vorbereitung für diese Bekehrung gewesen wäre wie August Strindberg.

(The first proselyte that the foremost critic of the North converted, was the foremost poet of the North. There is also no one else, whose life would have been such a preparation for this conversion, besides August Strindberg.)<sup>41</sup>

Ja, Nietzsche! Men du borde ha märkt att jag för tre år sedan vände i *Schleichwege* och *Die Kleinen* just i *Neue Freie* och innan jag hört namnet Nietzsche. Derför sade mig Georg B. på Kongens Nytorv strax efter föreläsningen: »Det borde vara Er man, Sg, Ni som hatar »de små.« »Visste det,« svarade jag, »och ser Ni nu att Sg. hade systemet i sin galenskap.«

(Yes, Nietzsche! But you ought to have noticed that I had turned three years ago with *Schleichwege* and *Die Kleinen* in the self same *Neue Freie* and this was before I had heard the name Nietzsche. That is why Georg Brandes said to me at Kongens Nytorv right after his lecture: »That would be your man, Strindberg, you who hate »the small.« »Right on,« I answered, »and you see now that Strindberg had a system to his madness.«)<sup>42</sup>

The twin epigraphs for this section were taken respectively from Ola Hansson's article on Nietzsche's influence in Scandinavia and a letter from Strindberg written in response to this piece. In the fall of 1889, Hansson published *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* in the *Neue Freie Presse*, a Viennese daily, which frequently featured the work of Scandinavian writers. Strindberg had published a few short stories in the very same newspaper and took great pride in his contributions.

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<sup>40</sup> It is important to keep in mind throughout, that if the premise of the first section of this exploration was to illustrate how Nietzsche was in timely correspondence with the environment of reception and that Strindberg shared a surface commonality with Nietzsche on the level of discourse; then this section will excavate the deep commonality between the two. However, it is also remarkable how the surface aspects of the reception are reproduced in the scholarship. This becomes apparent in the initial reaction to the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg.

<sup>41</sup> HANSSON: 1889; my translation.

<sup>42</sup> STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1900 to Ola Hansson, sent around 10/20, 1889.

Hansson's already strong interest in things German and his ambition to become a pan-Germanic author were fueled by his contact with Strindberg. He had interested the older writer in the work of Edgar Allan Poe, but it was Strindberg who had kindled and fanned the flames of what was to become Hansson's burning curiosity about Nietzsche. If Brandes acted as a midwife for Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche, it can be argued that Strindberg played the same role for Hansson's encounter with the philosopher's works and his subsequent role as the first Scandinavian to inform the German-speaking world about Nietzsche's reception in the North. Ironically enough, Hansson beat Brandes to the German-speaking world by publishing on Nietzsche first. If Nietzsche was exposed to the Scandinavian intellectual world through the work of the Dane, Brandes, he was brought back to Germany through these two Swedes.

Hansson and Georg Brandes were Strindberg's main correspondents about the subject of Friedrich Nietzsche. In fact, Brandes had not only introduced Strindberg to Nietzsche's thought, but had arranged both their exchange of books and their correspondence. And so two questions arise: why would Hansson consider Strindberg to be the first acolyte that Brandes had won for Nietzsche (despite the Dane's own silence on the issue), and why would Strindberg protest against this label? These questions have been a problem conflated by the scholarship to date and deemed to be a matter of influence and the resistance to it. It is my belief that these questions lead us to an investigation of something much more intrinsic to Nietzsche and Strindberg's authorial projects: namely, the construction and re-construction of the narrative of self. It follows that the answer to our questions lies in the tension between public and private statements. What follows is the story of these utterances.

In the spring of 1888, Brandes was in the midst of giving a series of lectures on what he called Nietzsche's »Aristocratic Radicalism« when he met Strindberg on Kongens Nytorv in Copenhagen. According to the October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1889 letter from Strindberg to Ola Hansson and a letter from Strindberg to Brandes on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1890, Brandes is reported to have said: »Det maa være Deres Mand Strindberg, De som hader de smaa.« (That may be your man Strindberg, you who hate the small.)<sup>43</sup> Brandes not only introduced Strindberg to Nietzsche's work, he also

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43 My translation.

wrote to Nietzsche about Strindberg. He first mentions Strindberg to the German in a letter from April 3, 1888: »Wenn Sie Schwedisch lesen, mache ich Sie auf das einzige Genie Schwedens, August Strindberg, aufmerksam ... Wenn Sie über die Frauen schreiben, sind sie sehr ähnlich.« (If you read Swedish, I would like to present and make you aware of Sweden's only genius, August Strindberg. When you write about women, you are very similar.)<sup>44</sup>

Strindberg claimed to have sent Nietzsche a copy of *Fadren* (*The Father*) in a French translation in April of the same year.<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche never got the package, but received another copy of the tragedy in November. On October 2, Strindberg wrote Brandes thanking him for Nietzsche's book *Der Fall Wagner* (*The Case of Wagner*) and calling the philosopher »den mest frigjorda, den modernaste af oss alla (naturligtvis icke minst i kvinno-frågan)« (the most liberated, the most modern of us all (naturally not least of all regarding the women's question)).<sup>46</sup> Brandes relayed the Swede's enthusiasm to Nietzsche. In a letter written just four days later, he remarked: »Ich habe ein Exemplar des Buches an den grössten schwedische Schriftsteller August Strindberg gegeben, den ich ganz für Sie gewonnen haben. Er ist ein wahres Genie, nur ein bisschen verrückt wie die meisten Genies (und Nicht-Genies).« (I have sent a copy of the book to the greatest Swedish author, August Strindberg, whom I have won over for you. He is a true genius, although a bit crazy like most geniuses (and non-geniuses).)<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche became quite excited over the news that he had won a »true genius« as a new reader. He wrote Heinrich Köselitz just eight days later, and in a statement that closely paraphrased Brandes, told his friend the news.<sup>48</sup> On October 20, he asked

44 Georg Brandes to Friedrich Nietzsche. Letter collected in NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 185–186. The English is my translation.

45 STRINDBERG: 1961, 127. Letter 1715 to Georg Brandes dated November 29, 1888: »Nietsche [sic] sände jag *Fadren* för 8 månader sedan till hans förläggares adress. Nu går en till.« My translation. »I sent Nietzsche *The Father* eight months ago to his publisher's address. Now here goes another.«

46 STRINDBERG: 1961, 127. Letter 1647 to Georg Brandes dated October 2, 1888.

47 Georg Brandes: Letter to Friedrich Nietzsche dated October 6, 1888. Collected in NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 320. Translation mine.

48 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 450. Letter to Heinrich Köselitz dated October 14, 1888: »Er [Brandes] hat ein Exemplar meiner Schrift an den größten schwedische Schriftsteller, der ganz für mich gewonnen sei, August Strindberg, gegeben, er nennt ihn ein »wahres Genie«, nur etwas verrückt.« Nietzsche repeated the same message in a November 13

Brandes for Strindberg's address so that he could send him a copy of *Götzendämmerung*.<sup>49</sup> By mid November, Nietzsche had received a copy of Strindberg's *Giftas* (*Les mariés*), apparently from Brandes.<sup>50</sup> The Dane wrote Nietzsche on November 16, stressing the similarity between the two men's misogynist views, quoting Strindberg on his identification with Nietzsche, and urging Nietzsche to read Strindberg's aforementioned tragedy, *Fadren* (*The Father*).<sup>51</sup> Nietzsche read both the tragedy and the marriage novellas in French translation and was moved to remark to Köselitz:

Diese Tage machte ich die gleiche Reflexion bei einem wahrhaft genialen Werk eines Schweden, des mir von Dr. Brandes als Hauptverehrer vorgestellten August Strindberg. Es ist die französische Cultur auf einem unvergleichlich stärkeren und gesünderen fond: der Effect ist bezaubernd: *Les mariés* heißt es, Paris 1885 – sehr curios, wir stimmen über das »Weib« absolut überein – es war bereits Dr. Brandes aufgefallen.

(These days I have had the same reflection on a truly ingenious work by a Swede, August Strindberg, who was introduced to me as a great admirer by Dr. Brandes. It is French culture from an incomparably stronger and healthier source: the effect is enchanting: it's called *Getting Married*, Paris 1885 – very curious, we agree on »woman« absolutely – Dr. Brandes already noticed this.)<sup>52</sup>

Nietzsche's admiration and identification with Strindberg continued in a letter to Brandes shortly thereafter where Nietzsche remarked: »Meine aufrichtige Bewunderung, der nichts Eintrag thut, als das Gefühl, mich dabei ein wenig mitzubewundern.« (My most unreserved admiration,

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letter to Köselitz. The difference, the past participle *gewonnen* is replaced by *eingenommen*.

49 Ibid., 456–457. Friedrich Nietzsche, letter to Georg Brandes, dated October 20, 1888: »... (– der Titel ist jetzt: Götzendämmerung. Oder: Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt) möchte ich sehr gern auch dem von Ihnen mit so ehrenden Worten vorgestellten Schweden ein Exemplar senden. Nur weiß ich seinen Wohnort nicht. – Diese Schrift ist meine Philosophie *in nuce* – radikal bis zum Verbrechen ...«

50 *Married* or *Getting Married*, depending on which English translation you pick up.

51 NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 353. Georg Brandes, letter to Friedrich Nietzsche dated November 16, 1888: »Der tolle Schwede heisst August Strindberg; er wohnt hier. Seine Adresse ist Holte bei Kopenhagen. Er liebt Sie besonders, weil er meint seinen Frauenhass bei Ihnen zu finden ... Als er in den Zeitungen die Referate über meine Frühlingvorlesungen las, sagte er: es ist erstaunlich mit diesem Nietzsche, vieles bei ihm ist, als ob ich es geschrieben hätte. In französischer Sprache ist sein Drama *Père* mit einem Vorwort von Zola erschienen.«

52 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 479: Letter to Heinrich Köselitz dated November 16, 1888. Translation mine.

which is marred only by the feeling that in admiring him I also admire myself a little.)<sup>53</sup> So, on the surface, Brandes had arranged a mutual admiration society with two members who were united by their views on women. However, Nietzsche's remark above displays the ironic distance that he kept from the encounter. He simultaneously distanced himself through irony from his admiration for Strindberg and brought his own valuation closer to himself. For as he admires the Swede; he admires himself.

This activity, at once a distancing and a making proximate, is intrinsic to the Nietzschean notion of *der Wille zur Macht* (the will to power) as an interpretive agency and the ascription of values made possible by *das Pathos der Distanz* (the Pathos of Distance).<sup>54</sup> »Aus diesem *Pathos der Distanz* heraus haben sie sich das Recht, Werthe zu schaffen, Namen der Werthe auszuprägen, erst genommen.« (It is out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and coin names for values.)<sup>55</sup> For Nietzsche, the noble perspective allows a distance to phenomena. This distance enables a valuation of these phenomena and this valuation coincides with naming. Naming, in turn, is a means of taking possession:

Das Herrenrecht, Namen zu geben, geht so weit, dass man sich erlauben sollte, den Ursprung der Sprache selbst als Machtäusserung der Herrschenden zu fassen: sie sagen »das ist das und das,« sie siegeln jegliches Ding und Geschehen mit einem Laute ab und nehmen es dadurch gleichsam in Besitz.

(The lordly right of giving names extends so far that one should allow oneself to conceive the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say »this is this and this,« they seal every thing and event with a sound and, as it were, take possession of it.)<sup>56</sup>

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53 Ibid.: Letter to Georg Brandes dated November 20, 1888. Translation in MIDDLETON: 1996, 327.

54 There are numerous references in the *Nachlass* for Nietzsche's definition of *der Wille zur Macht* as an interpretive agent and as a pathos. As for *das Pathos der Distanz*, the best examples are found in aphorism 257 of *Jenseits von Gute und Böse* and Essay 1, section 2 of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. The relationship between these Nietzschean tropes and the creation of subjectivity will be developed at much greater length in a later chapter.

55 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 259. English translation in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 26.

56 Ibid., 260. The English translation is found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 26.

Possession brings the phenomena closer to oneself. The pathos of distance that interprets phenomena from a noble perspective, also engages other perspectives. This engagement is intrinsic to the Nietzschean genealogy and takes the form of a polemic (eine Streitschrift). In the *Vorrede* to *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*), Nietzsche claims that a polemic is an »Auseinandersetzung« that makes former influences, in that case Schopenhauer, contemporary.<sup>57</sup> Polemic, then, is a pathos of engagement, a means of making another perspective proximate. The oscillation between a pathos of interpretation, which expands the self towards another perspective, and a pathos of distance, which facilitates the organization of interpretations into a system of values, is essential for the Nietzschean notion of the necessary fiction of self-hood. For if his genealogy of morals constructed a »history« of the creation of societal consciousness through an internalization process, then we must remember that Nietzsche had previously posited: »unser Leib ist ja nur ein Gesellschaftsbau vieler Seelen.« (for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls.)<sup>58</sup> This internalization process is put under the microscope in *Ecce Homo* by means of a *genealogy of self*. The Nietzschean process of the creation of self-hood, the ascription of value to the fictional doer in light of the deed, will be revisited in the next chapter of this study. As for now, suffice it to say that the dynamic of distance and proximity is common to both Nietzsche's genealogical method and his processing of Strindberg as an external phenomenon. This dynamic would have its echoes in Strindberg's own formulation of the problem of Nietzsche's influence: the ambiguity of identification and distancing that the commentary has up to now taken as a psychological aspect of the anxiety of influence rather than an epistemological problem.

In the late fall, Strindberg and Nietzsche entered into a short-lived correspondence. The first letter came from Nietzsche to Strindberg on November 27, 1888. The correspondence lasted only until Nietzsche's nervous collapse shortly after the New Year. During this period of correspondence the two men exchanged some books. As mentioned, Strindberg sent Nietzsche *Giftas* (*Getting Married*) and *Fadren* (*The Father*) in November. At the end of the fall, Nietzsche sent Strindberg *Der Fall*

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57 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 252

58 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 33. The English translation is in HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 49. The citation comes from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Aphorism 19.

*Wagner (The Case of Wagner)* and *Götzendämmerung (Twilight of the Idols)*, and in the middle of December, *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)*. Strindberg sent Nietzsche the novella, *Samvetsqual (Pangs of Conscience)* and shortly thereafter he borrowed Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (Human, All Too Human)* from Ola Hansson, probably in January of 1889.<sup>59</sup> The tone of the correspondence escalated from an air of mutual admiration, to an attempt by Nietzsche to use Strindberg to forward his plans to have his works translated, to a dizzying and cryptic exchange of letters at its terminus.

Throughout the period of the correspondence with Nietzsche, Brandes kept in touch with Strindberg through the mail. On the subject of the German philosopher, he responded to the Swedish writer's exuberance with moderation. Brandes' attitude towards Nietzsche's work was measured by sober experience. His reply to Strindberg's intoxicated declaration that Nietzsche was a liberator who heralded the decline of the West reads as paternal advice: »Meget hos ham synes mig mindre nyt end det forekommer Dem og ham selv. Hans Antikristendom kan jo ikke – det vil De vist indrømme mig – gjøre et særdeles dybt Indtryk paa den, der i 20 Aar og mere har baaret – i lang Tid ene – Odiet af at være Nordens Antikrist.« (Much in him seems less new to me than it does to both you and himself. His anti-Christianity can certainly not – that you must allow me – make an especially deep impression on the one – who for 20 years and more has borne – for a long time alone – the odium of being the Anti-Christ of the North.)<sup>60</sup>

Brandes continued his evenhanded approach to Nietzsche in both his public communication and his private correspondence to Strindberg. Strindberg began to respond more moderately to Brandes, even questioning the philosopher's sanity at one point. It is here that an interesting twist to this story takes shape. Strindberg's final letter about Nietzsche to Brandes was written the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1890. The letter came in response to an April 20<sup>th</sup> letter from the Danish critic where he issued a stern warning: »De maa endelig ikke fordybe Dem saaledes i Nietzsche. Der er Element i

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59 Strindberg also may have read *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, mentioned in letters to Hansson and he later read *Der Willie Zur Macht (The Will to Power)*, that infamous collection of notebook entries edited by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth. Strindberg mentions this work in his Blue Book and an essay, »Religious Renaissance.«

60 Georg Brandes, letter to August Strindberg dated December 5, 1888. My translation. Letter collected in BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 295.

ham, som er at bruge, et andet, som leder Følelsen og Tanken vild. De er som Poet ikke mistroisk nok overfor Idègang.« (At the end of the day, you ought not to engross yourself so in Nietzsche. There is an aspect of him to use, and another, which can lead your feelings and thoughts astray. You, as you are a poet, are not wary enough over the course of your ideas.)<sup>61</sup> In the same letter, Brandes described his misgivings about the political implications of Nietzsche's disgust for the French Revolution, urging Strindberg to »anvende Deres kritiske Hoveds Kritik« (use your critical sense.)<sup>62</sup> Strindberg responded two days later. The April 22<sup>nd</sup> letter to Brandes opened with an explanation of how Strindberg had anticipated Nietzsche and how the philosopher's *program* coincided with his own. He continued by explaining that Brandes himself had recognized this congruency and then launched into a tirade about his persecution at the hands of »små tyranner till partivänner som vill sätta mig på dårhus därför – jag hade rätt i qvinnofråga etc.« (an alliance of minor tyrants who want to put me in the insane asylum because I was right about the women's question, etc.).<sup>63</sup> Then Strindberg bared the device. The entire *Nietzsche problem*, he explained, is to be staged in the form of a novel.<sup>64</sup> It seems that Strindberg could not decide what was philosophically true until he worked it out in a fictional world. The question was not *to be or not to be* Nietzschean, but rather what might be possible in a confrontation of the inner life of the self in constant formation and reformation with an internalized intellectual force. Consequently, Strindberg's response to Brandes' warning was to reassure him that the problem would be enacted as a *possibility*. The conflation of an external intellectual force with Strindberg's own internal imperatives is projected onto the scene of writing, the locus of naming. Strindberg, in this moment, saw his public expression as being a result of the struggle between a proximity to Nietzsche and a desire to distance himself through a staging of this very struggle. He would take possession of Nietzsche's thought by giving it his

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61 Ibid., 300. Georg Brandes, Letter to August Strindberg dated April 20, 1890. My translation.

62 Ibid. My translation.

63 Ibid., 301. August Strindberg: Letter to Georg Brandes dated April 22, 1890. My translation.

64 Ibid. »Hela problemet håller jag nu på att sätta i scen i en stor roman till hösten (*I havsbandet*).« (I am in the midst of staging the entire problem in a great novel to come out in the fall (*By the Open Sea*)). My translation.



own name. This dynamic explains his paraphrasing of Brandes back to the Dane in the same letter: »Man skall gå igenom (befruktas av) N. och sedan rensa sig ifrån honom.« (One should go through (be fertilized by) N. and then purge oneself of him.)<sup>65</sup> Like Brandes, Strindberg was much more interested in dissemination than insemination.

This paraphrase leaves us with a riddle to solve. For if Strindberg truly felt that his program coincided with Nietzsche's, that he had anticipated him, that Nietzsche's writings were so close to his own that he experienced the sensation that the philosopher had written his own thoughts, how could he purge himself of his »influence«? Perhaps Brandes' warning about the two sides of Nietzsche, one to be used and the other to eschew, alerts us to an answer to our question. This answer informs us of the location where Strindberg's project coincided with Nietzsche's philosophy; it resides in the role that the past plays in the construction of a narrative of self, through the dynamic between interpretive distance and proximity of engagement; it also resides in philosophy as a fictional possibility with interstices in which the self is reconciled with its history.

If Brandes' warning and Strindberg's response alerts us to how Strindberg's seemingly paradoxical proximity and distance to Nietzsche's thought reveals the epistemological commonality in their respective authorial projects, Strindberg's correspondence with others about Nietzsche informs us about another dynamic which problematizes the work of the scholarship. Here the salient issue is the relationship that Strindberg perceives himself to have with his own past. With this in mind, we return to our original questions: why did Ola Hansson perceive Strindberg as the first acolyte won by Brandes for Nietzsche in the North and why did Strindberg protest this labeling?

Strindberg had enthusiastically spread the word about the philosopher in his voluminous correspondence with his many literary friends. He began to be associated with Nietzsche as a result of his own enthusiasm. Shortly after his meeting with Brandes, Strindberg read Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*). His first reference to Nietzsche came in a letter to Verner von Heidenstam dated May 17, 1888: »Köp dig en tysk modern filosof som heter Nietsche [sic] om hvilken G.B. hållit föreläsningar. Der står allt att läsa! Neka dig ej njutningen! När skald också.« (Buy a German, modern philosopher named Nietsche

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. My translation.

[sic] on whom G.B. has given some lectures. Therein is all that there is to read! Do not deny yourself the pleasure! N is also a poet.)<sup>66</sup> Praise of and enthusiasm over Nietzsche's books became a common theme in Strindberg's letters through 1890. As Strindberg wrote to Nietzsche himself at the beginning of December 1888: »Je termine tous mes lettres à mes amis: lisez Nietzsche: C'est mon Carthago est delenda!« (I end all my letters to my friends: read Nietzsche: This is my Carthage must be destroyed!)<sup>67</sup>

Strindberg expressed his enthusiasm for the philosopher in numerous ways. He received Nietzsche as a fertilizing agent: »Emellertid mitt aandsliv har i sitt uterus mottagit en förfärlig sädesuttömning af Friedrich Nietzsche, så att jag känner mig full som en hynda i buken.« (Meanwhile, my spiritual life has taken in a terrible emptying of Friedrich Nietzsche's seed, so that I feel filled like a bitch in the belly.)<sup>68</sup> Then, consequently, Nietzsche was a source of inspiration already enshrined in the literary pantheon: »Skrifver samtidigt en modern roman i Nietzsche och Poes fotspår.« (At the same time, I am writing a modern novel which follows in Nietzsche and Poe's footsteps.)<sup>69</sup> As such, the philosopher intoxicated Strindberg, and strengthened his conviction, but he threatened his sanity:

Jag tror Nietzsche gör mig blind, emedan min hjerna är som ett sår! Af öfveranstängning! Men han gör mig visst tokig också! Ty hans oerhörda själfkänsla i sina böcker ha[r] gifvit mig en dylik. Hvilket hindrar icke att min gråa hjernbark kan brista, som den nog gör ...

(I believe that Nietzsche is making me blind, because my brain is like a sore! From over exertion! And he also is making me crazy! For the unprecedented self-esteem in his books has given me the same. This will not keep my gray brain bark from bursting, which it certainly will ...) <sup>70</sup>

Nietzsche strengthened Strindberg because his work served as a unifying force, an explanation for Strindberg's own production: his systemless

66 STRINDBERG: 196I, 9I, letter 16II. My translation.

67 NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 376, letter 62I. Letter from August Strindberg to Friedrich Nietzsche dated the beginning of December, 1888. Translation from the French is mine.

68 STRINDBERG: 196I, 112. August Strindberg: letter to Edvard Brandes, Danish playwright and politician and Georg's brother dated September 4, 1888. Letter 1632. Translation to English by Stefanie von Schnurbein.

69 STRINDBERG: 1938, 57. Letter from August Strindberg to Ola Hansson dated July 6, 1889. My translation.

70 STRINDBERG: 196I, 236. August Strindberg: letter 176I to Ola Hansson dated January 28, 1889.

system.<sup>71</sup> He threatened Strindberg's sanity because the surety with which Nietzsche expressed himself, this source of confirmation for Strindberg, also threatened the Swede; the self-confidence that springs from a feeling of certainty, the sensation of isolation that comes when one thinks oneself a prophet without a God with whom he could communicate. This isolation was in both men's minds (and this is what was hypostatized by Hansson in his Nietzsche essay) a result of their understanding of nihilism and of what they considered to be historically derived decadence. As Strindberg wrote to Georg Brandes at the close of 1888:

För mig står Nietzsche som bebådaren af Europas och kristendomens undergång. Orientens vaknande och återinträdande i sina rättigheter så som adeln hvilken de äldsta anorna. Kristendom är mig nemlig ett barbari ... ett bakslag i utvecklingen, de smås, de uslas, kastraternas, kvinnornas, barnens och vildernas religion, derföre är de i rak strid med vår evolution som vill skydda den starke mot den dåliga arten ... Nietzsche är mig derföre den moderne anden som vågar predika den starkes, den klokes rätt gentemot de dumma, de små (demokraterna), och jag kan tänka den stora andens lidande under de många smås våld ... och jag helsar i honom befriaren och slutar såsom hans katekumen mina bref till literära vänner så: läs Nietzsche.

(For me, Nietzsche stands as the herald of the decline of Europe and Christianity. The Orient's awakening and return to its rights as the nobles with the oldest lineage. I regard Christianity as barbarism ... a regression in development, the religion of the small, the wretched, the eunuchs, the women, the children, and the savages; therefore it is in direct conflict with our evolution which wants to protect the strong against inferior types ... As a result, Nietzsche is, for me, the modern spirit who dares to preach the strong, the intelligent's right over the dumb, the small (the democrats), and I can also imagine the great spirit's suffering from the violence of the small ... and I greet Nietzsche as a liberator, and end my letters to my literary friends with what passes as his catechism: read Nietzsche.)<sup>72</sup>

Strindberg's description of Nietzsche's mission as the herald of the decline of the West carries the resonance of an overheated sermon. It also sets up an opposition between the great man who sees the coming of the end of life as he knows it, and those who enjoy the fruits of this decline

71 STRINDBERG: 1961, 192. August Strindberg: letter 1715 to Georg Brandes dated December 4, 1888. »Eget att jag genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap att »opponerar mot allt.' Jag omtaxerar och sätter nya värden på gamla saker! Det har man ej förstått. Knappt jag själf.« My translation: »Strange that I find through Nietzsche the system in my madness in opposing myself against everything. I re-evaluate and place new values on old things. No one has understood this. I barely understand it myself.«

72 STRINDBERG: 1961, 192. August Strindberg: letter 1715 to Georg Brandes dated December 4, 1888.

and persecute the man of vision. If Nietzsche represented this man for Strindberg, it was because he identified himself with this position as well. For in 1888, Strindberg was living in exile, isolated from his countrymen, in desperate straits, and, perhaps, most importantly for this discussion, disillusioned with his own past. His socialist political agenda was now a source of discomfort. He had become the *bête noire* of Swedish letters: viewed as a reactionary by the left and as an immoralist by the right. In a May 25<sup>th</sup> letter to Heidenstam, Strindberg described his understanding of his own authorship as such:

Mitt författeri: ett sökande efter sanningen! Idiotisk i sjelf kanske, ty sanningen är endast konventionell. Man öfverenskommer massvis att detta skall vara sant, och så det andra lögn! ... Motsägelseerna i mitt författeri bero på att jag ställt mig eller stått på olika ståndpunkter för att få se saken från många sidor! Det är ju rikt och humant ...

P.S. Om jag skulle med ord ange min ståndpunkt nu blefve det så: Ateist. Kristus-hatare. Anarkist-optimat (Frihet för alla, äfven de kloka och starka att göra sig, hvarigenom och om icke de små vore privilegierade verlden skulle regeras af kloka och starka, hvilka skulle öka lusten).

(My authorship: a seeking after truth! Idiomatic in itself, maybe, for truth is only convention. One comes into agreement en masse that that should be true and the other should be a lie! ... The contradictions in my authorship occur because I have placed myself or stood for different perspectives in order to see things from many sides! That is certainly rich and humane ...

P.S. If I should specify my perspective in words, it now becomes: Atheist. Christ-hater. Optimal-anarchist. (Freedom of all, including the wise and the strong to make out, whereas if the small were not privileged, the world would be ruled by the wise and the strong who would increase the pleasure).<sup>73</sup>

So much for the apparent »distancing« that Strindberg supposedly took from his encounter with Nietzsche. As for the commonality with Nietzsche: a fragmented letter with an unknown addressee and collected in *Nietzsche's Briefwechsel* leaves us with an interesting parallel:

... ich komme aus hundert Abgründen, in die noch kein Blick sich gewagt, ich kenne Höhen, wohin kein Vogel sich verflog, ich habe am Eis gelebt, – ich bin verbrannt worden von hundert Schneen: es scheint mir, daß warm und kalt in meinem Munde andere Begriffe sind 1. Ruhm und Ewigkeit 2. Letzter Wille 3. Zwischen Raubvögeln 4. Das Feuerzeichen 5. Die Sonne sinkt 6. Von der Armut des Reichsten.

(I come out of a hundred abysses, in which yet no one dares to gaze. I know the heights where no bird has flown. I have lived on ice and have become burnt from a hundred snows. It seems to me that other concepts are warm and

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73 STRINDBERG: 1961, 92. Letter 1612 to Verner von Heidenstam dated May 25, 1888.

cold in my mouth. They are 1. Fame and Eternity 2. Last will 3. Between Birds of Prey 4. The Fire Sign 5. The Sun Sinks 6. From the Poverty of the Richest<sup>74</sup>

The numbered items in this fragment list Dionysian Dithyrambs. Nietzsche's poetry is connected to his vision, his shaping of oppositions, of heights and abysses into literary form. Strindberg for his part had turned his back on his search for truth. His pietism and his socialism were now seen as experimental positions. The *truth* of his authorship was its lack of truth and its abundance of perspectives. He reasoned that if truth is merely convention accepted by the masses, then the truth of the individual resides in the fluidity of his interpretation of his own past. This explains the paradox of his twin declarations: that Nietzsche had given him a system for his *madness* and that it was modern of Nietzsche not to have a system.<sup>75</sup> The system that Strindberg was referring to in the first statement was no system at all; it was a process. I call this systemless system *the genealogy of self*. This is the key to understanding how Strindberg understands his own Nietzsche reception. He understood the philosopher's work as a theoretical explanation of his own quixotic authorship. This insight was not based on a reconciliation of contradictory elements under the umbrella of a system; rather it was the recognition of a mode of evaluation that was based on a series of narratives that emphasized a dynamic act of creation based on the internalization of seemingly antagonistic principles. Strindberg's truth claim was contingent upon a process of value laden description that bared its own device: the oscillation between a pathos of distance (genealogy) and a pathos of engagement (naming in a polemical mode). Despite the claims of the anti-realists: authenticity was never in the picture.

The correspondence reaffirms Strindberg's contradictory reception of Nietzsche; he saw both the articulation of a system that described his own authorship in philosophical terms and simultaneously denied that Nietzsche had constructed a system. The system for Strindberg's *madness* was the reconciliation of his past through the acceptance of multiple

74 NIETZSCHE: 2003, 495, letter 1162. Translation mine.

75 See my footnote 71, letter to Georg Brandes dated December 4, 1888: »Eget att jag genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap ...« My translation. »Strange that I find a system for my madness through Nietzsche.« see also Strindberg's letter to Ola Hansson dated December 7, 1888: »Det är modernt af Nietzsche att ej göra system.« My translation. »It is modern of Nietzsche to not construct a system.« This letter is collected in STRINDBERG: 1961, 196, letter 1718.

perspectives organized by the imperatives of his moment, his *Augenblick*. The past is seen as a series of roles played out, an experiment with different perspectives enacted through an authorship. This sheds light on Strindberg's remark to Georg Brandes about his reception of Nietzsche: »När såg jag i Nietzsche, den jag delvis anticerat, fann hela rörelse formulerad, tog jag in hans ståndpunkt, och ämnar nu allt framgent experimentera med den ståndpunkt för att se hvart den leder.« (When I saw in Nietzsche that which I partially anticipated, the entire movement became formulated. I took in his perspective and intend henceforth to experiment with this perspective to see where it leads.)<sup>76</sup> Strindberg's understanding of his reception of Nietzsche was that it was an experimental enactment, a fictional performance of the possibilities of the German's philosophy and of his own possibilities previously present in the shadows of his experience, as yet to be articulated by the light of the noonday sun. This performance was not delimited by the influence of Nietzsche's thought. Rather, Nietzsche's thought, an external influence, was conflated in the present tense with a personal understanding of the history of the self.

Despite the dizzy intoxication of the letters to Hansson and von Heidenstam, it was no accident that he would express the experimental nature of his enactment to Georg Brandes. As mentioned previously, Brandes' own position on Nietzsche was rather sober. He felt a responsibility for that which he brought into the world. For Brandes had not only delivered the first public lectures on the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, he had arranged the contact between the two men. Strindberg, in turn, had loaned Ola Hansson *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in December of 1888. Hansson had previously read *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, but Strindberg fueled his enthusiasm for its author.<sup>77</sup> Unlike Brandes, Hansson was un-

76 My translation of a letter from Strindberg to Georg Brandes dated April 12, 1890. Collected in BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 298.

77 STRINDBERG: 1938, 10. Letter from Ola Hansson to August Strindberg dated December 5, 1888: »*Jenseits von Gut und Böse* håller jag på med. Jag har förut läst ett arbete af Nietzsche: *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Jag har alldeles samma förnimmelse nu som då: det är som om jag satt i en karusell. Allting går runt för mig. Men jag antar, att den mannen skall läsas mer än en gång och grundligt. Jag saknar den Arkimediska punkten, en stabil sockel af fakta. Det hela är mig en fantastisk hängande trädgård. Vill du, när jag nu sänder dessa böckerna tillbaka, låna mig en ny laddning av samma sort.« (I am now reading *Beyond Good and Evil*. I had previously read a work of Nietzsche's: *On the Genealogy of Morals*. I have the exact same sensation now as then: it is as if I

der the influence of Strindberg's experimentation. While the older, more temperate Brandes had warned Strindberg about Nietzsche's excesses, the younger Hansson had engaged with Strindberg in an intoxicated series of discussions and letters about the philosopher. Strindberg, always an actor aware of his interlocutor's predilections, responded to Brandes' paternal warning with caution and answered Hansson's inebriated exuberance in kind. As a result, when Hansson wrote his article on Nietzsche's growing influence in Scandinavia, he depicted Strindberg as the first acolyte whom Brandes had won for the German. As discussed previously, Strindberg reacted vehemently in a letter dated just five days after Hansson's article came out, his response chiding its author. Strindberg's reminder to Hansson carried the intimation that he had anticipated Nietzsche. It also lacked the nuance of his explanation to Brandes.

Hansson made amends. In 1891, he published a book, also in German, entitled *Das Junge Skandinavien. Vier Essays von Ola Hansson*. The first essay of this collection was about Georg Brandes. Its content was a pastiche of material that Hansson had previously published in the Berlin newspaper, *Freie Bühne*, and *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien*. However, there is one striking emendation in the text. Although Strindberg served as the emblem of the conversion of the northern elite to *Nietzscheanism* in *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien*, in Hansson's 1891 essay on Brandes' influence on Scandinavian literature Strindberg is given the ambiguous status of being a follower who anticipated that which he was to follow:

Och i detta ögonblick finns det väl ingen kulturheros, på vilken det unga Skandinavien ögonblicka med sådan tro som på Nietzsche, vilken Brandes genom sitt föredrag först gjort känd i vidsträckt kretsar. Till honom bekänner sig bland andra även Sveriges största diktarsnille, August Strindberg, varom flera av hans diktningar bära vittnesbörd, isynnerhet novellen *De små*, – skriven, innan Brandes introducerad den tyska diktar-filosofen i Norden –, samt romanerna *Tschandala* och *I havsbandet*.

(And in that moment there was no other cultural hero other than Nietzsche whom »Young Sweden« could gaze at with such belief, and Brandes had first

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were sitting in a carousel. Everything is spinning. But I assume that this man should be read thoroughly and more than once. I lack that Archimedian point, a stable factual base. In its entirety, it seems a fantastic hanging garden for me. Will you, when I send these books back, lend me a new charge of the same kind. My translation. According to Ingvar Holm in *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttiotalsromantik*, even though Hansson had previously read *Zur Genealogy der Moral*, his interest in Nietzsche did not begin in earnest until a visit to Strindberg in Holte in November of 1888. See HOLM: 1957, 118.

made him familiar in a wide circle. Sweden's greatest poetic genius, August Strindberg, even can be counted among those who profess for Nietzsche. Several of his works provide testimony of this, particularly the novella *The Small*, written before Brandes introduced the German poet-philosopher to the North –, as well as the novels *Tschandala* and *By the Open Sea*.<sup>78</sup>

The importance of Hansson's commentary on Strindberg's relationship to Nietzschean thought resides in that his comments set the tone for the scholarship that followed. Hansson registered both Strindberg's enthusiasm and his ambivalence towards Nietzsche in two discrete moments, providing future scholars with a contradictory base on which to build. His own fluctuating statements on the degree of influence which was exerted upon Strindberg by Nietzsche has left a paradoxical legacy. The scholarship has stilled the fluctuation of Hansson's position and negated the possibility of influence. It has relied instead on readings of the *psychological* implications of the contents of the correspondence or a mapping of a monolithic notion of conceptual congruity onto Strindberg's production. Instead, I have suggested that the correspondence bares the mechanism of Strindberg and Nietzsche's formal notions of self-construction expressed by their formulation of the construction of a personal history, which includes a reaction to the force of their encounter.

Hansson's agenda certainly had an effect on his reading of the encounter between the two. However, his agenda was split. Hansson wanted to establish himself as a German writer and was calling for a pan-Germanic cultural revival of which he considered himself to be part. He also valued his relationship to Strindberg, was a great admirer of the older man's work, and the two shared some literary affinities. Hansson's private relationship with Strindberg caused him to amend his public statement on the latter's relationship to Nietzsche.

The first and only German book devoted entirely to Strindberg's relationship to Nietzsche was written by an acquaintance of Strindberg's in 1921. Karl Strecker's *Nietzsche und Strindberg. Mit ihrem Briefwechsel*

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78 This essay was reprinted in a Swedish translation in HANSSON: 1921b. The essay in question is entitled »Den nya riktningen (Georg Brandes)« and is found on pages 7–22. On pages 21–22, after praising Brandes' role of bringing an element of German fertility to Scandinavian culture through his early Hegelianism and later Nietzscheanism, Hansson wrote the lines you see in the body above. Though the change is subtle, Hansson has modified his language to suggest continuity in Strindberg's work. See my discussion of Hansson's paradox of continuity and renewal in the excursus that precedes this chapter. The translation of the passage is mine.



(*Nietzsche and Strindberg. With their Correspondence*) reads as a proto-fascist paean to the German spirit. Strecker transformed Strindberg into a pan-German writer and gave him equal status with Nietzsche as they played a rather peculiar role in this writer's imagination: that of two stars shining brightly in the firmament, shedding light upon the »Zeitgeist« at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Strecker writes, »Germanische Freiheitsgefühle und germanische Unrast sind in ungewöhnlicher Stärke die eigentümlichen Wertemale dieser beiden Genien.« (A German sense of freedom and Germanic restlessness are to an unusual extent the characteristics of both of these geniuses.)<sup>80</sup> Despite the pathos of Strecker's ideologically intoxicated prose, this was the first time that the letters between Strindberg and Nietzsche were collected.

The value of this book derives from Strecker's personal recollection as an eyewitness and in his contemporaneity to Strindberg. His recollections reinforce the notion of Strindberg's identification with Nietzsche's work. »Er sagte mir 1892 in Berlin, ›Nietzsche hat allein dafür die Worte gefunden, was ich im letzten Jahrzehnt gefühlt und gedacht habe.« (In Berlin in 1892 he said to me: ›Nietzsche alone has found the words for what I have felt and thought in the last decade.)<sup>81</sup> This allows us an insight into how Strindberg expressed his own view of the impact of the encounter while he was in Germany and trying to establish himself as a German author. The fluidity of Strindberg's own notion of his past becomes apparent when Strecker tells the story behind this book. This story is worth repeating.

Strecker knew Strindberg from his Berlin days. He hadn't seen him since 1892, but in 1909 he wrote Strindberg to ask for his Nietzsche correspondence. Strindberg was living in Stockholm at the time and was experiencing a level of acceptance in his homeland that would have been beyond his expectations in 1892. Strindberg had suffered through his years of wandering and poverty. Now, even his previously unpublished work was finding its way to the reading public. In October of 1909, he wrote an introduction to the fourth section of his autobiography, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*). The book was written in 1886, but was first find-

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79 »Nietzsche und Strindberg sind die beiden selbstständigsten, stärksten und einflussreichsten Geister am Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.« STRECKER: 192I, II.

80 Ibid., 99. Translation mine.

81 Ibid., 64. Translation mine.

ing its way to the booksellers. This introduction consisted mostly of a listing of his works in chronological order. At the end of the section for the 1880's, he wrote: »*I havsbandet*. Nietzsches Filosofi influerar; men Individen går under i strävan till den absoluta Individualismen. Inleder 90-talet: Übermensch.« (*By the Open Sea*. Nietzsche's philosophy influences; but the individual succumbs (goes under) in the striving for absolute individuality. Introduces the 90's: Übermensch.)<sup>82</sup> This simple statement alerts us to the change in Strindberg's understanding of his own past: the influence of Nietzsche is concentrated in the form of a novel, and the text tells the story of the failure of the individual to attain an *absolute* individuality. This leads to his downfall and introduces the work of the 1890's. This statement indicates that Strindberg's ideological predisposition at that moment, his »violent individualism«<sup>83</sup> had now given way to a notion that the hubris of the individual would be punished by *powers*, which were external and provided the grammar for the limits of individual freedom.<sup>84</sup> This change was reflected in his response to Strecker as well.

Strindberg replied to Strecker's request on January 30, 1909:

Es handelt sich in meinem Briefwechsel mit Nietzsche u. a. um eine Übersetzung ins Französische, die ich von seinen Schriften machen sollte, und da ich verarmt war, konnte ich das nicht umsonst – also die ewige ungemütliche Geldfrage. Aber inzwischen sandte ich ihm die französische Übersetzung meiner »Friedensnovelle«, *Tortures de Conscience*, *Samvetskval*. Bald darauf wurde er wahnsinnig und schrieb mir ungefähr folgendes: »Ihre Novelle hat auf mich wie ein Flintenschuß gewirkt. Ich gehe nach Rom um drei Monarchen totzuschießen.« (Es war nämlich damals eine Konferenz in Rom.)

»Der Gekreuzigte«

Ich glaube, dass er mit mir Spaß machen wollte und sandte den Brief an Dr. Georg Brandes. Brandes antwortete, daß er die »Katastrophe schon längst erwartet habe.« Später bekam ich noch eine Zeile, ungefähr so: »Leben Sie wohl, Divorçons!«

(My translation of his writings into French is the subject matter of my correspondence with Nietzsche, among other things. As I was impoverished, I could not do this for free – thus the eternally unpleasant money question. In between, I sent him the French translation of my »peace-novella,« *Pangs of Conscience*. Shortly after that, he went insane and wrote me something like

82 STRINDBERG: 1996a, The introduction is found on pp. 263–267. My translation.

83 See BORLAND: 1956, 24.

84 This change in Strindberg's ideology, however, is not a change in his understanding of the process of identity formation. This issue will be discussed in the last chapter of this study through a reading of Strindberg's *Inferno* and Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*.

this: »Your novella has affected me like a gunshot. I will travel to Rome to assassinate three monarchs. (Namely, there was a conference there at the time).

»The Crucified«

I believe that he wanted to fool around with me and I sent the letter to Dr. Georg Brandes. Brandes answered that »he had already long expected the catastrophe.« Another time I received a note that read something like: Live well, let us be divorced.)<sup>85</sup>

There are some subtle yet telling discrepancies in Strindberg's recollection of the letters. Four points emerge from a comparison of Strindberg's version of the story and the primary source documents. These are as follows: a transposition, a rewording to advantage, an omission, and a distancing.

When Strindberg sent Nietzsche his *peace novella*, Nietzsche responded:

Sie werden die Antwort auf ihre Novelle in Kürze zu hören bekommen – sie klingt wie ein Flintenschuß ... Ich habe einen Fürstentag nach Rom zusammenbefohlen, ich will den jungen Kaiser füsillieren lassen.

Auf Wiedersehn! Denn wir werden uns wieder sehen ... Une seule condition: Divorçons ...

Nietzsche Caesar

(You will soon have an answer about your novella – it sounds like a rifle shot ... I have ordered a convocation of princes in Rome – I mean to have the young emperor shot.

*Auf Wiedersehen!* For we shall see each other again. Under one condition: let us divorce ...

Nietzsche Caesar)<sup>86</sup>

First, Strindberg confuses two signatures. In the letter, which refers to the *peace novella*, Nietzsche did not sign off as »Der Gekreuzigte,« but rather as »Nietzsche Caesar«. Second, Strindberg's version of Nietzsche's response implied that he had had an explosive effect (*Aufwirkung*) on the philosopher. Nietzsche's actual response was much more ironic. He wrote that the answer to the *peace novella* would be heard and that it, with it being a bit ambiguous as both *die Antwort and die Novelle* are feminine, would sound like a gunshot. The irony here is unmistakable as the answer to Strindberg's pacifist novel sounds (*klingt*) as if it comes out of the barrel of a gun. Also, further accentuating the irony, Nietzsche

85 STRECKER: 1921, 27. Translation mine.

86 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 567–568. The English translation is from MIDDLETON: 1996, 344. Note: Middleton does not translate the French – so the last line of the letter is my translation.

wore the mask of the martial Caesar, not the peaceful Christ, and ordered a march on Rome. Thirdly, Strindberg neglected to mention his own answer to Nietzsche's letter where he cites Horace's *Carmina* II number 10, and added »Interdum juvat insaniere« (Meanwhile let us rejoice in our madness),<sup>87</sup> signing off as »Strindberg (Deus, optimus, maximus),«<sup>88</sup> thereby upping the ante. To this Nietzsche replied in the beginning of January: »Eheu? ... Nicht mehr Divorçons ... Der Gekreuzigte.«<sup>89</sup> Lastly, Strindberg recalled correctly that he had sent Brandes the letter and questioned Nietzsche's sanity; however, he forgot that he had put forward the proposition that Nietzsche was mad, and, out of fear that he would be compromised by association, asked for Brandes' advice.<sup>90</sup> Brandes replied the very next day. In his response he reminded Strindberg that he had criticized Nietzsche's »svulmende Selvfølelse« (swelling sense of self)<sup>91</sup> and that Strindberg had defended Nietzsche. Brandes went on to speculate if Nietzsche were really mad and expressed sorrow that such a rich spirit could be beset by megalomania. Strindberg also forgot to mention that Brandes' lack of surprise at Nietzsche's condition was expressed in the following manner:

Lidt Haab har jeg dog endnu. Naar man som jeg i mere end en Snes Aar er gaaet om som Doctor i det store Hospital af syge, saarede, exalterede og halvfjottede Forfængeligheder, som kaldes Literaturen – forbauses man ikke mere over nogen Ytring af Selv-tilbedelse hos en Skribent, især en længe miskjendt.

(Despite this, I still have little hope. When one has, as I have, played doctor in the great literary hospital filled with sick, wounded, exalted, and half-wittedly vain individuals for more than a score of years, – then one is not astonished

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87 Translation from MIDDLETON: 1996, 344.

88 STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1739.

89 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 572. The irony is even further compounded here – Nietzsche's farewell signature is in response to Strindberg's signature in the previous letter: »Strindberg (Deus, Optimus, Maximus),« so we have »Der Gekreuzigte (The Crucified)« asking for a divorce from God.

90 BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 296. Letter from Strindberg to Georg Brandes, January 3, 1889. »... nu tror jag vår vän Nietzsche är galen och hvad värre är, han kan kompromettera oss, såvida den listige Slaven (minns Turgenjeff-Daudet, tänk på den slipade Tolstoi) skojar med oss allesamman! ... Was Thun?« (... now I believe our friend Nietzsche is mad and what is even worse, he can compromise us, provided that sly Slav (remember Turgenjev-Daudet, think about that cunning Tolstoy) is putting us all on ... What is to be done? My translation.

91 Ibid. Georg Brandes to Strindberg.

any more over some expression of self-worship by an author, especially one who has long been suspected.)<sup>92</sup>

Strindberg failed to recall how Brandes' assessment of Nietzsche's condition was tied into his notion of the literary environment as a whole, and, recalling how Brandes had introduced Strindberg as a half-crazed but true genius, by association back to Strindberg himself. Strindberg distanced himself from his own fear of being perceived as mad. Another form of distancing also took place. Strindberg told Strecker that Brandes had the letters, completely forgetting that Brandes had sent the letters back. Strecker wrote Brandes, who informed him of Strindberg's mistake. It is interesting that Strindberg placed the correspondence in the hands of the one who made it possible.

While Strecker has been merely seen as a curiosity and Ola Hansson's pan-German agenda faded with time, the closeness of Hansson's relationship to Strindberg added weight to his statements for future scholars. The two men's disagreement over the extent of Nietzsche's influence and their correspondence about their reception of the philosopher was to become a staple of the Scandinavian and German scholarship on the subject.

The scholarship has resolved the disagreement between the two perspectives by smoothing it out and deeming Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche to be a passing phase in the life of the Swede and a document of the philosopher's imminent demise.

Parting company with these lines of thought, I claim that the incongruities that face the teller of this tale provide us with an opening through which we can discern its significance. It is these incongruities that exemplify the commonality in Strindberg and Nietzsche's projects. This commonality can be found on the level of the construction of subjectivity. Both Nietzsche and Strindberg share a notion of subjectivity that denies a sense of foundation. Recollection is in dynamic tension with forgetting, as the self knows no stable history. The construction of self is dependent upon a struggle between forces in a polemical present tense. Both men share the notion of character as fiction, see historical conditions as an internalized imperative to re-interpret, and valorize the fluidity of this interpretative optic dependent only on the interests of the organism in ceaseless reformation. Contradiction, the saying against what was previ-

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 297.

ously said, replaces the notion of a stable self. Thus, our version of the story begins at a moment when the past is a point of contention. This choice is appropriate to our subject matter. For the crux of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg is the commonality in the way that they bare the device of their reconstruction of both a personal and a cultural history. The self is a site of conflict, and self-interpretation is shown to be a reconstructive process, which changes the past, by its very enactment.

Appropriately, the first problem that arises in the telling of the story of the encounter between the two men is the conflict between the public and the private Strindberg. This conflict is magnified when we factor in August Strindberg's fluid conception of his own past. It is even further complicated when we consider Strindberg's project in the light of bourgeois realism, which claims to make the private lives of its class of readers transparent to themselves. Strindberg radicalized this project by making himself and his own private life the subject of an autobiographical project written in the form of fiction. In other words, he made the fiction of his own private life public. This left him with only one truth claim, the paradoxical and mutable claim of being both an aspect of continuity and renewal. He became by his own reckoning, the modern.

I senare tiden spridda uppgifter att mitt skriftställereri skulle vara baserat på Nietzsche, utan vidare, ber jag här få besvara.

(Recently, there have been scattered reports that my authorship is based on Nietzsche. Without further ado, I ask permission to respond here.)<sup>93</sup>

In 1894, a group of Scandinavian authors published a collection of essays written about Strindberg. Included in this collection was a terse two-page article by Strindberg himself. The title of his contribution is *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* (My Relationship to Nietzsche). It is interesting that Strindberg chose to comment upon a »relationship« which was both short-lived and impossible to rekindle. Yet in this strategically placed apologia, Strindberg elected to respond to a perception that he had helped to create and at one time had hoped to exploit. As Gunnar Brandell has remarked about Strindberg's Berlin years:

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93 STRINDBERG: 1918, 323–324, *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* (My Relationship to Nietzsche). Originally published in *En bok om Strindberg* (A Book about Strindberg) in 1894.

Ola Hansson och Georg Brandes i kompanjonskap hade också för tyskarna tolkat en av deras landsmän, den nyupptäckte filosofen Friedrich Nietzsche. Till Strindbergs rykte hörde att han hade varit i kontakt med den märklige mannen, vilket inte skadade hans sak. Vid ett tillfälle sökte han efter Nietzschebrevens för att visa upp dem i krog eller salong, glömsk av att hade lämnat dem kvar i Stockholm.

(Ola Hansson and Georg Brandes had in concert interpreted one of the Germans' countrymen for them, the newly discovered philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Strindberg had been in contact with this remarkable man and this enhanced his reputation. It certainly did not hurt his case. When the opportunity arose, he searched for his Nietzsche letters to show them off in a bar or salon, forgetful that he had left them behind in Stockholm.)<sup>94</sup>

Strindberg had at one time hoped to gain recognition for his association with Nietzsche and wanted to ride the wave of the growing enthusiasm for the philosopher in Germany.<sup>95</sup> This association with Nietzsche helped pave the way for Strindberg when he traveled to Berlin in 1892. Disappointed with his lack of success at home, Strindberg had hoped to become known as a pan-German author.<sup>96</sup> This article, which was written after Strindberg had decided to try his hand as a scientist in France, reflected another interest. Strindberg now wanted to be seen as a scientist and in literature as a scientific author who had experimented upon himself and had anticipated his own development. In any case, Strindberg seems split between allure of momentary ambitions and the weight of his by any standards interesting past.

The burden of this past, populated with letters of intoxicated indulgence about Friedrich Nietzsche, was lifted through a public appeal;

<sup>94</sup> BRANDELL: 1985, 287.

<sup>95</sup> Or at least, Strindberg's understanding of the German cultural situation was influenced by Hansson whose residence in Berlin predated his own. Hansson wrote Strindberg on April 8, 1890: »Alla tyska publikationer ha nu i en hast blifvet fulla af Nietzsche.« My translation. »All the German publications have suddenly become filled with Nietzsche.« Ola Hansson: Letter to August Strindberg collected in STRINDBERG: 1938.

<sup>96</sup> Strindberg, in fact, would find a more receptive audience in Germany than at home. Directors such as Max Reinhardt were much more willing to stage some of Strindberg's more controversial plays than his own countryman. A good example: After the turn of the century, Max Reinhardt established a Strindberg repertoire which premiered new plays and staged some of the older, more controversial dramas. *Fröken Julie*, written in the summer of 1888, was part of a series of Strindberg productions staged by Reinhardt. It played to great success at the Kleines Theater in Berlin in 1904. Its Swedish premiere was in 1906 – in Lund – a production directed by a young actor, August Falck, in a prominent but small university town, staged far away from the capital.

explained away in a series of terse statements, which read like a chronicle. Strindberg claimed that what had been regarded as the Nietzschean strain in his work was, in fact, a continuation of the train of thought that had begun in 1886 with the writing of the fourth volume of his autobiography, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*). With the writing of *Författaren* (*The Author*), he claims to have »arbetat mig ur äldre vantrö, invuxen från ungdomen« (worked myself out of older false beliefs inherited from my youth).<sup>97</sup> He continues by echoing his 1889 admonition against Hansson's *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* by mentioning that he had published *Die Kleinen* (*The Small*) in the *Neue Freie Presse*. But there is a significant change in this retrospective public echo, which in the passing of time resounds to the point where we hear the echo of an echo and so on. For here, the site of the confluence between Strindberg and Nietzsche's thought branches out into a few more tributaries, and the protest that Strindberg lodged against Hansson converges with his statement to Georg Brandes that he would experiment with a Nietzschean perspective. The texts that Strindberg had presented to Hansson in defense of his intellectual autonomy multiply in *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche*. *Schleichwege* has been forgotten, but *Die Großen* (*The Great*) and *Kampf der Gehirne* (*Battle of the Brains*) are added to the list of texts published in the Viennese newspaper. *Fadren* (*The Father*) and the novel *Hemsöborna* (*The People of Hemsö*) are also mentioned as being part of an experiment in which the Nietzschean perspective was tentatively enacted.<sup>98</sup>

The chronicle continues by addressing the events of the next year, 1888, by stating that his *war of liberation*<sup>99</sup> continued and that *Fröken Julie* (*Miss Julie*) furnishes the proof that he had come upon the same results as Nietzsche, who was completely unknown to him at the time.<sup>100</sup>

97 STRINDBERG: 1918, 323, »Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche«. My translation.

98 Ibid. »... och hade 1887, i de av Neue Freie Presse tryckta novellerna *Die Kleinen*, *Die Großen* och *Kampf des Gehirnes* samt i dramat *Fadren* och romanen *Hemsöborna* försöksvis intagit den ståndpunkt som numera betecknas som Nietzsches.« (... and had in 1887 through the publishing of *Die Kleinen*, *Die Grossen*, and *Kampf des Gehirnes* in the *Neue Freie Presse*, as well as in the drama *The Father* and the novel *The People of Hemsö* took in the Nietzschean perspective by way of experiment.) My translation.

99 Ibid. *Befrielsekriget* is the term used.

100 *Fröken Julie* is known in English as either *Miss Julie* or *Lady Julie*, depending on the translation. It is germane to note, that while Strindberg uses this play as an example of his anticipation of Nietzsche, the foreword to the play was written after Strindberg



The encounter itself and how it came to be is dealt with tersely. *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* concludes: »De som följt min skriftställarebana i dess utvecklingskeden veta åtminstone alltför väl huru tidigt jag intog den s. k. Nietzscheståndpunkten gentemot konventionell moral och kvinnoemancipation, för att de ej skola med rena samveten giva mig mitt och Nietzsche sitt.« (Those who have followed the trajectory of my authorship in this stage of development know at least all too well how early I took the so called Nietzschean perspective on conventional morality and feminism, so that they could not with a clean conscience not give me what is mine and Nietzsche what is his.)<sup>101</sup> The protest ends with a call for separation, and the scholarship has up to now heeded this call. In Strindberg's first, last, and only public statement on his encounter with Nietzsche, he set the stage for a series of scholars who posit the impossibility of influence. Yet, through a condensation of his own past in the interests of his momentary ambitions, Strindberg pointed once again to the relation between separation and identity formation. The struggle of being modern, of creating lasting things in a sea of change, had replaced the desire to depict what is *real*. Strindberg based his notion of selfhood on an oscillation between distance and proximity, this movement reconstructing and inflecting the past, making it present through a polemical voice, all the while reclaiming experience through naming. The question for Strindberg was not whether to be or not to be Nietzschean. For him, it was more the paradox of both being and not being Nietzschean that held sway and perhaps this is the most Nietzschean response of all.

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had read the philosopher. It is in this foreword that Strindberg introduces his notion of the characterless character. Strindberg admits that the foreword was written under the influence of Nietzsche. I would claim that the foreword is interesting in that it provides us with a window through which we can see how Strindberg re-evaluated his own *pre-Nietzschean*, »Nietzschean play« *post Nietzsche*.

101 STRINDBERG: 1918, 324, »Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche«.

## Chapter 5: The Genealogy of Self

Contradiction, then, functions throughout discourse, as the principle of its historicity.<sup>1</sup>

Michel Foucault writes that the »history of ideas recognizes [...] two levels of contradictions: that of appearances, which is resolved in the profound unity of discourse; and that of foundations, which give rise to discourse itself.« Foucault argues that despite attempts to reconcile these discrepancies, »contradiction is ceaselessly reborn through discourse«.<sup>2</sup> Up to now, engaging with contradictions of the first kind has served as a tool for situating the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg historically as a series of collisions within seemingly paradoxical positions.

These particular collisions arose due to a certain historical understanding; as the awareness of being a modern human being in the flow of time inflected the attempts of intellectuals to understand how they could either posit enduring forms or learn to affirm constant change in what they understood to be an increasingly contingent world. Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche was epitomized by contradictory claims and the discourse around the encounter between the two tended to smooth out the differences. As a result, the richness of the moment was relegated to the marginalia of literary history and the philosophical import of the encounter was written off as Strindberg's strong misreading of Nietzsche. More importantly than any claim of influence, the encounter revealed a certain post-positivist epistemological uncertainty where the drive to learn and to receive recognition from the other was expressed through tropes of appropriation and anticipation. Both Nietzsche and Strindberg inform us of a vivid conception of the relationship between descriptions of the world and of the self in late nineteenth century Europe.

Even though both men rejected teleological explanations of progressive historical change, the encounter was marked by a temporal displacement intrinsic to certain strains of modernity, namely the feeling that the past is irretrievable and the present is always pregnant with the future. This particular understanding of temporality had a profound effect

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<sup>1</sup> FOUCAULT: 1972, 151

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

on Nietzsche and Strindberg's conceptions of how narrative of the self could be told; for if the »I« is a historical construction and history has no telos, then how could one claim essential or enduring qualities without reverting to trans-historical spiritual or materialist claims? In the 1880's, both Nietzsche and Strindberg took recourse in a middle position, believing that modernity was a moment where the anticipation of change was confronted by the claim of the proper name; as naming and description themselves served as forms of appropriation in a contentious public culture. Their belief in the ability of discourse to temporarily place the stamp of being on becoming was often misread by their contemporaries, as often as not, in a rather ahistorical fashion.

The consequent rise of the trope of authenticity in the discourse around the Nietzsche reception in Scandinavia created a tension between the »good European« as a trans-national »aristocratic radical« who anticipates a future free from the parochial confines of the strong nation state and the ambiguous particularity of the national or racial type who re-constructs an authentic future out of a self-consciously fictional past. However, despite the essentializing propensity of the discourse around him, Nietzsche understood his own existence as being suffused with history:

*Wohin man reisen muss.* – Die unmittelbare Selbstbeobachtung reicht nicht lange aus, um sich kennen zu lernen: wir brauchen Geschichte, denn die Vergangenheit strömt in hundert Wellen in uns fort; wir selber sind ja Nichts als Das, was wir in jedem Augenblick von diesem Fortströmen empfinden.

*(Whither we have to travel.* – Direct self-observation is not nearly sufficient for us to know ourselves: we require history, for the past continues to flow within us in a hundred waves; we ourselves are, indeed, nothing but that which at every moment we experience of this continued flowing.)<sup>3</sup>

For Nietzsche and Strindberg, the history of the self emanated from an engagement with internal contradictions. Therefore, Foucault's second type of contradiction, that from which discourse emerges, will be the subject of the remainder of this book. Both Nietzsche and Strindberg believed that the antinomies of the modern subject bring to bear a certain historical sense, specifically a sense of living in a nihilistic age, where »die obersten Werthe sich entwerthen« (the highest values are devalu-

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<sup>3</sup> NIETZSCHE: KSA 2, 1988b, 2:477, Aphorism 223. The English translation comes from: HOLLINGDALE: 1996, 2:267–268, Aphorism 223.

ated).<sup>4</sup> Both men understood themselves to be living in a moment when they needed to »[d]em Werden den Charakter des Seins aufzuprägen« (*imprint* upon becoming the character of being)<sup>5</sup> and they understood that »[w]enn kein Ziel in der ganzen Geschichte der menschlichen Geschicke liegt, so müssen wir eins hineinstecken« ([i]f there is no goal in the history of man's lot, then we must put one in).<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche's genealogical method, which according to Eric Blondel utilizes »the language of the *life* of the body,«<sup>7</sup> serves as a point of entry into our discussion of the contradictions that belie the claims for the autonomous individual. For certainly the collective demand for individual self-assertion leads to the construction of one of the most uncanny creatures in the history of modern thought, an individual who dares not deny his own autonomy for fear of departing from the values of the crowd. This is Nietzsche's herd animal, believing in his own individuality because of a universally held belief. However despite or perhaps because of his critique, Nietzsche realized the value of contradiction himself and understood it to be a defining aspect of his own modernity; his view of what it meant to be living in the late nineteenth Century clearly expresses the uncanniness of the position of the bourgeois subject. Congruently, one of his notebook entries from the mid 1880's reads:

Wenn ich einstmals das Wort »unzeitgemäß« auf meine Bücher geschrieben habe, wie viel Jugend, Unerfahrenheit, Winkel drückt sich in diesem Worte aus! Heute begreife ich, daß mit dieser Art Klage, Begeisterung und Unzufriedenheit ich eben damit zu den Modernsten der Modernen gehörte.

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4 NIETZSCHE: 1970, 14. The English translation comes from STURGE: 2003, 146, entry 9 [35]. Michael Allen Gillespie claims that »[i]n contrast to all of his predecessors from Jacobi to Turgenev, Nietzsche thus sees Nihilism as the consequence of human weakness and not as a result of a Promethian striving for the superhuman. Indeed, for Nietzsche, the superhuman is not the cause of nihilism but its solution.« I will argue that the »Promethian« is an aspect of Nietzsche's nihilism as well. Certainly Zarathustra cites Goethe's »Prometheus Fragmente« and Robert Gooding Williams argues convincingly for Zarathustra's Promethian aspects. I would also add that the *will to power* is a species of Promethian expansion. See GILLESPIE: 1995, 179 and GOODING-WILLIAMS: 2001, 236-268

5 NIETZSCHE: 1974b, 320, entry 7 [54]. The English translation comes from STURGE: 2003, 138.

6 NIETZSCHE: 1974b, 242, entry 6 [9] The English translation comes from STURGE: 2003, 124.

7 From Eric Blondel's »Question of Genealogy,« collected in SCHACHT: 1994, 312.

(If I once wrote the word »untimely« on my books, how much youth, inexperience, peculiarity that word expressed! Today I realize it was precisely this kind of complaint, enthusiasm, and dissatisfaction that made me one of the most modern of the moderns.)<sup>8</sup>

Nietzsche understood his being modern by virtue of his opposition to modernity. This was his way of situating himself in history and for understanding the role that history played in his psychology. Nietzsche's contradictory discourse historicizes yet he claims that the collision between internalized positions cannot be directly observed; it emerges through discursive and performative acts. For »[w]ir sind uns unbekannt, wir Erkennenden, wir selbst uns selbst: das hat seinen guten Grund« ([we] are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason).<sup>9</sup> This particular species of »ignorance« evokes ironic thoughts about the *pathos of distance*. However it becomes apparent that the taking of distance in order to know cannot be the entire story for one who rejects the notion of an absolute objectivity, and thus the pathos of distance cannot be the basis for a Nietzschean epistemology all on its own. Perhaps, distance requires a reciprocal passion, a contradiction so to speak in the form of a pathos of engagement. Nietzsche implied that we require a context from which we can know and that we desire both finitude and something more, an awareness of the ebb and flow of time in consciousness.

Henry Staten contests the idea that the inconsistencies in the Nietzschean project are merely the hallmark of perspectival thinking. He writes that while Nietzsche advocates that all knowledge is perspectival, he does take positions, and seeing as much, the critic must assimilate Nietzsche from a »psychodialectical approach,« »the dialectic between logic and libido.«<sup>10</sup> Staten also centers his critique in Nietzsche's bodies so to speak: in the textual corpus and in the libidinal economy that the text reveals. Staten's argument is compelling and his reasoning finds some support in Nietzsche famous dictum that all philosophy is really the unconscious memoir of the body.<sup>11</sup>

Building on this line of reasoning and factoring in Michel's Foucault's postulation that contradictions allow the principle of historicity to

8 NIETZSCHE: 1974b, 162, Entry 2[201]. English translation: STURGE: 2003, 98.

9 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 247. The English translation comes from DIETHE: 2007, 3.

10 See STATEN: 1990. The first cited phrase is found on pg. 6, the second on pg. 2.

11 Ibid., 8–9. Here Staten cites Nietzsche from JBG (BGE), Aphorism 6.

emerge in thought, one wonders how to reconstruct the contradictions in Nietzsche's genealogies so that they reflect his timeliness, his modernity, and his moment. It is helpful to recall that Nietzsche believed himself to be living in »die Zeit der Tragödie, die Zeit der Moralen und Religionen« (the age of tragedy, in the age of moralities and religions).<sup>12</sup> However despite the dominance of these aspects of the age, we must not read this formulation in a static manner for Nietzsche's contradictory method is born from his concern for difference and relation. Gilles Deleuze reminds us that the »tragic is only to be found in multiplicity,«<sup>13</sup> and from Aristotle on we have known that collision creates the dramatic modality of a tragic art. Nietzsche's genealogical method necessarily involves descriptions of colliding and contradictory moments in both the history of morality and I would argue in the history of the self. For as Nietzsche argues in the very aphorism that Staten uses to introduce his study of the philosopher's »psychodialectical« economy:

Bei allem Wollen handelt es sich schlechterdings um Befehlen und Gehorchen, auf der Grundlage, wie gesagt, eines Gesellschaftsbaus vieler »Seelen«: weshalb ein Philosoph sich das Recht nehmen sollte, Wollen an sich schon unter den Gesichtskreis der Moral zu fassen: Moral nämlich als Lehre von den Herrschafts-Verhältnissen verstanden, unter denen das Phänomen »Leben« entsteht.

(All willing is simply a matter of commanding and obeying, on the groundwork, as I have said, of a society constructed of many »souls«; from which a philosopher should claim the right to understand willing itself within the framework of morality: morality understood as a doctrine of power relations under which the phenomenon of »life« arises.)<sup>14</sup>

For Nietzsche the sense that one has of history is related to »die Fähigkeit, die Rangordnung von Werthschätzungen schnell zu errathen, ach welchen ein Volk, eine Gesellschaft, ein Mensch lebt« (the capacity to divine quickly the valuations by which a society, a man lives).<sup>15</sup> Staten is certainly right to take to task anyone who would simply argue that

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<sup>12</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1988c, KSA 3, 370, Aphorism 1. The English comes from NAUCKHOFF: 2001, 28, Aphorism 1.

<sup>13</sup> DELEUZE: 1983, 17; my translation.

<sup>14</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 32, Aphorism 19. The English comes from NORMAN: 2002, 20.

<sup>15</sup> See NIETZSCHE: 1974a, 232. The English translation comes from STURGE: 2003, 17, Entry 35 [2]. See also NIETZSCHE: 1993, 157–160, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Aphorism 224.

Nietzsche's contradictions are merely a result of perspectivalism; for this is not only a question of specific viewpoints, but of drives, the perspectives they create, and the organization of these competing perspectives within the organism. Nietzsche argues that »[v]on jedem unserer Grundtriebe aus giebt es verschiedene perspektivische Abschätzung alles Geschehens und Erlebens« ([f]rom each of our fundamental drives there is a different appraisal of everything that happens and is experienced). He continues by adding there is »einer Vielheit von ›Willen zur Macht‹: jeder mit Vielheit von Ausdrucksmitteln und Formen« (a multiplicity of ›wills to power‹: each one with a means of expression and forms).<sup>16</sup> He even posits that »der Mensch eine Vielheit von Kräften ist, welche in einer Rangordnung stehen« (man is a multiplicity of forces, which stand in an order of rank) so as to provide an internal hierarchy of command that enhances their existence.<sup>17</sup> It becomes apparent that there is a strong processional commonality between the way one understands historically and the way one's drives are organized to produce a moral sense as well. Seen in this light, it is easier to understand why Nietzsche critiques the notion of a unitary subject when he critiques morality, and why he wonders if perhaps history is yet to be discovered.<sup>18</sup>

The implications in all this come to the fore when we realize that Nietzsche relegates the »I,« the »soul,« the »unitary« and the »free« wills to fictions, to composites abbreviating multiplicities.<sup>19</sup> Self-depiction is both retrospective (adding the doer to the deed) and anticipatory (based on the noble privilege of keeping promises) in this framework, and this helps to explain the imperative of a notion of time that demands a circle of recurrence. The self derives itself through performance, through aesthetic reconstruction, and this is dependent on contradictions. In the end, I argue with Foucault that these contradictions situate Nietzsche historically in the moment where bourgeois subjects attack bourgeois

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<sup>16</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1974b, 21. The English translation comes from: STURGE: 2003, 59–60, Entry 1 [58].

<sup>17</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1974a, 181, Entry 34 [123]; STURGE: 2003, 8, for the translation.

<sup>18</sup> See Aphorism 34, »Historia Abscondita«. NIETZSCHE: 1988c, KSA 3, 404, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. The English may be found in NAUCKHOFF and DEL CARO: 2001, 53–54.

<sup>19</sup> For a compelling study of this phenomenon, see PARKES: 1994.

suppositions. I argue that the subject emerges in the late nineteenth century as the »contradiction ceaselessly reborn through discourse«.<sup>20</sup>

The last chapter addressed how scholars had reconciled both the contradictory aspects of Strindberg's literary production and the inconsistencies in his private statements concerning his encounter with Nietzsche. It was my contention that the scholarship on the subject has been restricted by the parameters of a model of analysis based on influence, and has heretofore reconciled these contradictions in order to posit the impossibility of influence. I argued further that a commonality between Nietzsche and Strindberg can be found in these selfsame contradictions if they are understood as part of a dynamic process of subject formation rather than merely a set of incongruent statements. As Steven E. Aschheim has pointed out, the determination of the degree of an author's Nietzscheanism is not contingent upon his conceptual congruity to a Nietzschean master text.

Strindberg believed that Nietzsche's penchant for contradiction made him the timeliest, »the most modern of us all,« and as mentioned earlier, he understood his palinodic philosophical production as a systemless system, as a process in other words. For Strindberg, the question was not »to be or not to be« Nietzschean, but to be both Nietzschean and not Nietzschean at the same time. He believed that Nietzsche had articulated his own way of understanding the past, as a re-collection in the moment, as an experimental re-enactment whose end result was a fictional sense of self. As we shall see, this sense of self was dependent on an agonistic process that included an internalization of the »truth« of contradictions.<sup>21</sup> What Strindberg saw as Nietzsche's *systemless system*, what he saw as the habit of opposing everything, I call the *genealogy of self*.

It is from the premise of colliding genealogical possibilities that I take my leave of the previous scholarship on the subject and start an interrogation of this concept. As previously defined, the *genealogy of self* is a

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20 In the end, I will argue we live in similar times where a revival of fundamentalist religious views worldwide stands mostly in staunch opposition to the values of globalizing capital.

21 Wolfgang Müller-Lauter went so far as to state that »For Nietzsche, the whole of reality is determined from the outset by the ›struggle‹ of opposites.« While I would not go so far as to call the contradictory terms used by Nietzsche »opposites« (for I believe he posits binaries only to empty the term *opposite* of its meaning), I agree that the motor of his philosophy sets opposing terms into colliding orbits. For the source of the citation above see MÜLLER-LAUTER: 1999, 5.



hermeneutic process that highlights the internalization of contradictory elements. It is a process of subject formation that bares its own device and forwards a weakened truth claim. As the *genealogy of self* is a dynamic process that highlights the »overcoming« of the past by the imperatives of the moment, contradiction ceases to be a problematic aspect and functions as the raw material for self-creation. Contradiction, then, marks the location where the device is bared. It conflates differentiated elements that are set in opposition to each other, and the force of this encounter is the vital element of the *genealogy of self*. In the *genealogy of self*, the construction of the »I« is always the result of a collision between collective modes of valuation and a mode of self-description that highlights the establishment of an internal hierarchy created through struggle. The result of this struggle is the description of a subject that is in no way a stable »I,« but is rather an »I« in a constant state of becoming, an »I« aware of its own history and in anticipation of its own futurity. In other words, a contingent subjectivity is constructed and deconstructed. In this way we are alerted to the phenomenon of the bourgeois uncanny, the means by which the notion of the individual is collectively determined and given the veneer of an absolutely discrete unit of measure.

In the encounter between Strindberg and Nietzsche, it is this very process that makes any attempt at a determination of influence an exercise in futility. For the value of the encounter resides in its very historicity, as a moment of rebellion against a notion of subjectivity upon which it was dependent, the false assumption of the self-creating and assertive individual. It is ironic that these two writers, who have often been depicted as exemplars of individual self-generation and whose reputation has been largely crafted from the material harvested from their more polemical moments, both forwarded notions of individuation that highlighted the fictionality of the process and factored in historical conditions. In this sense, both Nietzsche and Strindberg performed a process of subject-creation that highlighted the tension between necessity and contingency. The *genealogy of self* is a site of collision between heredity and creativity and between history and the moment of self-identification, which stamps being on the soft flesh of becoming in the flow of time.

It is important to note that my investigation of this concept is not merely a capitulation to the discourse of the environment of the reception

with its emphasis on the individual who either created history or was not subject to its conditions. While my interrogation will precipitate a renewed investigation of the concepts whose surfaces were traced in our previous investigation of the discursive environment of the reception, it will concentrate on the concept that remained underdeveloped in this discourse, namely, the concept of origin. For the salient aspect of the *genealogy of self*, the very motor that drives the process, are two oppositions, the tension between naming and forgetting and the agonism between dual origins. These oppositions are evident in several moments of the two men's authorship, and an investigation of these instances will show that neither Strindberg nor Nietzsche discounted historical conditions nor did they forward a notion of authenticity based on an intrinsic element of origination. They shared a notion of self-construction that conflated historical and experiential elements in a momentary metaphorical complex. In other words, in this investigation I will be concerned with the internalization of contradictions in a dynamic process.

An objection can be raised: What is the difference between what I have previously called the metaphysics of poeticizing the self into text and the textual construction of subjectivity that I call the *genealogy of self*? The difference resides in the following: the *genealogy of self* bares the device of the poeticization of self into text and it makes a weakened truth claim. It does not conflate man and text; it claims only the status of an interpretation. It posits the predicates of the proper name of the self as the assumption of a momentary perspective that is subject to continual repetition. The end result of a *genealogy of self* is not a claim for a stable subjectivity. The self is not a result of an autobiographical excavation of the content of experience; it is not a confirmation of the past. The *genealogy of self* highlights a formal process, a self-referential hermeneutic, which is a struggle between necessity and contingency resulting in a momentary conflation of history and autobiography in a compound metaphor. With this in mind, I will now turn to an exploration of the Nietzschean genealogical method.

#### Pathos of Distance, Pathos of Engagement: The Relationship of Genealogy and Polemic

In chapter four, I remarked that the surface aspect of the commonality in Strindberg and Nietzsche's authorial projects could be found in a means

of valuation whose dynamic was an oscillation between proximity and distance. I explained this phenomenon through a brief explication of the Nietzschean opposition between *das Pathos der Distanz* (the pathos of distance) and appropriation through naming.<sup>22</sup> In this section, I will elaborate on this method of valuation by analyzing those Nietzschean texts that are most concerned with this subject: a theoretical investigation of what he saw as the dominant mode of valuation in the West, *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)*, and his self-description, *Ecce Homo*. These two genealogies are inextricably linked as Nietzsche understood this dominant perspective, the *ascetic ideal*, to be an internalization of suffering and considered the praxis of his philosophy to be a *Selbstüberwindung* (self-overcoming). His genealogical work re-enacted what he considered to be the struggle between this perspective and a *noble* perspective on both the level of »history« and »autobiography«. Considering this postulation, the problem of the *relativity* of Nietzsche's perspectivalism must be addressed. For if the Nietzschean genealogy confronted what he saw as the dominant perspective in Western culture with just another perspective, what is his truth claim?

Section 22 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil)* informs the following reading of Nietzsche's twin genealogies. Though this text cannot be considered as an example of Nietzsche's genealogical corpus, it provides us with a means of understanding the genealogies in light of their perspectivalism. In this section, Nietzsche takes the »Physicists« and »bad Philologists« to task for positing the »Gesetzmässigkeit der Natur« (nature's conformity to law).<sup>23</sup> He accuses them of mistaking their interpretation for fact and goes on to forward a counter claim that nature is not subject to law, but instead expresses *der Wille zur Macht* in all of its manifestations. The section ends by admitting:

Gesetzt, dass auch dies nur Interpretation ist – und ihr werdet eifrig genug sein, dies einzuwenden? – nun, umso besser. –

(Granted this too is only an interpretation – and you will be eager enough to raise an objection? – well, so much the better. – )<sup>24</sup>

22 The claim that naming appropriates is at least as old as the book of Genesis.

23 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 37. See also HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 52 for the translation of the phrase.

24 Ibid. NIETZSCHE for the original and HOLLINGDALE for the translation.

Readers of Nietzsche's genealogical works are confronted with a basic interpretive problem. Do we read these genealogies as historical accounts, as polemics, or in a more Nietzschean sense, as a masked »autobiography« that calls itself a linguistic manifestation of *der Wille zur Macht* (the will to power). Nietzsche's claim that perspective delimits interpretation can be easily turned against him by an unsympathetic reader who asserts that perspectivism undermines his critical project by rendering his own assertions relative to any other assertion. Nietzsche can be accused of either denying the very foundation upon which his postulations stand or of using the *will to power* as a metaphysical ground. However, an interpretation of this kind would arrest the motion, which characterizes the Nietzschean genealogical method. It is not that Nietzsche lacked a truth claim, but rather that he refrained from connecting his truth claim to any static model. He stated time and time again that our understanding of »reality« is an interpretation in competition with and in relation to other interpretations. The Nietzschean genealogy admits to its perspective, but this does not negate the relevance of his claim for an affirmative praxis.

Nietzschean perspectivism does not merely admit to the existence of divergent points of view. It is not a passive gesture that simply acknowledges a multiplicity of interpretations. His perspectivism is not relative; it is relational. It is not relative in the sense that interpretations exist independently of and equal to one another. It is relational in that interpretations are an event of *the will to power*. »Der Wille zur Macht interpretiert« (The will to power *interprets*), and as an interpretive force, defines itself in relation to other interpretations.<sup>25</sup> For Nietzsche, interpretation was an event of *the will to power* and as such experiences »Alles Geschehen, alle Bewegung, alles Werden als ein Feststellen von Grad- und Kraftverhältnissen, als ein *Kampf*« (All that happens, all movement, all becoming, as a determination of relations of degree and force, as a *struggle*).<sup>26</sup>

Nietzschean interpretation collides with other interpretations in the world and is never a neutral activity. An interpretative perspective and the resulting exegesis cannot constitute a neutral ground. Within this

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25 NIETZSCHE: 1974b, 137, Entry 2[148]. The English translation is from STURGE: 2003, 91.

26 NIETZSCHE: 1970, 49, Entry 9[91]. STURGE: 2003, 155, for the translation.

framework, our understanding of the world is textual, and the confluence of its multiple interpretations results in it being a site of collision.<sup>27</sup> This collision activates a play of forces. However, not all interpretations are equal. »[S]chlechte Philologie« mistakes its interpretation for the text itself. Nietzsche's »bad philologists« mistake their calculations for the world as such, and understand existence as governed by laws.<sup>28</sup> It is to them that Nietzsche directs his challenge. This is the heart of Nietzsche's perspectivism. Interpretation is always met by counter-interpretations, memory by counter-memory, and dogma by difference.<sup>29</sup> An interpretation seeks to »master« other interpretations. Nietzsche's own interpretation depended upon his objections to previous interpretations and the objections of others to his, and so on.<sup>30</sup> That is not to say that this relationship is parasitic.<sup>31</sup> A Nietzschean interpretation does not feed off previous interpretations, it engages with them in an oscillation between distance and proximity in a movement between *das Pathos der Distanz* (*the pathos of distance*) and polemic as a pathos of engagement. »In Wahrheit ist *Interpretation ein Mittel selbst, um Herr über etwas zu werden.*« (In truth, *interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something.*)<sup>32</sup>

This mastering is not parasitic; it is parodic. It does not draw its lifeblood from the vitality of previously stated positions. It inhabits the same discursive space, so to speak; confronting a poem with another poem, colonizing or if you prefer, de-colonizing the sacred space of the western tradition with a counter narrative of origination. The drive to master occurs in three moments. *The will to power* is engaged within the »self,« with the »historical« past and with other interpretations in the world.

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27 This is an example of what I call »Nietzschean Modesty,« a modesty that ironically is dependent upon a polemical rhetorical assertion.

28 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 37 (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*).

29 See FOUCAULT: 1980.

30 As Daniel Conway puts it: »Hence a NIETZSCHEAN genealogy is successful not if it achieves or approximates objective validity, but if it effectively supplants or discredits the dominant interpretation of the historical phenomenon in question.« See Conway's »Genealogy and Critical Method« in SCHACHT: 1994, 324.

31 Conway feels that it is. I agree with him that Nietzsche's discourse attempts to occupy the same discursive space as other interpretations, but see the modality as being sometimes parodic, sometimes ironic, always appropriating, and not parasitic. See *ibid.*, 318.

32 NIETZSCHE: 1974b, 138, Entry 2[148]. The English is from: STURGE: 2003, 90.

The first two moments of engagement address »autobiographical« and »historical« concerns in order to affirm chance and becoming. This necessitates a genealogy. The third moment manifests itself in an eternal present tense and speaks in a polemical voice. These three moments are dependent on each other and do not constitute a system of discrete elements. They are aspects of a dynamic complex of forces, which engage in an interpretive event. They cannot be reduced to historical and autobiographical elements or subject and object relations. For Nietzsche, the salient characteristic of his contemporary historical environment was the internalization of repressive elements of the *ascetic ideal*. He saw himself as a site where the contradictory elements of instinct and internalized history were in a state of constant struggle. These contradictory elements, in turn, act as the raw material for self-creation.

The remainder of this chapter will explore this play of forces by investigating the relationship between the genealogical elements of *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* and *Ecce Homo* and the polemical voice employed in both of these texts. The genealogical and polemical moments in these texts will be addressed discretely, in relation to each other, and as constituent formal elements of the three interpretative sights mentioned above. My preliminary thesis reads: *Nietzsche's fascination with moral valuation in his later work was accompanied by a concern with the problem of the relationship between his historical environment and subject formation. His genealogies are not an attempt to reconstruct the »origin« of moral valuation, but a performative act, a negotiation between the interpretative poles of necessity and contingency in the act of self-construction.*<sup>33</sup>

## Genealogy

Meine Humanität ist eine beständige Selbstüberwindung.

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<sup>33</sup> Keith Ansell Pearson writes: »Nietzsche construes the advent of nihilism as providing the occasion for a supreme act of self-examination on the part of humanity, namely a reevaluation of all values, including a reevaluation of the value of civilization.« I would add that this includes a self vivisection from which internalized historical elements are unknotted and re-organized. The source of the citation above is ANSELL-PEARSON: 1991, 44.

(My Humanity is a constant self-overcoming).<sup>34</sup>

For Nietzsche, interpretation is the product of an internal determination, for »unser Leib ist ja nur ein Gesellschaftsbau vieler Seelen« (our body is, after all, only a society constructed out of many souls).<sup>35</sup> Yet this internal determination is not an innate principle, it is the product of a long history of social interaction and reaction, a social structure of internalized relationships of active and reactive forces.<sup>36</sup> However, the individual is not determined solely by this »history«. The possibility exists for him to interact with history through the interpretative and symbolic aspects of consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

If Nietzsche's representation of consciousness is metaphorical, as claimed by Sarah Kofman, it is because the »unsymbolisch« meaning which *ancient* man ascribed to attributes has been laden with symbolic meaning over time.<sup>38</sup> In any case, the internalization of energy, which Nietzsche believed to form consciousness, is by no means mimetic. It is not a mirror image of the external world displayed upon the surface of an individual *tabula rasa*, but rather the inward turning and inflection of an interpretative perspective that created a hierarchy by positing values.

Nietzsche explained how this internalized social structure (*Gesellschaftsbau*) was created and how it was internalized, through his de-

34 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, Section 8, 274. »Warum ich so weise bin«. The English can be found in NORMAN: 2005, 83.

35 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 33. The English translation is taken NORMAN: 2002, 19.

36 For one description of these active and reactive forces see DELEUZE: 1983, 39–72. For a critique of Deleuze's argument see STATEN: 1990, 16–18.

37 Mark Warren writes: »There is a necessary tension between the universalizing aspects of language, with its hold over consciousness, and the individualizing qualities of experience and biography. Unless we see that this is a problem, Nietzsche is arguing, we fail to understand the experiential bases of meaning and agency.« See WARREN: 1988, 57.

38 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 264–265: »Im Übrigen sei man davor gewarnt, diese Begriffe ›rein‹ und ›unrein‹ nicht von vornherein zu schwer, zu weit oder gar symbolisch zu nehmen: alle Begriffe der älteren Menschheit sind vielmehr anfänglich in einem uns kaum ausdenkbaren Maasse grob, plump, äusserlich, eng, geradezu und insbesondere *unsymbolisch* verstanden worden.« The English translation comes from KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 31–32. It reads, »One should be warned, moreover, against taking these concepts ›pure‹ and ›impure‹ too ponderously or broadly, not to say symbolically: all the concepts of ancient man were rather at first incredibly uncouth, coarse, external, narrow, straightforward, and altogether *unsymbolic* in meaning to a degree that we can scarcely conceive.«

scription of the origin of consciousness and conscience in *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)*. According to this text, conscience originates in the »dominirende Instinkt« (dominating instinct) of the »souveraine Mensch« (sovereign human) who becomes aware of the »Privilegium der Verantwortlichkeit« (Privilege of Responsibility) and consciousness came as the result of the suffering of those who were dominated.<sup>39</sup> For Nietzsche, a healthy conscience is distinguished by its ability to distinguish between what to remember and what to forget. This noble »Privilegium der Verantwortlichkeit« was the result of an act of self-affirmation, an active valorization of the ability to extend the will into the future. This ability to select and affirm is the hallmark of *noble* perspective. According to Nietzsche, the bodies that saw from this perspective conquered, organized, and codified the proto-societies of pre-history.

»Schlechtes Gewissen« (Bad Conscience), on the other hand, is created when »Die Feindschaft, die Grausamkeit, die Lust an der Verfolgung, am Überfall, am Wechsel, an der Zerstörung – Alles das gegen die Inhaber solcher Instinkte sich wendend« (Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts).<sup>40</sup> The creation of this proto-state with its system of hierarchy, law, and domination, abetted the development of a »herd animal« who internalized his dammed up aggression and thereby created a reactive inner life. Suffering, denied an outlet and turned inward, became meaningless, for it lacked a witness. A God or Gods were created to serve as witnesses, and gave meaning as he/they assumed the role(s) of creator(s). The *priest* seized upon this unhealthy condition and created a perspective epitomized by *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* is defined as being the inability to digest experience. From this inability to forget, the spirit of revenge is born. The internal space of consciousness developed out of this reactive condition: »Die ganze innere Welt, ursprünglich dünn wie zwischen zwei Häute eingespannt, ist in dem Maasse [sic] aus einander- und aufgegangen, hat Tiefe, Breite, Höhe bekommen, als die Entladung des Menschen nach Aussen *gehemmt* worden ist.« (The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and gained depth,

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39 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 294.

40 *Ibid.*, 323. The English translation is from KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 85.



breath, and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man's instincts were *obstructed*.)<sup>41</sup> *Ressentiment*, as Nietzsche remarked, is an illness that is pregnant with possibility. As Robert Guay points out, »the bad conscience was what created the self-distance needed to take oneself as an object.«<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche also reminds us: »Das tiefe Leiden machte vornehm; es trennt.« (Profound suffering makes you noble: it separates.)<sup>43</sup> Repression opens up the possibility of both the sovereign individual and the human as a herd animal. Nietzsche understood this to be his own context and his own struggle.

Though there is more to Nietzsche's narrative and the description above is schematic, my intention is merely to point out that the *noble* ability to forget and to use memory selectively to extend the will is one internalized perspective, and the *herd animal's* inability to digest experience is another. In other words, the *noble* creates and values, while the enslaved *herd animal* believes that he is created and values an absolute. The agonistic relationship between these two perspectives is part and parcel of the multiplicity within the »individual«.

As a result of this internalization of the relationship between these two perspectives, a struggle ensues within the body as well as without. Self-overcoming within a body, which interacts as a social structure (*Gesellschaftsbau*), suggests the imposition of an internal hierarchy. The principle that imposes this hierarchy is what Nietzsche calls the »*organisierende Idee*«.<sup>44</sup> He states that this self-organization is not based on the selfless principle of living for others or an abstract goal, nor is it based on the self-knowledge of a stable subject. It is the fruit which ripens by avoiding »grosse [...] Imperative« (all great imperatives), »sie bildet der Reihe nach alle dienenden Vermögen aus, bevor sie irgend Etwas von der dominirenden [sic] Aufgabe, von ›Ziel‹, ›Zweck‹, ›Sinn‹ verlauten lässt« (it develops all the *servile* faculties before giving any clue of the dominating task, the ›goal‹, the ›purpose‹ or the ›meaning‹).<sup>45</sup>

41 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 322. The English is from DIETHE 2007, 57.

42 GUAYN: 2006, 358.

43 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 225, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Aphorism 270. The English translation comes from NORMAN: 2002, 166.

44 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 294, *Ecce Homo*, Section 9, »Warum ich so klug bin«. The English translation comes from NORMAN: 2005, 97.

45 Ibid. For the original and the translation.

»Der Wille, einen Affekt zu überwinden, ist zuletzt doch nur der Wille eines anderen oder mehrerer anderer Affekte.« (The will to overcome an emotion is ultimately only the will of another emotion or of several others.)<sup>46</sup> Self-overcoming is the result of an internal play of forces in which discrete aspects of the internalized *social structure* master other subservient aspects. Therefore, self-overcoming is not a reconciliation of equals, but a domination of certain drives over others. The self then is a site of competing perspectives and interpretations. Self-overcoming is not the discovery of a *true* self, or the positing of the ego as text, – it is the affirmation of a dominant perspective. A *genealogy of self* is the selective use of memory in order to affirm this dominance. A *genealogy of self* is an affirmative praxis, an event of self-interpretation in which a *noble* perspective, a *healthy* perspective, subdues competing interpretations. »Unserm stärksten Triebe, dem Tyrannen in uns, unterwirft sich nicht nur unsere Vernunft, sondern auch unser Gewissen.« (To our strongest drive, the tyrant in us, not only our reason but also our conscience submits.)<sup>47</sup>

So in der That erscheint mir *jetzt* jene lange Krankheits-Zeit: ich entdeckte das Leben gleichsam neu, mich selber eingerechnet, ich schmeckte alle guten und selbst kleinen Dinge, wie sie Andre nicht leicht schmecken könnten, – ich machte aus meinem Willen zur Gesundheit, zum *Leben*, meine Philosophie ...

(This is, in fact, how that long period of illness looks to me *now*: I discovered life anew, as it were, myself included, I tasted good and even small things in ways other people cannot easily do, – I created my philosophy from out of my will to health, to *life*.)<sup>48</sup>

*Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's *genealogy of self* is not an autobiography, it is a philosophy, a praxis. It is the dramatization of a way of life.<sup>49</sup> The *genealogy of self* is a site where the genetic aspects of a created perspective are untangled, where the interaction of forces is displayed, where a hier-

46 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 93, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Aphorism 117. The English translation comes from HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 98.

47 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 100, Aphorism 158. For the translation HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 103.

48 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, Section 2, 266–267, *Ecce Homo* »Warum ich so weise bin«. The English translation is from NORMAN: 2005, 76.

49 Please note the difference between my claim that this is a dramatization of a way of life and Alexander NEHAMAS' claims in his wonderful *Nietzsche. Life as Literature* (1985). Nehamas argues that Nietzsche makes a literary character out of himself; my point is that Nietzsche performs and dramatizes those pre-discursive contradictions discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

archy is established, and where health is affirmed. The *genealogy of self* displays a locus of selection and reveals the antinomy of self.

»Abgerechnet nämlich, dass ich ein *décadent* bin, bin ich auch dessen Gegensatz.« (Granting that I am a decadent, I am the opposite as well.)<sup>50</sup> This celebrated sentence reveals the antinomy discussed above. Nietzsche goes on to describe how he used his decadence, his sickness, as an »energisches Stimulans zum Leben« (energetic stimulus to life).<sup>51</sup> The next step in our analysis is to show how the *genealogy of self* is a praxis, a performance of subject construction in a narrative with a weakened truth claim. In his ensuing description of the healthy individual, Nietzsche stated: »Er sammelt instinktiv aus Allem, was er sieht, hört, erlebt, *seine* Summe: er ist ein auswählendes Princip, er lässt Viel durchfallen.« (He instinctively gathers *his* totality from everything he sees, hears, experiences: he is a principle of selection, he lets many things fall by the wayside.)<sup>52</sup> Like the *noble* in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, the healthy individual knows how willfully to forget. This principle of selection implies that the healthy individual is a locus of interpretation, a creator of a perspective through a process of »instinctive preference«. However, if the *genealogy of self* is a performative praxis, as I have claimed, how is this process affirmed? How does one overcome himself? Nietzsche clues us in: »Wohlan, ich bin das *Gegenstück* eines *décadent*: denn ich beschrieb eben *mich*.« (Well then, I am the *opposite* of a *decadent*: because I have just described *myself*.)<sup>53</sup>

For Nietzsche, self-description was not a recapitulation of the qualities of a static ego. It was an affirmation, the performance of an act of self-overcoming. In the *genealogy of self*, writing is the affirmative act of self-creation, the expressive act of self-definition through which the dominant interpretative perspective is valorized. If autobiography is a description of the »doer,« a *genealogy of self* is the creation of the »deed«. It revolves around the selective use of memory in order to affirm active forces. This is not a banal falsification of the past, but rather a manifestation of the ritual aspects of the *Wiederkunft des Gleichen*

50 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 266. The English translation is from NORMAN: 2005, 76.

51 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 266. For the original, English translation: NORMAN: 2005, 77.

52 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 267. English Translation: NORMAN: 2005, 77.

53 Ibid. For both the original and the translation.

(Eternal Return of the Same). This ritual aspect is a performative re-enactment of the creation of a dominant perspective through naming. This leads us to a question: How does language affirm a noble perspective?

Das Herrenrecht, Namen zu geben, geht so weit, dass man sich erlauben sollte, den Ursprung der Sprache selbst als Machtäusserung der Herrschenden zu fassen: sie sagen »das ist das und das,« sie siegeln jegliches Ding und Geschehen mit einem Laute ab und nehmen es dadurch gleichsam in Besitz.

(The lordly right of giving names extends so far that one should allow oneself to conceive the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say »this is this and this,« they seal everything and event with a sound and, as it were, take possession of it.)<sup>54</sup>

In Chapter four, this citation was utilized to illustrate Nietzsche's conception that the act of naming is an interpretative process that appropriates by making a thing or an event proximate. Our illustration in that instance was an example of how valuation occurred in a moment of engagement with Strindberg's play, *Fadren (The Father)*. The act of naming manifests itself in his genealogical work as a means of making the past proximate through appropriation. The issue here is a suspension of temporality. Our task is to explicate how this process treats elements of the past, regardless of whether these elements are historical or experiential. The key to understanding this process is Nietzsche's conception of the relationship between naming and origination.

In the citation above, Nietzsche stated that language was »originally« a form of possession, that naming seals and prolongs the domination of things and events in the world. However, the concept of origins is problematic in Nietzsche's genealogies for he declared:

die Ursache der Entstehung eines Dings und dessen schliessliche Nützlichkeit, dessen thatsächliche Verwendung und Einordnung in ein System von Zwecken toto coelo auseinander liegen; dass etwas Vorhandenes, irgendwie Zu-Stande-Gekommenes immer wieder von einer ihm überlegenen Macht auf neue Ansichten ausgelegt, neu in Beschlag genommen, zu einem neuen Nutzen umgebildet und umgerichtet wird; dass alles Geschehen in der organischen Welt ein Überwältigen, Herrwerden ein Neu-Interpretieren, ein Zurechtmachen ist, bei dem der bisherige »Sinn« und »Zweck« nothwendig verdunkelt oder ganz ausgelöscht werden muss.

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<sup>54</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 260. The English translation is from KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 26.

(the cause and the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming *master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous »meaning« and »purpose« are necessarily obscured or even obliterated.)<sup>55</sup>

There is a distance between origin and use, and this difference is explained by an act of mastery through interpretation. Seeing this, it would be a mistake to explain Nietzsche's understanding of the origin of language solely from his statement on the *lordly right to name*. His understanding of the possibility of discerning origins explains the parentheses around his postulation about the origination of language. One could claim that whenever Nietzsche posits an origin, the parenthetical nature of his postulation is understood. For in a Nietzschean genealogy, origins are posited to discern a notion of the active creation of something that has been transformed through time. This clears the ground for a genealogy that will compete with other interpretations.

Therefore, this parenthetical statement about the origin of language should not be taken as a description of a static relationship between a noble perspective and the ability to name. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*), Nietzsche traced just how far linguistic purpose has come from its origin, and he exposes this movement as a redefinition of the terms of valuation in the service of the ascetic ideal. His positing of origins can be understood as the deconstruction of an alloy where noble components are parenthetically separated from the base metals. The component metals of the alloy remain, but a new hierarchy is established and the alloy is given a new name. As Sarah Kofman writes: »Genealogical etymology does not aim to find the originary, true, and accurate meaning, but to discover multiple origins and to hierarchize them.«<sup>56</sup> This act of ranking has a purpose as well, for »vergessen wir auch diess nicht: es genügt, neue Namen und Schätzungen und Wahrscheinlichkeiten zu schaffen, um auf die Länge hin neue ›Dinge‹ zu schaffen« (let us not also forget that in the long run it is enough to create

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55 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 313–314, for the original, KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 77, for the translation.

56 KOFMAN: 1993, 87.

new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new »things«).<sup>57</sup>

Nietzschean genealogy, as a performative act, reclaims the right to name for its interpretive perspective. The »origin« of language is parenthetically posited in order to show that, for the noble, language is the active mastering of something in the present. In other words, naming is the taking possession, the domination of a thing by the use of language. Nietzsche constructs an etymology for the words »gut,« »schlecht,« and »Böse«<sup>58</sup> to illustrate the self-activating nature of *noble* valuation and to contrast this with the *herd* method of naming through reaction. Genealogy performs a double task: it posits »origins« in order to untangle the »verknüpft, verhäkelt« antithetical elements that have been homogenized by moral valuation.<sup>59</sup> Then it uses narrative to rank these elements by virtue of their activity and reactivity, thereby renaming and re-possessing the concept.

This process is identical in both *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* and *Ecce Homo*. The condition of decadence that Nietzsche saw as pervading the environment of Western civilization, the development of man into »ein krankhaftes Thier« (a sickly animal),<sup>60</sup> is part of an internal landscape in the *genealogy of self*. *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's *genealogy of self*, is the location where this *decadence* is utilized as a *stimulus for life*. The energy derived from this stimulus produces a self-description that is used as a means of self-overcoming. As Nietzschean self-description is not merely a recapitulation of the qualities of a static ego, the description of the development of the dominance of moral valuation is not the history of a static process. The Nietzschean genealogy of morals is not the description of the »doer,« the »good man,« it is the enactment of the »deed« of a self-description that re-evaluates. Genealogy does not trace the origins of this »good man«; it valorizes the creative self-interpretative act that calls itself good. It follows that any positing of an origin sets the original »deed« in parentheses.

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57 NIETZSCHE: 1988c, KSA 3, 422, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, Aphorism* 58. NAUCKHOFF and DEL CARO: 2001, 70, for the translation.

58 »Good,« »Bad,« and »Evil«.

59 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 17, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.

60 NIETZSCHE employs this term in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1993, KSA 5, 4II.

It is important to recall that Nietzsche conceived of the *will to power* as an interpretative complex and as such it is »nicht ein Sein, nicht ein Werden, sondern ein *Pathos* ist die elementarste Thatsache, aus der sich erst ein Werden, ein Wirken ergibt« (not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*, is the most elementary fact, and becoming, effecting is only a result of this).<sup>61</sup> *The will to power* is the expansiveness of a perspective as it engages other perspectives. Nietzsche's positing of dual origins (of health and decadence in himself, of the noble and the slave modes of valuation) is a metaphorical representation of the agon of interpretation. This agon is a product of the collision of history (interpretation wearing the mask of necessity) or as Nietzsche would put it, fate, and the contingency of experience (the state of becoming without a telos). The site of this collision resides within an interpretative hermeneutic circle that takes the form of a genealogy. An interpretation that makes use of a genealogy analyses these agonistic »origins,« which by definition are seen from a distance. This explains why Nietzsche as a genealogist, utilizes a *Pathos der Distanz* (Pathos of Distance). However, the second moment of valuation from this perspective is repossession through naming. It is through the employment of polemic, a pathos of engagement that the parenthesis of an »originary« moment of active creation is reproduced. A genealogy in a polemical voice is linguistic reclamation. It creates its »truth« through language.<sup>62</sup>

Wahrheit ist somit nicht etwas, was da wäre und was aufzufinden, zu entdecken wäre, – sondern etwas, das *zu schaffen ist* und das den Namen für einen Prozeß abgibt, mehr noch für einen Willen der Überwältigung, der an sich kein Ende hat: Wahrheit hineinlegen, als ein processus in infinitum, ein *aktives Bestimmen*, nicht ein Bewußtwerden von etwas, das »an sich« fest und bestimmt wäre. Es ist ein Wort für den »Willen zur Macht«.

(Truth is thus not something that's there and must be found out, discovered, but something *that must be made* and that provides the name for a *process*, or rather for a will to overcome, a will that left to itself has no end: inserting truth, as a processus in infinitum, an *active determining*, *not* a becoming conscious

61 NIETZSCHE: 1972, 51, Entry 14 [79]. The English translation: STURGE: 2003, 247.

62 Most commentators marginalize the importance of polemics in the Nietzschean genealogy. For example Daniel W. Conway remarks »Nietzsche advertises the *Genealogy* as a *polemic* [eine Streitschrift]; it contains both a genealogical interpretation and elements of a symptomatological critique. Many of the book's confusions are attributable to Nietzsche's failure (or unwillingness) to distinguish clearly between his genealogy of Morals and the critical method it enables.« (CONWAY: 1994, 329).

of something, that is »in itself« fixed and determinate. It is a word for the »will to power«.)<sup>63</sup>

For Nietzsche, »truth« was the name given to a perpetual process of overcoming. It was a linguistic representation of great fluidity. If we associate genealogy as a description of the past with the notion of history or autobiography, this presents us with a paradox. It is as if Nietzsche were saying, if an origin is posited, it is a creation of a »truth,« a willful overcoming. Since the will cannot will backwards in time, the »truth« claim of a Nietzschean genealogy can only reside in the present or the future.

*Historia abscondita.* – Jeder grosse Mensch hat eine rückwirkende Kraft: alle Geschichte wird um seinetwillen wieder auf die Waage gestellt, und tausend Geheimnisse der Vergangenheit kriechen aus ihren Schlupfwinkeln – hinein in seine Sonne. Es ist gar nicht abzusehen, was Alles einmal noch Geschichte sein wird. Die Vergangenheit ist vielleicht immer noch wesentlich unentdeckt! Es bedarf noch so vieler rückwirkender Kräfte!

*(Historia abscondita.* – Every great human being exerts a retroactive force: for his sake all of history is put on the scale again, and a thousand secrets of the past crawl out of their hiding places – into his sunshine. There is no telling what may yet become a part of history. Maybe the past is still essentially undiscovered! So many retroactive forces are still needed!)<sup>64</sup>

That is to say, »truth« manifests in the present as a re-valuation and in the future as a dominant perspective.<sup>65</sup> Nietzsche's genealogical method is in this sense an explication of the Aphorism 22 in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*). He bares the device of his interpretative process and if the objection is raised that his genealogy is only an interpretation – »nun, – um so besser« (well, so much the better).

This phrase brings us to the subject of the role that polemic plays in the Nietzschean genealogy. It is my contention that there is a double movement in the Nietzschean genealogy. Genealogical description encloses »origins« parenthetically; polemic opens up the parentheses and thereby initiates the performative aspect of the genealogical process of affirmation. As »truth« is a perpetual process, this affirmation is subject to constant repetition. This double movement manifests Nietzsche's

63 NIETZSCHE: 1970, 49, Entry 9 [91]. The English translation: STURGE: 2003, 155.

64 NIETZSCHE: 1988c, KSA 3, 404, *Aphorism* 34. The English translation is from NAUCKHOFF and DEL CARO: 2001, 53–54.

65 As described in the first chapter of this book, Brandes' notion of a vital realism and Strindberg's description of his »greater naturalism« bear family resemblances to Nietzsche's views on truth and naming.



*Wiederkehrgedanke* (thought of the eternal return). It is a form of differentiated repetition as a species of the *Pathos of Distance*. First genealogy creates a hierarchy between contradictory historical forces and their internalization. Then the act of describing this process of ranking in a polemical voice engages with these forces and makes them proximate through the process of re-naming. This process creates affect both within and without. The very same contradictory forces appear in both *Zur Genealogie der Moral* and *Ecce Homo*. In either case, the »doer« is a fiction and the »deed,« (the struggle between contradictory forces in the absence of a witness to the subsequent suffering engendered by this conflict) is recreated through the employment of a polemical voice. Nietzsche's genealogical method affirms the past by making it an affect of a momentary act of the will. Polemic is the means by which the historical or autobiographical past is addressed contemporaneously. The paradoxical claim that the truth of the past resides in the present colors the Nietzschean genealogy and points to its performative imperative.

### Polemic

Im Grunde lag mir gerade damals etwas viel Wichtigeres am Herzen als eignes oder fremdes Hypothesenwesen über den Ursprung der Moral (oder, genauer: letzteres allein um eines Zweckes willen, zu dem es eins unter vielen Mitteln ist). Es handelte sich für mich um den Werth der Moral, – und darüber hatte ich mich fast allein mit meinem grossen Lehrer Schopenhauer auseinanderzusetzen, an den wie an einem Gegenwärtigen jenes Buch, die Leidenschaft und der geheime Widerspruch jenes Buchs sich wendet (– denn auch jenes Buch war eine »Streitschrift«).

(Even then my real concern was something much more important than hypothesis-mongering, whether my own or other people's, on the origin of morality (or more precisely: the latter concerned me solely for the sake of a goal to which it was only one means among many). What was at stake was the *value* of morality – and over this I had to come to terms almost exclusively with my great teacher Schopenhauer, to whom that book of mine, the passion and the concealed contradiction of that book, addressed itself as if to a contemporary (– for that book, too, was a »polemic«).<sup>66</sup>

In this citation from the »Vorrede« of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*), Nietzsche is quite clear about both the manner in which the question of morality will be addressed and the impor-

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66 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 251–252, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, »Vorrede«. The English translation is found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 19.

tance of an understanding of his own past. In the previous section of the »Vorrede,« Nietzsche referred to several of his earlier statements about the question of morality. He states that one should compare what he had previously said about the subject in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (*Human, All Too Human*), and *Morgenröte* (*Daybreak*). In the citation above, the latter text was said to be addressed to his teacher, Schopenhauer,<sup>67</sup> as if he were a contemporary (*Gegenwärtiger*), for that book too was a polemic (*Streitschrift*). In other words, polemic is an interpretive pathos of engagement, it makes the past proximate. If Nietzsche's goal is not »Hypothesenwesen« and the goal of depicting the origin of moral thinking was only one means among many, then the aim of the genealogy is not the depiction of a stable historical »truth«. Polemic addresses the past as present and polemical genealogy as a »truth« creating activity struggles against other interpretations that claim to depict history based on a reconstruction of the past by making the past proximate and subject to reinterpretation.

A *Streitschrift* is an argument or a struggle in writing. This leads us to a question. What does Nietzsche's *Streitschrift* struggle against? In his later work, Nietzsche struggles against the *highest values*, the *ascetic ideal*. »Es gilt, das ungeheure, ferne und so versteckte Land der Moral – der wirklich dagewesenen, wirklich gelebten Moral – mit lauter neuen Frage und gleichsam neuen Augen zu bereisen.« (The project is to traverse with quite novel questions, and as though with new eyes, the enormous, distant and so well hidden land of morality – of morality that has actually existed, actually been lived.)<sup>68</sup> The rediscovery of this distant land implies a journey to the past by means of genealogical investigation. Nietzsche's project seeks out the ossified elements that lie behind moral valuation, »der uns heute nur deshalb aus den Augen gerückt ist, weil er – siegreich gewesen ist« (which we no longer see because it – has been

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67 The choice of engaging Schopenhauer is interesting on several fronts: first, by engaging with his »teacher,« Nietzsche enables the creation of a distinct perspective, and second, as Andreas Ur SOMMER points out, Nietzsche mentions »nihilists« for the first time in the summer of 1880 and calls Schopenhauer »their philosopher«. Sommer's reference is found in *Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche*, an article in ANSELL-PEARSON: 2006. The reference to Schopenhauer can be found on pg. 252. Nietzsche's original formulation can be found in KSA 9, 4 [103].

68 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 254 The English translation can be found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 21.

victorious.)<sup>69</sup> According to Nietzsche, these elements have crystallized through time into dogma and wear the mask of the eternal and the unchanging. This leads us to our next, perhaps more properly Nietzschean question: how does Nietzsche's *Streitschrift* struggle against the ascetic ideal? His answer: »Damit ein Heiligthum aufgerichtet werden kann, muss ein Heiligthum zerbrochen werden.« (If a temple is to be erected a temple must be destroyed.)<sup>70</sup>

If the stated goal of the genealogy of morals is to determine the *Werthe* (value) of morality by tracing their »origins,« and if this process untangles the hidden origins of the ascetic mode of valuation in order to expose it as a reactive inversion of a noble and active perspective while making the contradictory claim that origins are no indication of moral valuation in the present, then the posited original activity of valuation must be put in parentheses. Genealogy turns its face towards the past. Polemic is the means by which genealogy engages the past in the present. Polemic opens the parentheses, which enclose origins. This enables the *warlike* and creative powers of interpretation to engage with the dominant, *siegereich* ascetic/moral interpretations of rival genealogies. The use of a polemical voice makes »history« a creative force that engages contemporary modes of valuation.

Polemic is a means of overcoming. It transforms description into de-description and then it re-inscribes. It unwrites by writing, and then it can re-write. It destroys in order to create. If genealogy as a discrete element can be regarded as a re-creation of *das Pathos der Distanz* (the Pathos of Distance), a genealogy that relies on polemic to engage the past in the present moment can be seen as creating a simultaneous pathos of engagement. Nietzschean perspectival interpretation oscillates between a pathos of distance and a pathos of engagement. In Nietzsche's philosophy, this oscillation has its parallel in the way the eternal return is able to affirm the past in the moment despite the inability of the will to will backwards. In Nietzschean genealogy, history returns in a polemical present. The parentheses that enclose the past are exploded by the power of a discourse that claims the noble right to possess by naming for itself.

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69 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 268. The English translation comes from KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 34.

70 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 335. The English is found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 95.

Nietzschean genealogy performed as a polemic is not history nor is it autobiography; it is dynamite.

The Nietzschean genealogy as dynamite, however, does not merely destroy; it creates. A consideration of his genealogical method in isolation tells us *what* Nietzsche intended to destroy. But the *what* tells us nothing about *how* Nietzsche claims that he can create by destroying. An understanding of *how* will enable us to understand *why* Nietzsche posits that creation necessitates destruction.

The truth claim of the Nietzschean genealogy is that »truth« is a perpetual creative process, which by virtue of its perspectival quality creates the position of the subject within colliding and antagonistic forces. Interpretations born of different perspectives struggle against one another both within and without the body; positing values as any linguistic creation is governed by a selection process, a naming, that appropriates. A genealogical text written in the polemical voice performs this struggle. It is an interpretation and as such engages other perspectives.

The key to this performance is narrative. However, before illustrating how the Nietzschean genealogy performs a narration in which form supercedes content, I will address a possible objection to my interpretation. Nietzsche's claim that destruction implies creation is not merely a metaphysical claim based on the myth of Dionysus. Rather, the myth of Dionysus serves as a metaphor for his philosophical praxis. Dionysian dismemberment, the destruction of a body, always anticipates a return in a new form. *Der Wille zur Macht* (the will to power), as an interpretative pathos, obliterates (creates oblivion) by willfully forgetting in order to make a new interpretation manifest. As Nietzschean genealogy oscillates between a pathos of distance and a pathos of engagement, it recreates the past in order to affirm it through an act of the will in the moment. This movement between the two types of pathos performs an act of creation that enables an affirmation of the eternal return through a selection process that willfully relegates and omits aspects of the past. *Der Wille zur Macht* is the name for an interpretative complex. There is no claim for the primacy of a stable text or for a truth that resides outside of interpretation. In a creative act, it imposes form on raw material. This process of creation uses experience and re-forms it in the present. Creation thus implies an active engagement between a creator and his understanding of the past. The past is manifested in the present as an activity through which willful and selective memory affirms only certain aspects of the

past in order to give form to experience in a momentary act. This selective process is not relative, but relational; it ranks. As perspectival interpretation is derived from the position of a body, and the body is likened to a social structure, interpretation is dependent upon a hierarchy. The interpretation that abets an act of creation is a willful valuation of the past in the moment. As the body as social structure forgets through interpretation, the creative process is in-corporated within the body as a condition of creation. Interpretation requires an affirmative forgetting, it destroys in order to create. This is a description of a process, not a metaphysical claim.

### Genealogy and Polemic

Man ist um den Preis Künstler, daß man das, was alle Nichtkünstler »Form« nennen, als *Inhalt*, als »die Sache selbst« empfindet. Damit gehört man freilich in eine *verkehrte* Welt: denn nunmehr wird einem der Inhalt zu etwas bloß Formalem – unser Leben eingerechnet.

(The price of being an artist is that one feels what all non-artists call ›form‹ to be *content*, to be ›the matter itself‹. Certainly, this places one in a world *turned upside down*: for now content becomes something merely formal – including our life.)<sup>71</sup>

Nietzsche's genealogies give form to suffering. *Der Wille zur Macht* is a pathos, that is to say, an occurrence of suffering or a rhetorical mode that addresses individuals and their emotions. *Der Wille zur Macht* as an interpretive force experiences the occasion of suffering as individual address, as a process of individuation. As discussed earlier, Nietzsche posits that the creation of consciousness came as the result of the wars of pre-history that created the first proto-societies. In Nietzsche's genealogies, profound suffering separates within the individual as well as without. The individual is a site of competing emotions that are ranked according to the *organizing idea*. As Nietzsche stated that the individual body is like a society and claims that societies are created by the victorious who extend their dominion by establishing a hierarchy, this *organizing idea* represents a species of self-conquest or *Selbstüberwindung*. *Selbstüberwindung* is affirmed by self-description, a selection process that needs to impose a form upon memory in the present. For Nietzsche, a polemic, a war of words, is a willful, creative »deed« that must obliterate in order to

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<sup>71</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1970, 251, Entry II[3]. The English translation is from STURGE: 2003, 207.

impose form. As he believed that creation is interpretation, the individual interprets and seeks to extend his will through struggle with other interpretations for »ein Philosoph, der kriegerisch ist, fordert auch Probleme zum Zweikampf heraus« (a warlike philosopher will challenge problems to single combat).<sup>72</sup> Internal warfare is the means by which Nietzsche creates what he said that he had lacked in his previous aphoristic efforts to criticize moral thinking, »eine eigne Sprache für diese eigenen Dinge« (my own language for my own things).<sup>73</sup>

The answer to the question of *how* the Nietzschean polemic struggles against the *ascetic ideal* is that it creates by destroying. This led us to the question of how Nietzsche performs this creative destruction. The answer to this question has been far too abstract up to this point. The postulation that Nietzschean genealogy is predicated upon an act of creation that obliterates elements of the past in order to evaluate and appropriate in the present suffices as a starting point for further analysis. However, the Nietzschean genealogy must be shown to perform in a different way than a genealogy that is beholden to the ideal of an absolute truth and an absolute origin. The specific case needs to fit the abstract model. The claim that answering *how* Nietzsche creates by destroying tells us the *why* of polemical genealogy suggests that form predominates over content. It also gives us insight into why Nietzsche valorizes artistic creation and forwards an aesthetic answer to an ethical question.

The preceding discussion attempted to point out similarities between the process of artistic creation and the Nietzschean concept of self-overcoming that he believed was an intrinsic element of creating an interpretative perspective. These similarities suggest that Nietzschean genealogy has a similar performative imperative. It is important to remember that Nietzsche did not believe that form was identical to content. He rejects the concept of identity in principle. Rather, the relationship between the two is an interpretative complex in which content is performed and form is content laden.

The form of *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* is a genealogy written in a polemical voice. The content tells the story

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72 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, (*Ecce Homo*, »Warum ich so weise bin«). The English translation is found in NORMAN: 2005, 82.

73 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 251, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, »Vorrede«. The English translation is found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 18.

of the victory of *reactive forces* and the ascension of the *ascetic ideal* to the position of being the *highest value*. However, this narrative, being a genealogy, posits an origin for the valuation that structured society before this triumph of *reactive forces*. According to Nietzsche, society was created by a war of conquest waged by »ein Rudel blonder Raubthiere« (a pack of blond beasts of prey).<sup>74</sup> These conquerors organized the proto-state as a work of »instinktives Formen-schaffen, Formen-aufdrücken« (instinctive creation and imposition of forms).<sup>75</sup> They instituted a hierarchy through a reign of terror and domination, taking away the freedom of the masses by enclosing them within the walls of this newly created state. These subservient masses were then formed into a herd and their instinctive aggression was turned inward. This original act of *creation* had its price and the conquerors unwittingly created the conditions for their own downfall. »Sie sind es nicht, bei denen das ›schlechte Gewissen‹ gewachsen ist, das versteht sich von vornherein, – aber es würde nicht ohne sie gewachsen sein.« (It is not in them that the ›bad conscience‹ developed, that goes without saying – but it would not have developed *without* them.)<sup>76</sup> The internalization of the tyranny of these blond beasts, this *schlechtes Gewissen* (bad conscience), became the raw material with which the *priests* created the *ascetic ideal* and led the *slave* revolt that inverted the »originary« system of valuation. This complicity of the *Herrn* in their own downfall is not posited as being the result of a teleology. It is the outcome of a struggle and Nietzsche, by no means, believed it to be an end result, for »welche Vorzeit übrigens zu allen Zeiten da ist oder wieder möglich ist« (this prehistory is in any case present in all ages or may also reappear).<sup>77</sup> The original act of creation is again put in parentheses and is said to lie dormant, available for reactivation.

The stated goal of Nietzsche's genealogy of morals is to reveal the immoral origins of conventional moral valuation. He does this by positing the origins of valuation itself as an attribute of a group of warlike creators who took away with »ihrer Hammerschläge, ihrer Künstler-Gewaltsam-

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74 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 324.

75 Ibid., 325. Notice the double usage of Form. The English translation is found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 86.

76 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 325. English translation KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 86.

77 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 307. The parentheses are Nietzsche's. The English translation is in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 71.

keit ein ungeheures Quantum Freiheit aus der Welt, mindestens aus der Sichtbarkeit geschafft und gleichsam latent gemacht worden wäre« (their hammer blows, their artist's violence made a terrible quanta of freedom [disappear] from the world, or at least [they] drove it out of sight and made it latent).<sup>78</sup> There are two points of note here. First, the freedom that was taken out of the world did not disappear; it was latent. Second, the hammer blows of the conquerors were destructive in the way that a sculptor's hammer destroys an unformed block in order to create.

The form of the Nietzschean genealogy, the process that it performs is an attempt to activate this latent *freedom*, to invert the repression that he characterizes as the prominent feature of the *ascetic ideal*. Nietzsche was by no means nostalgic for the *blond beast*. The truth claim of the genealogical narrative is weak and the depiction of the originary act of formation is metaphorical, a stand-in for a performative act of valuation. As Nietzsche understood valuation as a struggle between competing perspectives, the metaphor he employs is war.

In the narrative of the origination of moral valuation, the destruction of the prehistorical wars of conquest imposed form upon the conquered and created a society. This original act of creation was unconscious, without meaning. Meaning was created by the *priest* whose creative act was saying *no* to life and providing his herd with a witness for their suffering. It follows that Nietzsche claimed that the only meaning that humankind has known is reactive, nihilistic. In the third and last essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* entitled »Was bedeuten asketische Ideale?« (What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?), Nietzsche polemicizes against the dominance of the *ascetic ideal* in all forms of endeavor. He condemned ascetic thinking as a form of thought that was created by the phenomenon that he described as follows: »lieber will noch der Mensch das Nichts wollen, als nicht wollen« (man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will).<sup>79</sup> For Nietzsche, even the atheists and scientists are guilty for despite their denial of *God*, they leave open the place where he once resided. In other words, their belief in absolute truth is a belief in nothingness. This is the peculiarity of Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism.

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<sup>78</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 325. The English translation is mine.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 412. The English translation found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 163.



The content of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* consists of the positing of an originary mode of active creation through war, the revolt against the societal structure that was created through these struggles, and a critique of the lingering and *decaying* effect of the *ascetic* values that emerged triumphant. The relationship of this content to the form of a polemical genealogy with a weak truth claim reveals the *why* of the philosophical project of the mature Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's genealogical method does not claim priority for the original, nor does it posit a telos. Competing perspectives are immanent in the interpreter and in constant struggle. Therefore the tone of the genealogy is not nostalgic for a way of life that has disappeared. Though polemic is a war with words that reclaims the noble *right to name*, it is not a mimetic return of the repressed elements of affirmative creation. As argued earlier, the genealogy posits an »origin« which is placed in parentheses. Genealogy by virtue of having its gaze directed towards the past performs its task under the aegis of a pathos of distance. Polemic, on the other hand, is a participant in a struggle and assumes a pathos of engagement. The Nietzschean genealogical polemic imposes a form upon the raw material of its inquiry by oscillating between these two types of pathos. It selects and ranks elements of the past and opens up the parentheses around »origins« to reclaim linguistic hegemony. Genealogy selects historical elements and exposes the »origin« of moral valuation to be an alloy of *immoral* elements. Polemic effaces the distance between an »origin« and the moment of writing by engaging with *what Nietzsche* calls *reactive* elements and releases the energy of the *original* warlike act of creative destruction. As Nietzsche understood naming to be a form of domination, polemic as a war of words attempts to create the »truth« of the past in the present tense through a struggle with other interpretations. The oscillating form of the polemical genealogy brackets the original »doer« and reaffirms the »deed,« thereby eliminating the place that he claims that previous genealogies of morals which privilege the »good« subject. In this way, Nietzsche's genealogies are aesthetic and not ethical, being about the act of creation and not *right* behavior. Polemic also obliterates the place held by an absolute creating agent and denies a teleology for it actively creates its own »truth« through the pathos of engagement and does not view the »historical« as a process that creates according to a divine or rational plan. We will return to the implications

of Nietzsche's understanding of the primacy of aesthetic concerns later in the chapter.

The Nietzschean truth claim was not based on arguing for a historical primacy or inevitability, its »truth« is created through performance. For Nietzsche, form is the *matter itself*. However, it is not identical to content. An internal hierarchy or form dictates the process that creates »truth« through the *Selbstüberwindung* that emerges from linguistic reclamation. Expressed through the use of a polemic, genealogy is the present tense selection process that imposes form upon a world »*nicht, weil Gesetze in ihr herrschen, sondern weil absolut die Gesetze fehlen, und jede Macht in jedem Augenblicke ihre letzte Konsequenz zieht*« (*not because laws prevail in it but because laws are absolutely lacking and every power draws its ultimate consequences every moment*).<sup>80</sup> The form of Nietzschean genealogies is, in a sense, an explication of Aphorism 22 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil)*. They perform the dramatization of a philosophical praxis based on the interaction of competing perspectives both within and without the body, thereby creating a self-understanding that is *merely formal* through an interpretation that is trans-formal.

Allmählich hat sich mir herausgestellt, was jede grosse Philosophie bisher war: nämlich das Selbstbekenntnis ihres Urhebers und seine Art ungewollter und unvermerkter mémoires; insgleichen, dass die moralischen (oder unmoralischen) Absichten in jeder Philosophie den eigentlichen Lebenskeim ausmachen, aus dem jedesmal die ganze Pflanze gewachsen ist.

(It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir, moreover, that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy have every time constituted the real germ of life out of which the entire plant has grown).<sup>81</sup>

Nietzsche's claim that philosophy is a species of memoir informs us how his genealogy of morals interacts with his *genealogy of self*. It is important to remember that his genealogy of morals is the story of the internalization of active creative forces and the creation of the *unhealthy* condition of *ressentiment*. It is also essential to recall that Nietzsche

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80 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 37 (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*). The English translation found in HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 53.

81 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KS 5, 19–20. The English translation is from HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 37.

regards any postulation to be an interpretation, a location of struggle. With these two points in mind, let us return to Aphorism 6 cited above to understand better the *genealogy of self*. It concludes:

Umgekehrt ist an dem Philosophie ganz und gar nichts Unpersönliches; und insbesondere giebt seine Moral ein entschiedenes und entscheidendes Zeugnis dafür ab, wer er ist – das heisst, in welcher Rangordnung die innersten Triebe seiner Natur zu einander gestellt sind.

(In the philosopher, on the contrary, there is nothing whatever impersonal; and above all, his morality bears decided and decisive testimony to who he is – that is to say, to the order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relative to each other.)<sup>82</sup>

The title page of *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* had the following inscription: »Dem letztveröffentlichten *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* zur Ergänzung und Verdeutlichung begeben.« (To expand upon and clarify the last publication, *Beyond Good and Evil*.) It follows that this genealogy with its ordering of what Nietzsche saw as the two opposing interpretative perspectives in his historical environment was also considered by him to be the result of an internal struggle, a »Rangordnung die innersten Triebe« (a ranking of the innermost drives) and as such, a disguised memoir. This explains why Nietzsche was to open his *genealogy of self*, *Ecce Homo*, with the following words:

In Voraussicht, dass ich über Kurzem mit der schwersten Forderung an die Menschheit herantreten muss, die je an sie gestellt werde, scheint es mir unerlässlich zu sagen, *wer ich bin*.

(In the expectation that soon I will have to confront humanity with the most difficult demand it has ever faced, it seemed imperative for me to say *who I am*.)<sup>83</sup>

Since »truth« is created and creation is an interpretative event, and to say who one is entails a performance of a »deed« in the present rather than the excavation of the attributes of a stable past, *the genealogy of self is a hermeneutic process*. This hermeneutic process bares the device of the construction of its own horizons through a struggle that is intimately related to what Nietzsche saw to be his own historical moment. The *genealogy of self* is a conflation of »historical« and experiential conditions

82 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KS 5, 20. The English translation is found in HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 38.

83 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 257 (*Ecce Homo*, »Vorrede«). The English translation is found in NORMAN: 2005, 71.

in a dynamic relationship, the baring of the device of a self-overcoming dependent on an internalization of contradictory perspectives.

Seen in this light, genealogy and polemic – the formal elements of the oscillation between pathos of proximity and distance – seek to dominate other perspectives in an interpretative moment. Nietzsche's genealogies of morals and of self are both sites of simultaneously internal and external collision. For Nietzsche, neither the world nor the self were texts, both are sites of competing interpretations that need to be mastered and ranked in order to impose form on a world of becoming rather than being. To impose this form, he confronts moral valuation with immorality, genealogy with counter-genealogy, and the dogmatic assertions of absolute truth with an affirmation of a lawless and agonistic world. For Nietzsche, both the slave and the noble perspectives existed internally as well as externally. Nietzsche's genealogy of morals is not history nor is his *genealogy of self* an autobiography: both works oscillate between these two poles.

Strindberg recognized that there was a process that was described in Nietzsche's work, and in 1889 he saw this process as an explanation of his own authorial project. It is to his work that we now turn. I will return to the themes addressed in the discussion above and elaborate upon them, analyzing a selection of Strindberg's texts in light of his claims that he had anticipated Nietzsche and that his first »autobiography,« *Tjänstekvinnans son (Son of a Servant)*, was a war of liberation.

Several claims need greater elaboration. The most prominent of these assertions is that there is a commonality in Nietzsche and Strindberg's authorships. In order to show that this commonality is not a matter of influence, Strindberg's claim that the *Nietzschean* aspects of his authorship predate his encounter with the philosopher will be explored. This exploration will yield concrete examples that answer to the inappropriateness of an influence model of analyzing the encounter. Second, an elaboration of the surface phenomenon of the use of Strindberg and Nietzsche as tropes in the anti-realist discourse will clarify the compatibility of Strindberg's conception of his »naturalism« with Nietzsche's philosophy. Third, this compatibility will be elaborated upon further to reveal a commonality on the level of form. This form is the *genealogy of self*.

The *genealogy of self* will be further explicated in terms of its components: the relationship between naming and forgetting, the internalization

of a weakened truth claim, the self-referential hermeneutic, and the conflation of autobiography and history on the level of subject formation within the text. This process of subject formation will reveal that both Strindberg and Nietzsche are faced with the dilemma of identification without a stable origin. Their solutions to this problem will conclude our exploration, as *Ecce Homo* will be compared to Strindberg's *Inferno*.

My definition of the *genealogy of self* is dependent on the following formal components: the positing of dual origins in the external world, the treatment of this world as a text to be interpreted, the subsequent ranking of these elements, the highlighting of the presence of these origins in the interpreter who then declares his ranking to be a self-overcoming, the positing of a self-created »truth« in opposition to a self that is created by an absolute agent, and the substitution of this constructed »self« in the position once occupied by the notion of an absolute, creating agent of »truth«. The remainder of this chapter will trace the development of this process in selected texts taken from Strindberg's production between 1882 and 1898.

The fourth chapter ended with a discussion of Strindberg's first and only public statement on his encounter with Nietzsche, *Mitt förhållande til Nietzsche* (1894). In this essay, Strindberg presented a model for his own understanding of his production, where his first »autobiographical« work, *Tjänstekvinnans son*, acted as a turning point in his authorship. He called this turning point a »befrielsekriget« (war of liberation). He then mentioned a number of his own texts as proof of his anticipation of the philosopher. These texts were divided into works that were anticipatory of his encounter with Nietzsche and those which were supported by Nietzschean texts after the encounter: the first group included three short stories published in 1887 and the second group was comprised of the preface to *Fröken Julie* (*Miss Julie*) and the novella *Tschandala*, both written in 1889. These short stories were all later connected in what Strindberg called his *Vivesektionen* and were all concerned with the psychological effects and power struggles waged both internally and out in the world. The preface to *Fröken Julie* is famous for the notion of the characterless character.<sup>84</sup> *Tschandala* is a rather flawed novella whose

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84 STRINDBERG: 1984a, 104–105, *Fröken Julie*, »Förord«. Strindberg's argument for the employment of »characterless« characters unfolds as follows: the term character had been employed originally as a designation for the dominating aspect of a »själskomplex« (soul complex), then the middle class appropriated the term in order to fix roles and

protagonist is a Swedish noble in a conflict with a treacherous Gypsy. This novella is a vulgar masking of Strindberg's own conflict with a Danish Gypsy, and his experience is painted through the perspective of Nietzsche's discussion of the *Book of Manu* in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.

*Mitt Förhållande till Nietzsche* concluded with a challenge from Strindberg to his readers to review his production prior to the encounter with the philosopher and to see if he had not anticipated the aspect of his work that had been designated as »Nietzschean«. It is my contention that there are *Nietzschean* elements in Strindberg's production before 1888. However, the question of whether Strindberg anticipated his own *Nietzscheanism* is of little importance here, as this is a question of influence. My intention is to explicate a dynamic that is common to both authorships and my exploration of Strindberg's production is designed to illustrate the relationship of these dynamics to subject construction in the initial stages of Strindberg's autobiographical project. It is also my task to name this »Nietzschean« element and show it to be a commonality that precedes the encounter between the two men and continues long after Strindberg's »Nietzschean« period had ended. I will now turn to the texts. The first point of analysis will be the development of description in Strindberg's authorship and the relationship of this to valuation. This will inform us about the compatibility of his naturalism and his »Nietzscheanism«.

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arrest the mutability caused by development. As a result, playwrights have adapted this fixed conception of the human being on stage. He then, on pg. 105 offers his own alternative for the depiction of »modern« human beings on stage: »Mina själar (karakterer) äro konglomerater av förgångna kulturgrader och pågående bitar ur böcker och tidningar, stycken av människor, avrivna lappar av helgdagskläder, som blivit lumpor, alldeles som själen är hopflikad.« JOHNSON: 1976, 77, provides the following translation: »My souls (characters) are conglomerations of past and present cultures, bits out of books and of newspapers, pieces of human beings, torn-off shreds of holiday clothes that have become rags, exactly as the human soul is put together.«

## Chapter 6: Strindberg's Open Sea: The Conflation of Science and Suffering

If it form the one landscape that we inconstant ones  
Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly  
Because it dissolves in water.<sup>1</sup>

The skerries of Stockholm's archipelago have a harsh beauty and were a point of fascination for August Strindberg.<sup>2</sup> Like W. H. Auden's depiction of his limestone landscape, these sparsely populated islands served as a location where Strindberg explored the relationship between description and subjectivity. As Auden implies, these descriptions are born from the longing for a home and as such, are quintessentially modern. *In Praise of Limestone* suggests that we create the illusion of permanent formations while it is really the *ocean's* incessant ebb and flow that carves and shapes regions that are truly transient. And »... [t]he poet,/Admired for his earnest habit of calling/The sun the sun [...],« is made uneasy by the apparently solid shape assumed by the limestone. He rebels against this apparent conceit, which goes against the grain of his »antimythological myth«.<sup>3</sup> However, this poet who doubts the very substance of the illusion that he carves out of his incessant desire, his longing and his exile, realizes that when he tries »to imagine a faultless love/Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur/Of underground streams, what I see is the limestone landscape.«<sup>4</sup>

*In Praise of Limestone* reminds us that our aspirations and our dream-like projections inspire form, and that every description momentarily arrests the flow of a landscape's history. Perhaps the poet becomes aware of the streaming of time within him and shapes it as an impassioned recreation of desire through naming and through description. Perhaps he describes »things« by imposing the mark of being upon the landscape of becoming. And yet, Auden's »antimythological« mythmaker keeps alive the tension between the ocean, which dissolves the form, and the form

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1 AUDEN: 1989, 184, *In Praise of Limestone*.

2 Strindberg wrote short stories, poems, novels, and plays set in the Stockholm archipelago.

3 Ibid., 186.

4 Ibid., 187.

itself. It could be that this is what Nietzsche means when he tells us of the »hermit's'« secret imperative that:

... dieser würdige Wort-Prunk zu dem alten Lügen-Putz, -Plunder und -Goldstaub der unbewussten menschlichen Eitelkeit gehört, und das auch unter solcher schmeichlerischen Farbe und Übermalung der schreckliche Grundtext *homo natura* wieder heraus erkannt werden muss.

(... this dignified verbal pageantry belongs among the false old finery, debris, and gold dust of unconscious human vanity, and that the terrible basic text of *homo natura* must be recognized even underneath these fawning and painted surfaces.)<sup>5</sup>

Nietzsche's comment addresses what he calls a »Grundwillen des Geistes« (fundamental will of the spirit), which attempts to »in sich und um sich herum Herr sein« (dominate itself and its surroundings) by means of an appropriation of the unknown.<sup>6</sup> According to him, the spirit enjoys the use of masks and artifice in order to increase its own feeling of power, and accomplishes this sense of its own surfeit by indulging in the protean display of a rich vocabulary of appearance. Nietzsche claims that all this has served to furnish humans with the illusions of »höhere Cultur« (higher culture),<sup>7</sup> and with the feeling of being »mehr« (more), »höher« (higher) and of »anderer Herkunft« (a different origin).<sup>8</sup> This higher culture, however, despite its fear of the »wilden grausamen Thiere« (cruel and wild beast) creates and replicates its form through »selbst gewendeten Grausamkeit« (*self-directed cruelty*).<sup>9</sup> In this vein, Nietzsche goes so far as to describe the »Erkennende« (knower) as »Künstler und Verklärer der Grausamkeit« ([an] artist of cruelty and the agent of its transfiguration).<sup>10</sup> And so, if knowledge is a means of redirecting internalized cruelty (read *ressentiment*), this hermitic philosopher, who stands beyond »good and evil,« has a task. His charge is to:

Zurück-übersetzen in die Natur; über die vielen eitlen und schwärmerischen Deutungen und Nebensinne Herr werden, welche bisher über jenen ewigen

5 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 169 (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*), *Aphorism* 230. The English is from NORMAN: 2002, 124.

6 *Ibid.*, 167, (121 for the English)

7 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 166, *Aphorism* 229. NORMAN: 2002, 120 for the English.

8 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 169, *Aphorism* 230 (NORMAN: 2002, 123 for the English).

9 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 165–166, *Aphorism* 229 (NORMAN: 2002, 120–121, for the English).

10 NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 167, *Aphorism* 229 (NORMAN: 2002, 121, for the English).



Grundtext *homo natura* gekritzelt und gemalt wurden; machen, dass der Mensch fürderhin vor dem Menschen steht, wie er heute schon, hart geworden in der Zucht der Wissenschaft, vor der *anderen* Natur steht ...

(Translate humanity back into nature; to gain control of the many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings that have been scribbled and drawn over the eternal basic text of *homo natura* so far; to make sure that, from now on, the human being will stand before the human being, just as he already stands before the *rest* of nature today, hardened by the discipline of science ...)«<sup>11</sup>

To accomplish this undertaking, Nietzsche explains, one must ignore the calls of the metaphysicians and their siren song of unchanging form. One must become like Auden's »antimythological mythmaker« of a poet, and like Strindberg's grand naturalist; one should call things by their *proper* names.

Nietzsche insists that there is a relationship between knowledge and cruelty, and that the translation of the human back to nature does not mean a return to a »natural« man free from cultural mediation. There is an appropriative and an aesthetic reconfiguration to this process as naming allows the eternal oscillation between proximate and distant forms to settle temporarily into a »secret system of caves and conduits,«<sup>12</sup> for at least a moment. As Mark Warren reminds us: »If the Dionysian *pathos* of embodiment – what Nietzsche calls ›nature‹ – is a deep and multifaceted resource and ground of human life, it is intelligible only through our interpretative and material appropriations of it. Because ›nature‹ consists only in the flux and multiplicity of raw experience, it has no humanly intelligible qualities.«<sup>13</sup> Translation into nature implies an active sovereign, creating his or her perspective towards the world through description. These descriptions flow out of the larger pool, which is a conflation of science and suffering.

This conflation is where Nietzsche's commonality with Strindberg becomes apparent. Despite Knut Hamsun's characterization of him as a writer who depicted culture as a degenerated nature, Strindberg occupies a much more complex position than such a romantic view would allow. This position is not a binary opposition between nature and culture, a simple matter of Strindberg emerging from Rousseau's shadow and enter-

<sup>11</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 169, Aphorism 230. NORMAN: 2002, 123 for the English.

<sup>12</sup> AUDEN: 1989, 184.

<sup>13</sup> WARREN: 1988, 48.

ing a Nietzschean phase.<sup>14</sup> Strindberg faces nature and forms a dynamic interpretative relationship with her. A few years before he encountered Nietzsche, Strindberg explicated his stance towards the cultural, stating that it »är alltså icke kulturen jag angriper utan överkulturen. Vi ha blivit för fina, därför är råheten ett symptom av den sunda återgången. Det är fint att ljuga och rätt att säga sin mening. Låtom oss uppfostra oss till mera råhet.« (is accordingly not culture that I attack but high culture. We have become too refined; consequently brutality is a symptom of the healthy retrogression. It is refined to lie and brutal to say one's piece. Let us educate ourselves to be more brutal).<sup>15</sup> It becomes apparent Strindberg's hostility was not directed towards culture per se; his critique was directed towards what he regarded to be a culture that had sublimated its *ressentiment* and created a nexus of lies. If we recall that we let Strindberg articulate his own understanding of naturalism in the excursus that follows the first chapter of this study and that he claimed that naturalists resist the artificial, »love to *name*« and thereby define their own cause, we can understand that Strindberg is arguing that the naturalist's belief in the primacy of a social contract honestly conceived is not simply a return to nature, and that he thereby assumes a position that lies somewhere in between Rousseau's notion of social contract and a Nietzschean translation back into nature. Once again the issue of naming something and determining its standing within a constellation of things that make up any collective sense of »reality« comes to the fore. With this in mind let us return to the skerries with Strindberg, where »Solrök« (Haze), a prose poem from »Högsommar« (High Summer) section of *Dikter på vers och prosa* (Poems in Verse and Prose) written in 1883 and »Solnedgång på havet« (Sundown at Sea) from the section entitled »Stormar« (Storms) from the same collection are set.<sup>16</sup>

### The Swimmer

»Haze,«<sup>17</sup> a prose poem, opens with a description of a family's objects being transported by ship. The passengers are leaving the city for the

<sup>14</sup> See Keith ANSELL-PEARSON's excellent book, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau* (1991).

<sup>15</sup> STRINDBERG: 1990, 12. *Utopia i verkligheten* was originally published in 1885. My translation.

<sup>16</sup> STRINDBERG: 1995, 9–156.

<sup>17</sup> »Solrök«. The poem appears in *ibid.*, 77–87.

Stockholm archipelago and the narration is in the third person. The protagonist notices a shift in his perspective. He catches sight of someone he knows and remarks: »Nej, man ser varann aldrig så här i stan, man har så mycket att göra.« (No, people never see each other like this in the city. One has so much to do.)<sup>18</sup> Not only does the journey change the angle of the narrator's vision, but the destination exerts an influence as well due to »naturens evigt förnygrande makt« (nature's eternal power of rejuvenation)!<sup>19</sup> However, as the narrative continues, this change in perception will prove to be misleading. The protagonist will find that a return to an unadulterated nature is not possible for him, and that nature herself does not transform things; his journey to the archipelago merely highlights the relationship between his own past and the desire to translate himself back into nature. In other words, he will see how the traces of an emergent subjectivity, whose perspective manifests in description, leaves an imprint on the very nature to which he longs to return. Man translated back into nature unfortunately transcribes the natural in human terms.

The protagonist has left the city, but traces of it remain. He has brought his things with him, and the city resides in his mind as a repressed element. Plagued by »mörka drömmar: han pressas mellan husen i trånga svarta gränder« (dark dreams: he is pressed between houses in narrow, black alleys).<sup>20</sup> He dreams that he is confined in a well, and is roused by some knocking on the windowpane. He awakes, looks out of the window and exclaims: »O natur! Verkligheten som övergår alla drömmar. Ser du, drömmare, sådant har din hjärna aldrig kunnat drömma ihop och du pratar om den kalla verkligheten.« (O' nature! Reality that surpasses every dream. See, you dreamer, your brain could never have dreamt up anything such as this, and you talk about cold reality.)<sup>21</sup> He creates an opposition between the magnificence of nature and the limitations of the mind, between »reality« and its mediation through thought.

An equivalency has been posited: to claim knowledge of »reality« is to dream. Yet there is a paradox built into this equation as well. Here, the limits of an individual's perspective are delimited by an intimation of that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 78. My translation.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. My translation.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 78–79. My translation.

which exceeds the ability of the individual to formulate and conceive. The protagonist knows his perspective through the nocturnal whispering of that which lies outside of it, »reality, or nature«. In a play on the notion of the sublime, the »realist« who claims to be able to grasp »reality« is proven wrong by a realization that something essential exists and that it remains outside of his reach. Nature is postulated to be the text that lies beyond the realm of interpretation, yet it is asserted to be legible as a phenomenon beyond individual comprehension. An opposition is established between that which can be described and that which is beyond description. Nature is described absolutely as that which cannot be described at all. The protagonist walks to the ocean and this opposition emerges in sharper relief:

Av med kläderna och ner i djupet. Vad han såg där nere på en sekund? En annan värld, där träden voro röda som tång och luften smaragdgrön som havets vatten; och så är han uppe igen mitt bland de sorlande och kämpande vågorna; och han brottas med dem tills han blir trött och lägger sig att vila på deras ryggar; och de kastar honom upp, som de ville vräka honom ner i mörka dalgångar som om de ville suga honom ner i avgrunden; han upphör att vilja, han upphör att önska, han gör intet motstånd; hans kropp har förlorat sin tyngd, han står icke under inflytande av gravitationslagarne, han svävar mellan vatten och luft – det är den absoluta vilan utan förnimmelser

(Off with his clothing and down into the deep. What did he see down there in a second? Another world, where the trees were red as seaweed and the air emerald green like the ocean's water; and then he is forced to the surface again into the midst of the rippling and battling waves; and he wrestles with them until he becomes tired and lays himself to rest on their backs, and they toss him up, as if they want to cast him down into dark valleys, as if they wanted to suck him into the abyss; he ceases to will, he ceases to wish, he gives no resistance; his body has lost its weight, he is no longer under the influence of the laws of gravity, he hovers between the water and the sky – this is the absolute repose without perception.)<sup>22</sup>

There are several stages to this encounter between swimmer and ocean and these moments show that for Strindberg, the *beyond* of nature is not merely Kant's *Ding an sich*, a mere structure of the conditions of possibility for apperception. The encounter occurs at the site of collision between aspects of self; it constructs a paradigm of incommensurability. This is the moment where the comparison of the like and the unlike create metaphor.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 80–81. My translation.

The swimmer takes off his clothes and dives into the ocean naked. He experiences a glimpse of another world, which he describes ironically, using comparisons from the landscape, the world in which he enjoys familiarity. This description is ironic because it simultaneously feigns ignorance and yet it bears the conceit of knowledge. This irony serves as a deconstruction of the paradox of the sublime, claiming that nature can be experienced as an absolute beyond description and yet it can still be described. The rhetorical strategy of this deconstruction is played out in the citation above as the poet names the characteristics of the ocean as another world, and then he names the features of the oceanscape as land forms. He does this while simultaneously attributing these nouns with adjectives that are descriptions of the very same ocean he had claimed to misrecognize. This is performed in a comparison, a simile. It was as if the poet were saying: *naming is not reality, it is a comparison between the like and the unlike, an attribute of the perceptual misrecognition and the subsequent forgetting of this misrecognition through description, through renaming. It is as if he were saying that words obscure the perceiver's distance from »reality« through the ironic movement from distance to proximity in description.*

Furthermore, the experience of the swimmer is parallel to his dream, except this time he is not driven down into the valleys of streets and alleys, but into their marine equivalent. He is not restricted by the barriers of a well, but by the limits of his own ability to describe a force more powerful than he is. The confinement of the cityscape re-emerges as the borders of his conscious mind. The description of the ocean is followed by a cessation of struggle, as the swimmer surrenders his body to the power of the ocean. He hovers between the water and the air; standing in for the horizon, inhabiting a liminal space that defines difference. The fury of the ocean leads him to a state of absolute repose without perception. In other words, while he is caught by a force that dissolves the differentiation between subject and object, he inhabits the space that delimits. His very presence in nature, immersed in it at this moment, is rendered liminal by his desire to interpret. This passage explicates the irony of description and as such rejects any identification of the experience of nature as the experience of the sublime.

The swimmer's passage suggests that the shedding of the superficial aspect of civilization, clothing, does not result in the merger with nature. Human beings are incapable of this union. The ocean's landscape is de-

scribed in terms of a movement, as the narrator names the unfamiliar in the terms of what is familiar, and then he modifies the object through a comparison of the unfamiliar with »itself«. The mechanism works like this: The seaweed is called a tree that has the color of seaweed. The name of the unfamiliar is known, but it is described in a simile that plays on the act of familiarizing a perception through description, then defamiliarizing this description by calling a thing by its common name. In this way the struggle between new and familiar metaphors is highlighted. His description is neither objective nor is it subjective; it is adjective.<sup>23</sup>

The swimmer's passage can be read as a representation of the problem of description, as a dramatization of the dynamic of distance and proximity. He nakedly struggles with the natural force of the ocean; he tries to describe it, and his energy is sapped. He is enervated by the effort. After he loses his ability to resist, his experience runs parallel to a dream, as associations seem to come of their own accord. His body loses its weight; willing ceases as he seemingly merges with his environment. This is an illusion however; this species of merger is impossible. The natural force forces him into a liminal position; he acts as a border as even his weightless body assumes the position of a horizon. He senses an absolute will, but is unable to describe it, as there is no discernible object to perceive. Despite these Schopenhauerian overtones, the salient issue is not a matter of willing and representation; it is a matter of positioning and perspective. For the swimmer, **description ceases at a point of absolute proximity**; it is dependent on the relationship between distance and comparison. However, fidelity to experience depends on immersion, proximity. But a merger with nature is impossible and the narrator is washed up on shore where then he proceeds to describe a shipwreck in verse.

The shipwreck is not an incidental detail, but serves as a parallel phenomenon to the experience of the swimmer. The ocean as a representation of generalized will rejects the body of one who attempts to merge with it through the particularity of description.<sup>24</sup> Description particularizes the human as well, creating a sense of subjectivity and perspective.

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23 The prefix »ad-« meaning either a moving towards or an adding to. I utilize this prefix in both of these senses.

24 An interesting moment inflected perhaps by Strindberg's »favorite philosopher,« Schopenhauer.

Yet, the attempt to describe »reality« is enervating. Total immersion, absolute fidelity to experience is impossible. The discernible »reality« of the ocean for the swimmer is an ironic interpretation dependent on an appropriation through naming and the resistance of the text of experience to the name. Complete fidelity, total immersion obscures the position of the one who describes; the »will« as generalized force moves him back to his »proper« position as a particular and sentient being. He becomes the boundary marker, the personification of the delineation between identification through naming and difference. It is as if the poet were saying that human beings do not reside within the realm of the authentic, but exist as a delimitation of experience through interpretation. The will of the individual is a directed will, an interpreting will, a will that changes the object of its description through appropriation.<sup>25</sup>

After the description of the shipwreck in verse, the text returns to a prose narrative. Later, »the swimmer« wants to be alone with nature. He travels out to an islet that »ser mera ofördärvad ut än de andra holmarne« (appears less defiled than the other islands).<sup>26</sup> He sets sail for the islet and lands to find »sin dröm förverkligad« (his dream made real).<sup>27</sup> Again, there is a contradiction as the poet has already stated that reality was beyond the swimmer's ability to dream. He believes that he has found »ensamheten, naturen« (solitude, nature)!<sup>28</sup> He dreams of being alone with nature and he equates nature with solitude seemingly believing that he could lose himself and his relationships in its midst. He spies a house sparrow, »rännstenens och bakgårdens grannar« (the gutter and backyard's neighbor), and he asks, »Vad levde han då av härute där människan icke fanns« (What did he live on out here where people were not to be found)?<sup>29</sup> He walks on and finds the sole of a shoe. Suddenly his description of the landscape metamorphoses from a depiction of a paradisiacal idyll to a catalogue of the signs of waste and abandonment. He had found the remains of a quarry in the middle of paradise. Men had come and taken what they could use and then had left ruins as a trace. The swimmer is appalled:

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25 And here the moment becomes a bit more »Nietzschean«.

26 STRINDBERG: 1995, 83.

27 Ibid., 84.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 85.

Han flydde ifrån förödelser och styrde sina steg ner till båten. – Fotspår i sanden! Han bannade och ville fly, men då märkte han att han bannade sig själv och då förstod han varför måsarne flydde och huggormen och de andra, och han trampade igen i sina spår, ty han kunde icke fly sig själv

(He fled the scene of destruction and steered his steps towards the boat. Footprints in the sand! He cursed and wanted to flee, but then he noticed that he had only cursed himself, and then he understood why the gulls, and the snakes, and the others had fled; and he retraced his footprints for he couldn't escape himself.)<sup>30</sup>

The trace of the destroyer was a trace of himself. He who had criticized and described the transformation of nature from idyll to raw material now realized that he was the same as those who came to exploit what nature had to give. There is no direct escape from human exploitation to an Arcadian landscape as the swimmer had left his trace on the landscape as well by virtue of his presence, his description. In the end, he is incapable of experiencing that »reality« that resided beyond his dream state. The imprint of the interpreter has indelibly marked the landscape. The very notion of Arcadia itself destroys Arcadia.

The swimmer then »tog sin kikare och riktade den åter över fjärden varifrån han kommit« (took up his binoculars and directed them once again towards the bay over which he had come).<sup>31</sup> His gaze drifts across the water towards his vacation house and his family. His excursion into nature and his subsequent attempts to differentiate between that which is natural and that which results from human cultural activity had failed. He learned that his critique of the exploitation of nature was contingent upon the realization that his own footsteps were the cause of his despair. His description of nature was a text in which he forgot to account for his own intrusion upon that which is natural. It was as if he had realized that to *describe the natural is to change it through the infusion of the namer in the named*.<sup>32</sup> All he could describe was his own intrusion and his longing for a purity that is unattainable. It was as if he had learned that his mistake was the same as the misreading that Nietzsche attributed to »bad Philologists«. The text of nature was inaccessible; all that could be seen were the footsteps, the traces of an interpretation, and despite a desire to escape, the swimmer returns to his own past. »If it form the one

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>32</sup> Does the germ of Expressionism reside in this gesture?



landscape that we inconstant ones/Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly/Because it dissolves in water ...«

### The Exile and his Metaphors

With this in mind, we turn to a poem written in 1883, »Solnedgång på havet« (Sundown at Sea). In »Haze,« a description of the ocean raised the issue of the possibility of the description of natural elements. I concluded that the depiction of the swimmer raised issues of liminality for the human, and an oscillation from that position of acting as a horizon highlighted the problem of depiction. The components of this problem are further illustrated in »Sundown at Sea«. The poem reads as follows:

Jag ligger på kabelgattet  
Rökande »Fem blå bröder«  
och tänker på intet.

Havet är grönt  
så dunkelt absintgrönt;  
Det är bittert som klormagnesium  
Och saltare än klornatrium;  
Det är kyskt som jodkalium;

Och glömska, glömska  
Av stora synder och stora sorger  
Det ger endast havet,  
Och absint!

O du gröna absinthav,  
O du stilla absintglömska,  
Döva mina sinnen  
Och låt mig somna i ro  
Som förr jag sömnade  
Över en artikel i  
Revue des deux Mondes!

Sverige ligger som en rök  
Som röken av en Maduro-Havanna,  
Och solen sitter däröver  
Som en halvsläckt cigarr.  
Men runt kring horisonten  
Stå brotten så röda  
Som bengaliska eldar  
Och lysa på eländet

(I stand by the Hawser hole  
smoking five »blue brothers«  
and think about nothing.

The sea is green  
so dark absinth-green;  
it is bitter like magnesium-chloride  
and saltier than sodium-chloride  
it is chaste like potassium-iodide;  
and forgetfulness, forgetfulness  
of great sins and sorrows  
is granted only by the sea  
and absinth!

Oh you green absinth-sea,  
oh you tranquil absinth-oblivion,  
dull my senses  
and let me sleep in peace,  
as before I had slept  
over an article in  
Revue des deux Mondes!

Sweden lies like smoke,  
like the smoke of a Maduro-Havanna  
and the sun sits over there  
like a half-extinguished cigar,  
but around by the horizon  
sit the cliffs as red/as Bengali fire  
and shines down on the misery.)<sup>33</sup>

»Sundown at Sea« builds a metaphorical complex around the figure of the ocean in order to illustrate a philosophical problem. The descriptive aspects of this poem are in collision as a tension between the will to name and the desire to forget prevails. The metaphorical core of this poem builds up through a process in which simile is transformed into metaphor. In other words, the resemblance or likeness between two things commutes to substitution of one thing for another. This movement depicts the very same phenomena faced by the narrator of »Haze« as he realized that he inhabited a liminal position from which he could never merge with the ocean, but from which he could only oscillate between positions of proximity and positions of distance. For the poet, nature herself could never be more than an interpretation, a valuation in the form of description.

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33 STRINDBERG: 1995, 125–126. Translation mine.

»Sundown at Sea« opens with the poetic »I« standing on the deck of a ship and thinking about nothing. He has no object which he could describe until he turns his attention to the ocean. Unlike the swimmer, he does not immerse himself in the water, but stands at a distance. He is not subject to the ocean's power and his will is not suspended. His first description of the ocean stutters as he directly describes the ocean's greenness and then modifies and intensifies his description by calling it the dark green of absinthe, the color of intoxication. He continues his description and the poem takes a strange turn, as an almost exaggeratedly programmatic naturalist rendering comes to the fore. The ocean is now »bitter as magnesium chloride/and saltier than sodium-chloride«. The natural object of description is broken down into its component parts and the use of scientific language, a manifestation of cultural mastery through naming, connotes an attempt to subjugate the natural to the cultural. However, in the very next line another, subtle change manifests. The sea becomes »chaste like potassium-iodide,« and scientific naming is infused with a human quality: *kyskhet* or chastity. This simile fuses scientific naming and human behavior. The trace of the describer's footsteps is again discernible. Scientific nomenclature is used to create similes. The scientific name and the natural object it describes are separated and compared, they hold likeness in common but this commonality shows itself to be unstable, held together by the fabric of the observer's distance. He stands on the deck of a conveyance that allows him the illusion of *being* in a sea of becoming. The ocean, which has the color of intoxication is confronted by an attempt to master it through scientific naming and thereby an attempt to enculturate nature. This attempt is complicated as a personification is juxtaposed to a scientific term infusing it with a human quality. This is the beginning of a merger of poet's interpretation and the text of nature in the act of description. However, the attempt to objectify the ocean cannot withstand the intrusion of the poet's own encroaching subjectivity.

The next four lines further efface the text of the ocean and a salient dynamic of description itself comes to the fore: »And forgetfulness, forgetfulness/of great sins and great sorrows/is granted only by the ocean/and absinth.« Suddenly the desire to forget is juxtaposed to the will to name. The poetic voice wishes to forget guilt feelings and suffering. The ocean is established as a locus for the juxtaposition of the will to intoxication, the will to name scientifically, and the slippage of the ability to mas-

ter nature through scientific naming when this attempt to objectify is infused with a human quality (*kyskhet*). After that, the ocean is personified, and it becomes a source of forgetfulness and is compared to absinth, intoxication.

In the next line the personification introduced in the attempt to enculturate nature is further radicalized as the poetic »I« addresses the ocean directly. »O you green **absinth-ocean**« (*absinthav*).<sup>34</sup> Absinth or intoxication now merges with the ocean, which is now not merely the color of absinth, but becomes the drink. This is the first time that substitution emerges out of a series of comparisons. The ocean merges with the forgetfulness of intoxication. The deck, the solid platform gliding across a raging sea and the site of an attempt to still the force of ever moving water by naming scientifically, has become the site of oblivion as forgetting obscures a rationalized system of naming in the movement from comparison to substitution. The Dionysian aspect of this particular metaphorical series takes over. The metaphorical complex around the figure of the ocean in »Sundown at Sea« is the locus of two seemingly opposing impulses: the desire to master through naming and the will to forget through intoxication. It becomes rather obvious here that my contention is that this opposition can be read as an aestheticized formulation of a philosophical problematic with Nietzschean implications.

The obvious association is the Apollonian/Dionysian opposition in *Der Geburt der Tragödie (The Birth of Tragedy)*. While one could certainly squeeze this poem into that rather tight shoe, this possibility is ruled out in favor of a development in Nietzsche's thought that more explicitly treats the problematic of naming and forgetting. I am referring to the Nietzschean genealogies. As discussed in the fourth and fifth chapter of this monograph, Nietzsche, in his genealogies, associated the right to name with the sovereign act of appropriation. He also posited that a willful forgetfulness was an essential aspect of a creative perspective. The inability to forget was conversely attributed to a perspective marked by a dyspeptic *ressentiment* and a sense of obedience to what he regarded as a dominant and unhealthy social order. As Sarah Kofman remarks in *Nietzsche and Metaphor*:

To make up for the forgetting of origins which it conceals, memory struggles against forgetting as an active life-force – against self-forgetting the other and

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34 My emphasis.

the past. It gives us the opportunity to take on the future and make promises; it gives us conscience, responsibility, personal identity. But these gratifications are merely a deception, for this violent process culminates in the triumph of the collective over the individual ... The fundamental objective of memory is to make one forget difference and genesis at all costs: for to society each presents the risk of change, instability and insecurity ... The objective of memory is to make us forget life.<sup>35</sup>

Kofman is arguing that, for Nietzsche, memory is the means by which the deception of individual identity is defined within the confines of a social structure. In other words, it is the means by which the collective assumes control over the individual by defining the concept of the self. Seen in this light, Nietzsche's argument that an active forgetting is a vital component of health is also a bid for release from the legacy of domination by the collective morality over the individual.

If we understand »Sundown at Sea« in light of »Haze« with its depiction of the human suspended on the horizon as a liminal being who both changes the object of his description and is changed himself by performing this act adjectively, then the problematic aspects of description bear a close resemblance to the dynamic of the Nietzschean understanding of interpretation. Interpretation, in turn, is accompanied by the creation of a perspective, a species of self-interpretation through the delimitation of one's angle of vision and the subsequent establishment of one's horizon. Seen in the light of Nietzsche's articulation of the problem, the desire to name scientifically is tantamount to an attempt to objectify and master a natural force from a distinctive perspective. For if the ocean is described as being like chemical compounds; it is broken down by naming and effaced as a natural force through the distance created by objectification. However, the tension between naming and forgetting in this poem leads to the construction of a metaphor. The metaphor emerges as the »gröna absinthav (green absinthsea),« a merger of intoxication and a natural force. As intoxication implies oblivion (»glömska, det ger endast havet och absint« [forgetfulness, is granted only by the ocean and absinth]), there is a merger between the will to forget and the intoxicating compound of nature and the Dionysian.

What the poetic voice wishes to forget are »stora synder och stora sorger« (great sins and great sorrows). Sins and sorrows are connected: sin the moralized conception of transgressive behavior and sorrows, the

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35 KOFMAN: 1993, 47–48.

internalization of pain. This is the hallmark of the Nietzschean conception of the *ressentiment* of the *herd animal*. The overcoming of this painful condition in which memory enslaves the individual is the creation of a metaphorical complex, which is an amalgam of exact naming and active forgetfulness. This is the Nietzschean formula for *Selbstüberwindung*.

Nietzsche also treated this issue of naming and forgetfulness in the unpublished essay, *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, collected in his *Nachgelassene Schriften* and written in 1872.<sup>36</sup> This essay informs us about the implications of metaphor production.

Wir wissen immer noch nicht, woher der Trieb zur Wahrheit stammt, denn bis jetzt haben wir nur von der Verpflichtung gehört, die die Gesellschaft, um zu existieren stellt, wahrhaft zu sein, d. h. die usuellen Metaphern zu brauchen, also moralisch ausgedrückt, von der Verpflichtung nach einer festen Convention zu lügen, schaaarenweise in einem für alle verbindlichen Stile zu lügen.

(We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone.)<sup>37</sup>

In this essay, Nietzsche argued that every concept is a comparison between that which a thing is and that which it is not (Gleichsetzen des Nicht-Gleichen).<sup>38</sup> Therefore, he continues, a concept is created through a forgetting of the difference between individual things of the same »class« »durch ein Vergessen des Unterscheidenden« (through the forgetting of the distinctions).<sup>39</sup> This process leads to another type of forgetting whereby: »den Menschen als Maass an alle Dinge zu halten, wobei er aber von dem Irrthume ausgeht, zu glauben, er habe diese Dinge unmittelbar als reine Objekte vor sich. Er vergisst also die originalen Anschauungsmetaphern als Metaphern und nimmt sie als die Dinge selbst.« (His method is to treat man as the measure of all things, but in doing so he again proceeds from the error of believing he has these things [which he intends to measure] immediately before him as mere objects. He forgets that the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors and takes them to

36 NIETZSCHE: 1988a, KSA I, 874–890.

37 Ibid., 88f. The English translation comes from BREAZEALE: 1999, 84.

38 NIETZSCHE: 1988a, KSA I, 880.

39 Ibid. Translation: BREAZEALE: 1999, 84.

be things themselves.)<sup>40</sup> According to Nietzsche, scientific »truth« can be seen in the same light, as an order of naming that obscures its origins. For him, science creates categories from out of the observable world through the anthropomorphizing act of conceptualization that is ultimately based on metaphor.<sup>41</sup> The problem, as Nietzsche saw it, is that the metaphors utilized by science are distinguished by an accompanying form of amnesia, a passive forgetting of the possibility of creating new metaphors. This is of course a one-sided critique, as science does have the ability to renew its representations of the world. This ability is exemplified by valorization of the notion of fallibility in scientific research. However, Nietzsche is forwarding a polemic here whose target is all absolute truth claims, and his main point remains of interest: *acts of description arise through metaphor and description is a form of valuation; therefore all our values are not essential, they merely stand in for something else.*

However, even if absolute truth claims have obscured the origin of the concept as a species of metaphor, there are still aspects of human endeavor where one can find freedom from the rule of the ossified metaphor, »im Mythus und überhaupt in der Kunst« (in myth and in art generally).<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche compares these activities to dreaming, which he claims frees the dreamer from the fixed order of conceptual metaphors and unleashes an associative stream of new metaphors that he compares to the celebration of a Saturnalia.<sup>43</sup> The creation of new metaphors liberates:

Mit schöpferischem Behagen wirft er die Metaphern durcheinander und verrückt die Gränzsteine der Abstraktion, so dass er z. B. den Strom als den beweglichen Weg bezeichnet, der den Menschen trägt, dorthin, wohin er sonst geht. Jetzt hat er das Zeichen der Dienstbarkeit von sich geworfen; sonst mit trübsinniger Geschäftigkeit bemüht, einen armen Individuum, dem es nach Dasein gelüstet, den Weg und die Werkzeuge zu zeigen und wie ein Diener für seinen Herrn auf Raub und Beute ausziehend ist er jetzt zum Herrn geworden und darf den Ausdruck der Bedürftigkeit aus seinen Mienen wegwischen.

(With creative pleasure it throws metaphors into confusion and displaces the boundary stones of abstractions, so that, for example it designates the stream as »the moving path which carries man where he would otherwise walk.« The intellect has now thrown the token of bondage from itself. At other times it

40 Ibid., 883. The English translation is found in BREAZEALE: 1999, 86.

41 See NIETZSCHE: 1988a, 886.

42 Ibid., 887. The English translation is in BREAZEALE: 1999, 89.

43 NIETZSCHE: 1988a, 886–887.

endeavors, with gloomy officiousness, to show the way and to demonstrate the tools to a poor individual who covets existence; it is like a servant who goes in search of booty and prey for his master. But now it has become the master and it dares wipe from its face the expression of indigence).<sup>44</sup>

Nietzsche ended this essay by creating an opposition between »der vernünftige Mensch« (the man of reason) who lives by the ossified metaphor and »der intuitive Mensch« (the intuitive man) who creates with the metaphorical freedom described above. These two types were common elements in the oppositions that appear in Nietzsche's work having appeared earlier as the tragic and Socratic Greek and they would later appear in *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* as representatives of the *ascetic ideal* and the *nobility of prehistory* respectively. It is apparent that the poetic »I« in »Sundown at Sea« has internalized both positions and that the construction of metaphor in this poem, the tension between naming as a »Gleichsetzen des Nicht-Gleichen« (comparison of the unlike), as a means of mastering the ocean through the concepts of science is in a tense relationship with the desire to forget. It is here that we can understand that Strindberg, even in his most radical, almost absurd application of his understanding of naturalism bares the device of a collision between rational and irrational elements in the creation of his art.<sup>45</sup> The metaphorical complex of the ocean is created from a perspective that has internalized this conflict. What I wish to take forward from Nietzsche's early thoughts on the equation of the creation of new and transgressive metaphors with the overcoming of a position of servitude to the already created metaphors of the collective is that the creation of a new metaphor is the performative linguistic vehicle for the active forgetting of the sovereign individual. For Nietzsche, it is by means of an active forgetting that the artist creates and resists the moralized judgment of the collective.

The last stanza of »Sundown at Sea« acts a condensation of the descriptive movement in the poem and alerts us to the commonality between Nietzschean thought and Strindberg's early poetic production. Here there is once again a movement from simile (*Gleichnis*) to metaphor. The poem ends: »Sweden lies like smoke/Like the smoke of a Ma-

44 Ibid., 888. The English translation is from BREAZEALE: 1999, 90.

45 In this sense, Strindberg is much less polemical and one-sided than Nietzsche in this moment. This also alerts us that the formal components of the commonality are much more pronounced than any commonality in content.



duro-Havanna,/And the sun sits over there/Like a half-extinguished cigar./But around the horizon/the cliffs stand so red/like Bengali-fire/and shine on the misery.«<sup>46</sup> After the creation of the initial metaphorical complex where the collision of rational and irrational elements amalgamates into a sea of intoxication, the poetic voice depicts its collective origins. Sweden becomes evanescent, illuminated by the sun, but perceivable only in this natural source of light's reflection, which in a simile, is compared to an artificial source of light – fireworks, the light of the carnival. This light shines on the misery, »eländet« in the original Swedish. »Eländet,« »Elend« in German, according to one of Nietzsche's numerous etymologies in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, has its origin in the word for exile, and is, according to Nietzsche, connected to the transgression of what binds a member to his community, the pledge to refrain from harmful and hostile acts.<sup>47</sup>

We can now discern the complex that connects naming, forgetting, and origins in the poem and point out its Nietzschean commonality. For Nietzsche, mastery was dependent upon appropriation through naming. Naming, in turn, is dependent on the forgetting of the agonistic elements of origination. The Nietzschean genealogies are attempts to reactivate this conflict in order to linguistically re-appropriate the name for a thing in the present through a system of ranking. Metaphor can either be in an ossified state that masks its aspect, or through the activity of the sovereign individual, a means of separating oneself (through pathos, through suffering) from the moral valuation of the collective.

For both Nietzsche and Strindberg, metaphor was a means of overcoming the constraints of their environment and a means of self-overcoming. In »Sundown at Sea,« a metaphorical complex is created which performs the tension between naming and forgetting. In the last lines of the poem, the origin of collective values, Sweden, is connected to the notion of being a source of misery from which the poet is exiled for the crime of his metaphorical originality. The poem performs the movement from likeness to substitution and highlights the tension between disparate elements in the formation of a description. This description in turn, is a form of overcoming the opposition of rational and irrational

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<sup>46</sup> Please notice the movement here: There are four similes and an ending metaphor, the substitution of misery for Sweden.

<sup>47</sup> See NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 307, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.

elements through struggle while retaining both elements. This is the way that Strindbergian naturalism is compatible with Nietzschean philosophy. For in Strindberg's naturalistic production, the text is a site of collision of rational and irrational elements. The struggle between these elements was then projected upon his society, as the origin of moral valuation, in the form of critique.

### Self-overcoming and the Pathos of Dual Origination

This leads us to a discussion of what I claimed was the underdeveloped concept in the environment of reception, origination. In the discussion of Nietzsche's genealogical method, I claimed that the notion of dual origination was a springboard for the activity of *Selbstüberwindung* (self-overcoming). This process depended on the internalization of an opposition between creative and reactive forces. I also posited that this opposition, between the *ascetic ideal* and the self-creating *Herrschaft*, was forwarded as a metaphorical explanation for the passage from a *prehistorical* to a historical state, and served as the contradictory raw material for self-construction in the text. This conflict between what Nietzsche calls the forces of the *Vorzeit*, that which comes before time and the forces whose internalization of their conditions have created historical consciousness is essential to our understanding of the notion of *Selbstüberwindung* in its relation to the conflation of autobiography and history in the texts under consideration.

*Selbstüberwindung* is a process that utilizes the internal conflict between forces that have two distinctly different temporal qualities. Nietzsche believed that these forces are simultaneously present in the individual. The textual form of this temporal duality is genealogical polemic. As early as his 1874 *meditation, Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life), Nietzsche both criticized the domination of the historical sense in cultural life and understood its ineffable presence in human culture.<sup>48</sup> Yet while Nietzsche was concerned with what he considered to be the enervating effect of an overabundance of concentration on the past, he never denied the validity of historical thinking in itself.

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<sup>48</sup> See NIETZSCHE: 1988a, KSA I, 243–324, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*. This essay is the second of the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*.

Nietzsche's genealogical project, and in this I include *Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil)* as the main text that the genealogies explicate, was a response to the problem to what he saw as an *overabundance* of history. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche claimed that the social conditions of the *Vorzeit* were the result of a problem that *nature* set before man: the breeding of an animal that could make and keep promises.<sup>49</sup> As this *breeding* was the cause of much suffering or pathos, this suffering was turned inward by the animal that was bred. Thus, another way to understand Nietzsche's re-construction of the origins of morality is that with the victory of the *ascetic ideal* and the advent of moral thinking, this originary pathos was obscured by a now prevailing ethos. In Nietzsche's performative antidote to the insomnia that he attributes to an overabundance of historical thinking, *der Wille zur Macht* (the will to power), as an interpreting pathos struggles with the prevailing ethos. For in Nietzsche's conception of a *healthy* historical sense, the ethos of shared moral valuation is subordinated to the pathos of interpretation. This helps to explain Nietzsche's philosophy of history; *der Wille zur Macht* as the interpretive force of both self and world uses a genealogy as a vehicle for a reversal of the repression of pathos by ethos. This was his notion of an active nihilism, Nietzsche's dangerous perhaps.

Regarding temporal matters, Nietzsche's attempted reversal of values does not point to the past. Instead it highlights the conflict between two orders, each of which has its own construction of temporality, each which has an anticipation of return. From this we can posit the following about Nietzsche's conception of time and memory. First, Nietzsche did not see time as simply moving in a circle; instead, he posited two species of time in collision: the first is a linear historical time that is based on the inability to actively forget; this time is marked by *ressentiment* and the repression of pathos. Here, the past dominates and its anticipated return marks an eschatological moment with the possibility of salvation and resurrection. The second species of time is the circular time of the eternal return. This is not a metaphysical time, for Nietzsche had abandoned the notion of divine logos with his declaration of the *death of God*; it is a psychological time marked by differentiated repetition and *Selbstüber-*

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49 See NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. The discussion of this problem starts at the beginning of the »Zweite Abteilung« and can be found on pg. 29f.

*windung*. This is the time of Zarathustra's »Vom Gesicht und Räthsel« where the two pathways that stretch on for eternity come together under a gateway over which is written »Augenblick«.<sup>50</sup> These two species of time coexist and are in constant opposition in Nietzsche's genealogical work. Linear time is the time of *nihilism* or *decadence*. Circular time is valorized as the time of health. It is also the time of *Selbstüberwindung*, the time when elements of the past are addressed in the moment in order to create the metaphor of subjectivity.

This formula also informs the Nietzschean conception of memory. For Nietzsche there are two kinds of memory as well. The first type of memory is distinguished by an inability to digest experience. Nietzsche considered this to be an unhealthy state of affairs. This type of memory posits »I was therefore I am«. The second type of memory is a function of *active forgetting*. This entails a discrete relationship between the *lordly right to name* and the recreation of a past that is dominated by the imperative of the moment. For Nietzsche, this dominant perspective that produces this type of interpretation is *der Wille zur Gesundheit* (the will to health). This type of memory says, »It was because ›I‹ will it to be such«. This also helps to explain why Nietzsche's historical genealogy is a polemic against moral valuation as memory becomes a site of conflict between pathos and ethos, between individual re-construction through internal conflict and a collective understanding of the past where conflicts in valuation are resolved externally through an ossified metaphorical system: either the coming salvation as an absolute truth, or science or history as absolute *telo*.

It is my contention that Strindberg's »autobiographical« project makes the same use of origins. Here, as in Nietzsche's genealogical work, dual and agonistic origins are posited. The struggle between them is a war between two types of memory. This is the very struggle that Strindberg was later to call his *befrielsekriget*, his war of liberation. For it is in *Tjänstekvinnans son (Son of A Servant)* that the struggle between two orders of understanding experience, the naturalist order of environmental determination and the hyper-present order of momentary affirmation, come into conflict.

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50 NIETZSCHE: 2002, KSA 4, *Also sprach Zarathustra* 3. »Vom Gesicht und Räthsel« can be found on pp. 197–202, the parable about the »Augenblick« on pg. 200.

*Tjänstekvinnans son* was written between 1885 and 1886. It was divided into four volumes, each depicting a period of time in »en själs utvecklingshistoria« (the history of the development of a soul). The first volume covers the period from 1849–1867; the second, entitled *Jäsningstiden* (*Time of Fermentation*), tells the story of the years 1867–1872; the third volume, *I Röda rummet* (*In the Red Room*) narrates the »events« between 1872–1875; and the final volume, entitled *Författaren* (*The Author*), which was not published until 1909, is an account of the years between 1877 and 1887.<sup>51</sup> The two missing years, 1875 and 1876, were the subject of *Han och hon* (*He and She*), a collection of letters between Strindberg and his first wife Siri von Essen that was refused by several publishers and did not reach the public until 1919, after Strindberg's death.<sup>52</sup> *Han och hon* shared the subtitle »en själs utvecklingshistoria« with *Tjänstekvinnans son* and Strindberg had planned it to be included in the work.

In an excursus that follows the first chapter of this study, I discussed the relationship between Strindberg's conception of a *naturalist* autobiography and utilized the »interview« that he intended to preface the first volume of *Tjänstekvinnans son*. The fictional *interviewee*, *the author*, stated in this *interview* that *Tjänstekvinnans son* »är ingen roman; det skall sålunda vara något nytt« (is not a novel, it would be, in that case, something new).<sup>53</sup> He went on to explain the principle of a project that was to continue beside his literary production for the rest of his life. This project was a series of cross-referential »autobiographical« works of which *Tjänstekvinnans son* was the first installment. At the core of Strindberg's conception of this project was the claim that one could only *know* one's own life. The form of these naturalist autobiographies keeps this claim from degenerating into mere solipsism. This form, *the genealogy of self*, employs the oscillation between distance and proximity, revealing itself as a self-referential hermeneutic with a weakened truth claim that is dependent upon the agonistic relationship between internalized elements of necessity and contingency. I define necessity here as the linear time of history with its collective memory, and contingency as being the process of *Selbstüberwindung* through description.

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51 STRINDBERG: 1996a.

52 STRINDBERG: 1996b.

53 STRINDBERG: 1989, 372.

In *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* (*My Relationship to Nietzsche*), Strindberg claims with the writing of the fourth section of this text to have »arbetat mig ur äldre vantrö, invuxen från ungdomen« (worked myself out of older false beliefs inherited from my youth).<sup>54</sup> The first chapter of the first volume of the work alerts us to the source of this »false belief«. It is my contention that the way this self-overcoming is performed is the heart of Strindberg's commonality with Nietzsche. In order to illustrate this point, I will compare the description of origins in the first volume of the text with the meta-narrative commentary that closes the book in the fourth volume. I will now turn to the first volume, entitled simply, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*).

*Tjänstekvinnans son* is narrated in the third person. It opens, in exemplary naturalist fashion, by depicting the historical environment into which the protagonist, Johan, is born:

Fyrtioalet hade gått ut. Tredje ståndet som genom 1792 års revolution tillkämpat sig en del av människans rättigheter hade nu blivit påmindt om att det fanns ett fjärde och femte som ville fram. Svenska Bourgeoisien som hjälpt Gustav III att göra den kungliga revolten hade längesedan recipierat i överklassen under förre jakobinen Bernadottes stormästarskap, och hjälpt till att motväga adels- och ämbetsmannaståndet, vilka Karl Johan med sina underklass-instinkter hatade och vördade. Efter 48 års konvulsioner togs rörelsen om händer av den upplyste despoten, Oskar I, vilken insett evolutionens omotståndlighet och därför ville passa tillfället att få äran av reformernas genomförande. Han binder vid sig borgarskapet genom näringsfrihet och frihandel, med vissa inskränkningar naturligtvis, upptäcker kvinnans makt och beviljar systrar lika arvsrätt med bröder, utan att samtidigt lätta brödernas bördor såsom blivande familjeförsörjare. I borgarståndet finner hans regering stöd gentemot adeln med Hartmansdorff och emot prästerskapet vilka utgöra oppositionen

(The forties had run their course. The third estate, which had won a share of human rights in the revolution of 1792, had now been reminded that there was a fourth and a fifth estate that also wanted to advance. The Swedish Bourgeoisie, who had helped Gustav III in his royal revolt and had long since been initiated into the over-class during the former Jacobean, Bernadotte's reign, now helped to balance the scales against the nobility and the bureaucracy, who Karl Johan with his underclass instincts both hated and admired. After the convulsions of '48, this movement was appropriated by the enlightened despot, Oskar I, who realized that the evolution was irresistible, and as a result, wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to receive the credit for the enactment of the reforms. He binds the bourgeoisie to him through freedom of trade, with certain restrictions of course, discovers the power of women, and grants sisters equal rights of inheritance without simultaneously relieving the burden of their

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54 STRINDBERG: 1918, 323. My translation.

brother's load as eventual breadwinners. His government finds its support in the bourgeoisie, and used them against the aristocracy with Hartmansdorff and against the clergy who makes up the opposition.)<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting, that Strindberg, the writer of his own history of Sweden, *Svenska folket* (1882), the man who attacked Gustav Geijer's notion that »att det svenska folkets historia är dess konungars« (the history of the Swedish people is her kings),<sup>56</sup> would open his own story with a catalogue of the political positions of three of Sweden's more powerful kings. The narration continues with a description of the class structure, a description that extends architectonically, as the house into which Johan is born is divided along the very same class lines as society, the apartments being located along the lines of rank and distinction. These class divisions of the social environment are even mirrored in Johan's own biological origins.

Johan's father is described: »Han var en aristokrat av börd och av uppfostran.« (He was an aristocrat by virtue of lineage and upbringing.)<sup>57</sup> His mother's description, juxtaposed in the same paragraph to the father's, reads, »mor var fattig skräddardotter av en styvfar utsatt i livet som piga sedan som värdshusflicka« (mother was the daughter of a poor tailor who was sent out by her step father to be a maid and then a waitress).<sup>58</sup> This dichotomy of being the son of an aristocrat and a servant is further developed as the father's aristocratic bearing is set in relief against the mother's »democratic instinct«. This opening sets a narrative in motion that is informed by the internalization of historical conditions and hereditary factors. This certainly seems like a naturalist memoir. The protagonist's historical environment and heredity are established as a starting point for an analysis of his development. His environment shapes him and his experience seems to be circumscribed by necessity. It also seems to be an internalization and anticipation of the anti-naturalist debates that accompanied the Nietzsche reception in the late 1880s. However, there is more to the story.

There is a split in the textual fabric. The protagonist Johan is an unveiled pseudonym narrated in the third person. August Johan Strindberg,

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55 STRINDBERG: 1989. My translation.

56. My translation.

57 Ibid., II.

58 Ibid.

the well-known public figure was designated as the author of the text. The name August Strindberg is inscribed upon the title page as the legal authority to which the text belongs. The narrator attributes the qualities and events that have marked »Strindberg's« life to Johan. The proper name Johan is connected to a series of predicates that have already been publicly attributed to the proper name Strindberg. This protocol is observed so strictly that the texts that have been legally attributed to Strindberg, published under his name and copyright, are attributed by the narrator to Johan in the third person within the confines of the text. This act gives *Tjänstekvinnans son* a dual characteristic. On the one hand, distance is taken through the use of a protagonist who stands in metaphorically for the name »Strindberg,« who speaks of his »I« as »he«. On the other hand, the text is so radically self-referential that the books, which Strindberg had written, are utilized to illustrate the development of the »fictional« protagonist. This strategy, at once a distancing through fictionalization and a making proximate through reference to the public utterances and legal status of the author, creates an oscillation between the very notions of the fictionality and the facticity of the past. This points to the relationship between the contingency of artistic creation and the necessity of environmental conditions that are forwarded in the text, and between the fixed aspects of the proper legal name and the variability of self-description. One can say that Strindberg assumes the right to name through the use of a pseudonymous stand-in for himself, and thereby claims the right for self-definition. He reappropriates aspects of his past through a reinscription of his name, as the stand-in, Johan, and thereby as metaphor.

This relationship is radicalized even further. In the fourth volume, in the last chapter entitled *Tjänstekvinnans son* (1886), the narrative is brought into the present tense and a metanarrative commentary is brought into play. The chapter itself describes aspects of the writing of the book of which it is a part. This chapter can be divided into two sections. The first section comments on the writing of *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*) and the writing begins by conjugating verbs in the past tense only to break into a discussion of subjectivity that shifts tenses, the verbs conjugated in the present. This second part of the chapter consists of a dialogue between Johan and a character designated only as X. It is here that the radical hermeneutic structure of the text is brought home and internalized within the text itself, as it comments upon itself. This



chapter that bears the name of the text is a commentary upon the writing of itself. It takes the same distance that Strindberg takes to Johan and it enjoys the same proximity as well. It is even more interesting that the narrator states that the book was written because of a decision to

göra upp bokslut med det gamla, genomgå sitt livs händelser från början till dato, undersöka sin själs uppkomst – och utvecklingshistoria, sådan densamma uppstått under alla framverkande orsaker av ärftlighet, uppfostran, naturell, temperament, under tryck och inverkan av den givna historiska epokens yttre händelser och andliga rörelser.

(close the books on the old, go through his life's events from beginning to the date, examine his soul's origination – and developmental history, such as it arose under all the pre-existing conditions of inheritance, nature, temperament, under the pressure and influence of the given historical epoch's external events and spiritual movements.)<sup>59</sup>

On the surface this appears to be a laundry list of a naturalist's understanding of the relationship between a historical environment and the possibilities for the development of the individual under those circumstances. Considering that Strindberg radicalized his own conception of naturalism to the point where only self-understanding was deemed possible, it is certainly no surprise that there would be a conflation of autobiography and history in this text. It could be argued that Strindberg's innovation was to give the naturalist protagonist a self-conscious understanding of the effect of environment on the individual by turning the vivisection scalpel on himself, no more and no less. If this is so, then there is at best a weak commonality with Nietzsche, who despite his own predilection for positing environmental factors as determinant was certainly not a naturalist.<sup>60</sup>

However, despite its »naturalistic« surface, there are two orders of time and two orders of memory present in *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*). The first order of time is the linear time of naturalist depiction. This is particularly manifested in the first three volumes. It is here

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<sup>59</sup> STRINDBERG: 1996a, 214. My translation.

<sup>60</sup> Or perhaps he was a »naturalist« in the same sense as Strindberg. In other words, a type of dialectical naturalist, one who recognized that self-interpretation was subject to historical factors, but introduced a radical element of contingency into the mix. In any case, Strindberg's »naturalism« is certainly eccentric and Nietzsche's anti-naturalistic position does not deny the effect of hereditary, social, historical, or even geographical conditions on the development of the subject. Certainly, both men's positions on naturalism are more polemical than substantial. As illustrated throughout this study, this is most often the case in late nineteenth century letters.

that environmental conditions dominate the individual. The second order of time is the circular time of differentiated repetition. This is the time of the last chapter of the fourth volume. It is here that the dual origins of Johan's conception are overcome and a hierarchy is established. It is here that autobiographical excavation is transformed into a performative act in the moment. This performative act is initiated in the metanarrative commentary.

The metanarrative commentary goes on to state that the text is neither a confession nor is it a memoir.<sup>61</sup> This leads us to a question: what is *Tjänstekvinnans son*? My answer is that it is a *genealogy of self*, a *Selbstüberwindung*, a performative work that overcomes the dual origins of its author and establishes an internal hierarchy. Strindberg performs his *Selbstüberwindung* in the following manner. The title, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*), is misleading for it implies that the subject of the book is defined by his relationship to his mother's position («als meine Mutter lebe ich noch und werde alt» (as my mother I still live and grow old)).<sup>62</sup> Almost immediately, dual origins are posited. The title has three textual valences: it is an expression of one of the temporal orders in the text, the representation of a movement away from a point of origin, and at the same time a symbol of the retention of a contradictory internal life («als mein Vater bereits gestorben» (as my father I am already dead)).<sup>63</sup> The protagonist is the son of two discrete and incompatible positions, as his father's aristocratic nature is sharply contrasted with his mother's »lower-class« origins.

These dual origins are not in a stable relationship to each other, but rather like Nietzsche's competing perspectives, their relationship collides internally. They are the raw material with which Johan (»Strindberg«) constructs a complex metaphor to stand in for the self. The process of self-construction that is dependent on contradiction is brought home in the metanarrative commentary in the last chapter. The title of the chapter, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (1886), represents the circular order of time and is a

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61 STRINDBERG: 1996a, 214: »Detta var huvudsyftet med boken om Tjänstekvinnans son, och alls icke att skriva några bekännelser, för att ursäkta sig, eller några memoarer för att roa.« My translation: »This was the main goal of the book about the son of a servant, and the goal was not at all to write some confessions to ask for pardon, nor to write a memoir to entertain.«

62 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 264.

63 Ibid.

differentiated repetition. For it is here that the narrative enters the present, becomes a polemic, the right to name is asserted, and the genealogical exploration of origins ends with a truth claim that is contingent upon an *organizing idea* and opposed to a telos. The issue of the shifting metaphors of self and their temporality has been addressed. I will treat each of the remaining claims in turn, starting with a discussion of the relationship between the act of presenting (making contemporary) and the polemical voice.

Fick han då fatt på sitt jag under denna långa och trista vandring i minnenas skuggrike? Att svara nej, skulle förr ha gjort honom bryderi, ty en personlig gud fordrar en ansvarig personlighet, men nu bryr det honom mindre, då han vet att jaget är en mycket bräcklig form av en liten rörelse varande kvantitet kraft, eller materia om man hellre vill, som under de givna förhållandena utvecklar sig så och så.

(Did he get a grasp on his I during that long, gloomy meander in memory's shadowy realm? Before, an answer of no would have embarrassed him, for a personal God demands an accountable personality; but now he cares less for he knows that the I (ego) is a very fragile form of a small quantity of existing force or material in motion, if one prefers, that under such and such given relationships develops one way or the other.)<sup>64</sup>

The narrative changes its verb tenses at the moment of a discussion of the construction of the »I«. It is in this moment that the narrative takes on a polemical voice as it both addresses Johan's own past as a contemporary and implicitly attacks the internalization of his mother's religious position through a denial of the existence of a *personal God* who would demand responsibility in the form of a stable character. It is in this moment, directly after the denial of God's existence, that the tenses change. It is in this moment as well, that the »I« is dismissed as a construction, as it said to be a quantity of force or material if »if one prefers«.

The metadiscourse then turns to the subject of the book's conclusion. The narrator addresses an imaginary interlocutor who demands a »sammanfattning,« a recapitulation or summary conclusion. The narrator responds to his own question by stating:

Men resultatet, sammanfattningen? frågar man. Var ligger sanningen han sökte? Den ligger här och där i de tusen tryckta sidorna; sök upp dem, samla dem och se efter om de kunna sammanfattas; se efter om de äro giltiga längre än ett år, fem år, tänk efter om de ens ha utsikt att bli giltiga, då därtill fordras ett flertals erkännande. Och glöm inte att sanningen icke kan finnas emedan den befinner sig som allt i beständig utveckling.

64 STRINDBERG: 1996a, 214. My translation.

(But the conclusion, the summary, one asks? Where does the truth he sought reside? It resides here and there in the thousand printed pages; look them up, collect them and see if they could be summarized or concluded; see if they are valid longer than a year, five years, think about if they even have the intention to be valid, for that would have demanded many admissions. And don't forget that the truth does not exist since it finds itself, like everything else, in constant development.)<sup>65</sup>

There is no recapitulation. There is no summary. There is only a continuous becoming with a dynamically unstable truth claim. The imaginary interlocutor is told to look at the text itself, and to the texts that the text discusses; all attributed to one August Strindberg and also to his double, Johan the protagonist. Any conclusion is of the moment, which is the time of the recurrence of the past, continually the same and continually new, always in a state of becoming (i beständig utveckling). There is no truth to *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*), there is only a self-referential narrative that demands an immanent interpretation of the texts of August Strindberg. The narrator names his »truth« and it is the »truth« of the fluidity of the past as it is organized and re-organized under the imperative of the moment. The narrator implicitly claims the right to name his own truth and the name of his truth is Johan, the character who has textually relived August Strindberg's life. There is no telos, only a metaphorical »I« that stands in for the constant change. The »I« is the deck of a ship on the open sea, from which the narrator describes his perspective. But the »I« is also a »he« for Strindberg. He/I is Johan.

Thereby, Johan is a split metaphor. He is the Johan who represents the trajectory of the linear order of time and memory, subjected to the historical conditions that have shaped his environment and the inheritance of his parents, who, in turn, represent conflicting aspects that have been internalized. This is the Johan determined by an interpretation called necessity. There is also the Johan who is merely the proper name that stands in for the performance of a genealogy of self, the fictional »doer« of the deed of *Selbstüberwindung*. This moment is also present in the last chapter, the chapter of the present tense. This is the Johan of contingency.

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65 Ibid., 215.

The last section of *Tjänstekvinnans son* is a dialog between Johan and X.<sup>66</sup> They are discussing politics. X is a young Swedish aristocrat. The dialog begins:

– Det förefaller mig, började X, som din monomani att vilja vara demokrat strede emot något att du ej rår på.

– Jag vet inte, svarar Johan, men det synes mig, när jag själv läser boken, såsom om ett samvete förföljde mig.

X. – Vad är samvete?

Johan – Frukta för följderna, säger man numera; känslan av att man ha gjort orätt, sa man förr.

X. – Orätt, rätt? Du har genom uppfostran och naturliga anlag stigit över den klass, där du var född; du är icke mer underklass du kallar, utan överklass. Varför generar du dig? Känner du kanske motsägelsen i dina angrepp på överklassen, och känner du att du angripa dig själv i dina skrifter? Du är gammaldags i det stycket, och det är bara kristendom med försakelselära som du ej kan frigjöra dig ifrån.

Johan. – Ja, men det kan också vara mina medfödda klasskänslor som ej kunnat följa med i utvecklingen ...«

(– It occurs to me, X began, that your monomania about wanting to be a democrat conflicts with something that you are not able to overcome.

– I don't know, answers Johan, but it is evident to me when I read the book myself that it is as if a conscience persecuted me.

X. – What is conscience?

Johan. – Fear of consequences, people say nowadays. People used to say that it is the feeling of having done something wrong.

X. – Wrong, right? You have risen above the class that you were born into by virtue of your upbringing and natural proclivities. You are not underclass, rather you are overclass. Why bother yourself? Do you even see the contradiction in your attack on the overclass, and do you not know that you attack yourself in your writings? You are old-fashioned in that way, and it is only that you cannot free yourself from Christianity with its ascetic teachings.

Johan. – Yes, but that can also be my inherited class feelings that could not keep pace with the development ...)<sup>67</sup>

There are several things to note about this exchange. First is the form, that of a dialogue between an aristocrat and the *son of a servant*. Second is the relationship of form and content. The two are discussing the split in Johan, his internalized guilt, his rise above his class, the contradictions of self-critique in his production, and the elements of his birth that he can-

66 Biographical readings of *Tjänstekvinnans son* have identified X as Verner von Heidenstam and all evidence points in his direction. However, for my purposes, X is a textual location, a participant in a split in the narration, an indication of the struggle of Johan's emergence from being the son of a servant, and a trope in Strindberg's »befrielsekrig«.

67 STRINDBERG: 1996a, 218–219.

not escape. There is a struggle between the two orders in this dialogue; the necessity of inheritance is confronted by the contradictions created by Johan's overcoming of his origins. The dialogue is in the form of a debate, X as an element of the text is the manifestation of the struggle between the son of a servant and an aristocrat. He plays the role of the *organizing idea*.

The text ends with a performative moment. X urges Johan to write down their conversation if he dares. Johan replies: »Ja det ska jag göra [...] och det ska bli slutet på fjärde delen av *Tjänstekvinnans son*.« (I will do that [...] and that will be the end of the fourth part of *Son of a Servant*.)<sup>68</sup> Considering that Strindberg was later to call the writing of this volume his *war of liberation* and in many ways began to assume X's convictions,<sup>69</sup> there is a doubleness to this statement. On the one hand, it draws the text into the moment in a radical temporal shift that equates the close of the book with the ending of the act of writing. The performativity of this act resides in the confluence of memory and the moment of writing, thereby highlighting the differentiated repetition that governs the form of the *genealogy of self*. It reflects the subordination of content to formal considerations. Second, in this volume this act marks the emergence of the Johan that is no longer *tjänstekvinnans son*, no longer only the son of a servant, but rather an *aristocrat* by virtue of self-overcoming, which subordinates the son of a servant through the tyranny of the *organizing idea*. It is as if he were saying what Nietzsche was to say later in *Ecce Homo*: »Wohlan, ich bin das *Gegenstück* eines *décadent*: denn ich beschrieb eben *mich*.« (Well then, I am the *opposite* of a *decadent*, because I have just described *myself*.)<sup>70</sup> In an act of performative irony, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*) is no longer a fitting title and Strindberg has written himself out of his »false belief«. The problem of overcoming dual origins was for both Nietzsche and Strindberg an aesthetic process in which an internalized social structure and hereditary disposition are overcome by a selection process that creates a fictional »doer« for the »deed« of a polemical genealogy. In both cases, the act of de-description enables a re-inscription of a momentary metaphor that

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68 Ibid., 229.

69 By early 1887, Strindberg had renounced many of his former political views. He would return to socialism, democracy, and Christianity after his Inferno crisis in the late 1890s.

70 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 267. See NORMAN: 2005, 77 for the English translation.

stands in the place of the subject. This is the commonality in the two men's authorial projects, what Strindberg called the systemless system.

### By the Open Sea: Strindberg's Nietzschean Experiment

Let us return for a moment to Strindberg's open sea. The novel *I havsbandet* (*By the Open Sea*) (1890) was said by Strindberg to be a fictional experiment with Nietzsche's philosophy. Commentators have often pointed to this novel in order to underscore their point that Strindberg misread Nietzsche. They designate the protagonist, Axel Borg, as Strindberg's version of *der Übermensch* (the overman). The Norwegian, Harald Beyer, comments that Borg is hardly a Nietzschean figure due to his refined and sensitive nature. Beyer uses the term *intelligensaristokrat* to describe the Strindbergian version of this Nietzschean figure.<sup>71</sup> I would like to conclude this chapter by pointing out that perhaps Beyer read Strindberg's novel in too programmatic a fashion and that *By the Open Sea* comments upon Nietzsche in a way that remains unexplored.

Strindberg included a map of his production in the preface to the fourth volume of *The Son of a Servant*. Written by Strindberg retrospectively in 1909, the preface includes a chart that schematically lists his writings and places them into categories. On the second page of this chart one can read:

*I havsbandet*. Nietzsches Filosofi influerar; men Individiden går under i strävan till den absoluta Individualismen. Inleder 90-talet: Übermensch.

(*By the Open Sea*. Nietzsche's philosophy influences; but the individual succumbs (goes under) in the striving for absolute individuality. Introduces the 90's: Übermensch.)<sup>72</sup>

This lone paragraph has greatly inflected scholars' understanding of two aspects of Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche. First, it has contributed to a concentration on the question of influence and has delimited the texts that have been brought under scrutiny. Second, it has led to a reading of *By the Open Sea* that concludes that Axel Borg's final act is suicide. I offer an alternative reading.

<sup>71</sup> See BEYER: 1958, 50–63. See also Eklund: 1948: 414.

<sup>72</sup> STRINDBERG: 1996a. This preface can be found in the appendix on pp. 263–267. Our citation can be found on pg. 265. My translation.

First, Strindberg's retrospective self-analysis claims that the individual perishes in the attempt for an absolute individuality. At the time of this novel's composition, a form of self-construction that was dependent upon contradiction governed Strindberg's conception of individuality. He understood these contradictions as arising from description (self or otherwise), which he understood as creating a locus where the collision between irrational and rational forces becomes apparent. This is quite apparent in the novel, where the demise of the individual indicates a possibility for a beginning as well as an end.

If Johan, in *Tjänstekvinnans son* had overcome the doubleness of his heredity, Axel Borg is a motherless child. The protagonist does not carry the burden of a dual inheritance. Instead he carries the expectations of a father who represents the idea of generational progression that is passed on to his son. This idea is carried by Borg, and his understanding of it in vulgar Darwinian terms, as the survival of the fittest, is severely tested as the novel progresses. There are two other arenas of contention, one external and the other internal. The prominent external struggle in this novel plays out through Borg's relationship to the inhabitants of the skerry. The internal struggle is between science and desire, or knowledge and love.

On the surface, Borg wears the aspect of the *Übermensch* as an *intelligensaristokrat*. He has a clearly »superior« understanding, and even attempts to establish religion on the island as a means of organizing what he considers to be the *herd*. Strindberg certainly conducts an experiment with his understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy in that the text implicitly asks the question: is it possible for such a figure as Borg to thrive in the company of other humans? His answer is seemingly in the negative as Borg eventually becomes so isolated that he breaks down and despite his desire to do so, he cannot reproduce himself as he loses his chance at love due to his need to conquer. In the end he even tries unsuccessfully to reproduce life in his laboratory. His drive to reproduce comes to a head in a pathetic scene where Borg collects some dolls that have washed up on the shore and tries to raise them as his children. On the level of content, seen through the optic of influence, Beyer appears to be correct; if Strindberg did depict Borg as an *Übermensch*, then his experiment came to the conclusion that Nietzsche's philosophy is untenable in the *real* world. However, if Borg's last act is read through a different optic, another possible conclusion emerges.



The scholarship that sees the encounter from the perspective of influence has been dependent on a direct mapping of a reading of Nietzsche's philosophy onto Strindberg's work. Limited by an insistence on assessing Strindberg's fidelity to the more underdeveloped and polemical aspects of the Nietzschean corpus, such as the notions of *origination* and the *Übermensch*, it has attempted to understand Borg as a type of miscreant *Übermensch*, and as a result, neglected to pay heed to the development of the ocean as metaphor in the novel. This has caused a negative reading of Nietzsche's influence, and the conclusion that there is a misreading and a rejection of the philosopher on Strindberg's part.

I approach this novel from a different perspective. First, if the description of the ocean is taken into account, Borg is not an *Übermensch*, but more likely an example of *der höheren Menschen* in *Also sprach Zarathustra* or the scientific nihilist of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. If this is the case, then even on the level of content, the ending of the novel takes on quite a different valence and the description of the novel in the 1909 preface to the fourth volume of *Tjänstekvinnans son* can be read to mean that the decade of the 1890s was the start of an experiment with the *Übermensch*. Seen on the level of both form and content, *By the Open Sea* does not demarcate the end of a period of commonality in the authorships, but serves as a signpost that points to a further investigation of the implications of Strindberg and Nietzsche's understanding of the dilemma of subject formation in a world *abandoned by God*.

There are three issues to be addressed regarding the description of the ocean in the novel: Borg's perspective in relation to the object of description, the components of the description, and the relation of the description to the end of the novel. It is certainly meaningful that the narration is in the third person and that Borg is depicted from this distance. However, my treatment of Borg's perspective is justified by the focalization of nature descriptions through his eyes. The components of the description inform us about the dynamics of this perspective. The first two points of analysis bring new light to the meaning of the book's conclusion.

Borg's perspective is established from the outset. The text opens with Borg traveling as a passenger in a rowboat to the skerry where he is to serve as fishing Inspector. One of the inhabitants of the island, »Tullkarlen« (The Customs Man), is rowing the boat. Borg's is described in detail and three aspects of his appearance are of note. He dresses in the manner of a decadent, he is regarded as an exotic outsider by »Tullkarlen,« and

he is wearing »ett tjockt guldarmband i form av en orm som bet sig i stjärten« (a thick bracelet in the form of a snake that bit itself in the tail).<sup>73</sup> Borg is dressed inappropriately for his rather rough surroundings, his companion regards him with disdain, and he bears the symbol of the Uroboros. There is split in Borg's appearance that signifies his perspective: this highly cultivated individual is also a figure of the realm of the circular self-referential cycle represented by his bracelet, a self-enclosed cycle of birth and death. Borg is described as a confluence of culture and irrational cyclical repetition.

A violent storm arises and events confirm the description of Borg as an amalgam of scientific and irrational elements. The purely instinctive »Tullkarlen« is unable to navigate through the violence of the storm, so Borg takes the helm and his performance delineates his perspective on nature. Borg is both the man of instinct and the man of science:

det var såsom om han improviserat nautiska och meteorologiska instrument av sina känsliga sinnen till vilka ledningar stodo öppna från hans stora hjärbatteri som doldes av den lilla löjligen hatten och den svarta hundluggen.

(it was as if he were improvising nautical and meteorological instruments from his delicate senses, to which the cords passed freely from his large brain-battery, concealed behind the little hat and the black dog's bangs).<sup>74</sup>

Borg's thinking is compared to the functioning of scientific instruments. There is a conflation of his instincts and his knowledge. He brings the boat safely to shore and collapses. He is both the instinctive man who understands the ocean's »harmonilära,«<sup>75</sup> and he is the scientific man who takes his distance from the fury of the storm to guide the boat to safety. When his task is completed, he collapses. Like the swimmer in »Haze,« Borg had pitted his own will against that of the ocean and the end result was a loss of consciousness. However, there is a significant difference between the two depictions. Borg did not immerse himself in the ocean in search of a merger with a natural force, instead he oscillated between the proximity of an instinctive reading of the text of the ocean and the distancing engendered by the internalization of science. This conflation delineates Borg's initial perspective.

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73 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 7.

74 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 12. Translation taken from SANDBACH: 1987, 6.

75 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 12. Translation: »harmony-teaching«.

However, the descriptions of the ocean in the novel, as focalized through Borg, play on the notion of science as hubris and are not necessarily a valorization of Borg as an *intelligens aristocrat*. The narrative develops a complex of descriptive events to illustrate this point. Borg sees himself as the crown of creation. »Intendent Borg var ingen naturdyrkare, lika litet som indiern dyrkade naveln, tvärtom hyste han såsom självmedveten och stående högst i den telluriska skapelsekedjan, en viss ringaktning för lägre existensformer.« (Inspector Borg did not worship nature any more than the Indian worshipped his navel. On the contrary, as a being conscious of himself, and of standing highest in the chain of terrestrial creations, he entertained a certain contempt for lower forms of existence.)<sup>76</sup> This attitude emerges from the descriptions of the ocean focalized through Borg's perspective by means of indirect discourse.

Det var icke med poetens drömfantasi med de dunkla och därför oroande känslorna och orediga förnimmelserna betraktaren njöt av det stora skådespelet utan det var med forskarens, den vakne tänkarens lugna blickar han överskådade sammanhanget i denna skenbara oreda, och det var endast genom sitt hopade väldiga material av minnen han kunde sätta alla dessa åskådade föremål i förbindelse med varandra.

(It was not with the dream-like imagination of the poet, or with vague and consequently disturbing emotions and confused perceptions that the beholder enjoyed this great spectacle. No, it was with the calm eyes of the scholar and conscious thinker that he detected order behind this apparent disorder. He was able [only] with the great store of accumulated memories to arrange all his observations in relation to each other.)<sup>77</sup>

This description of natural life that follows obeys a progressive line of development, and things are described by virtue of their age: »avsvalningsperiodens alger« (algae of the cooling-off period), »den äldsta avkomlingen sillen« (their oldest descendent, the herring), »stenkolstidens ormbunkar« (club-mosses of the Carboniferous era), »sekundärtidens barrträd« (coniferous trees [...] of the secondary era), and »tertiärtidens lovträd« (deciduous trees [...] of the Tertiary era) and so on.<sup>78</sup> All living things are described by their position in a chain of development in a schema that despite its attention to rank and order is more Darwinian than Nietzschean. Borg goes on to classify human beings in the same manner.

76 Ibid., 25. Translation: SANDBACH: 1987, 20.

77 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 34. Translation in SANDBACH: 1987, 29.

78 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 35. Translation SANDBACH: 1987, 30.

Borg is depicted not as an *Übermensch*, but as *der höhere Mensch* (the higher man) in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, or the scientist of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*).

As the novel progresses the duality in Borg's perspective becomes more apparent. He continues to seek nature through a scientific optic, but wears his bracelet as a talisman whenever he needs to rely upon his instincts. This represents a confluence of rational and irrational elements in Borg's person, and the descriptions illustrate a repression of instinctive elements that accompanies Borg's conscious attempt to subordinate nature to a scientific order of naming. This is especially apparent in two moments. The first moment is the creation of an optical illusion designed to show the inhabitants of the island the power of science. Borg loses control over his creation as two suns appear in the sky and the superstitious islanders understand the scene to portend the coming of the apocalypse.<sup>79</sup> His control is incomplete, and he learns that nature cannot be controlled by calculation. His attempt to master nature parallels his attempt to master the population of the island through science alone. Both end in a dismal failure as »[h]an hade lekt med naturandarne, frambesvurit en fiende till hjälpa sig som han trodde och då hade alla gått över till fienden så att han nu stod ensam« ([h]e had played with the spirits of nature, he had conjured up an enemy to help him, as he thought, and now everything had gone the enemy's way and he walked alone).<sup>80</sup> This passage is crucial to an understanding of the novel for as Borg, forgetting the ocean's »harmonilära,« masters neither the natural environment nor human relations. He becomes more and more isolated and eventually his reason in the extreme crosses over to madness. His relationship with Maria follows along similar lines. He eventually »masters« her, but winds up alone.

The depiction of Borg's degeneration has its parallel in the progression of the dominance of scientific thinking in his descriptions. The story of Borg's visit to the island is not a representation of the failure of an *Übermensch* to establish control over his environment. Rather, it is a narrative that leads to a »genealogical« moment at the novel's conclusion. At the end of the novel, Borg once again sets out to sea. This time he is alone and he is leaving the island. It is Christmas Eve, and he sees a

79 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 117

80 Ibid., 118. Translation, SANDBACH: 1987, 117.

star in the sky. At first, he thinks that it is »ledstjärnan till Betlehem« (the lodestar to Bethlehem) and a criticism of Christianity as occasioning »fallna storheter« (fallen heroes) for the benefit of »alla smås förklarade gud« (the avowed God of all the small).<sup>81</sup> He then realizes that he is mistaken. The star is »Beta i Herkules«. Borg sets his course:

Ut mot den åtminstone på himmelen upptagne, som aldrig lät piska sig eller spotta sig i ansiktet utan att som en man slå och spotta tillbaka, ut mot självförbrännaren som endast kunde falla för sin egen starka hand utan att tigga om nåd från kalken, mot Herakles, som befriade Prometheus, ljusbringaren, själv son av en gud, och en kvinnomoder, som sedan vildarne förfalskat till en jungfrupilt, vars födelse hälsades av mjölkdrickande herdar och skriande åsnor. Ut mot den nya julstjärna gick färden, ut över havet, allmodern, ur vars sköte livets första gnista tändes, fruktsamhetens, kärlekens outtömliga brunn, livets ursprung och livets fiender.

(Out towards the one whom at least the heavens had received. The one who had never allowed himself to be whipped or spat in the face without, like a man, hitting and spitting back. Out towards the one who had burnt himself, who could only die from his own strong hand, without begging for grace from the chalice. Out to Heracles who had [freed] Prometheus, the bringer of light, himself the son of a god and a human mother, though the barbarians later misrepresented him as a virgin boy, whose birth was celebrated by milk-drinking shepherds and braying asses. He had steered his course out towards the new Christmas star, out over the sea, the mother of all, in whose womb the first spark of life was lit, the inexhaustible well of fertility and love, life's source and life's enemy.)<sup>82</sup>

Borg sets his course for the star of Hercules and the ocean takes on a new aspect. The description is now poetic, and the ocean becomes a source of love, life, and suffering. There is an opposition created in the tension between the description of the star and the description of the ocean. The star, »den nya julstjärnan« (the new Christmas star) becomes a symbol of Borg's decision to replace the light of Christianity with Hercules, who enabled Prometheus to bring light to the human race. If Prometheus can be seen as a bringer of culture, he is also a symbol of suffering as he was forced to endure torture throughout eternity. The ocean becomes a vitalistic symbol, dark, uncertain, fruitful, a source of love and death. Borg is traveling towards the beacon of culture creation on a sea of

81 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 182. Translation: The first and third translations are from SANDBACH: 1987, 184. The second translation is mine.

82 STRINDBERG: 1982b, 183. Translation: SANDBACH: 1987, 184–185. I made one amendment that is indicated by brackets. Sandbach translated the Swedish »befriade« as »bred«. This is incorrect; it translates to »freed«.

incalculable and cyclical repetition. Rather than committing suicide, Borg is sailing on a body of water that is a union of the necessity of recurrence and the contingency of possibility. He has given up his rational evolutionary thinking and now valorizes a source as opposed to the crown in a chain of progression. His previous mode of description, exemplary in its inability to forget that which has been learned and exemplary in its forgetting of the metaphorical nature of its scientific postulations, has now turned to the creation of a metaphor that transgresses against Christian belief. Borg has set sail for the open sea. He has paused before the decision. In a state of endless becoming, in the guise of the »good European« to come, he has paused before being.<sup>85</sup>

Borg's final journey does not mark a final capitulation nor is it a suicide in the sense of finality. It is genealogical moment where the twin lodestars of European culture are set against the horizon as Borg sails out to the open sea. On the surface, he understands his possibilities to be between Christ and Hercules, but as we shall see, there is no choice at all, for both are present within. This moment of decision does not mark the end of Strindberg's fictional enactment of Nietzschean possibilities; it marks the beginning of a Promethean stage in Strindberg's understanding that culminated in his *Inferno* crisis. It is during that time period that the repressed elements, the path not chosen re-emerges. However, before we turn to our concluding chapter, it would be wise to remember that Strindberg, who ends his Nietzschean novel with Borg on the open sea, wrote to Nietzsche on December 31<sup>st</sup> of 1888. In this letter, he cites Horace and the English translation reads as follows:

You would lead a better life, Licinius, if you neither shaped your life constantly towards the open sea, nor, shivering tremulously in the face of the storm, held too closely to the treacherous coast.

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85 Recall that Strindberg owned a copy of Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*), and in the margin next to Aphorism 243 he wrote the word »framåt« or »forward«. The aphorism reads: »Ich höre mit Vergnügen, dass unsre Sonne in rascher Bewegung gegen das Sternbild des Herkules hin begriffen ist: und ich hoffe, dass der Mensch auf dieser Erde es darin der Sonne gleich thut. Und wir voran, wir guten Europäer!« (I'm glad to hear that our sun is moving rapidly towards the constellation of Hercules: and I hope that the people of this earth will act like the sun. With us in front, we good Europeans!) See NIETZSCHE: 1993, KSA 5, 183. The translation comes from NORMAN: 2005, 134.

Apparently Strindberg, unable to conceive of a harbor for being on the shores of the ocean's incessant becoming, could not follow this advice himself. Neither was Nietzsche able to affect such moderation. With this in mind, I will conclude with an examination of what these two thinkers have to say to us today.

## Conclusion:

### Are Nietzsche and Strindberg Our Contemporaries?

As we leave Axel Borg, he sails for the horizon, and several questions remain: are we still living in an era where we are forced to choose between sailing towards the open sea and clinging tremulously to the shoreline? Are the tides still governed by the fractious twins, Prometheus and Christ? Are we still subjected to the collisions between internalized discourses of secular expansionism and a promise of salvation that awaits us only upon the event of our demise? As we enter the third millennium, do the contested aspects of nineteenth century modernists still speak to our condition? Are we still living in »die Zeit der Tragödie, die Zeit der Moralen und Religionen« (the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religion) as Nietzsche put it?<sup>1</sup> Is there any alternative?

Despite the theoretical battles of the late twentieth century, with the subsequent disputes over definition and forms of dissemination, I am inclined to postulate that the tragic condition of subjectivity, the collision between secular and religious discourse under the sign of nihilism's weak truth claim still speaks to our conditions of possibility. Therefore the purpose of this conclusion is twofold: to test the hypothesis that the *genealogy of self* as a process of subject formation that applies to both a religious and a secular perspective, and to discuss the contemporaneity of the concept for us.

I will conduct this test through a reading of two »autobiographical« texts: Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and Strindberg's *Inferno* (1897). The commonality of the formal aspects of the genealogy are severely put to the test in this analysis, as *Inferno* is a text depicting a religious awakening and *Ecce Homo* is known for its atheistic conclusion. More importantly for this study, I will demonstrate how the absent father, the dead father's position is colonized by Nietzsche and how sacred narrative conflates with family drama in Strindberg's late drama, *Till Damaskus*.<sup>1</sup> It is my contention that the subject, who oscillates between tragedy and parody, that is between inescapable risk and the safety of the already written, between the new and the familiar, is an aspect of the *bourgeois uncanny*

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<sup>1</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1988c, KSA 3, 370, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. The English translation is from NAUCKHOFF and DEL CARO: 2001, 28.



found in both writer's work.<sup>2</sup> In addition, my understanding of the contemporaneity of the *genealogy of self* will be informed by a reading of the Italian philosopher, Gianni Vattimo. Vattimo's work emphasizes an aspect of a contemporary resonance of Nietzschean thought, namely the weakening of the truth claim of an interpretive act. His discussion of hermeneutics is our point of entry.

### Hermeneutics, »The Fabling of Being,« and »The Death of God«

The title of this conclusion asks the question: Are Strindberg and Nietzsche our contemporaries? While the title in question is broadly formulated and runs the risk of initiating an excursion into a circular argument, the potential circularity inherent in its formulation is purposeful. For the question of the contemporary relevance of nineteenth-century letters has been a circular process for twentieth century scholars. In other words, it has been a hermeneutic question. I employ the term hermeneutics in the sense that Vattimo defines the term in *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*.<sup>3</sup> His main argument rests upon the claim that the commonality found in late twentieth-Century philosophical thought can be found in the dominance of hermeneutics and the subsequent weakening of any claim to truth. True to form, Vattimo defines hermeneutics in a weak sense himself, as the family resemblance of a wide variety of theories, all of which have rejected positivistic science and posit that there are no facts, only interpretations.<sup>4</sup> According to Vattimo, the notion that »each experience of truth is an experience of interpretation is almost a truism in today's culture.«<sup>5</sup> For him, »Hermeneutics is not only a theory of the historicity (horizons) of truth; it is itself

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<sup>2</sup> I define the »bourgeois uncanny« as the moment when one recognizes that his or her individuality is a collectively held and historically determined notion. Hence the uncanny feeling that one's subjectivity is both one's own and part of a collective narrative.

<sup>3</sup> VATTIMO: 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Vattimo discusses Habermas' theory of communication, Derrida's deconstruction, the late Heidegger, Rorty's philosophy of contingency, and Gadamer's hermeneutics. He posits the commonality of a weakened truth claim for each of these theories.

<sup>5</sup> VATTIMO: 1997, 5.

a radically historical truth«. <sup>6</sup> Hermeneutics, then, is a theory that forwards a truth claim that is contingent upon its historical moment. In other words, any hermeneutic theory lacks a foundation, as the interpretation it presents is conditioned by the historical environment in which the interpreting subject resides. It follows that hermeneutics is a way of thinking that factors in contemporaneity, and hence the hermeneutic circle in all its self-referentiality is born. <sup>7</sup>

This hermeneutic self-referentiality entails that the interpreter's view of history is dependent on his self-perception as a subject in the contemporary historical environment he or she describes. The negotiation between the historical past and the understanding of the interpreter in his interpreting moment depends upon the assumption that the horizon of the past constitutes a part of the horizon of the present. The past, history as culture, has been internalized by the interpreting subject and reconstructed in dialectic of self-identification. This dialectic of self-identity is interpretative, as the interpreter needs to consider the historical locus of his own subjectivity in order to posit himself as interpreter. This process animates the past within the horizon of understanding in the present. The interpreting subject is not limited to an adherence to the past, however, as he makes the past contemporary through the process of reconstruction, which is in a necessary relationship to his construction of self as a historical subject. For inherent in this reconstruction of the past is a construction of the self as interpreter in the moment. We have already discussed how this works for Strindberg and Nietzsche in the fifth and sixth chapters of this book.

Vattimo claims that the radical historicity of the hermeneutic process results in the weakening of any claim to truth. This weakening has theological implications, which in turn, have an effect on the interpreter's understanding of the genesis of his own subjectivity. Vattimo asserts that the most illuminating example »for an argument of this kind is Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God«. <sup>8</sup> Vattimo does not read Nietzsche's »announcement« in a metaphysical sense. He argues

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>7</sup> This self-referentiality of Vattimo's conception of the hermeneutic circle is certainly not the only understanding present in our intellectual environment. I am using Vattimo as an example of just one trajectory of thought in order to illustrate an aspect of the Nietzschean legacy in our times.

<sup>8</sup> VATTIMO: 1997, 5.

»Nietzsche is not trying to say that God is dead because we have finally realized that ›objectively‹ he does not exist or that reality is such that he is excluded from it.«<sup>9</sup> Vattimo understands Nietzsche's statement as a postulation about the possibilities of interpretation in his philosophical/historical moment. These possibilities for ›truth‹ exclude any reliance on the foundation of a first philosophy and

draw us closer to the theme of nihilism. If hermeneutics, as the philosophical theory of the interpretative character of every experience of truth, is lucid about itself, as no more than an interpretation, will it not find itself caught up in the nihilistic logic of Nietzsche's hermeneutics. This ›logic‹ may be encapsulated in the statement that there can be no recognition of the essentially interpretative character of the experience of the true without the death of god and without the fabling of the world, or which amounts to the same thing, of being. In short, it seems impossible to prove the truth of hermeneutics other than presenting it as a response of the history of being interpreted as the occurrence of nihilism.<sup>10</sup>

The experience of truth exemplified by Nietzsche's announcement of the »death of God« goes hand in hand with the »fabling of being,« the creation of the self as narrative. Vattimo's claim can be seen in the light of Max Weber's postulation that modernity occurs in a world abandoned by the Gods, that is to say, a disenchanted world, and Nietzsche's notion of the fabling of being can be understood as an attempt to re-enchant this world through the construction of a self who is aware of the metaphorical status of its own narrative. Relative to my own claim that hermeneutics demands the construction of an interpreting subject who is aware of the historicity of his self-construction, this self-construction needs to factor in an absence of guarantee of a divine origin, and consequently be aware of the interpretative quality of his own notion of self-hood. The construction of a self who both interprets and is created by self-interpretation depends on a re-enchantment of the world where the self is substituted for the divine. This self-understanding entails a positioning of the subject in a secular notion of his own history. The self, in turn, is not a foundation, but a play of forces subject to interpretation in the moment.

Following this line of thought and adhering to a critical trajectory exemplified in the work of Karl Löwith and notably opposed by Hans Blumenberg, Vattimo asserts that modernity itself is a secularization of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

the eschatological impulse of Western religious thought.<sup>11</sup> It is in this way that Vattimo traces the pre-history of modern hermeneutics to its original function as biblical exegesis and justifies the break between hermeneutics as bible-study and modern hermeneutics as a general theory of interpretation.

In other words, modern hermeneutics is born in Europe not only because here is a religion of the book that focuses attention on the phenomenon of interpretation, but also because this religion has as its base the idea of the incarnation of God, which it conceives as *kenosis*, as abasement and, in our translation, as weakening.<sup>12</sup>

Vattimo goes on to assert that despite the initial religious impetus of hermeneutic inquiry, aesthetic and historical experiences have replaced biblical exegesis as the dominant concerns. Vattimo thereby connects modern hermeneutic philosophy with an aesthetic modernism in revolt against both the natural sciences and religious dogmatism. By employing secularization theory and tracing modern hermeneutics to its primal scene in section 108 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)* Vattimo locates the origins of what he claims to be the dominant way of thinking in our time in the late nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> For him, the hermeneutic aspects of a species of modern historical thinking must factor in self-consciousness about the reconstructive process of historical thought itself. This present-tense aspect of the historical enterprise was born in the rejection of both a divine history and positivistic historiography.

And so the question, »are Nietzsche and Strindberg our contemporaries?« has a bearing on my preliminary thesis: *An aspect of the legacy of the Nietzschean project can be found in Vattimo's assertion that hermeneutic inquiry dominates an arc of contemporary western thought.* I will take this one step further. Hermeneutic inquiry itself is a negotiation between the construction of different temporal horizons of understanding based on a historicized construction of a self that understands itself to be located within a stream of constant change and created in the absence of

11 See LÖWTH: 1949 and BLUMENBERG: 1983.

12 VATTIMO: 1997, 48.

13 See NIETZSCHE: 1988c, KSA 3. Section 108 can be found in the third book on pg. 467 of this edition. It reads: »Neue Kämpfe. – Nachdem Buddha todt war, zeigt man noch Jahrhunderte lang seinen Schatten in einer Höhle, – einen ungeheuren schauerlichen Schatten. Gott is todt; aber so wie die Art der Menschen ist, wird es vielleicht noch Jahrtausende lang Höhlen geben, in denen man seinen Schatten zeigt. – und wir – wir müssen auch seinen Schatten siegen!«

a divine foundation. This postulation leads to another question: If the philosophical environment of modernity is constrained by hermeneutics in its »nihilistic« moment, what is the status of the subject in the absence of a valid claim of a foundation? In other words, how does the subject create itself in the absence of a creator?

### Ecce Homo and the Substitution of Self for Christ

With this in mind, I will now turn to an analysis of our texts: Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and Strindberg's *Inferno*. This analysis provides us with the opportunity to develop further the concept of the *genealogy of self* and to illustrate how Vattimo's understanding of Nietzsche's »announcement of the ›death of God‹« posits a subject in a process of aesthetic self-generation whether or not said subject seeks religious salvation. These two tasks are intimately connected and together illustrate one theoretical conception of the predicament of self-assertion. An understanding of aesthetics as an intersubjective embodiment informs my utilization of these two seemingly contradictory texts to test the hypothesis that the commonality found in Strindberg's and Nietzsche's projects is the conflation of autobiography and history in a hermeneutic process of self-construction. The *genealogy of self* is a hermeneutic device for the reconstruction of the subject in that it factors in the contemporaneity, regards the past as a text to be interpreted, and has a truth claim that is weakened by the absence of »God, the father«. I employ the term as a sub-category of and in opposition to the notion of autobiography understood as an excavation of the past. A *genealogy of self* is a performative overcoming of origins in the moment. Unlike autobiography, it lacks a telos. There is little sense of »I was, so now I must be«. Instead, the *genealogy of self* self-consciously highlights the »fictionality« of the past through the employment of a metaphorical complex made up of agnostic elements. It emphasizes the struggle between contradictory forces: between heredity and self-creation, and between an internalized social order and individual experience. The *genealogy of self* is an attempt to re-enchant the world through a »fabling of being,« but the performer of this process is ironically aware of the fictional process of self-construction. It is an affect of the phenomenon that Vattimo connects to hermeneutics through his reading of Nietzsche's announcement of the »death of God,« and what I call the bourgeois uncanny.

On the surface, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* is an attack on Christianity, while Strindberg's *Inferno* is most often regarded as a document of religious conversion. This discrepancy in the reception of the two texts is a formidable test for any hypothesis that is concerned with establishing their commonality. *Ecce Homo* is a problematic text. Published posthumously, it is often read either as a sad and puzzling document that points to Nietzsche's imminent mental collapse or as a beautifully written but curiously flawed autobiography. If one were to read *Ecce Homo* as an autobiography, he or she would be left with Nietzsche's hyperbolic claims, little information about the philosopher's life, some self-critique, and a series of paradoxical statements. Read as autobiography, the title smacks of hubris, and the last line can be understood as a simple restatement of Nietzsche's opposition to Christianity. But if one reads the text as a *genealogy of self*, as a performative hermeneutic construction, this picture changes shape. In order to illustrate this claim, I will analyze three points of entry to this text: the title, the last line, and a riddle.

The title reads: *Ecce Homo. Wie man wird, was man ist.* (Ecce Homo. How one becomes, what one is.)<sup>14</sup> This two-part title provides us with a point of entry. The first part: »Ecce Homo« is a biblical citation. It appears in *John 19:5* and can be translated as *behold the man* or *here is the man*. The phrase comes from the story of the *Passion* and is uttered by Pilate. The context is as follows: Jesus has been beaten and given a crown of thorns to wear. He is »arrayed in a purple robe« and is presented to the people. Pilate shows Jesus to the crowd and proclaims that he finds »no crime in him,« but the priests cry out for his crucifixion. After a short discussion, in which Jesus is accused of the crime of misrepresenting himself as »the son of God« and condemned to death, he begins his walk to Golgotha.<sup>15</sup> In John, the phrase, *Ecce Homo*, signifies

<sup>14</sup> NIETZSCHE: 1988d, KSA 6, 255.

<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Bible: containing the Old and New Testaments*, Revised Standard Edition (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952), 854: »Pilate went out again, and said to them, ›Behold I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no crime in him.‹ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ›**Here is the man!**‹ [Ecce Homo]. When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, ›Crucify him, crucify him!‹ Pilate said to them, ›Take him yourselves for I see no crime in him‹ The Jews answered him, ›We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God.‹« (my emphasis)

Pilate's presentation of Christ for judgment, and the subsequent narrative irony.

The irony of this narrative moment can be explained by the status of the Bible as a central text and Nietzsche's utilization of the citation. The biblical narrative is written with an audience of believers in mind. Christians believe already that Jesus is the »son of God« and so his presentation to the crowd by Pilate is a moment of misrecognition: his crime is the claim to be the »son of God« and for that he is crucified. Yet, the crucifixion and the subsequent resurrection are the keys to this narrative of Christ's »divinity«. The irony of the story of the *Passion* becomes apparent: Jesus needs to be misrecognized in order to attain his preordained status. Nietzsche isolates this moment of Jesus' misrecognition and condemnation by the priests for reasons that are congruent to his project. There are four levels to note. On the first level the use of this citation as a title was a continuation of his critique of Christianity, of what he regards to have been the »victory of Judea over Rome« and the establishment of the values of *ressentiment*. On the second level, by entitling his own story with the phrase, »Ecce Homo,« Nietzsche was pointing to his own misrecognition and the potential attack on his own production by the »priests« of the *ascetic ideal*. On the third level, Nietzsche, who in the same book declared »ich bin, auf griechisch, und nicht nur auf griechisch, der Antichrist« (I am, in Greek, and not just Greek, the *Anti-Christ*),<sup>16</sup> was writing himself into the position of Jesus while simultaneously declaring himself to be his opposite. This is the key to the irony in *Ecce Homo*. The textual subject that exhorts its reader: »Hört mich! denn ich bin der und der. Verwechselt mich vor Allem nicht!« (Listen to me! I am the one who I am! Above all, do not mistake me for anyone else!)<sup>17</sup> shows himself to be »der und der,« a compound metaphor that is dependent upon misrecognition in order to establish »himself« as a stand-in for an extra-textual subjectivity. On the fourth level, he announces himself, and by doing so, writes himself temporarily into the position of Pilate by enunciating »Ecce Homo« thereby intimating that the performative act of saying »who you are« entails the announcement of an internalized collision where one is neither Pilate nor Jesus, as one oscillates between the position of announcing and being delivered to the public. For

16 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 302. Translation NORMAN: 2005, 102.

17 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 257. Translation: NORMAN: 2005, 71.

Nietzsche, one becomes a subject as he speaks, wandering into the collective poetics of the »I,« entering into a tragic discourse, where the moment of emergence is also fraught with danger.

The subtitle of the book reads: *Wie man wird, was man ist*. (How one becomes, what one is.)<sup>18</sup> Given Nietzsche's position that life is eternal becoming, and as echoed in his statement that Dionysian philosophy found its bearings in »das Jasagen zu Gegensatz und Krieg, das *Werden*, mit radikaler Ablehnung auch selbst des Begriffs ›sein‹« (saying yes to opposition and war, *becoming* along with a radical rejection of the very concept of ›being‹),<sup>19</sup> if we factor in his objection to the concept of being, it is not hard to imagine that the comma in this statement is significant. The punctuation in the sentence – »Wie man wird, was man ist« – juxtaposes the two concepts of becoming and being, thereby emphasizing the process and movement between the two terms.

A parallel is established by the title and the subtitle. The reference is clear: Christ becomes who he is by walking the road to Golgotha. What awaits him at the end of his journey is the crucifixion that establishes his identity. Nietzsche entitles his *genealogy of self* so as to write himself ironically into the position of Christ and into the position of the one who announces the demise of Christ and therefore his salvation. This is certainly both a biblical parody and the performance of a tragedy, as Nietzsche describes himself through the moment of his own *untergang* (down-going). The textual journey leads to the last line which reads: »Hat man mich verstanden? – Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten ...« (Have I been understood? – Dionysus versus the crucified ...)<sup>20</sup>

While this line certainly *can* be read as an expression of Nietzsche's approaching madness, as a megalomaniac proclamation of opposition to the moral order of the Christian world by a man who considered himself to be a destiny, my own reading is different. It factors in the irony inherent in *Ecce Homo* and sees the text as a performative process in which oppositions are ranked and ordered to produce a compound metaphor of self. I understand the last line to mean that Nietzsche has written himself into both positions, he is recurrent through tragic de-individuation and through crucifixion. »Nietzsche« is »ein Jünger des Philosophen Diony-

18 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, Title page for *Ecce Homo*, 256.

19 Ibid., 313. The English translation is from NORMAN: 2005, 110.

20 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 374. English translation: NORMAN: 2005, 151.



« (a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus)<sup>21</sup> and he is the Antichrist. He is both »ein decadent« (a decadent) and he is »auch dessen Gegensatz« (also its opposite).<sup>22</sup> The story of the self is a story of a process of becoming and the self is represented by the internalization of both positions. The re-enchantment of the self in a world where »God is dead« is performed by the writing of the self into the position of both the dead God and that which is to replace him. However, this claim of the dual origination of the metaphor »Nietzsche« demands further elaboration.

Das Glück meines Daseins, seine Einzigkeit vielleicht, liegt in seinem Verhängnis: ich bin, um es in Räthselform auszudrücken, als mein Vater bereits gestorben, als meine Mutter lebe ich noch und werde alt. Diese doppelte Herkunft, gleichsam aus der obersten und der untersten Sprosse an der Leiter des Lebens, *décadent* zugleich und *Anfang* ...

(The happiness of my existence, perhaps its uniqueness, lies in its fatefulness; to give it in the form of a riddle: as my father I am already dead and as my mother I am still alive and growing old. This double birth, from the highest and lowest rungs on the ladder of life, as it were, simultaneously decadent and *beginning* ...) <sup>23</sup>

The chapter, »Warum ich so weise bin« (Why I am so wise), continues to describe this doubleness as a condition of being both a decadent and its opposite. »Nietzsche« claims that this dual origin is a source of his unique perspective, and it acts as his »Stimulans zu Leben« (Stimulation to Life).<sup>24</sup> In his ensuing description of the *healthy* individual, which for Nietzsche was the opposite of a decadent, he states, »er ist ein auswählendes Princip, er lässt viel durchfallen« (he is a selective principle, it lets much fall by the wayside).<sup>25</sup> This principle of selection implies that the *healthy* individual is a locus of interpretation where competing principles, internalized elements of his own inheritance, are transformed by the experience of interpretation. This transformation is the process of self-creation. For if one is both a decadent and a healthy individual, both alive and dead, and subject to the absence of a stable foundation for the

21 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 258. The English is from NORMAN: 2005, 71.

22 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 266. Also see my earlier discussion of this passage in Chapter 5.

23 Ibid., 264. Translation NORMAN: 2005, 74–75. A comment on the translation – Nietzsche uses the word »Herkunft,« which Norman translates as birth. I would like to emphasize the word in the sense that it also designates an origin, in the many senses of the word.

24 NIETZSCHE: 1988d, 267.

25 Ibid. See also my discussion of this selection process in Chapter 5.

understanding of self-hood, how does one overcome the unhealthy elements that have been internalized? »Nietzsche« answers: »Wohlan, ich bin das *Gegenstück* eines *décadent*: denn ich beschrieb eben *mich*.« (Well then, I am the *opposite* of a *decadent*: because I have just described *myself*.)<sup>26</sup>

In *Ecce Homo*, the self is constructed through agon and a self-affirmative narrative, through a hermeneutic economy of self-referentiality and internalized historical conditions. The »death of God« acts as a springboard for the construction of an identity whose creation is initiated by a substitution of the self for the absent God. The nihilistic self overcomes the vacuum of self-creation *ex-nihilo* by interpreting the text of the past in a way that makes it contemporary. This is a gesture of the *eternal return* in which »I was« is interpreted as »I will it to be such«. And so the old gods are brought back to life as a conglomeration. Dionysus and Christ merge to form a compound metaphor for the hermeneutically constructed self, aware of his own metaphorical status. This metaphorical status derives from a textual journey, a narrative.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche created a self in response to his conception of Western history as the advent of nihilism. This self-construction is a hermeneutic process in that it is contingent upon the internalization of its historical moment, its »truth« is expressed metaphorically as a merger of opposing forces organized internally within the horizon of the present, and the past is treated, not as fact, but as text subject to an interpretative process. The inter-textuality of Nietzsche's self-construction was so radical, that he commented upon his entire body of work. *Ecce Homo* is not an autobiography, it is a *genealogy of self*, a performance of a hermeneutic self-interpretation of a textualized past regulated by differentiated repetition. It seems to be that Nietzsche's conception of the »death of God« is a tragic conception, one born of collision. It is also clear from that collision that the »death of God« is not a statement of finality, but an existential gesture, a pausing before decision. For Nietzsche does not eradicate the presence of Christ (his culture's God), but shows the subject to be an amalgam that includes his internalized narrative. As I stated in my introduction, Nietzsche interpreted himself as being born posthumously as his dead father.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 267. English translation from NORMAN: 2005, 77.

My preliminary thesis stated that the answer to the question of whether Strindberg and Nietzsche were our contemporaries lies in how the subject creates itself in a *disenchanted* world. Following Vattimo's line of thinking about the meaning and the impact of Nietzsche's »announcement of the death of God« and extending it to the realm of identity formation, I claimed that if the experience of truth is to be satisfied with an interpretation, then the self, lacking a foundation displaces the notion of a divine narrative with the genealogy of its own construction. This genealogy is a gesture, as it states two originary positions in opposition and pauses before the decision of being one or the other.

### Inferno and the Split between Love and Knowledge

Strindberg wrote *Inferno* in Lund between May 3 and June 25 of 1897. Originally written in French, the manuscript was translated into Swedish by Eugène Fahlstedt and first appeared in November of the same year. It was also published in France by the publishing house, Mercure de France, in 1898. *Inferno* tells the story of Strindberg's last residence in Paris, his separation from his second wife, Frida Uhl, and his journey back to Sweden through Austria. In the 1909 preface to *Tjänstekvinnans son IV*, Strindberg dated the book in 1898, and grouped it with *Legender* and the play *Advent* both dated 1899. He remarked:

Stora krisen vid 50 år; revolutioner i själslivet, ökenvandringar, ödeläggelsen, Swedenborgs Helveten och Himlar. Icke influerad av Huysmans' *En Route*, ännu mindre av Pèladan, som då var Förf.okänd, liksom « *En Route* », utan byggd på personliga upplevelser.

(The great crisis as I turn 50; revolutions in my spiritual life, wanderings in the desert, devastation, Swedenborg's hell and heaven. Not influenced by Huysman's *En Route*, even less so by Pèladan, who was then not known by the author, similar to *En Route*, except built on personal experiences.)<sup>27</sup>

In *Levande död: Studier i Strindbergs prosa*, Ulf Olsson devotes a chapter to *Inferno*, which he dubs »Det redan skrivnas text« (The Already Written Text).<sup>28</sup> Olsson claims that *Inferno* operates on both an allegorical and realist level of narration. This results in a tension between the already written texts of religious conversion and the historically bound

27 STRINDBERG: 1996a, 266. Translation mine.

28 OLSSON: 1996. The chapter on *Inferno*, »The Already Written Text,« can be found on pp. 305-394.

bourgeois notion of subjectivity. For Olsson, this results in the depiction of a struggle between meaning and the vacuum, and in Strindberg's assumption of the positions of both Christ and Antichrist. Though Olsson posits that the ideology of *Inferno* is informed by Nietzsche's *Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (Eternal Return of the Same), he does not elaborate fully on this claim. However, the notion of a substitution of the self for both Christ and Antichrist provides us with a point of entry from which to explore the commonality between *Inferno* and *Ecce Homo*. Olsson's notion of »The Already Written Text« allows us to interrogate the hermeneutic aspects of the former. The struggle between the bourgeois and religious notions of selfhood leads to analysis between the split between love and knowledge that culminates in a *mise-en-abyme* in which these two forces merge. I will address each of these points in turn.

Despite its religious overtones, *Inferno*, like *Ecce Homo*, is a response to the »death of God«. Like »Nietzsche,« the narrating »Strindberg« constructs a subjectivity in response to his understanding of this cultural/historical phenomenon. Despite the presence of »the powers,«<sup>29</sup> the construction of self in the text is a process of negotiation between the antagonism of already existing positions, and the overcoming of this antagonism through a creation of the self as a compound metaphor.<sup>30</sup> These already existing positions are recreated through interpretation. The »powers« act upon the narrator in an economy of internal and external signification; there is never any indication of a self that is solely created by external forces. The self is a site of interpretation. Self-knowledge, the »fabling of being,« is derived through an interpretation of signs in an occult manner. The »powers« do not provide a foundation for the construction of the self; in a sense they act as a personification of Nietzsche's *organizing idea*, providing a type of grammar for the random interpretation of signs in the absence of any correspondence between an absolute truth and experience. Like »Nietzsche,« the narrator of *Inferno*, despite his religious *pilgrimage*, does not enact an imitation of Christ, but rather performs the substitution of self for Christ in an attempt to re-enchant a

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29 Strindberg used the term »d'ordre des puissances« in French which was translated by Fahlstedt as »makterna« in Swedish. These terms were used to describe invisible forces that watched and reacted to »Strindberg's« daily life.

30 This process has already been discussed in chapter 6. Strindberg employed this technique as early as 1885 in the writing of *Tjänstekvinnans son*. The salient example is Johan's dual inheritance.

disenchanted world. The narrator's substitution of self for Christ factors in the position of the Antichrist. Like »Nietzsche's« conception of the decadent and its antithesis, this is a compound metaphor for a fluid subjectivity.

Jag stannar hänryckt inför den symboliska synen men då jag vänder blicken därifrån varseblir jag till höger om mig en skylt till ett färgeri vid rue de Fleurus. Sannerligen! visionens verklighet är oförneklig. Målade på butiksfönstret finner jag initialer till mitt namn: A.S. svävande på ett silvervitt moln och därovan en regnbåge. *Omen accipio* och jag påminner mig ett ställe i Genesis: »Jag skall sätta min båge i skyn och den skall vara tecknet till förbundet mellan mig och jorden.«

(I stand enraptured before that symbolic sight, but when I turn my gaze from it I perceive to my right a paint store's sign on rue de Fleurus. Truly! the vision's reality is undeniable. I find my initials, A.S., painted on the store's window, hovering on a silver-white cloud and above that is a rainbow. *Omen accipio* and I remind myself of a passage in Genesis: »I shall place my rainbow in a cloud and that shall be a sign of the pact between myself and the earth.«)<sup>31</sup>

There is a distinct hermeneutic economy in the text. The world, as text, is interpreted, and internal states are reflected by and projected upon the world. Everything speaks to and of the narrating self.

In *Inferno*, the contingency of this process is emphasized. The narrator opens books at random, his chance encounters in the world display internal conditions, and his own past is re-interpreted in order to generate a narrative of self-selection. The radicality of this interpretative process, which treats all experience as a text, exemplifies the relationship between the accidental self and necessity.<sup>32</sup> This explains the two levels of reading in *Inferno*. The process of interpretation conflates the internal and external worlds, and is shown to be an arbitrary process, yet at the same time, this conflation is intrinsic to the creation of the narrator's subjectivity. A good example of how this works comes on page 61 when the narrating »Strindberg« receives his publisher's corrections of his

<sup>31</sup> STRINDBERG: 1994, 35. English translation from SANDBACH: 1988, 116.

<sup>32</sup> The exploration of the seemingly contradictory notions of chance and necessity is another point of commonality in Nietzsche and Strindberg's work. With regard to the Nietzschean corpus, one only has to think of his valorization of the random lawlessness of the world and his notion of *Amor fati*. In Strindberg's authorship, the best example is here in *Inferno*: the relationship between the necessity exemplified by the »powers« and the radical contingency of the interpretation of occulted signs performed by the narrator.

scientific exploration, *Sylva Sylvarium*.<sup>33</sup> The pages are found to be disordered and the disorder is interpreted. The attempt to order the world through a scientific explanation is negated by chance, upon return; the disorder is re-interpreted as a sign that is a part of a process of the construction of a new self through narrative. There is no sense of causality to this process, there is only a constant process of the order, disorder, and re-ordering of chance events.

There are many examples in *Inferno* that illustrate how Strindberg employs the external world as a series of signs interpreted according to internal imperatives. Street signs, burning coal, initials on a store window, the configuration of twigs on the ground, all reveal the narrator to himself. The relationship between the radical arbitrariness of interpretation and the necessity represented by the »powers« emphasizes the struggles that accompany the hermeneutic experience of truth as the »fabling of being« confronts the nihilistic moment of modernity. It is here in *Inferno* that the self-referentiality of the hermeneutic interpreter seemingly attains its most extreme level of irrationality. If we remember, however, that hermeneutics posits a radically historical experience of truth; this seeming irrationality becomes a startlingly clear example of how the *genealogy of self* is a location that highlights the conflation of the irrational and rational impulses, which are used in the creation of the self. »Strindberg« reads the contingency of signs against the backdrop of the necessity of the »powers«. The inexplicable randomness of the world is internalized and organized according to the historically conditioned imperative of self-creation. »Autobiographical« narrative and historical conditions conflate and separate in an ironic ebb and flow where the historical is set against the foreground of an occulted existence. This process is hermeneutic, that is to say, interpretative, and the narrator is aware of his own historicity. In other words, what is highlighted in *Inferno* is the conflation of autobiography and history. I will now turn to a *mise-en-abyme* to illustrate this claim.

Utan bestämd avsikt kommer jag till Gare Montparnasse och tar tåget till Meudon. Jag stiger av vid själva byn som jag besöker för första gången. Går uppför stora gatan, viker av åt höger i en gränd som är omgiven av två murar. Tjugo steg framför mig höjer sig över marken en romersk krigare i järngrå rustning till hälften nedgrävd i jorden. Ehuru figuren är mycket tydligt ut-

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33 STRINDBERG: 1994, 61. *Sylva Sylvarium* is a »scientific« exploration written by STRINDBERG in 1895.

formad, men i miniatyr, undgår det mig inte att den är av obearbetad sten. Då jag kommit ända fram visar sig föremålet vara en synvilla, men jag hejdar mig och fasthåller med flit illusionen som roar mig.

(Without specific intention, I arrive at Gare Montparnasse and take the train to Meudon. I get off at the village itself, which I am visiting for the first time. Go up the main street, turn to the right into a lane that is surrounded by two walls. Twenty steps in front of me, a roman warrior raises himself above the ground. He is in iron gray armor, half-way buried in the earth. Although the figure is in miniature, it is very clearly formed and it doesn't escape me that it is of unworked stone. When I have finally come forward to it, the object shows itself to be an optical illusion, but I stop myself and maintain industriously the illusion that amuses me.)<sup>34</sup>

»Strindberg« travels randomly to Meudon. He sees a stone in the road and imagines it to be a roman warrior. He is not concerned with its reality, but persists in his illusion. Treatment of this episode demands a return to the theme of the opposition of love and knowledge, with which the book had opened. On the level of realist narration, the text opens with the narrator sending away his wife and rejoicing about his decision. By the end of the page, there is a dark sense of foreboding. »Ställd i valet mellan kärlek och vetandet hade jag bestämt mig för att söka nå kunskapens höjder, och i det jag försakade mina känslor glömde jag den oskyldiga som offrats på altaret för min ärelystnad, eller min kallelse.« (Forced to choose between love and knowledge, I had decided to seek the heights of the intellectual achievement, and in renouncing my feelings I forgot the innocent who would be sacrificed for my ambition, or my calling.)<sup>35</sup> The theme of the opposition continues to appear throughout the narrative, manifesting in the narrator's interpretation of external events and his attribution of the seeming randomness of the universe of signs to the incomprehensible plans of the »powers«.

By the time he journeys to Meudon, »Strindberg« is convinced that his choice of knowledge over love is absolute, excluding the possibility of love itself. Then he sees the »illusion« of the knight. He persists in his vision and describes it in detail. The gaze of the knight peers at an inscription on one of the surrounding walls. The narrator's eyes follow and he sees that the letters F and S are written in charcoal. He interprets these letters as the inscription of his own initials and those of his wife. He ex-

34 STRINDBERG: 1994, 69. Translation mine.

35 Ibid., 9. Translation mine.

claims, »Hon älskar mig fortfarande!« (She still loves me!)<sup>36</sup> In the next moment, this illusion transforms and the letters read FE and S, the signs for iron and sulfur, the alchemical ingredients for the manufacture of gold. He then finds two lead stamps on the ground, one that is inscribed with the royal crown. Love, knowledge, and sovereignty merge in an illusion, to which the gaze of a historical figure directed the narrator. The agonistic elements of a self in turmoil are united in his interpretation of signs in the context of his imaginings that re-construct the idea of a historical figure. Symbolically, history conflates with the construction of the compound metaphor of self, the representation of which is the result of the internalization of a personal and a cultural history. The opposition between love and knowledge is overcome in a metaphorical union comprised of both elements. In this scene, the economy of self-representation in *Inferno* reveals itself to be a *genealogy of self* as the »fabling of being« connects to history. This self-construction, aware of its status as an illusory representation conflates the interpreting self and that which is interpreted through a negotiation between the necessity of self-creation and the contingency of experience. In *Inferno* as well as in *Ecce Homo*, the »truth« of the self is hermeneutic.

### The Significance of Recurrence

Now I will return momentarily to the question proposed by the title of this conclusion: Are Nietzsche and Strindberg our contemporaries? According to Vattimo, the philosophical possibilities for the late twentieth-century were limited by a hermeneutic imperative where truth is experienced as interpretation. The primal scene of this truth is Nietzsche's »announcement of the death of God«. The question is whether this late twentieth century formulation speaks to those of us now living just beyond its cusp.

In their *genealogies of self*, Nietzsche and Strindberg initiated a construction of subjectivity by substituting the self for the divine. The lack of a divine guarantee is internalized and transformed into a principle of psychological necessity. This necessity is then negotiated through the contingency of narrative as this absence is made manifest through language. The origination of the self is posited to be inaccessible; it is merely

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Translation mine.



contingently negotiated through an agonistic process that obeys the structural imperative of giving a name to the unnamable. In many ways this process, the substitution of the symbolic for the real anticipates psychoanalysis. For many the trajectory of thought that runs through the work of Nietzsche and Strindberg moves forward in an arc through the Freudian notion of the attainment of mental health through narrative and the inaccessibility of the *real*. This process is dependent upon the hidden connections between associations and is, in essence, a hermeneutic process. For both Strindberg and Nietzsche, the hermeneutic of self-formation was dependent upon an internalization and transformation of external imperatives. The location held by the dead God, the dead Father has been read by many modernists as the primary psychological signifier, as the phallus that produces the very language that names it. As Jacques Lacan wrote, »the true formula of atheism is not God is dead [...] the true formula of atheism is God is unconscious«.<sup>37</sup>

However, I would like to propose an alternative. Is the death of God truly a linguistic formula; is it a product of our dreams? For Lacan, there is a moment where »[d]esire manifests itself in the dream by loss expressed in an image at the most cruel point of the object«.<sup>38</sup> For psychoanalysis this moment of loss is the moment where language is born as a function of the differentiated repetition of symptom. Is it not so, however, that we, with the word God, reduce wonder to discourse and repetition to symptom? Is this not one of the reasons that the ironic Nietzsche chose *Ecce Homo* as the title of his self-genealogy? For »*Ecce Homo*« is a citation from John, which begins: »In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.« For if we believe as Lacan, the unconscious is structured like language and the truth of atheism resides therein, then perhaps the paramount importance of the structuring authority of the Father in psychoanalysis can be explained by this as well. This certainly raises the question of whether this perspective is part of modernity's misreading of itself as a secular age and the misreading of Nietzsche's confrontation of Christ with Dionysus as atheism instead of a moment of collision. For modernity is/was, I will avoid this tired debate, not simply a secular age, but an age of tragic collisions and the internalization of this agon.

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<sup>37</sup> LACAN: 1981, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

One could argue further that the equivalence of word and God, and God as incarnation revealed through word commits the sin of an ontological fallacy, the collapse of being into text. It repeats the mistake of collapsing the doer into the deed, of ignoring the retrospective anticipation of *Hinzudichtung*, of poeticization. It is as if Nietzsche chooses John because he wishes to critique the reduction of religion to magic, to a form of representation based on an absence that it effaces through illusion. It is a critique of modes of representation that claim a fidelity to loss; it is a critique of nihilism.

In an environment where the most provocative of thinkers wrote about the draining of meaning from institutional forms, the possibility of transcendence was annulled in favor of a repetitive process where competing versions of events are negotiated. Perhaps the message inherent in the Nietzschean genealogies speaks to the need of seeing the other without *ressentiment* acting as the regulation force of repetition. It is important to remember that when Nietzsche claims to be the philosopher of Dionysus, he is asserting the primacy of that which cannot appear without the aegis of that which gives form. It is my claim that Nietzsche's original form-giving principle, the Apollonian, which he paired with the Dionysian in *Die Geburt der Tragödie (The Birth of Tragedy)*, has now been replaced by the cultural historical aspect that he felt gave form to a nihilistic western notion of subjectivity, Christ. Nietzsche's critique of modernity defined religion as its limit, as the conditions of possibility for the recurrence whose linguistic affect creates the poetics of subjectivity. Strindberg's notion of recurrence is born within this context also, a context colored by the collision between two forms of return, one born of circularity and the other born of anticipation. This is congruent with Nietzsche's notion of a collision of the two Gods who return, Dionysus and Christ. This formulation, which Strindberg shares in other words, shows us one mode of description of the limits of nihilistic modernity. He also shows us something that Nietzsche excludes: that in the realm of the quotidian, a sense of nihilistic modernity delimits the possibility for the recognition of repetition; and therefore repetition appears in the form of a denial, while its architecture is ironically displayed. This manifests as the fetish for the new.

Let us look at an example. Strindberg's *Till Damaskus* I (1898) re-tells a story told in *Inferno*, the narrator's trip to Donau, where he visits his daughter and stays with his in-laws. The scene in *Inferno* begins with the

narrator's departure from Berlin. He had just returned and wants to kill off his past, to have his Berlin memories remain »begravet för att lämna rum för nytt« (buried in order to leave room for the new).<sup>39</sup> He then exclaims:

Jag lämnar detta Berlin som blivit mitt andra fädernesland, där jag genomlevat min *secunda primavera* och min sista. På Anhalt-bangården lämnar jag jämte minnena varje hopp om att på nytt få uppleva en vår och en kärlek, som aldrig, aldrig skall återkomma!

(This Berlin that I was leaving had been my second fatherland. In it I had lived through my *secunda primavera*, which was also to be my last. At the Anhalter Bahnhof I left behind me not only my memories but all hope of renewing a springtime and a love that were never, never to return again.)<sup>40</sup>

Eugène Fahlstedt's Swedish translation from Strindberg's original in French does not quite capture the denial of repetition in its utterance as the original citation ends with »jamais, jamais,« emphasizing that the narrator's dashed hopes for re-experiencing happiness is enunciated as a passionate stammering.

The work of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard is of some importance here and in particular his story of another journey to Berlin that ended in a denial of repetition. While Strindberg addresses his countryman, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg, more directly in this time period, my interest is in depicting the conditions of possibility for recurrence in relation to modernity, and suffice it to say for now, while Swedenborg enjoyed a particular sense of certainty, was convinced that his visions allowed for a direct observation of the spirit world, Strindberg was not so sure. I believe that this can be understood when we consider that Swedenborg did not understand himself to be living under the sign of nihilism while Strindberg did. Kierkegaard, who also believed himself to be living in nihilistic times, shows us how this works.

Kierkegaard was extremely interested in repetition as an existential possibility. His enigmatic text, *Gjentagelsen (Repetition)* (1843), written under the pseudonym Constantin Constantius, leaves us with a rather ironic conclusion. While Constantin denies that repetition is possible, his own story involves a return to Berlin, which despite all the outward signs to the contrary fails to produce the kind of repetition that he seeks, a

39 STRINDBERG: 1994, 189. Translation mine.

40 Ibid. Translation from SANDBACH: 1988, 203.

repetition that provokes transcendence. He understands this failure as the failure of staging as he arranged scenes and objects but found them to be lifeless, which he interpreted as proving that there was no repetition. Of course, when we realize that Constantin's premise is dependent on an arbitrary distinction between the predominance of recollection in ancient philosophy, and his hope for the ascendance of repetition as a category for the modern, we can understand, remembering Mircea Eliade's work on recurrence, that his blindness originates from an inadequate understanding of modernity. That is modernity as a discursive moment that distinguishes between moments of development and its other. In his *The Myth of the Eternal Return*<sup>41</sup> Eliade claims that we must consider that there is a distinct difference between the way a traditional society and a modern society address the reality of an object. A pre-modern society, he argues, acts on the principle that there is a transcendent reality and that »the object appears as the receptacle of an exterior force that differentiates it from its milieu and gives it meaning and value«. <sup>42</sup> He goes on to claim that the meaning of human acts in such a society »is not connected with their crude physical datum but with their property of reproducing a primordial act, of repeating a mythical example« and that because of this dynamic, »life is a ceaseless repetition of gestures initiated by others«. However, it is important to remember that Eliade makes his argument based on the notion that repetition derives from a belief in what he calls a »celestial archetype,« the repetition of a primordial act that resulted in the creation of the world. In modernity, in the nineteenth century, repetition was intimately connected to the creation of a subjective interiority. This leads to the question: What is the significance of repetition in a world in which notions of creation and transcendence have become internalized and the external force that bestows meaning upon objects and actions is perceived to have exited the stage. Considering that Strindberg, post-Inferno, imbues the objects of his world with a strong hermeneutic resonance and that he thematizes the notion of regulating spirits, or unseen powers by reading random objects in his environment and animating them with auto-biographical significance, how are we to explain Strindberg's notion of recurrence?

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41 ELIADE: 2005.

42 Ibid., 4.

It is clear that Strindberg is very aware of living under the sign of modernity and that he does not simply attribute transcendental qualities to the objects that he interprets, and he is never quite certain about the transcendental status of his experience of recurrence. Kierkegaard's Constantine, as a self-conscious modern, also lived in an environment where an exterior force did not animate the objects in his life, and the experience he had of repetition was not regulated by a re-creation of the world. His expectation of transcendence was thwarted by his modernity, his concept of repetition delimited by the banality of everyday life. This is further indicated by the story of his correspondent, the young man who does experience repetition as a paradox, as a loss that returns his self to him. Of course when we realize that Constantin created the young man, designates him as a »primitive,« and uses him as an example, we realize that the text is ironically showing us that the conditions of possibility for repetition as a modern category disallow for a certainty about the content of recurrence, while assuring us that the desire for repetition is what allows us to commute between the of realm existential actuality and the stage architecture that promises an ideal. Repetition is a state of anticipation in the face of uncertainty. Repetition is also more significantly denied on the level of the bourgeois intellectual who is blind to the desire to repeat as the exoteric aspect of repetition and even blinder to the occulted significance of the denial of repetition as its confirmation. For Kierkegaard, and for Strindberg, this occurs because of their understanding of modernity as an occurrence of nihilism.

Kierkegaard's *Literary Review* of 1846 describes the present age and the emptying of meaning from the social structure and the predominance of reflection.<sup>43</sup> For Kierkegaard, modernity is the moment of the empty gesture, of leveling, reflection, and an inward turn. This inward turn is for Kierkegaard where the possibility of religious experience resides. But it is important to remember that for Kierkegaard, the religious subject appears as the bourgeois subject, his movement towards a repetitive transcendence is opaque, indistinguishable.<sup>44</sup> Though for Kierkegaard, the subject is the site of collision between the chatter of secularity and its double the passion of religious discourse. This thought is further reinforced by a

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43 See KIERKEGAARD: 2001.

44 See Kierkegaard: 2006.

notebook entry from 1854, where Kierkegaard writes about primitivity and inwardness.

Primitivity is part of every human being's constitution, since primitivity is the possibility of spirit – God, who has made it so, knows the best. All earthly, temporal, worldly wisdom relates to killing one's primitivity. Christianity relates to following one's primitivity.

Kill your primitivity, and in all probability you will get along very nicely in the world, perhaps even be a success – but the eternal does not honour you. Follow primitivity and you will be shipwrecked in the temporal, but the eternal accepts you.<sup>45</sup>

In Kierkegaard's text, Eliade's notion of archaic discourse remains as an internal possibility; the discourse of modernity internalizes the discourse of its other. Recurrence becomes a site where the discourse of reflection (modernity) collides with the discourse of transcendence (circular recreation of a religious possibility). This leads to two competing notions that collide within the individual. This how the setting of the scene sublates; in an attempt to re-animate the nihilistic environment of modernity, the desire for repetition is posited and then denied, the dialectic retaining the desire for repetition which re-emerges discursively in the form of its denial.

And so it is for Strindberg on the level of staging, where the denial of repetition occurs despite the architecture of recurrence. This denial then re-animates the stage, filling it with powers unseen and all knowing, who bring up his past to him as a *deus ex machina* assuring repetition. On the level of motif, it is as if Marx's remark that history occurs twice, the first time as tragedy and the second as farce, is internalized and re-staged in a private arena of tragedy and parody. In a way, this explains the re-writing of the narrator's trip to Donau as *Till Damaskus* 1. In *Inferno*, he describes this trip as a pilgrimage; in its re-writing in the drama, it takes on the form of a parody where the discourse of the other is inhabited, in this case Saul as he becomes Paul. Here in the play, the discourse of denial is replaced by the Nietzschean thematization of recurrence as the structure of a Dionysian theater, where the beginning of the tragedy doubles as the beginning of the parody and the protagonist pauses before decision, retaining the indeterminacy of eternal recurrence and infinite becoming.

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45 KIERKEGAARD: 1996, 603.

The play has an architecture consisting of 17 scenes. The first eight are divided from the last eight by a scene called the asylum. The staging of the last eight scenes repeats the first eight in descending order. There are a few alterations to indicate that the repetition is differentiated and the characters react differently in each moment of repetition. The middle scene is called »The Asylum« and it is here that the motif of madness and religiosity merge.<sup>46</sup> The play begins and ends on the street corner with the main character, The Stranger, paused before a decision. The nature of his decision mirrors the play's architecture as he is trying to decide whether or not to attend a church, thus denying his own professed atheism. His subjectivity is suspended by his indecision. This lack of resolve reflects Strindberg's ambivalence about the title of the play as well. He was unsure whether to name it after an incarnation of the devil or not, but instead chose to name it after the conversion of Saul to Paul. This subversion of ontology is a modernist gesture, one in which tragedy is accentuated by the colliding discourses of *Robert le diable* and *Saint Paul*, the anti-Christian and the Christian exist side by side, and our protagonist who contains them both remains paused before decision at the play's close. The motif of the pilgrimage commutes from *Inferno* to *Till Damaskus*, where it is a discourse that conflates the religious figure of the chosen one with the secular discourse of the madman – both discourses of the individual set apart, the individual as the monstrosity, that which is to be warned against. This is the Nietzschean motif par excellence. Recurrence occurs as a movement towards parody, to a thematization of the collision of religious and secular discourse through the colonization of sacred narrative by the drama of bourgeois subjectivity. For certainly in *Till Damaskus* 1, the conversion drama of Paul is projected upon a family drama about the *Stranger*, the *Lady*, and the *Mother* (the Stranger's mother-in-law).

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46 STRINDBERG: 1991, 13. The Scene arrangement reads: »Akt 1: I Gathörnet/Hos Läkaren. Akt 2: Hotellrummet/Vid Havet/På Landsvägen/Vid Hålvägen/I Köket. Akt 3: I Rosenkammaren/Asylen/Rosenkammaren/Köket. Akt 4: I Hålvägen/Landsvägen/Vid Havet/Hotellrummet. Akt 5: Hos Läkaren/Gathörnet.« The English translation comes from STRINDBERG: 1986, 389: Act 1: On the Street Corner/At the Doctor's House. Act 2: In the Hotel Room/By the Sea/On the Road/In the Ravine/In the Kitchen. Act 3: In the Rose Room/In the Asylum/The Rose Room/The Kitchen. Act 4: In the Ravine/On the Road/By the Sea/In the Hotel Room. Act 5: At the Doctor's Home/The Street Corner.

On the level of character, Strindberg's use of doubling is often explained by taking recourse to the *Erinran (The Recollection)* that prefaces *Ett drömspel (A Dream Play)*. Usually the dream is read in Freudian fashion, with Strindberg's assertion that this fluidity of character is regulated by a consciousness that »står över alla, det är drömmarens« (stands over and above them all, the mind of the dreamer).<sup>47</sup> However it is important to remember that Strindberg never posited a unity of consciousness and that the term *medvetande*, in Swedish, implies that the reflexive knowledge of what we call consciousness is a knowing with an other. Our comparison with *Inferno* further illuminates this aspect when we recall that the narrator writes:

Min svärmor och min tant som äro tvillingar och fullkomligt lika varandra, Med samma karaktär, smak, och antipatier, betrakta varandra som dubbelgångare. När jag talar till den ena i den andras frånvaro, är den frånvarande genast inne i vad jag sagt så att jag kan fortsätta mina förtroenden med vem som helst av dem utan vidare. Därför gör jag ingen skillnad mellan dem i denna berättelse som icke är någon roman med anspråk på stil och litterär komposition

(My mother-in law and my aunt who are identical twins, exactly alike in character, with the same likes and dislikes, so that each appears to be the other's double. If I talked to one of them when the other was not present, the absent one always knew what I had said, so that I was able to confide in either without having to repeat myself. I don't therefore distinguish between them in this account, which is not a novel with pretensions to style and literary form.<sup>48</sup>

Here Strindberg, in a text that he claims embraces reality, denies character distinction by relegating it to the realm of fiction. In the staging of this event, the character of the mother remains and the character of the aunt drops out in favor of the young lady, the wife spoken about but absent in *Inferno*. It is curious that *Inferno* with its claim to actuality plays out a notion of character that is occulted, with the condensation of person to attribute. While the play *Till Damaskus I*, which allegorizes the trip to Donau, plays out this scene on the level of a domestic drama. This inversion is a form of the denial of repetition as it concerns ethical relations. Denial again points to an occulted repetition. Perhaps this helps to explain the repetition of the motif of the death of the primal father as the origin for the super-ego, as the regulator of ethical relations in the Freudian version of psychoanalysis.

47 STRINDBERG: 1988, 7. Translation: SPRINCHORN: 1986, 646.

48 STRINDBERG: 1994, 203. The English translation is from SANDBACH: 1988, 210.



With this in mind, I will conclude by invoking the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Two lines from Paul Celan form an epigraph that sits above the opening of Emmanuel Levinas's essay on Substitution.<sup>49</sup> The lines read: »Ich bin du, wenn/ich ich bin.« (I am you when I am I.) In a section of this essay, Levinas addresses a tradition of ontological depictions, stressing that our bourgeois understanding of subjectivity is blind to the subject as affect of recurrence. For Levinas, recurrence creates a consciousness of identity that »bears its name as a borrowed name, a pseudonym, a pronoun«.<sup>50</sup> He claims that recurrence creates »an expulsion of the self outside the self as its substitution for the other«. In other words, Levinas restates the problem of recurrence as the opportunity afforded by substitution, as the moment where the self sees itself repeated and cannot »stop at oneself, but goes to the hither side of oneself«. He continues »Recurrence becomes identity in breaking up the limits of identity, breaking up the principle of being in me ...« In other words, recurrence becomes an identifiable repetition at an ontological cost; this is the moment of the famous Levinasian dictum that ethics precedes ontology as first philosophy. Levinas understands recurrence to open up the possibility of a notion of the self that subverts an ontology based on an essence, (on an I that is purely an I), of a self that resides as the regent of a unified consciousness. Of equal importance, Levinas concludes his essay about recurrence and substitution by making a theological claim, for him, the discourse of the secular subject opens up the possibility of perceiving the moment of infinity, what Kierkegaard called the fullness of time, a moment where the ironic condition of the self is founded by a relationship upon which it founders, a moment of collision between modern bourgeois subjectivity and the possibility of knowing a deity as absolute other.

Following Levinas, I would like to suggest that perhaps the ideology of recurrence in Strindberg's late production is as much about the destruction of the self and its re-establishment as it is about the conflation of the literary and the lived. Perhaps Strindberg's repetition is truly in opposition to both idealistic notions of subjectivity and in contradistinction to any therapeutic goals retroactively projected upon it. Perhaps, Strindberg's repetitions are less about an anticipation of psychoanalysis, and more about the discourse of recurrence before it was delimited to an

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49 LEVINAS: 1990, 88–125.

50 Ibid., 96

affect of a symptom, designated by Freud as the desire to return to the inorganic. Repetition cannot be reduced to representation's fair tribute to death, or to absence.

From my perspective, the issue at hand is how Nietzsche and Strindberg inform us about the repressed element of religious discourse, which has re-emerged in our recent history. Perhaps what Strindberg shows us is how we have entered a different age, where the repressed element is the discourse of secular humanism. For certainly we live in an age where politicians mistake their speech for the word of God, and God for the word. With this in mind, perhaps, each in the same way and each in their own, Nietzsche and Strindberg are our contemporaries, serving us as a warning against a notion of representation that mistakes the symbolic for the literal. Perhaps our contemporaries on the religious right mistake imperialism for progress, and Promethean expansion for the true word.

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