

Dream-Playing Across Borders

Accessing the Non-texts of Strindberg's *A Dream Play*
in Düsseldorf 1915–18 and Beyond

ASTRID VON ROSEN (ED.)

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Cover: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, 1915.
Courtesy of the Ström family.
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It has been a most stimulating process to engage in what is indeed the first interdisciplinary project originating at the Department of Cultural Sciences (KUV), at the University of Gothenburg (UGOT). What was intended to be a small-scale and short-term endeavour has lasted for more than three years, and it is somewhat sad that an exciting intellectual and physical border-crossing exchange now comes to an end (at least temporarily).

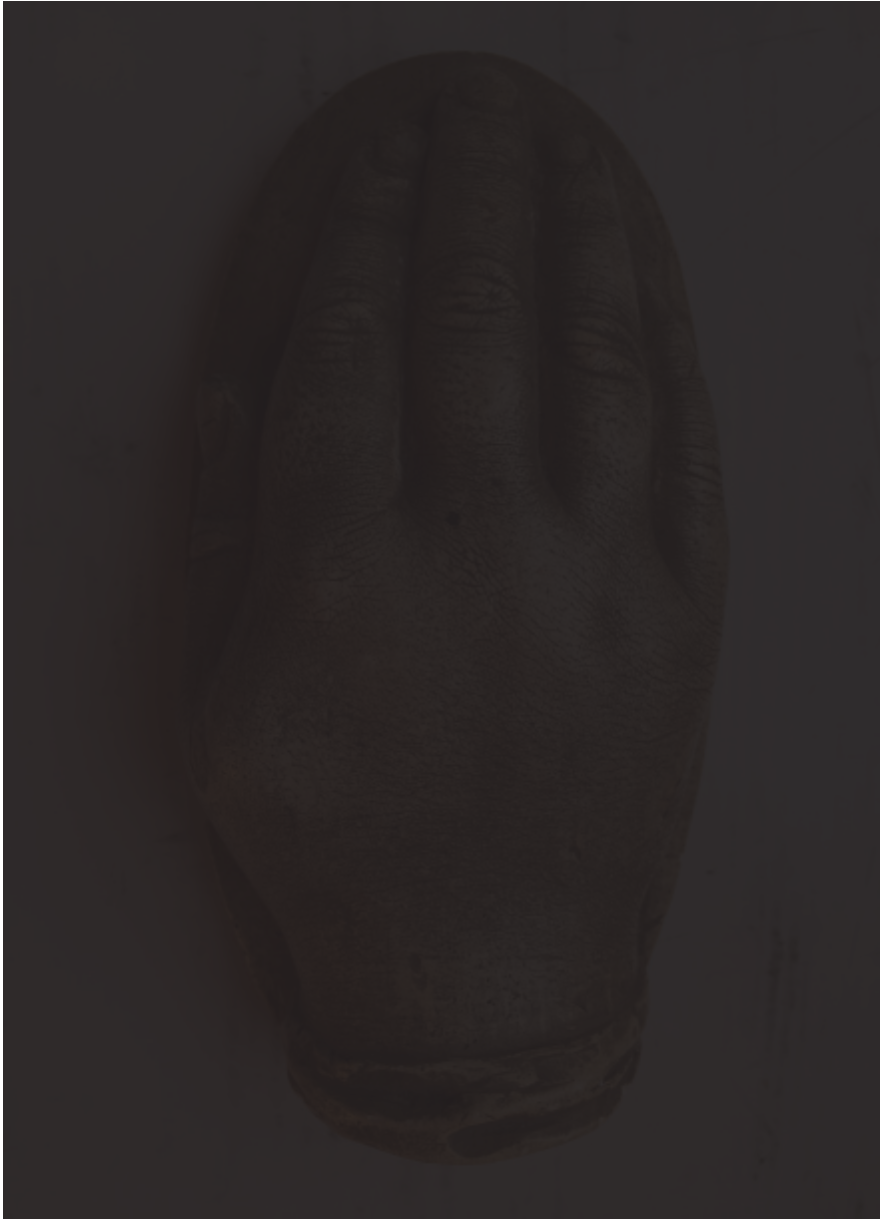
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*Astrid von Rosen, for the research group
Brännö, in October 2016*



This cast of the hand of Anna Ström when she was a child indicates the embodied and sometimes touching character of the archive. Courtesy of the Ström family.



1. The Dream-Playing project has crossed borders, visiting archives in the following cities: Düsseldorf, Cologne /Wahn, Gothenburg and Stockholm.

Introduction

Dream-Playing with Non-Texts Across Borders

ASTRID VON ROSEN

“I dreamt I awoke with one dead seeing eye
and one living closed eye”

Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960)

An astonishingly unknown *Dream Play*

“Dream-Playing” is an interdisciplinary scholarly project that both deconstructs and utilizes “the Strindberg canon” by assessing a pool of hitherto untapped archival materials, creatively and collaboratively, in order to chart the border-crossing, multidisciplinary, and radically innovative modernity of Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* and its involvement in ongoing discourses. By looking beyond the canon of early stagings of the drama, the project draws attention to a previously almost completely unknown production of *A Dream Play* (Ett drömspel/Ein Traumspiel) that premiered in Düsseldorf, Germany, on 16 October 1918 in the final phase of the First World War.¹ Co-directed by Swedish scenographer-director Knut Ström (1887–1971) and German actor-director Paul Henckels (1885–1967), and with music by Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871–1927), it was only the third production of the drama in Germany.² While most of the reviewers praised the performance as a considerable artistic achievement, some also expressed ambivalence and critical opinions, indicating a contextual complexity worthy of further exploration. As much of the source materials are not text-based, it can be argued that a multimedia investigation of the topic can make new contributions to our knowledge about the early productions of a play that Strindberg described as “my most beloved Drama, the child of my greatest pain”.³ Thus, the Dream-Playing project proposes an innovative

approach to the study of archival materials, viewing the non-text based archive in particular as having a performative aspect. Because Ström's scenographic work and Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf are not well known among an Anglo-Saxon readership, they are introduced in the following, together with an outline of the main features of the Dream-Playing endeavour. This is followed by a presentation of the dramatic text and the individual contributions.

Ström, Strindberg and the Düsseldorf context

The beginnings of the Dream-Playing project can be found in my doctoral thesis *Knut Ströms scenografi och bildvärld: Visualisering i tid och rum* (2010).⁴ A section of the study, forming the first substantial investigation of Ström's career in Germany, was devoted to his work at the so-called reform stage Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf from November 1912 to June 1919. Theorizing scenography as a *web of translations* operating in three registers, I explored the intermingling of (1) material and sensuous circumstances and impossibilities, (2) cultural and personal imaginaries and pictorial worlds, and (3) structural systems and orders traversing Ström's legacy.⁵ The act of traversing geographical as well as historiographical borders when locating and connecting sources, together with the following analyses of new archival materials, contributed to the conclusion that already during his time in Düsseldorf Ström created highly skilled visual and spatial interpretations of plays that formed the core of the repertoire at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf.⁶ Without going into detail, his scenography for Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1915), Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1916) and *Hamlet* (1917), and Goethe's *Faust* (1916) can be mentioned as examples of transformative spaces, engaging the audience in pluri-dimensional experiences. [Illustrations 2 and 3] It is also worth mentioning that Ström created groundbreaking expressionist scenography for dramas by writers such as Pär Lagerkvist and Georg Kaiser. While it was beyond the scope of my thesis to look more deeply into Ström's involvement with Strindberg's dramas, the Dream-Playing project marks a return to a still under-explored theme.

Strindberg wrote most of *A Dream Play* in 1901 during a painful but



2. *Photograph from Peer Gynt, performed at Münchener Künstlertheater in 1914, and at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf in 1915. Knut Ström created the scenography and Gustav Lindemann directed. We see artistic director and actress Louise Dumont as Aase, and Knut's friend Otto Stoeckel as Peer Gynt. Courtesy of the Ström family.*

3. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for Faust, Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, 1916. Courtesy of the Ström family.*



equally productive crisis in his marriage to the young actress Harriet Bosse. When the drama finally premiered on 17 April 1907 at Svenska Teatern in Stockholm, a prologue where Indra's daughter descends to earth had been added. The production was directed by Victor Castegren, and the scenography was made by Carl Grabow. Looking into what has hitherto been written about this first production, we find one narrative in particular that is often repeated. It is the story of Grabow's overly earthbound scenography, and the failure of the theatre to live up to Strindberg's demands for magic-lantern images and dematerialized decorations.⁷ There are problems with the modernist bias and empirically weak research-underpinning of this view, but I will leave this for future study and here focus on another event that took place on 30 December 1907, namely the premiere performance of Strindberg's chamber play, *Storm* or *Thunder in the Air* (*Oväder/Wetterleuchten*) at Intima Teatern in Stockholm.

Ström created his very first scenography – back then called decorations but here theoretically understood as scenography, that is, as an active, expressive and co-creative participant in the performance – for *Storm*. A young and ambitious “painter-boy” (his own expression in an interview) Ström was given the opportunity to make designs for *Storm*, because his employer Thorolf Jansson (whose decorating firm in turn was employed by Intima Teatern) wanted to rest for a production.⁸ Intima Teatern was an experimental venue using the latest ideas from the European avant-garde and, receptive as he was, the young Ström managed to create sketches that Strindberg himself approved. While no photographs are preserved from the performance, there does exist a single colour sketch that according to Ström was made for *Storm*. It shows the exterior for the first and third acts; we see a section of a shimmering golden building in Art Nouveau style, and in the background a silvery sky over a pink cityscape. Arguably, the artist's monogram in the sketch's lower left corner was added later, because in 1907 Ström had not yet developed his ostentatious signature or artist's monogram: a “knot” (Knut) with a “tail” (Ström). The simple interior for the second act (no sketch is preserved), was much appreciated by Strindberg, who felt that the exterior in the other acts demanded too much construction on stage. Nevertheless, creating the scenography for *Storm* was a great opportunity for Ström, who only later realized the full

importance of having worked for Strindberg. New ideas about theatre and staging in circulation at Intima Teatern fed into Ström's involvement with what the young "revolutionary" enthusiasts termed the fight against naturalism. In the following years Ström worked for Jansson at the Royal Opera, but realized that he needed to go abroad to further develop his skills and interests.

Coming from a lower middle class family of small business owners, and having to work hard for a living, Ström managed to leave Stockholm for Berlin in 1909 thanks to a grant. There he worked in broad range of contexts from variety shows to the decoration studios of the theatre industry. He also immersed himself in a range of avant-garde experiments for the theatre, many of them less successful due to a lack of professional skill. The theatrical gauze technique Ström learned in the decoration studios and the modernist and avant-garde influences to which he was exposed were of great significance for his scenography for *A Dream Play*. The use of gauze is a theatrical device whereby draped cloth can be either transparent or opaque depending on how it is painted and lit. It is worth mentioning that Ström was present in 1910 when the influential and multitasking director Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) worked with an innovative combination of gauzes at Circus Busch.

In November 1912 Ström accepted the artistically prestigious position of Künstlerischer Beirat at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. He thus held a key position at one of the more prosperous reform stages of the time. Proponents of this theatrical movement sought to engender a theatre that differed from – but was also influenced by – what they saw as the overly pluralistic approaches exemplified in particular by the work of Reinhardt. Acknowledging the importance of local semiosis, Ström sought to develop a close and long-lasting relationship with an audience, in contrast to the often unsatisfactory and superficial encounters characteristic of extensive touring by Reinhardt and others.⁹ As a result, when Düsseldorf audiences encountered *A Dream Play* in 1918, they were probably already familiar with some general traits of Ström's modernist scenographic language such as striking transformations, exquisite lighting, sensuous colour systems, symbols and objects charged with meaning, and stylized but functional constructions.

Zooming out we see that Ström was part of a larger shift within West-

ern theatre where societal changes, urbanization, industrialization, secularization and democratization propelled ideas about offering what was considered to be advanced art to large groups of people from all classes. As is demonstrated in a contemporary article by W. F. Storck in *Dekorative Kunst* (1913) the modernist-reformist efforts of, for example, Ström were particularly influenced by Gordon Craig's and Adolphe Appia's theories about stylization and a unified or total artwork.¹⁰ Storck takes up the problem of overly dogmatic schedules guiding the stagings, as well as the difficulty of maintaining a balance between scenery and words. He mentions Reinhardt's scenographer Ernst Stern as a good example of how art and technology (such as advanced lighting, cyclorama, gauze, revolving stages, standardized construction units, and moveable platforms) could successfully be united within the theatre context.¹¹ For Ström it became possible to take on these challenges at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, in relation to both newly written and classical plays. As the theatre had a close collaboration with Georg Fuchs and Münchener Künstlertheater, Ström worked principles for the so-called relief stage into his sketches, presenting stylized, ingeniously constructed, and sensuously vibrating scenographies.¹² In the sketches we thus find current practices, technical solutions and artistic styles woven together with elaborate interpretations of the dramatic texts.

The artistic director at Schauspielhaus, actress Louise Dumont (1862–1932), was a highly esteemed interpreter of Strindberg's and Ibsen's dramas. While she held “the word” to be central in theatrical work, she also encouraged visual and spatial experiments among the theatre workers. Part of this collaborative hotbed for modernist experimentation, Ström developed a theoretically conscious conception of scenography (without having access to that particular notion). In an article from 1917 the process is described as seeking to allow for what is termed the “neutral background” to be activated by the chorus's movements and grouping, so that it “takes on the character necessary for the moment”.¹³ It is worth noting how the performative reciprocity of Ström's visual, spatial and corporeal investigations resonates with current views of scenography as an “expressive and affective agent of performance”.¹⁴ On the basis of this I have chosen to use the term scenography – even if it is anachronistic in his context – when addressing relevant parts of Ström's work and that of

others. In addition to thinking of scenography as being born, or taking place, during a theatrical event, it is also, for the purposes of historical inquiry, useful to understand it as a practice and a process.¹⁵ A scenographic sketch, for example, is a material object containing a vision, an imaginary idea for a future theatrical event. During the course of the investigation the sketch and the activator(s) will together be part of another event (not the one performed on stage); this is very useful in research processes.¹⁶ The scholar will propose an interpretation, and the sketch will respond, a process that repeats many times in a dialogic and spiralling series of negotiations, transformations and temporary closures.

Returning to the importance of “the word” at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, as a native Swedish speaker Ström became closely involved with language matters at the theatre. He reports often sitting next to Dumont’s husband, director Gustav Lindemann (1872–1960) during rehearsals. Checking the German translations against the original Swedish texts, Ström declares that Emil Schering (1873–1951) “was a poor interpreter of Strindberg” and “quite a nuisance in that respect”.¹⁷ It can also be mentioned that Ström and actor-director Otto Stoeckel translated the above mentioned Lagerkvist’s *The Difficult Hour* (*Den svåra stunden*/ *Die schwere Stunde*), which premiered on 29 April 1919 in Düsseldorf. These remarks indicate in an embodied and historicized way how closely and skilfully Ström worked with the translation and interpretation of dramatic texts. In line with recent critical ideas within practice-based research, this challenges unproductive dichotomies between practical and theoretical knowledge, or between material construction and intellectual interpretation.¹⁸ A telling example of such dichotomization can be found in Gösta M. Bergman’s – in many other ways very useful – *Den moderna teaterns genombrott* (1966), where Ström figures as a “slick practitioner”, while director Per Lindberg is ascribed the role of an intellectual theoretician.¹⁹

For ambitious modernists like Ström, who dreamed of revolutionizing the theatrical world, working with Strindberg’s so-called post-Inferno dramas in particular served as a rite of passage. As briefly mentioned by Gunnar Ollén (one of the few scholars to point this out) in *Strindberg’s dramatik* (1982) the premiere of *A Dream Play* was the culmination of Ström’s work with Strindberg’s dramas in Düsseldorf.²⁰ In 1916 Ström

had co-directed *Comrades* (Kamrater/Kameraden) and *There are Crimes and Crimes* (Brott och brott/Rausch) with Henckels, creating the scenography for both of them. Here it can be mentioned that on 17 March 1916, the first German production of *A Dream Play* had its premiere at Theater in der Königgrätzer Strasse in Berlin under the direction of Rudolf Bernauer (1880–1953). It was a great success, being performed over 200 times. In *Strindberg's drömspelsteknik – i drama och teater* (1981) Richard Bark finds that from the beginning of the Berlin run, its character of a “fairy play” was already established.²¹ According to Bark, Svend Gade’s (1877–1952) stylized, yet also quite realistic and colourful scenography was a main contributor to the success. An extra proscenium, in the shape of an ear or a soft kidney-shaped oval, was covered throughout the performance with a gauze that could be either opaque or translucent. In “Stockholm–Berlin–Moscow: Strindberg and Avant-Garde Performance in the 1920s” (2012), Eszter Szalczer describes how this production was canonized as a role model also accepted by the Swedish establishment.²² Notably, Gade’s scenography was used for the staging of *A Dream Play* that premiered at Lorensbergsteatern in Gothenburg on 27 October 1916.²³

In 1917, still in Düsseldorf, Ström made his debut as a director in a production of the above-mentioned *Storm* by Strindberg, a task that included responsibility for the scenography. Here it becomes apparent how his prior experience of working with *Storm* in 1907 took on new energy in the midst of the feverish German interest in Strindberg. Press-clippings in the archive in Cologne/Wahn indicate that this interest far exceeded the theatrical context, as all sorts of perspectives on Strindberg feature in the papers. Headlines address topics such as (in translation) “Strindberg and women” and “Strindberg and music”, as well as dealing with a plethora of personal and sensationalist reflections, and so forth.²⁴ Several scholars have also pointed out how the belated success of the post-Inferno dramas could have been due to their resonance with the hardships caused by the war.²⁵ At the same time, there is a lack of more detailed analysis of (for example) the 1916 Berlin production; the choice of the word “fairy play”, the syncretistic golden costume worn by Indra’s daughter for her entrance, the symbolically and organically charged scenography, the eclectic music and the dialogue relate to the earthly sufferings of the starving audience.²⁶

While Ström's production of Strindberg's chamber play *The Pelican* (Pelikanen/Der Pelikan) premiered in 1917, his work with *The Burned Site* (Brända tomten/Brandstette) and *The Ghost Sonata* (Spöksonaten/Gespensersonate) remained at the level of interpretive sketches. This is also the case for *The Road to Damascus I* (Till Damaskus I/Nach Damaskus I), from which there remains a rather coherent series of sketches, signed 1916, as well as storyboards.²⁷ This brief list alone is enough to show that Ström possessed considerable knowledge of Strindberg's dramatic work. A closer look at the archival materials further strengthens the impression that Ström's Düsseldorf interpretations are worthy of more in-depth exploration. Worth knowing is also that Ström remained interested in Strindberg's dramatic work throughout his career, and staged a wide range of the author's plays at theatres in Gothenburg.

Dream-Playing the non-text-based Archives

As mentioned above, not all of Ström's sketches for projects were realized on stage, which poses historiographical challenges but is also potentially productive. Thinking through the dynamics of the scenographic web in relation to the archive, it might be rewarding to follow other threads than those linking sketches with the "real thing", the performance on stage. Instead of too quickly dismissing a sketch that has no direct link to a staged event, it might be worth considering it from other angles.²⁸ Needless to say, sketches are but one example of "an insufficiently studied and theorized category of sources in the theatre-historical archive".²⁹ By investigating the reciprocal relationship between archival materials such as sketches, storyboards and playbills and societal, political and aesthetic contexts, valuable insights can be gained into artistic practices and institutional cultures. It was this dynamic idea to follow the threads of the web in various directions and enter new spaces for exploration that eventually led to the formation of the current Dream-Playing project. Also, the materials from Ström's long engagement with *A Dream Play* are quite unique, and can provide new knowledge about practices, scenographic interpretations of dramatic texts, and situated transformative production processes.

In current discussions about the archive within the humanities and

social sciences, digitization is considered key to processes of democratization and identity formulation. Despite this prevailing tendency, the archives explored by the Dream-Playing project lie outside the sphere of generous and globally accessible archives.³⁰ Moving through the world of small-scale theatrical collections – perhaps merged with large-scale institutions – requires engaging with a plethora of differing materials. Many of these are non-text-based items and the majority are not digitized, or if they are, a fee is usually charged for working copies. In any case, it is quite arduous to first pre-arrange a visit, then enter the archives in person, then order digitized copies of the items (it is normally not allowed to take photographs), and perhaps have to repeat the process if it was not successful the first time, and so on.

For the Dream-Playing project it became crucial to literally – physically – cross national borders in order to access archival materials not previously included in what dance and theatre scholar Lena Hammergren terms “a shared canon of source material”.³¹ It is an all-too-common scholarly habit to recycle and rethink already familiar materials, resulting in the exclusion of what lies outside the charted territories. As dance historian Johanna Laakkonen aptly states in *Canon and Beyond: Edvard Fazer and the Imperial Russian Ballet 1908–1910*: “By choosing the alternatives and stressing factors that might be alien to the canon, a historian can contribute to a more comprehensive view of the past.”³² In recognition of this it can be argued that an interdisciplinary exploration of *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf has the potential to provide new insight into how the drama was understood and staged in its early production history.

The legacy of the Düsseldorf production is fragmented, spread out across archives and collections in several countries, and thus difficult to access. This process of fragmentation began in the direct aftermath of the First World War (and may still be ongoing). Due to the dangerous situation, Knut, his wife Anna (1890–1968), and their two small children Carl Johan (born 1914) and Lillanna (born 1916) – both of whom had rickets – left Düsseldorf for Gothenburg in 1919.³³ Germany was in a state of upheaval and chaos, although the war had officially come to an end in November 1918. Paramilitary formations, such as the right-wing militias, were carrying out atrocities without really being stopped by the authorities. In a radio interview conducted by his granddaughter Lisa Söderberg,

Knut described how dangerous the situation was in Düsseldorf at the time.³⁴ He felt he had to leave to protect his family.

When they married in 1913, Anna and Knut were a young and enthusiastic couple, as is visible in photographs and described in letters to relatives in Sweden. They had both studied at Tekniska Skolan (a school of arts and crafts) in Stockholm. In addition they took private painting lessons from the artist Wilhelm Gernandt. As young ambitious artists in the making, Anna and Knut spent much time outdoors practising drawing. Moreover, Knut took photographs of the young and beautiful Anna in poses resembling those in fashion magazines.³⁵ His interest in fashion is also reflected in one of the studies for the Dream-Playing project. In *Svenskt konstnärlexikon* (Swedish Dictionary of Artists) Anna is only devoted a few lines where she is described as a “lady painter” (*målarinna*) but primarily as the wife of Knut and mother of their two children, Carl Johan and Lillanna, both of whom later worked with scenography.³⁶ Even though Anna did not have a recognized career as an artist, she remained, according to her grandchildren, creative and liberal minded throughout her life.³⁷

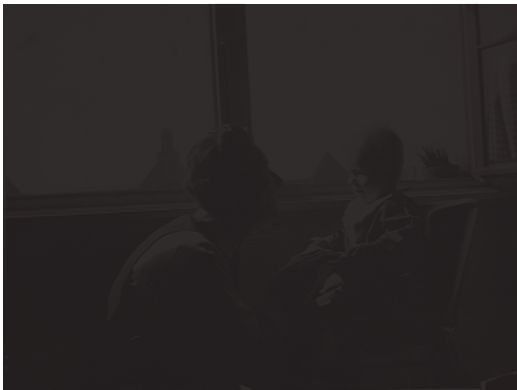
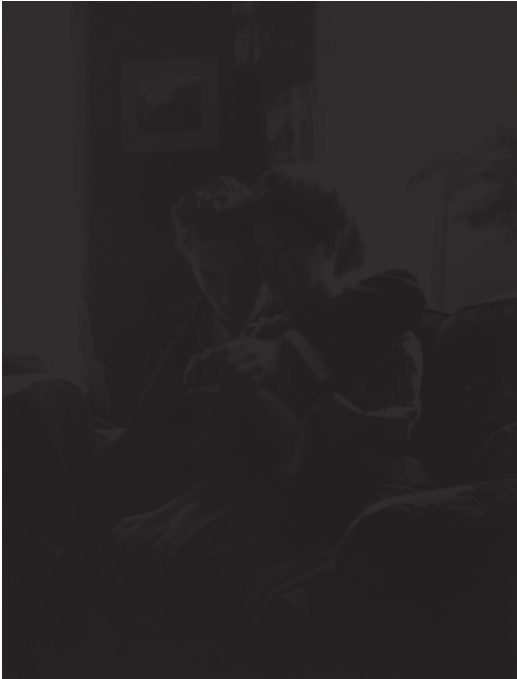
When the war began Knut and Anna could not imagine that it would last so long, and soon the time-consuming difficulties of running a household begin eating into Anna’s correspondence. In a section of a long Easter letter written in 1915, Anna mentions celebrating Knut’s birthday, meeting up with friends, visiting the theatre and, as so often, finding food.

Now we have bread cards. Without them you can’t get bread. For three [people], CJ included, we have approx. 5 kilos of bread per week, and that’s ok. Luckily fresh vegetables are beginning to be available. There’s lettuce, radish, cucumber, rhubarb. Meat’s expensive, especially pork. If only this horrid war would end soon. But what can you do? Just wait.³⁸

Knut writes a few lines saying that they will definitely be coming home to Sweden in July, when the holidays begin. The letter ends with the usual closing phrases, as if it were not at all the last letter before a long (archival, at least) silence. Between Easter 1915 and June 1919 there are

no (preserved) letters, and this silence or gap is in a negative way telling about the pressure and daily struggle faced by the Ström family and so many others during the war. A photograph of a serious Anna and the two children, taken in 1919 at Dylta Bruk in Sweden when they have begun to recover, bridges the gap. As a housewife Anna had an important – but easily neglected – role in making it possible for Knut to fully engage with his work at the theatre. To write a scenography history from her often “infra-ordinary” perspective would, I suggest be an interesting task for future research. Following the thinking of George Perec, the infra-ordinary refers to small things – simple and often contradictory details and feelings from individual lives.³⁹ My point here is that *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf was immersed in the war context, and understanding this from the viewpoint of family life is one way of embodying history. When leaving for Sweden Ström probably brought some materials pertaining to *A Dream Play* with him, and these can today be found in Stockholm. In addition, the Ström family is in possession of traces from Ström’s period in Germany, such as letters, photographs of the young couple and sketches for some theatrical productions. [Illustration 4] Nevertheless, many of the sources for *A Dream Play* remained in Germany, and what is left of these can be found in archives in Düsseldorf and Cologne (and probably also in private collections). Unfortunately no known photographs exist of the performance. This probably has to do with the extreme difficulty of getting hold of film during the war, as is exemplified in the letters Anna wrote to her family in Sweden.⁴⁰ Moreover, the theatre building where *A Dream Play* was performed cannot be revisited *in situ*, because it was destroyed by bombing during the Second World War. However, *Jahrhundert des Schauspiels*, a publication unfortunately not available in English, provides a useful history of the theatre.⁴¹

If it is such hard work to access enough relevant materials, why is it worth it? I would suggest that reassembling materials from a non-written history can be described as an act of resistance to the fragmentation caused by war, archival greed, ordinary carelessness, and other factors not conducive to a shared and democratic archive. This is not meant as criticism of individual archivists – they have all been helpful, and in some cases exceedingly generous – but our work does criticize overly simplistic views about the democratic benefits of digitization.



4. Knut and Anna dating in Stockholm, before 1913.

Anna and the children Lillanna and Carl Johan in 1919, Dylta Bruk, Sweden.

Anna with Carl Johan in 1914, and Knut with Carl Johan, the same year.

No photographs are preserved of Lillanna from the years in Düsseldorf. Their third child, Greta, was born in Gothenburg in 1922. All the children had artistic careers. Courtesy of the Ström family.

Our putting together of digitized materials is a conscious creation of a new growing archive, shared among the scholars in a knowledge-creating process. Indeed, this archive resembles a Strindbergian “growing castle” (a construction that develops and shifts in unexpected ways), and also resonates with what historian Carolyn Steedman calls “a place of dreams”.⁴² While this digital archive is no substitute for engaging with the material items *in situ*, it does provide new possibilities for historical inquiry across national and other borders.⁴³ How then can we propel creative transgressions and vertiginous experiments with, against and in relation to source materials and various scholarly approaches?

The notion of Dream-Playing addresses the complex and often difficult processes of translation and transformation (and other forms of exchange) that might occur between times, places, different types of archival materials, practice and theory, or scholarly traditions. While it is neither a straightforward nor an easy process to transpose images, sound, corporeal sensations, dreams and the like into coherent written text, such translations are nevertheless very important. As summarized by archaeologist Victor Buchli:

The incommensurability of the translation is not a formal problem, but a productive one: the conditions by which new mutualities are established, ones based on the forgiveness of debt towards the establishment of new expanded relationships and merciful bonds.⁴⁴

According to this reassuring statement something is always lost in translation, but within this very loss lies the seed of critical thinking and new knowledge. During collaborative as well as individual work, the archival researcher is exposed to the many impressions in the materials – in the sketches, the music, the critical reception, the letters, the dramatic text and so forth. When engaging in collaborative work, one is asked to open one’s mind to a plurality of new and unknown inputs, a situation that might be difficult to handle, and that might never actually begin if it is not explored and theorized, and thus made easier to share with others.

“Dream” refers to something unclear or vertiginous taking place in darkness when sleeping, or in twilight when daydreaming, as well as a

more conscious hope for something graspable, and meaningful in the future. For Strindberg the notion of darkness was immensely valuable for his creative processes, as he expressed in a letter written in November 1887:

It seems to me that I'm sleepwalking; as if poetry and life have been mixed together. I don't know whether *The Father* is a poem or if my life has been one; but I feel that very soon at some predestined moment it will dawn on me, and then I'll collapse, either into insanity tortured by remorse, or into suicide. Through much writing of poetry my life has become a shadow life; I seem no longer to walk on the earth but float, weightless, in an atmosphere not of air but of darkness. If any light enters this darkness I'll tumble down, crushed!⁴⁵

During the early stages of the Dream-Playing project the fact that we did not really know where we were heading when conducting seminars or writing drafts, as well as difficulties coping with our different means of expression, working habits and scholarly language were sometimes quite a challenge to all of us in the group. (At least this has been my experience of the process.) At the same time, the only way to proceed seemed to be to keep moving and thinking within what Strindberg calls “darkness”. This resonates with one of the last texts formulated by culture and art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929) during his lifetime: “Beneath the dark flutter of the griffin’s wings we dream – between gripping and being gripped – the concept of consciousness”.⁴⁶ The pains and passions of transformative processes are not to be dismissed or neglected; I agree with Strindberg and Warburg that we need the darkness, and as both of them knew very well, we also need frames and structure.

“Playing”, then, is creative and active engagement that hopefully facilitates a positive transformation processes, framed by a set of rules that all the players (in this case scholars) agree upon. As academics we have access to and are also formed by an institutional framework that we take for granted, but that sometimes can be limiting. It can be difficult to leave one’s comfort zone, even if one intends to do so. The experience of crossing borders and feeling lost has its distinct place in the quest for

knowledge. Also, even if there is no guarantee that such exilic excursions will lead anywhere, it is necessary to dare to take the risk, especially if the project navigates outside the canon and wishes to take on historiographical challenges. Philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva writes: “How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one’s own country, language, sex and identity? Writing is impossible without some kind of exile.”⁴⁷ The critical position argued for here obviously does not seek to parasitize on exilic experiences, such as being forced to leave one’s country. However, and this is important, any kind of exile – forced, more or less voluntary, or scholarly – confronts us with questions about the processes and possibilities of finding and being able to inhabit a new place, a home. (For some people this home is found in writing, and while in motion.)⁴⁸ The exiled person lives in and with translations, and faces the challenges and hopefully also the constructive forces this implies. Inspired by the endeavours of philosopher and writer H el ene Cixous, Derrida beautifully describes her work as an “indefatigable and unique translation of the infinite world, of all possible worlds of the nocturnal dream, into the incomparable vigilance of one of the most calculating of diurnal writings”.⁴⁹ Acknowledging this, the dream-playing scholar strives to make conscious what may be never-ending processes of co-creative exchange, and then to gradually produce a coherent academic text, without losing the playful aliveness. I would suggest that this approach is particularly useful when engaging with materials that will never surrender to one stable meaning or one solid interpretation.

Approaching *A Dream Play*

At once deeply personal and full of influences ranging from occult mysticism to contemporary visual media, *A Dream Play* “set the stage for the major trends within twentieth-century drama and theatre history”.⁵⁰ In this last section of this introduction, I will quickly move through the events of the play to provide the reader not familiar with it a point of entry.

In his author’s note to *A Dream Play*, Strindberg outlines the poetic principles forming the basic challenge faced by Str om and others striving to put it on stage.

Anything can happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; on a slight groundwork of reality, imagination spins and weaves new patterns made of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities and improvisations. The characters split, double and multiply; they evaporate, crystallize, scatter and converge.⁵¹

When the drama begins, Indra's daughter leaves heaven to come down to earth. Her task is to learn about human life and suffering. After landing she enters a "growing castle". There she liberates a man who is held captive (by himself and his history), and the space transforms into an ambiguous theatre corridor, where an array of suffering, hope and repetition is revealed. The next series of locations are the Lawyer's office, the church and Fingal's cave. As a married woman, the Daughter suffocates in a small room with a cruel husband and a child that cries continuously. Escaping to Foulbay, and then visiting Fairhaven, she witnesses how human logic breaks down, and everything seems to be twisted or turned against itself. When she meets the Poet, the Daughter begins to remember where she comes from. After the scene at the Mediterranean, where she is exposed to the heat and confronts her inability to cure human suffering, she finds herself once more in the cave, this time with the Poet. There a swirling poetic attempt to contact Indra, the god or unresponsive father, is intermingled with a scary flow of images and rising waters. The cave transforms into the theatre corridor, and the drama ends with the Daughter entering the castle that both burns and blooms (the bud on its roof opens).

Even in writing these few descriptive lines a process of selection and interpretation is involved. As a woman, with a background in the theatre as a professional dancer, I will most certainly read the drama text differently from people with other life paths, genders, experiences and knowledge. In short, there is no single way of understanding or staging Strindberg's drama, but rather a multitude of ways. Moreover, a quick search on Google reveals no sign that the interest in *A Dream Play* is waning. In Oslo, in autumn 2014, Indra's daughter was born out of hole in a hospital bed, screaming, surrounded by chaotic fragments of words, light and noise.⁵² Unlike the gold-clad Daughter of divine descent making her

entrance in Berlin 1916, the Oslo Daughter seemed to leave one Inferno for another. If the former was part of the visual regime of the “*deus ex machina*”, the latter rather seems to have belonged to a regime of “*dirt ex machina*”.⁵³ Yet the performance was still a recognizable dream-play, resonating strongly with the crises and struggles of our days.

The Düsseldorf production was part of other struggles and crises, immersed as it was in the First World War, something that is not always easily accessible or manifestly present in the materials. From today’s perspective the war easily becomes a Derridean “spectre”, referring to the paradoxical, almost unreachable yet perceptible presence of non-chosen, excluded features and persons. Derrida says that we ought to learn how to live “*with* ghosts”, and that “this being-with specters would also be, not only but also, a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations”.⁵⁴ So, how could we move beyond the canon to explore such “ghostly” non-texts as the music filling the theatrical space in the weeks before the armistice, the pulsations created by form, colour, signs and symbols in the sketches, the reverberations of dance, the costumes and their imaginary shimmers, the female body as a political battlefield, the words of Strindberg in a world at war, or the dreams there and then? In recognition of this it was important to implement a dynamic framework allowing for the intermingling of basic historical inquiry and more experimental enterprises.

In recent years Strindberg research has departed from the conventional literary criticism and biographical approaches to include multimedia and non-text-based material explorations from a wide scale of disciplines. We think that the reader of the six essays forming the first part of the publication is interested in and inspired by this new cross-disciplinary trend within the fields of, for example, visual, cultural, media, music, fashion, performance, theatre, dance, scenography and gender studies.⁵⁵ These chapters, briefly outlined in the following, might also attract an audience outside the academy, for example practising scenographers, dancers or other artists, or non-academics interested in archival explorations beyond the traditional institutional and text-based models.

While it is no longer possible to experience Stenhammar’s music as it sounded in Düsseldorf in 1918, it is possible to learn much more about it than one might expect. Juxtaposing a historiographical gap concerning

the presence of Stenhammar's music in the Düsseldorf staging and the playbill's announcement that his music was an integral part of the performance, Alf Björnberg, in his chapter "The Sound of a Dream: On the Use of Wilhelm Stenhammar's Music in the 1918 Düsseldorf Staging of *A Dream Play*", tracks down and scrutinizes source materials such as letters, a copy of the score and reviews in the local papers. We also learn how a Master Reed Organ (Meister-Harmonium) helped solve the problem of staffing an orchestra during the war. As stated by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, "the historian is still committed to the principle of historical truth. Anything less is irresponsible".⁵⁶ Björnberg's study demonstrates the ability of detailed archival studies combined with creative and innovative criticism of sources to contribute to a more diversified multimedia and performance history.

Ylva Sommerland, in her chapter, "Giving Indra's Daughter a Female Body: Trans Time Gender Captivity", queers the archive by creating a corporeal biography of the actress Ellen Widmann (1894–1985) who played Indra's daughter in Düsseldorf 1918. Out of this grows a narrative of Widmann's life, body, and intellectual skills, quite distant from the today rather anonymous name on the playbill or the abstracted female features in Ström's sketches. In the words of Ann Cvetkovich, scholar of English and Women's Studies, this is an example of paying "attention to how history is embedded in fragments and material objects", and involves "a mutual engagement between art practice and the archive".⁵⁷ The dream-playing with images and other non-text-based fragments that has formed an important part of Sommerland's archival investigations is, in my view, close to being an "art practice" in itself. This by no means detracts from the scholarly precision of the analysis, however, but rather comprises a creative aspect of critical methodology.

Traces of costume can be thought of as social constructions or discursive mediums; the visual materials are already coded and imbued with meaning when placed in the archive, and thus are part of socio-cultural systems.⁵⁸ In her chapter, "Fashioning *A Dream-Play*: On Knut Ström's Costume Sketches 1915–18 from a Fashion Perspective", Viveka Kjellmer follows the threads in the web of translations to look into how Ström both understood and made use of the visual impact of the latest modern dress codes in his sketches for *A Dream Play*. Kjellmer's focus is on the

practitioner's working process, not on the 1918 event. Costume is still an underrepresented perspective within both visual studies and theatre and performance studies, so this study marks the importance of transdisciplinary work in relation to the scenographic archive.

In "Dancing with Strindberg: A Social Perspective", Mats Nilsson and I explore social dance in Strindberg's context; the results are then brought back to Düsseldorf in my chapter. We argue that a corporeal and social analysis of the waltz considerably improves our ability to understand emotionally and politically charged dimensions of *A Dream Play*. While this practical work differs greatly from traditional text-based approaches, it relates to current explorations where practice-based researchers collaborate with humanities scholars. In the words of Tracy C. Davies and Barnaby King, a new creative research model is emerging "that functions contiguously with an archivally based model in that it engages evidence, posits new knowledge, and activates debate".⁵⁹ As dance is still a relatively rare theme in Strindbergian scholarship, we think a more embodied approach to archival investigations opens the way for further critical explorations in the future.

Characteristic of *A Dream Play* is its complex weave of transformative fabric.⁶⁰ This made – and still makes – the drama quite a challenge to stage. In my chapter "Scenographing Strindberg: Ström's Alchemical Interpretation of Strindberg's *A Dream Play* 1915–18 in Düsseldorf", I am particularly interested in Ström's development of what I claim is an alchemical interpretation of the drama and how this helped him visualize it in time and space. Using basic archival research in combination with art historical methods as well as dancerly activations I seek to access the ingenious transformational expressions created by Ström in his many sketches and other materials but not always manifestly present in Strindberg's text. Alchemy and dance are underrepresented analytical strategies in Strindbergian scholarship, so the study represents an innovative approach and a critique of less engaged and embodied ways of exploring for example non-text-based traces of scenographic endeavours.

The last chapter of the first part of the publication, "*A Dream Play* at War – a concluding discussion about the 1918 performance in Düsseldorf" serves to bring our results closer to the staged event. Rather than taking on the impossible task of reconstructing a long-gone performance,

Ylva Sommerland and I juxtapose the playbill, the reviews and some strands in our findings to bring out contextual and ideological charges that we believe can stimulate further scholarly research as well as other engagements with the non-text based archive.

What later became the Dream-Playing project began as a couple of public lectures addressing psychological and visual charges in Strindberg's *A Dream Play* held in 2011 and 2012 (the centenary of Strindberg's death) at a venue bringing together academics from the University of Gothenburg and practitioners within mental health.⁶¹ The ambition to explore features that lie at the basis of the often so painful human drama, and the ability and need to dream instead of acting out in real and often horrible ways has stayed with the project and resulted in Per Magnus Johansson's "Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and Strindberg's *A Dream Play*: A Comparative Study", which forms the second part of this publication. We think there is a group of readers interested in the intersection of the humanities and psychology who might find their way into Johansson's text. There are examples of recent scholarship where Strindberg's so-called "self-dramatization" is discussed in relation to Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*.⁶² For a reader not familiar with Freud, his context and ideas may be difficult to understand; hence the chapter begins with a lengthy exploration of Freud's work on dreams, and then turns to the intertextuality (in Kristeva's understanding of the term) that can be claimed to exist between *Interpretation of Dreams* and *A Dream Play*. This opens the way for making further connections with the vast field of Strindberg scholarship as well as with the field of mental health, and we hope that this thread of the Dream-Playing project can be further developed in the future.

The book concludes with a dialogue between the participants about the reimaged research archive that has grown out of the project.

Now, enter *A Dream Play*, in Düsseldorf and across borders. The playbill from 1918 opens the door to a three-year production process, an event forever gone, its aftermath, and threads that can be followed beyond its immediate theatrical context.⁶³ [Illustration 5]

5. *The Playbill for A Dream Play, 16 October 1918, Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf.*
Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.



NOTES

- 1 I will use the common English titles of the plays, giving the Swedish title and Emil Schering's German translation in parentheses. Unless otherwise indicated, I follow the most recent source I have come across: Roland Lysell (ed.), *Strindberg on International Stages/Strindberg in Translation*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014.
2. It was the third according to *Freie Presse*, 19 October 1918. See also *Volkszeitung* 17/18 October 1918. For my purposes it is not important if it was the third, fourth or fifth staging; what is interesting is the rich materials it offers in relation to research on other productions of the drama during this period. According to Klaus van den Berg, "Strindberg's A Dream Play: Postmodernist Visions on the Modernist Stage", *Theatre Survey*, Volume 40, Issue 2, November 1999, p. 50, the drama "appeared regularly in the repertoire of German theatres" between 1914 and 1923.
3. August Strindberg, Strindbergsällskapet and Torsten Eklund (ed.), *August Strindbergs brev. 15. April 1904–April 1907*, Bonniers, Stockholm 1976, p. 361. My translation, "mitt mest älskade Drama, min största smärtas barn" in a letter dated 17 April 1907, from Strindberg to Schering.
4. *Knut Ströms scenografi och bildvärld: Visualisering i tid och rum*, (diss.), Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture 32, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg 2010. While the doctoral thesis was conceived within art history and visual studies, my background in the theatre as a professional classical and contemporary dancer has provided useful practice-based insights.
5. Since then, I have been developing the analytic model, the latest version of which can be found in Astrid von Rosen, "Scenografisk sensualism: I fält med stadens dansare"/"Scenographic sensualism: In the field with the city dancers", University of Gothenburg, *Humanister i fält*, edited by Åsa Arping, Christer Ekholm, Katarina Leppänen, 2016, pp. 121–129. Open access.
6. For details about the repertoire, see *Jahrhundert des Schauspiels: Vom Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf zum Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus*, Droste, Düsseldorf 2006.
7. This is by and large summarized in Sverker R. Ek, "Brytningstid", *Ny svensk teaterhistoria*, principal editor Tomas Forser, Gidlunds förlag, Hedemora 2007, pp. 14–18. Other relevant references, if one wants to look into the iterations creating a master narrative, are Per Bjurström, *Teaterdekoration i Sverige*, Natur och Kultur, Stockholm 1964, pp. 72–74, 122–123; Richard Bark, *Strindbergs drömspelsteknik – i drama och teater*, Studentlitteratur, Lund 1981, pp. 83–86; Gösta M. Bergman, *Den moderna teaterns genombrott*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm, 1966, pp. 275–277. Gunnar Ollén, *Strindbergs dramatik*, Sveriges Radios Förlag, Stockholm 1982, pp. 451–452; Gunnar Ollén, "Tillkomst och mottagande", in *August Strindbergs Samlade verk 46, Ett*

- drömspel*, edited by Gunnar Ollén, Norstedts, Stockholm 1988, pp. 125–160; Egil Törnqvist, “Staging *A Dream Play*”, in *Strindberg’s Dramaturgy*, edited by Göran Stockenström, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1988, pp. 256–290. Another type of investigation, lacking a place in the canon production, and perhaps daring in its early attempt to contest prevailing views on Grabow’s work, is Margareta Broberg’s *Carl Grabow, teaterdekoratören i sin tid*, C1-uppsats i teatervetenskap, Stockholms universitet 1979.
8. Ström’s early career and his work with *Oväder* are outlined in von Rosen 2010, pp. 28–36.
 9. For an intercultural analysis demonstrating how local semiosis is played out in different contexts, see Eszter Szalczer, “Stockholm–Berlin–Moscow: Strindberg and Avant-Garde Performance in the 1920s”, *The International Strindberg: New Critical Essays*, edited by Anna Westerståhl Stenport, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2012, pp. 27–48.
 10. W. F. Storck, “Die neue Bühnenbildkunst“, *Dekorative Kunst: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Angewandte Kunst*, F. Bruckmann, München, XVI. 7. April 1913, pp. 297–312.
 11. The theatrical terms I use are taken from *New Theatre Words: Northern Europe*, Swedish OISTAT Centre 1988. I am thankful to Nick Hunt for recommending this book and for a useful discussion on the complexity of these terms in relation to different languages.
 12. The influence from Fuchs is mentioned in *Jahrhundert des Schauspiels* 2006, p. 39.
 13. Knut Ström, “Teaterbetraktelser” (written in Düsseldorf, April 1917), *Svenska scenen*, 1917:9.
 14. Joslin McKinney and Philip Butterworth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (2009) 2010, p. 5.
 15. For a discussion siding with this pragmatic stance, see Hans Öjmyr, *Kungliga teaterns scenografi under 1800-talet*, (diss.), Eidos 5, Stockholms universitet, Stockholm 2002, p. 28.
 16. Astrid von Rosen, “Sweating with Peer Gynt: Performative exchange as a way of accessing scenographic action”, *Nordlit* no. 34, 2015: *Ibsen and World Drama(s)*, pp. 343–352.
 17. Jarl W. Donnér, “Det finns inga stora dramatiker längre”, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, 13 March 1968. My translation: “var en dålig Strindbergs-tolkare” och “en ganska stor buse i det hänseendet”.
 18. This stance is aptly captured by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason in “Introduction”, in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, edited by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason, Intellect, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2012, pp. 17–25.
 19. Bergman 1966, p. 535. My translation: “fiffig praktiker”.

20. Ollén 1982, p. 460. Not brought up by Ollén, but worth mentioning is that Ström – in the position of Künstlerischer Beirat – worked with Strindberg’s *Die Erste Warnung/Die Stärkere/Ein Sommertraum* (premiere in Düsseldorf the 9 April 1914). See *Jahrhundert des Schauspiels* 2006, p. 272.
21. Bark 1981, p. 100. My translation “sagospel”.
22. Szalczer 2012, p. 35.
23. Bertil Nolin, “Upptakt: Att göra rättvisa åt Ett drömspel”, in *Lorensbergsteatern 1916–1934: Dokument: Analyser*, edited by Bertil Nolin, Teaterhistoriska museet Göteborg, and Entré, Gothenburg 1991, pp. 42–57.
24. I am indebted to Hedwig Müller for introducing me to these materials in the Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung Universität zu Köln (TWS).
25. van den Berg 1999, p. 50.
26. For a telling example of the sufferings of the audience, see Svend Gade, *Mit Livs Drejescene: 50 Aar i Teatrets og Filmens Tjeneste*, A.G. Hassing, København 1941.
27. von Rosen, 2010, pp. 54–59.
28. To develop and hone approaches that might be useful for our project we initially held seminars and readings focusing on theatre scholar Willmar Sauter’s concept of the *theatrical event*. See Sauter, *Eventness: A Concept of the Theatrical Event*, STUTS Stiftelsen för utgivning av teatervetenskapliga studier, Stockholm University, Stockholm (2006) 2nd edition 2008, pp. 21–25; *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Reception*, Iowa City 2000; “Cyclic Perseverance and Linear Mobility of Theatrical Events”, *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, edited by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 2010, pp. 137–139. Sauter also gave a seminar about his concept of the theatrical event in March 2014 at the Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg. Even if none of the scholars within the Dream-Playing project belong to the field of theatre studies we found the model inspiring and helpful when striving to navigate in conjunction with the production of *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf, as well as beyond it.
29. This argument is inspired by Christopher B. Balme’s line of thinking in “Playbills and the Theatrical Public Sphere”, in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, edited by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 2010, p. 58.
30. For a discussion on this type of generous archive, see Heike Roms, “Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Performance Remains?”, in *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, edited by Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen 2013, p. 48, and the reference to Jacques Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and*

- Genius: The Secrets of the Archive* [Genèses, genealogies, genres et le genie, 2003], Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2006, p. 83.
31. Lena Hammergren, “Many Sources, Many Voices”, in *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader*, edited by Alexandra Carter, Routledge, London and New York 2004, pp. 20–31. See also the discussion in Johanna Laakkonen, *Canon and Beyond: Edvard Fazer and the Imperial Russian Ballet 1908–1910*, Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki 2009, p. 16, and 246.
 32. Laakkonen 2009, p. 248.
 33. Their third child, Greta, was born in Gothenburg in 1922.
 34. Lisa Söderberg, “Regissör Knut Ström berättar för Lisa Söderberg”, Sveriges Radio, 25 May 1970, radio programme, Göteborgs stadsmuseum.
 35. Materials in the private collections of the Ström family.
 36. *Svenskt konstnärslexikon*, Allhem, Malmö 1952–67, p. 291. My translation.
 37. Interviews with Ström’s relatives conducted by Astrid von Rosen 23 March 2015 (Lisa Söderberg), and 10 May 2015 (Lars, Carl and Lisa Söderberg). For previous interviews, see von Rosen 2010.
 38. Transcriptions of Anna Ström’s letters at Göteborgs Stadsmuseum, Teatersamlingarna, Knut Ström 1. Members of the Ström family have done the transcriptions from the original letters. Anna wrote most frequently during autumn 1913. Six out of a total of 14 pages in the transcribed version refer to this period. The letters from 1914 take up about four pages, and the ones from 1915 about three. There is a gap between 12 April 1915 and a single letter dated 5 June 1919, written when Anna was back in Sweden.
 39. George Perec, “Approaches to What [1973]”, in *Species of Spaces and Other Places*, edited and translated by John Sturrock, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1997, pp. 205–207. The text was first published in the journal *Cause Commune* 1973, and then in the compiled volume *L’Infra-ordinaire*, 1989. For a useful example, where the infra-ordinary guides the exploration, see Peter Englund, 1914. *Stridens skönhet och sorg: Första världskrigets inledande år i 8 korta kapitel*, Natur & Kultur, Stockholm 2014.
 40. Anna Ström’s letters, GSM.
 41. *Jahrhundert des Schauspiels* 2006.
 42. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2001, p. 69.
 43. For a useful discussion about how the materiality of archival objects is still considered crucial in explorative processes, see Maryanne Dever, “Photographs and Manuscripts: Working in the Archive”, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2014, pp. 282–294.
 44. Victor Buchli, “Afterword: The Contemporary Past, Translation and MerMcy”, *Architecture, Photography and the Contemporary Past*, edited by Claes Cald-

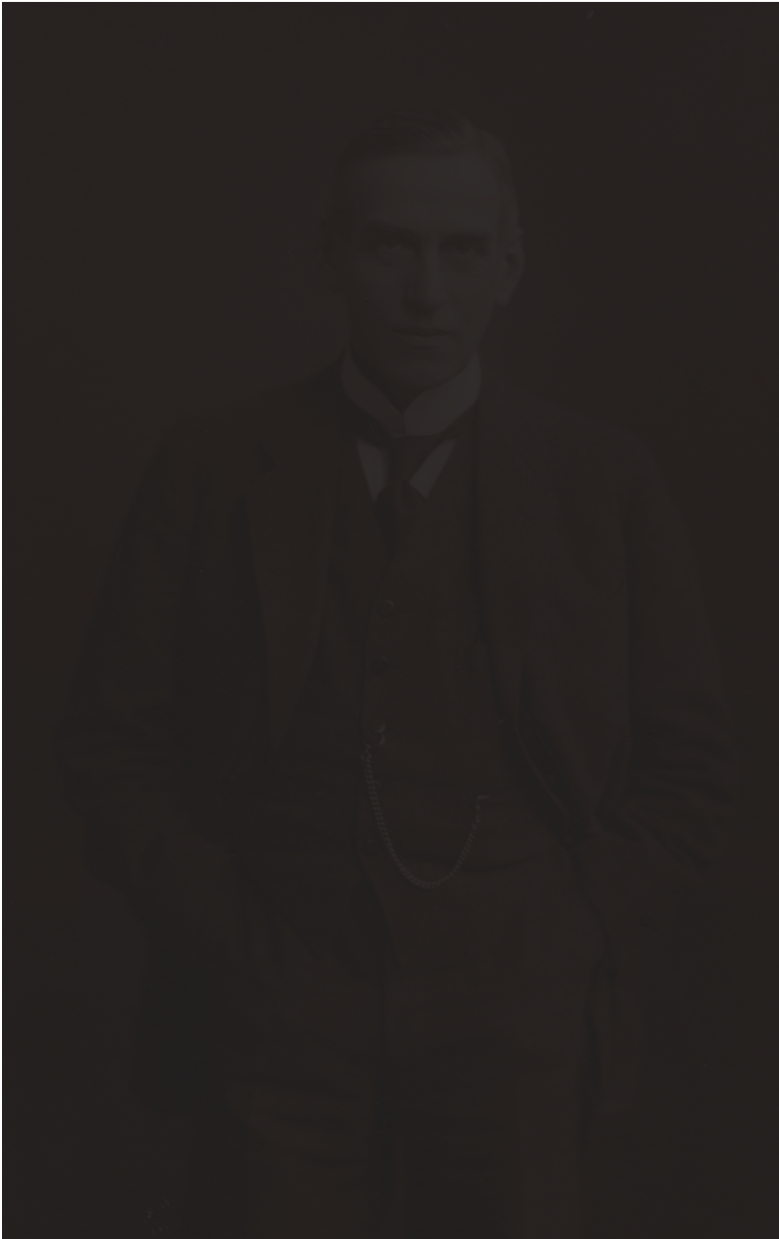
- enby, Julia Tedroff, Andrej Slávik, Martin Farran-Lee, Art and Theory Publishing, Stockholm 2014, pp. 162–171.
45. August Strindberg, Strindbergsällskapet and Torsten Eklund (ed.), *August Strindbergs brev. 6. Augusti 1886–januari 1888*, Albert Bonniers förlag, Stockholm 1958, p. 298. Written to Axel Lundegård, probably 9 November 1887. My translation.
 46. Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, translated by Sophie Hawks, Zone Books, New York 2004, p. 336.
 47. Julia Kristeva, “A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident”, *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1986, pp. 292–300.
 48. This is inspired by the public lecture “En poetisk dialog om exilens språk”, with Per Magnus Johansson and Jila Mossaed, at Göteborgs stadsbibliotek, 14 January 2015. I have also read Johansson’s manuscript for the lecture.
 49. Derrida 2006, p. 23.
 50. Freddie Rokem, “Voices and Visions in Fingal’s Cave: Plato and Strindberg”, *The International Strindberg: New Critical Essays*, edited by Anna Westerstähl Stenport, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2012, p. 127 (the quotation). For a recent overview, see Michael Robinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009. The complex web of influences informing Strindberg’s post-Inferno drama is aptly addressed in Eszter Szalczzer, “Nature’s Dream Play: Modes of Vision and August Strindberg’s Re-Definition of Theatre” in *Theatre Journal*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2001. The inspirational model of theosophy is more specifically explored in Eszter Szalczzer, *Strindberg’s Cosmic Theatre: Theosophical Impact and Theatrical Metaphor*, (diss.), UMI, Ann Arbor 1997. For Strindberg’s relation to visual media, see Vreni Hockenjos, *Picturing Dissolving Views: August Strindberg and the Visual Media of His Age*, (diss.), Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Cinema Studies 7, Stockholm University, Stockholm 2007.
 51. *Six Plays by Strindberg*, translated by Elizabeth Sprigge, Doubleday Anchor Books, New York 1995, p. 193. Here quoted from Rokem 2002, p. 54. For the beginning of my own chapter for this publication another translation is used – just to exemplify how they diverge.
 52. A scenographic analysis of this performance can be found in Astrid von Rosen, “Inferno i trötthetssamhället: en scenografisk analys av *Ett drömspel* i Oslo 2014”, *Arche* 52–53, 2015, pp. 307–315.
 53. Indra’s daughter as “Deus ex Machina” is discussed in Rokem 2012, pp. 129–132.
 54. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* [*Spectres de Marx: L’État de la dette, le travail du deuil*

- et la nouvelle Internationale*, 1993], translated by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, New York and London 1994.
55. The Dream-Playing project has been structured around visits to archives, workshops for presenting work in progress, seminars devoted to readings of the drama as well as previous research about it, and presentations at conferences. Film scholar Mats Björkin was initially part of the project, but his role transitioned into that of an advisor. Art historian Bia Mankell has also been part of the project and contributed valuable knowledge on the modernist art context.
 56. Thomas Postlewait and Charlotte M. Canning, "Representing the Past: An Introduction on Five Themes", *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, edited by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 2010, p 15.
 57. Ann Cvetkovich, "Photographing Objects: Art as Queer Archival Practice", in *Lost and Found: Queering the Archive*, edited by Mathias Danbolt, Jane Rowley and Louise Wollters, Nikolaj, Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, Bildmuseet Umeå University, 2009–2010, pp. 63–64.
 58. Hammergren 2004, p. 22.
 59. See for example Tracy C. Davies and Barnaby King, "Performance, Again: Resuscitating the Repertoire", *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, edited by Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen 2013, p. 179–198.
 60. Freddie Rokem seeks to grasp this with the help of Strindberg's own idea that words from ancient languages are procreative, highly transformative root systems, living and growing among us. This line of thinking has been a helpful source of inspiration to me when exploring Ström's work. Freddie Rokem, "Secret Codes: Strindberg and the Dead Languages", *August Strindberg and the Other: New Critical Approaches*, edited by Poul Houe, Sven Hakon Rossel and Göran Stockenström, Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 63, Rodopi, Amsterdam, New York 2002, pp. 54–55.
 61. Astrid von Rosen, "Knut Ströms scenografi", 9 April 2011, och "Ström och Strindberg", 28 January 2012, at Freudianska föreningen in Gothenburg. The second lecture was repeated for Teaterhistoriska Samfundet, 27 February 2012, at Gothenburg Museum. The Strindberg theme was then followed up in two joint public lectures with Astrid von Rosen and Per Magnus Johansson: "Att spela med drömmen i Freuds tid: Strindbergs *Ett drömspel*", 9 November 2013, and "Gråtande och grottor som psykologiska tematiker i Strindbergs *Ett drömspel*", 17 May 2014, at Freudianska föreningen.
 62. Recent examples are Linda Haverty Rugg, "August Strindberg: The Art and Science of Self-dramatization", *The Cambridge Companion to August Strind-*

berg, edited by Michael Robinson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 16; Eszter Szalczter, “A Modernist Dramaturgy”, *The Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg*, edited by Michael Robinson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 103–104. An overview of scholarship on psychological issues in relation to Strindberg’s life and authorship can be found in Michael Robinson (ed.), *An International Annotated Bibliography of Strindberg Studies 1870–2005*, Volume 4, Modern Humanities Research Association, London 2008. A useful text in which the pathologization of Strindberg is problematized is Ulf Olsson, “Going Crazy: Strindberg and the Construction of Literary Madness”, *August Strindberg and the Other: New Critical Approaches*, edited by Poul Houe, Sven Hakon Rossel and Göran Stockenström, Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 63, Rodopi, Amsterdam, New York 2002, pp. 115–131.

63. I am thankful to Nils-Aage Larsson for inspiring comments on this text, and to Jonas Anderson for encouraging support during the project.

PART I



Wilhelm Stenhammar (c. 1920). Courtesy Humanities Library, Gothenburg University Library.

The Sound of a Dream

*On the Use of Wilhelm Stenhammar's Music
in the 1918 Düsseldorf Staging of A Dream Play*

ALF BJÖRNBERG

Introduction

In his biography of Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar, Bo Wallner claims that the only stage production of *A Dream Play* to have used Stenhammar's stage music was the 1916 production at the Lorensberg Theatre in Gothenburg, for which this music was commissioned from the composer. Wallner was aware that the plans for the 1918 Düsseldorf staging of the drama involved using Stenhammar's music, and he quotes extensively from a memo written by Stenhammar and intended, according to Wallner, for Knut Ström, scenographer-director of the Düsseldorf production.¹ However, Wallner states that "the contact with Düsseldorf did not lead to any concrete results" and that, apart from the 1916 Gothenburg staging, the only theatrical production to have used Stenhammar's music was a radio-drama produced by Swedish public-service radio in 1930.²

Wallner's monumental three-volume work is the most extensive biography hitherto devoted to any Swedish composer and is based on extensive research over a period of several decades. The reason for his reaching an erroneous conclusion about the music in the Düsseldorf production, despite his thorough research, is somewhat obscure. Be that as it may, it remains a fact, supported by unambiguous historical evidence, that the 1918 staging of *A Dream Play* at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf did feature Stenhammar's music. The purpose of this chapter is to assess, on the basis of preserved archival material related to this theatrical produc-

tion, how the music was adapted to the resources at hand, what it may have sounded like, and how it was received by the Düsseldorf critics and audience.

The adaptation

The playbill for the opening-night performance of *A Dream Play* on 16 October 1918 announces quite clearly that “[t]he music of Wilh. Stenhammar associated with the play has been arranged for the Düsseldorf production by F. C. Hempel”.³ As far as can be ascertained, the producers at Düsseldorf had access to Stenhammar’s original score for the stage music. While this original score has not been preserved, a copy of the score is kept in the Swedish Radio Music Library (henceforth: SRMB), with the annotation “This score is a copy of Stenhammar’s manuscript score, prepared by the undersigned”.⁴ The score is quite comprehensive, including several verbal cues to facilitate the synchronization of the music with the stage action. The fact that it may nevertheless have been found desirable to adapt the score for the Düsseldorf staging can have been due to several reasons. Judging from Stenhammar’s memo, his music was to a large extent shaped according to his views on how the music should interact with the on-stage action. It is thus possible that revisions of the text of the play undertaken at Düsseldorf may have motivated revisions of the music. In all probability, however, a primary incentive for revising the music would have been the limited orchestral resources available. Unfortunately, no information has been preserved in the TMA on the orchestral resources used in the production, but their limitations in this regard are indicated by one of the reviews of the production, published a month after the opening night and focusing on the music:

... it is fervently hoped that times to come, with their expected greater supply of suitable resources, will bring about a significant change in the number and selection of the participants.⁵

Stenhammar’s score is composed for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two french horns, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, and strings. In the memo

written for Ström, he specifies that a grand piano should be used, and that the total number of string players should preferably be between 15 and 21, giving a total of 25–31 required musicians.⁶ The specified number of string players is characterized by Stenhammar as a “small string orchestra”, but due to the very difficult situation during the last weeks of the war, even these minimal requirements may well have proven impossible to meet.

The available source material provides little information on exactly how musical director Franz Carl Hempel went about adapting Stenhammar’s music for the purposes of the Düsseldorf production. Apparently, no musical notation used in the production has been preserved, neither the orchestral score nor any single instrumental parts. A letter, dated 8 April 1921, from Schauspielhaus director Gustav Lindemann to Knut Ström, then employed at the Lorensberg Theatre, explicitly refers to what appears to be the score used in the production. Here, Lindemann writes:

The score for “Dream Play” belongs to us. We are willing to have it copied, but we’d like to point out that this is going to cost a lot; however, the exchange-rate relieves the burden for the composer. Could you please ask whether we should copy the score at his expense.⁷

This indicates that Ström had asked Lindemann for the score on Stenhammar’s behalf, and that the composer no longer possessed his own copy of the score. That the score was indeed copied for Stenhammar is confirmed by a letter written by him to the Schauspielhaus, dated September of the same year:

For your kind help with the copy of my Dream Play score I send my grateful thanks. The amount of Mk 550 will be sent to you by Skandinaviska Kreditaktiebolaget, Gothenburg. I ask you to keep the score until I can shortly inform you where it should be sent.⁸

The fact that this copy was prepared at the composer’s request makes it likely that the copy was based on the original score provided by him for

use in Düsseldorf in 1918, rather than containing any revisions added by Hempel.⁹ That a copy of the score was still kept at the Schauspielhaus in 1927 is indicated by a telegram from Stenhammar, dated 20 October that year, that is, one month before the death of the composer:

Staatstheater Munich wants to see my music for Strindberg
Dream Play / can you kindly provide your score¹⁰

Whether this request was fulfilled by the Schauspielhaus is not documented in my source material. However, this information indicates that a copy of Stenhammar's score, possibly also containing traces of adaptations and revisions performed by Hempel, may still be preserved in Munich. While I have not been able to investigate this possibility within the framework of the current project, it remains a potential point of entry for future research.

Thus, no source material containing musical notation has been available for elucidating the nature and extent of Hempel's revisions of Stenhammar's score. In the absence of such material, however, we can use other kinds of information to draw some conclusions about this matter. Towards the bottom of the opening-night playbill, on a separate line in small print, one such piece of information is provided. In the original German wording:

Meister-Harmonium "Dominator" von Schiedmeyer-Stuttgart¹¹

It may seem curious that the use of a particular musical instrument was considered significant enough to warrant such an announcement. The reed organ ("Harmonium") is a keyboard instrument based on the same free-reed principle as accordions and harmonicas; its use was quite widespread in the early 20th century, often as a less expensive substitute for a pipe organ in an ecclesiastical context.¹² The quote further indicates that this was not just any old instrument, but a Master Reed Organ ("Meister-Harmonium"). For Hempel, who was a trained organist, this instrument may well have provided a convenient solution to the problem of limited orchestral resources.

The reed organ

The specification on the playbill of the model and brand of reed organ used in the play might be taken as an indication of a financial agreement between the Schauspielhaus and the reed-organ manufacturer Schiedmeyer of Stuttgart, with the latter putting the instrument at the disposal of the theatre for free or at a reduced rate in return for the instrument being advertised on the playbill. However, some pieces of correspondence which have been preserved in the TMA indicate that this was not the case.

It turns out the reed organ was the personal property of musical director Hempel. Further, it seems that its appearance in the *Dream Play* production was the first, but not the last time it was used at the Schauspielhaus. A letter to Hempel from the theatre, dated 19 November 1918, commences:

Dear Mr. Hempel, / we thank you for kindly placing your Dominator at our disposal for the accomplishment of our joint artistic tasks.¹³

In this letter it is further stated that Hempel will be remunerated for this with an “extra fee” of 25 Marks per month, and that the theatre will provide fire insurance for the instrument. Curiously enough, the archive contains another letter of the same date to F. C. Hempel’s father, Mr. H. Hempel, who was addressed as “Director of the City Art Museum” at Düsseldorf. This letter opens in the following way:

Dear Mr. Director, / we thank you for your letter of the 15th this month and take the opportunity to express to you our joy over the active co-operation of your son in the work of the Schauspielhaus.¹⁴

The rest of the letter contains the same information as the letter to Hempel Jr. After the staging of *A Dream Play*, the instrument appears to have been regularly used by the Schauspielhaus; in a contract dated 1 July 1920, Hempel agrees to rent out the Dominator to the theatre at a monthly rate of 200 Marks.¹⁵ The contract further states that the in-

strument will be insured against fire and theft, and specifies that “[t]he instrument will be played by Mr. Hempel or by a trained organist”. In a hand-written note on the otherwise typewritten contract, the value of the Dominator is stated to be 60,000 Marks.

The last archival trace of the instrument is a letter dated 19 September 1931 from Lindemann to a certain “*Justizrat* Dr. Presser”. The contents of this letter indicate that Presser had written to Lindemann to request that Hempel be given a steady employment at the theatre. Lindemann states that this is “regrettably” impossible, as the finances of the theatre only allow for the temporary employment of musicians for the duration of a production. The letter continues:

Moreover, the events of the past are represented in Mr. Hempel’s artistic imagination a little bit askew: Mr. Hempel Sr. has bought his son a Dominator. Mr. Hempel has indeed used this Dominator several times in the theatre in his own compositions, for which each time an extra fee was paid for the instrument, and if Mr. and Mrs. Hempel Sr. were subscribers at the Schauspielhaus, they surely were so in their own best interest, or ...?¹⁶

No correspondence from Presser to Lindemann has been preserved in the TMA, but it would seem that Hempel had presented to Presser the fact of his generously putting his own instrument at the theatre’s disposal as a supporting argument in Presser’s plea for Hempel’s employment. In any case, the circumstances described shed some light on the reason for the letter to Mr. Hempel Sr. in 1918.

Since there is thus no indication of any financial agreement between the theatre and the manufacturer of the Dominator, it seems that the endorsement of the instrument on the playbill must have been motivated by other concerns. One possible explanation is that the instrument, as a piece of contemporary state-of-the-art music technology, was considered a token of up-to-dateness and sophistication, thus conferring an image of technologically advanced modernity on the theatre and the production. Around the turn of the last century, the reed organ was generally viewed as an artistically rather limited instrument, not suited for use in *bona fide*

art-music contexts. However, its status was soon to change, the decisive factor in this process appearing to have been Richard Strauss's use of it in his one-act opera *Ariadne on Naxos* (1912). Among the instruments required for this work, the printed score specifies that a "Reed organ (from the factory Schiedmeyer, Stuttgart)" should be used.¹⁷ An enthusiastic article in the *Zeitschrift für Instrumentenbau* provides a detailed account of the musical merits of the Dominator and the technical innovations distinguishing it from more ordinary reed organs, thus justifying Strauss's decision to admit the instrument into the higher realms of art music:

This instrument offered him [Strauss] what he was looking for: a sound that blends well with the individual characteristic shades of the woodwinds and strings, and even – as previously was regarded as impossible – enters with trumpets and horns into a flawless union that lives up to artistic needs. This instrument is the Master Reed Organ "Dominator" of the "Schiedmeyer Piano Factory" in Stuttgart.¹⁸

Unfortunately, there is no mention in my source material of which version of the Dominator was owned by Hempel and used in the *Dream Play* production. According to information provided on the website *Harmoniumnet*, the Dominator was manufactured in three different versions: the "Rossini", the "Wagner", and the "Strauss".¹⁹ Unlike the Rossini, in addition to several reed-organ stops, the Wagner and the Strauss were both equipped with a celesta stop played from a second keyboard; the difference between the Wagner and the Strauss was that the latter had a greater range (AA–f₄) than the former (C–c₄), as well as an extra reed-organ stop. The availability of a celesta stop might well have been useful for Hempel, for instance as a substitute for the harp required in Stenhammar's score (in case it was difficult to recruit a harp player; however, whether this was the case we do not know).

In the absence of any written music from the Schauspielhaus production or complementary verbal information on Hempel's Dominator, further details of which version of the instrument was used, and for what parts of Stenhammar's score, are matters of pure speculation. Only one of the reviews of the production, the aforementioned review in November

1918 focusing specifically on the music, explicitly but briefly comments on the use of the Dominator:

He [Hempel] carried out his task, truly not easy with the resources available, with skill and care; one especially had to admire the clever and original use of the reed organ, whose versatility and technical usefulness under the skilful hands of Mr. Hempel manifested themselves in amazing ways.²⁰

“Film music before there was such a thing”

As already stated, no material has been preserved indicating in any musical detail how Stenhammar’s music was adapted for the Düsseldorf production. It seems plausible that the Dominator was mainly used for the string parts of the score, as a compensation for a small number of string players; this, however, remains a surmise, based on the ability of the reed organ to produce sustained notes with a somewhat string-like timbre. With few exceptions, the press reviews of the production only mention the music in passing; the judgements presented characterize the music in generally positive but not very specific terms:

Enhanced by the music of W. Stenhammar, arranged for the Düsseldorf production and subject to the careful direction of Hempel – nostalgic sounds that seem to float as if from another world, softly embedding all the unrealities of the fiction and creating dream visions – the premiere of the Strindbergian work left a deep impression.²¹

F. C. Hempel, the musical director of the house, has arranged Stenhammar’s music for the purposes of the Düsseldorf performance. In gentle waves, it carries the mood from image to image.²²

From the attic closet of dramaturge Hans Franck, who loosened up the rickety verses of Schering’s German translation and set them in freer rhythms, all the way to the depths of the orchestra, from where the conductor Hempel caused waves of

music to foam up, the entire house is dedicated to this work.²³

A further essential aid to completing the illusion of a dream is the music of W. Stenhammer [sic], specially arranged for the purposes of the Schauspielhaus performance by F. C. Hempel.²⁴ ... the music of W. Stenhammar, arranged by F. C. Hempel, carries through the breaks, in the darkened room, connecting and maintaining the mood while still intensifying it.²⁵

Interestingly, the two more critical reviews supply some significant information with regard to both how the music was performed in the context of the staging and how it was received by the audience. One reviewer states the following:

The Schauspielhaus has mostly not adopted Strindberg's ideas for the performance of such Dream Plays; due to the need to change the scenography, the breaks were sometimes a bit long, which music of Stenhammer's [sic] kind cannot shorten. Thus, instead of lasting until 10:30, the piece lasted until 11:15; still, it was not too long, because both the poetry and the performance in all their beauty knew how to captivate the audience until the end.²⁶

The intended finishing time of 10:30 PM is explicitly stated on the playbill. That an opening-night performance of a technically complicated production should exceed the planned playing time is not in itself very surprising. However, the statement about Stenhammar's music being unable to fill unintentional breaks provides an interesting perspective on the functions that contemporary theatre audiences would generally expect stage music to fulfil. In the case of unexpected breaks in the performance, a piece of intermission music in a recognizable, closed musical form could provide entertainment and prevent the spectators from becoming bored. Stenhammar's *Dream Play* music, largely refraining from conventional musical forms and clear melody-background dualism, and often tightly integrated with the on-stage action, seems to have been perceived as not very well suited for fulfilling the functions normally expected of theatre music. For most critics, these deviations from established conventions

were signs of originality, high quality and congeniality with the structure and mood of Strindberg's text. This is particularly eloquently articulated in the November review in the *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*:

The value of this creation, in my opinion, lies in how Stenhammar's music manages to capture the wondrously illogical, matter-of-fact way the events of the plot are strung together, and creates a musical-emotional complex, which moves in a manner just as unconscious, just as other-worldly, just as separated from sensuous appearances as the things on stage. Stenhammar accomplishes this by the most modest possible means, which however by their very simplicity announce the congenial original creator, through floating, chromatically shifting harmonies, long held notes and pedal points, drifting arpeggios and threads of melody that dissolve into nothingness.²⁷

In the most outspokenly critical of the press reviews, however, a completely contrary opinion is offered:

It must be said openly that the pace of the play was too slow, from time to time even dragging; that the actors consistently, and thus on the director's orders, spoke too protractedly; that some of the scene-images were hauntingly beautiful, though most did not fit into the framework of the play and some, though intended to be appealing, were unappealing. And finally, it must be said that the accompanying music by Wilh. Stenhammar, conducted by F. C. Hempel at a snail's pace, clings to the work of the poet like a leaden weight, pulling down many a beautiful poetic phrase, philosophical truth, biting piece of satire, into that which Indra's daughter shakes off her feet before returning to heaven: the mud of the earth! If Strindberg's "dream vision" is to remain on the bill and the poet's grand intentions are to be made intelligible, then wise cuts must be made, the pace of the play be sped up and most of the accompanying music be removed.²⁸

Besides articulating this reviewer's heartfelt dislike of Stenhammar's music, this quote also provides an additional possible explanation for the prolonged playing time commented on in the *Lokalzeitung Düsseldorf* review. It appears somewhat unclear whether this slow pace was intended by the director, as the *Volkszeitung* reviewer suggests, or whether it may be ascribed to opening-night jitters. However, the fact that the finishing time announced on the playbill was exceeded by 45 minutes would seem to support the latter conclusion.

Taken together, the reviews indicate that Stenhammar's music was perceived by the Düsseldorf audience and critics as a "new" kind of theatre music in significant respects. The view that this music was indeed innovative in a theatrical context is supported by a comment by stage designer/director Mathias Clason in the CD booklet for a recording of the concert version of Stenhammar's score:

... the music was something completely new, evocative "film music" before there was such a thing, instead of disjointed intermission tooting and florid dance fillers.²⁹

Clason's view that "film music" did not yet exist in 1918 appears somewhat rash, in so far as the term is taken to designate original music specifically composed for a particular film and intended for regular live performance in conjunction with the public screening of that film. Although the most widespread practice of cinema orchestras and keyboard players in the "silent-film" era was to compile a musical accompaniment from pre-existing music – often with the help of catalogues such as Giuseppe Becce's *Kinobibliothek* (1919) – several cinematic productions in the 1910s and 1920s at the more extravagant end of the production scale did feature original film music.³⁰ One notable example is Joseph Carl Breil's score for Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915); another is Hans Erdmann's score for Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). Incidentally, the pre-premiere screening of the latter film in Berlin on 4 March 1922 featured an orchestral accompaniment with the Schiedmeyer Dominator in a prominent role.³¹

Another sense in which Stenhammar's music may be characterized as "film music" relates to the extended melodrama sections of his score, where music is combined with spoken dialogue in a manner that might

well be perceived as a precursor to the “underscore” structures developing in film-music practices in Hollywood (and elsewhere) soon after the introduction of sound film. This was not, however, an original innovation of the sound-film era. Instead, as several authors have pointed out, 19th-century theatrical melodrama constituted one of several models for the film-music practices evolving after the introduction of synchronized film sound.³²

There is, however, a third respect in which Stenhammar’s music may seem to predate (sound-)film music. In several places, the directions in his memo clearly indicate his desire for the music to be closely synchronized with the on-stage action and dialogue:

My music does not at all aim to illustrate, it only wants to emphasize the mood. Thus here as well. What matters is only that the procession is arranged such that the promovendi occur at the wind players’ fanfare, and that the Lawyer has arrived to be laureated exactly on the final bar, after which the rest is acted in the most soundless silence. [...] In the following melodrama, the actors must carefully abide by the pace of the musical director. Nevertheless, he in turn should choose a tempo that may suit the actors (not too slow!). [...] The pedal sound of the piano remains during the final fermata precisely until the Poet has finished uttering the word Eros. Please excuse this pedantry but it’s an important detail! [...] In the Song of the Waves, the words of the text should be fitted in as carefully as possible where I have indicated them in the score. The tempo may be fixed by friendly agreement between the actress and the conductor. [...] At the Daughter’s farewell: “And as I go now, in the parting hour” etc., the conductor must adapt his tempo completely to that of the actress and ensure that they come to an end at the same moment (the final bars may be slowed down indefinitely).³³

In contrast with the possibilities provided by synchronized film sound, a careful implementation of such instructions in a live performance may well be expected to have presented the director, musical director, actors

and musicians with significant technical difficulties. The complexity of attempting to follow Stenhammar's instructions in detail, especially with regard to his demands for synchronization of dialogue and music in the extended melodrama sections, may also help explain the slow pace of the opening-night performance criticized by the *Volkszeitung* reviewer.

We do not know whether Stenhammar's memo actually reached Düsseldorf, nor, if it indeed did, to what extent the Schauspielhaus production team attempted to heed his instructions. What can be concluded, however, is that Stenhammar composed his *Dream Play* music on the basis of carefully worked-out considerations of how he wanted this music to interact with the stage action and the dialogue; in this respect he might well be characterized as a "film-music composer", albeit in the context of live on-stage theatre. Also, any assessment of the artistic merits of this music – which is not my main object here – should reasonably be based on the music's function in this multimedia context. Interestingly, the two analyses of Stenhammar's score which I have located in the literature both evaluate it on the basis of "absolute-music" criteria. Bo Wallner writes of Stenhammar's music for the extended second Fingal's Cave scene:

His score [...] is a backdrop resonating in dynamic waves [...].
But also "merely" that. As an independent composition, the scene is uninteresting.³⁴

Christine Eberlein, in her comparative analysis of Stenhammar's and Pančo Vladigerov's respective stage-music scores for *A Dream Play*, reaches a similar conclusion:

Until today – unlike Wilhelm Stenhammar's "Dream Play Suite" – Vladigerov's stage music in the form of the "Scandinavian Suite" (Op. 13) has proved its artistic ability to survive.³⁵

The "Dream Play Suite" referred to by Eberlein is the concert-version arrangement of Stenhammar's music prepared in the early 1970s by composer Hilding Rosenberg, who in the 1920s had been a counterpoint pupil of Stenhammar.³⁶ A brief comparison of the two scores indicates that in order to transform the work into "an independent composition"

Rosenberg took liberties with the structure of Stenhammar's score; the result is an orchestral piece in an implicit four-movement form, retaining the "recapitulation" structure intended by Stenhammar.³⁷ However, in the recording of the piece which I have consulted, the work's status as "independent composition" is somewhat undermined by the fact that it includes the spoken dialogue between Indra and Indra's daughter from the Prologue, an option indicated in the score of Rosenberg's arrangement by two alternative paginations from p. 6 onwards.³⁸

Did Stenhammar compose "Strindbergian" music?

The question at issue here does not concern the relationship between Stenhammar's music and the intentions underlying Strindberg's use of musical parallels and metaphors in his writings on dramaturgy, including remarks on the "musical" structure of *A Dream Play*.³⁹ Neither does it refer to the possible existence of analytically discernible syntactic similarities between this music and the drama text.⁴⁰ Rather, the question is whether, and in what sense, Stenhammar's music was perceived by the Düsseldorf audience and critics as somehow congenial with the structure and mood of Strindberg's drama. To the extent that this question can be answered by archival material, this has already largely been done by the reviews quoted above. Here, I would just like to add the opinion of one further commentator. In his essay "Strindbergs Traumspiel", written for the occasion of the premiere of the drama at the Schauspielhaus, Gustav Landauer provides an interesting perspective on the "musical" characteristics of Strindberg's work.⁴¹ In his view, Strindberg's innovative achievement consisted precisely in the successful transfer of musical principles to the field of drama:

If one considers these Strindbergian expressive forms: intimate theatre, chamber plays, dream play, sonata; and if one, on the other hand, compares, for example, the – with regard to structure and actual conditions – still robustly real "dramatic epilogue" of Ibsen's "When We Dead Awaken" with Strindberg's "Damascus", or even Ibsen's "Ghosts" with Strindberg's

“Ghost Sonata”, one realizes how much it mattered to Strindberg, and how he managed to create a new form for the new contents, and how for him music – an expressive art for the ear, or rather, for the spirit via the ear – is enlarged and transformed in a new way: not music drama, but drama-music for the mind through the eye, the ear, and especially language. I do not doubt that music drama, opera, will also be significantly affected by this crucial innovation of Strindberg’s [...], already followers and imitators, [...] such as Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss, are groping for the effects that Strindberg in his field has brought up from the deep and achieved in a wonderful way...⁴²

Landauer’s discussion indicates quite clearly that at the time, especially but by no means exclusively in Germany, the work of Richard Wagner was still the obvious reference point for discussions on the relationship between music and drama, even in the case of spoken drama rather than opera. In his essay he explicitly compares Wagner and Strindberg, a comparison that clearly favours the latter:

In my view, from Strindberg one can even derive a criterion for Wagner and acknowledge that in the final analysis the reason why “Parsifal” for example outraged such a delicate spirit as Nietzsche – and with him the best spirits again and again – was that the theatrical form of expression for that which the musician and mystic Wagner actually may have had in mind, was far too little mystical and fantastic, far too real, causal, natural; and precisely therefore made an impression not of ultimate necessity, but of the unreal. [...] No dramatist except Shakespeare and the ancient tragedians – I do not exclude Wagner – has given birth to his dramas so directly from the spirit of music as Strindberg.⁴³

Landauer’s essay was written before the premiere of the Schauspielhaus staging of *A Dream Play*, and contains no indication that he had heard Stenhammar’s music at the time of writing. Thus, the question of how Landauer would have assessed the suitability of this music for Strind-

berg's drama must remain a matter for speculation; however, the criteria by which he criticizes Wagner indicate that he might well have found Stenhammar's music congruent with Strindberg's innovative dramaturgy. Interestingly, one of the press reviews of the opening-night performance does make a passing comparison between Stenhammar and Wagner:

Stenhammar's music "Wagners" several times, but otherwise seems to me in parts rather pretty and suitably atmospheric.⁴⁴

The exact meaning of the description of the music as "Wagnering" from time to time is not developed further in the review, but apparently the reviewer has trusted in the comprehensibility of the comment for the readership. From an analysis of the score, it may be conjectured that the comment refers to the more "dramatic" passages in Stenhammar's music, characterized by chromatically dissonant harmony and agitated melodic motion.⁴⁵ Judging from the general tenor of the reviews, it is precisely when Stenhammar is not "Wagnering" that his music is perceived as innovative and congenial with the text of the drama, as indicated particularly by the November review in the *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*.

The latter review contains a further comment that sheds light on the interpretative matrix conditioning the reception of Stenhammar's music:

When he [Stenhammar] once in a while becomes formally musical, as in the dance music for Fairhaven, a healthy and fresh imagination is revealed, which is certainly northern, but owes much, very much to the German Romantics.⁴⁶

The notion of a "northern imagination" influenced by German Romantics is interesting in view of the fact that it is highly unlikely that the music referred to actually was composed by Stenhammar. The score in the SRMB contains no music at all for the Fairhaven scene. In Stenhammar's memo, he mentions having prepared an orchestral transcription of the Adagio from Bach's D minor Organ Toccata that Strindberg prescribed for this scene. With regard to the origin of the dance music used in the scene in the 1916 Gothenburg production, he continues:

The waltz melody indicated by me is not mandatory. I got it from the director at the Lorensberg Theatre, Mauritz Stiller, who dreamed it one of the last nights before the premiere. He believes he heard it somewhere in his early youth. I thought it made good effect in its idiotic monotony. The main thing here is [...] to choose something that is not well-known, but sounds vaguely old and familiar.⁴⁷

Stenhammar may have found it appealing that the melody provided by Stiller was actual “dream music”. The quote indicates that Stenhammar included it in the musical material which he provided for the Düsseldorf production; however, it remains unclear whether it was actually used in the play or whether Hempel chose some other dance music for this scene. If the latter is the case, the German influence perceived by the *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* reviewer appears quite explainable. If the former is the case, an interesting divergence of opinion between Stenhammar and the reviewer may be observed.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that Stenhammar’s music was generally perceived by the Düsseldorf audience and critics as original, innovative and well compatible with Strindberg’s drama. However, as indicated by the outspokenly critical *Volkszeitung* review quoted above, this assessment was not a unanimous one. This difference of opinion could perhaps be interpreted as manifestation of aesthetic and perhaps socio-cultural differences between different parts of the theatre audience at the time. For spectators and critics intent on a “reading for the plot”, or rather “watching and listening for the plot”, Strindberg’s extraordinary text, in conjunction with the visual and aural elements of the Schauspielhaus staging of the drama, including Stenhammar’s music, may well have proven an overly advanced piece of theatrical entertainment.

NOTES

1. Wilhelm Stenhammar, *P.M. (för Düsseldorf)* [“Memo (for Düsseldorf)”], undated. This memo consists of six handwritten pages with corrections and amendments, apparently a draft. The location of the original manuscript is unclear; a photocopy is kept at the Music and Theatre Library of Sweden (Bo Wallner’s archive, Working papers for the Stenhammar book).

2. Bo Wallner, *Wilhelm Stenhammar och hans tid*, vol. 3, Norstedts, Stockholm 1991, p. 255. All translations from Swedish and German by the author; thanks to Alexandra Herlitz for language consultancy.
3. Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf (henceforth: TMA), Grosse Sammlung, material from *Ein Traumspiel*.
4. SRMB, T 98. The copy was prepared by Ivar Hellman.
5. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 15 November 1918.
6. Stenhammar (n.d.).
7. TMA, Grosse Sammlung, materials after Knut Ström.
8. TMA, SHD V, 12418.
9. If the assumption is correct that Stenhammar needed this copy because he no longer had one of his own, this implies that the copy made at the SRMB in 1930 may in fact not have been based on Stenhammar's manuscript, but on the Düsseldorf copy (cf. footnote 4). The matter is further complicated by the fact that the SRMB score does not appear to be identical to the music described in Stenhammar's memo; the numbering of musical sections in the score differs from that in the memo, and some sections mentioned in the memo are absent from the score.
10. TMA, SHD V, 12418.
11. TMA, Grosse Sammlung, material from *Ein Traumspiel*.
12. Or, for that matter, a theatrical context: cf. Strindberg's own recommendation of the use of a reed organ for Bach's Toccata in the Fairhaven scene of *A Dream Play*, recounted in August Falck, *Fem år med Strindberg*, Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm 1935, p. 275.
13. TMA, SHD II, 4706, 3.
14. TMA, SHD II, 4701.
15. TMA, SHD II, 4705.
16. TMA, SHD II, 4702.
17. Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos, Orchesterpartitur*, Adolph Fürstner, Paris & Berlin 1912.
18. Kurt Hennig, "Meisterharmonium 'Dominador' und Parabrahmorgel", *Zeitschrift für Instrumentenbau*, 1912–13, 33, p. 376. Thanks to Paul Peeters for calling my attention to this reference.
19. Website *Harmoniumnet*, <http://www.harmoniumnet.nl/schiedmayer-dominador-ENG.html>, accessed 20 March 2015.
20. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 15 November 1918.
21. *Crefelder Zeitung*, 17 October 1918.
22. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918.
23. *Freie Presse*, 19 October 1918.
24. *Düsseldorfer Zeitung*, 19 October 1918.
25. *Kölnische Zeitung*, 17 November 1918.

26. *Lokalzeitung Düsseldorf*, 19 October 1918.
27. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 15 November 1918.
28. *Volkszeitung*, 17 October 1918.
29. CD booklet, Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra/Arvo Volmer, *Wilhelm Stenhammar: Music for the Theatre*, CD Sterling CDS-1045-2, 2001.
30. Cf. Hans-Christian Schmidt, *Filmmusik*, Bärenreiter, Kassel, Basel & London 1982, and Roger Hickman, *Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Film Music*, Norton, New York & London 2006.
31. Cf. the review in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 March 1922, quoted on website *Nosferatu*, <http://www.filmhistoriker.de/films/nosferatu.htm>, accessed 3 March 2015.
32. Cf. Schmidt 1982; Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis 1987.
33. Stenhammar (n.d.).
34. Wallner 1991, p. 253.
35. Christine Eberlein, “*Ein Traumspiel*”: *Zur funktion der Schauspielmusiken zu August Strindbergs Drama von Wilhelm Stenhammar und Pančo Vladigerov*, Magisterarbeit, Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1992, p. 100.
36. Wilhelm Stenhammar, Hilding Rosenberg, *Musik till August Strindbergs Ett drömspel bearbetad för konsertbruk av Hilding Rosenberg*, Edition Svecia, Stockholm (n.d.). The dating “early 1970s” is provided by Wallner 1991, p. 255.
37. Cf. Stenhammar’s (n.d.) comment on the interlude composed by him for the transition between the two last scenes of the play: “Symphonically, it stands naturally and beautifully as a companion piece to the transition music from the Prologue to the first scene”.
38. Cf. footnote 29. In the Helsingborg recording, the spoken Prologue occupies roughly 25% of the total playing time, thus significantly affecting the proportions of the piece.
39. Cf. Erik Höök, “Med musiken som förebild: Några reflektioner kring musiktermernas betydelse i *Öppna brev till Intima teatern*”, 20 x *Strindberg: Vänbok till Lars Dahlbäck*, edited by Margareta Brundin, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 2003, pp. 217–24. Here, Höök discusses Strindberg’s characterization of *A Dream Play* as “a symphony, polyphonic, fugued here and there, with the main subject still recurring, repeated and varied by the thirty-odd voices in all keys”. Raymond Jarvi, “*Ett drömspel: A Symphony for the Stage*”, *Scandinavian Studies*, 44, 1, 1972, p. 35, argues, on the basis of the same quote, that “the organizing principle on which the structure of *Ett drömspel* depends” is “the composite arrangement of three dissimilar movements”, and attempts to specify in detail in musical terms how these “movements” have been arranged.
40. A detailed comparative analysis of the syntax of Strindberg’s drama and Stenhammar’s music would be an interesting task for future research.

41. Gustav Landauer, "Strindbergs Traumspiel", *Der werdende Mensch: Aufsätze über Leben und Schrifttum*, Gustav Kiepenhauer Verlag, Potsdam 1921, pp. 286–341. The essay was originally published as "Strindbergs Traumspiel: Zur Erstaufführung im Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus", in the journal *Masken*, 14 (1918–19), p. 49–64.
42. Landauer 1921, p. 286. On the relationship of the work of Strauss and von Hofmannsthal to that of Strindberg, cf. Florian Heesch, *Strindberg in der Oper: August Strindbergs Opernpoetik und die Rezeption seiner Texte in der Opernproduktion bis 1930* (Diss.), University of Gothenburg, Dept. of Culture, Aesthetics and Media, Gothenburg 2006, pp. 378–407, where a detailed analysis of intertextual connections between *A Dream Play* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* is presented.
43. Landauer 1921, p. 287f.
44. *Lokalzeitung Düsseldorf*, 19 October 1918.
45. For instance, nos. 4, 5 and 11 in the SRMB score.
46. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 15 November 1918.
47. Stenhammar (n.d.).

Giving Indra's Daughter a Female Body

Trans-Time Gender Captivity

YLVA SOMMERLAND

The point of departure for this study has been the archival material connected to Swedish scenographer-director Knut Ström's work on the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf production of August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* that premiered on the evening of 16 October 1918. Initially, my aim was to study the leading character, Indra's daughter, as depicted visually by Ström, from performative theoretical and queer perspectives, and ask questions about how gender is performed in the play, and specifically how gender is performed through the character of Indra's daughter. When the "Dream-Playing" project began, Ellen Widmann (1894–1985), the Swiss actress who played Indra's daughter, was no more to me than an anonymous name on a playbill. In Ström's 1915 sketches for a production not fulfilled until 1918, the character of Indra's daughter is depicted as a thin, asexual, faceless body. Working through Ström's images, the idea of giving Widmann a body, and by doing so also to give Indra's daughter a female body became more and more urgent. Eventually I decided to do this by exploring and following Widmann's more extended work, dream-playing with her biography across time and across borders. Thus, the main idea underlying this article is that by exploring images of Widmann from the 1920s, 1930s and 1970s the abstract character of Indra's daughter she played on stage in Düsseldorf 1918 can be given not only a female body, but also an ageing female body. In particular the photo-

graphs I have found through archival explorations have made it possible to contextualize Widmann's female body in the political climate in which she was active over the years. The body thus constructed will take the form not only of her long-gone physical body, but of a body in broader terms, the body of a professional life and the body of the political and cultural context that affected Widmann and was affected by her. The aim has been to discuss August Strindberg's character Indra's daughter, but the focus has been on possible effects of Indra's daughter, instead of meanings of the character.

Not much has been written about Ellen Widmann. The information on her acting career presented below comes from an article in *Theaterlexikon der Schweiz*.¹ To support these data about her career I have also studied *Zürcher Zeitung* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from the time she was active.² In them, for example, I have found evidence of her theatre teaching career in Switzerland after she left Germany.³ In addition to this I have also consulted the material available on Ellen Widmann in the Grosse Sammlung, Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf, which consists of a collection of letters and her contract of employment.⁴ I also used visual examples from Widmann's subsequent acting career, after her years in Düsseldorf. The three visual examples I present here show her in the roles of Rune Levenclau in the play *Sturmflut* (1926), written by Alfons Paquet (1881–1944) and directed by Erwin Piscator; Kommandoran in the movie *Emil in Lönneberga* (1971), directed by Olle Hellbom; and finally Frau Beckmann in *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (1931), directed by Fritz Lang. In the initial study I zoomed in on the Daughter's body in three scenes from *A Dream Play*, painted by Knut Ström: *Das wachsende Schloss (I. Akt)*, *Chor einer Kirche (I. Akt)*, and *An der Küste des Mittelmeeres (II. Akt)*.⁵ Ström probably didn't have Widmann in mind when he painted his 1915 version of Indra's daughter in her turquoise dress and with brownish red hair. I also juxtaposed these excerpts from Ström's sketches with photographs of two actresses who played Indra's Daughter in 1916: Irene Triesch in Berlin and Inez Lundmark in Gothenburg. [Illustration 1]

I will only present the results here, rather than the full image analysis of Ström's pictures. The focus is on the photographs of Ellen Widmann and I use the results from my studies of Ström's pictures as support for my discussions on Indra's daughter in relation to Strindberg's text.



1. Collage consisting of excerpts from Knut Ström's 1915 sketches for *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf and photographs of two actresses playing *Indra's Daughter* in 1916: Irene Triesch in Berlin and Inez Lundmark in Gothenburg. For full representations of Ström's sketches, see von Rosen's chapter. Courtesy Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln and Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (GTM:5015:3) and Leo Baeck Institute Center for Jewish History, Irene Triesch Family Collection (AR 1550)

One result of my initial study of Ström's visual interpretations of Strindberg's text was that gravity stood out as an interesting concept in discussing Indra's daughter and gender. Gravity is the force that drags Indra's daughter down to earth and contributes to the heaviness of the burden she experiences by visiting a human body. I found the word gravity useful in many ways in relation to issues that are dealt with in *A Dream Play*. Birth as well as death are strongly affected by gravity, but also ageing. When death occurs the physical body could be described as lost to gravity. When life leaves the body, the constant physical struggle to contest gravity ceases. Indra's daughter goes through both birth and death in the drama. This is described in a number of ways by Strindberg, and in this chapter the focus has been on investigating the ways in which Indra's daughter inhabits or experiences the female body, or even how she is actually trapped in it, as we know that she is a goddess who at the end of the play chooses to overcome gravity and leave this earth – to levitate. She has that opportunity, that freedom unattainable by living human beings.

Ellen Widmann was born in the city of Biel in 1894. She was trained as an actress in Berlin, under theatre and speech teacher Professor Emil Milan (1859–1917). She debuted as an actress in 1914, twenty years old, at the Hoftheater in Darmstadt. Between 1917 and 1919 she was employed at the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. She signed her contract in Bern on 14 April 1917, and according to the contract her period of employment was to last until 10 June 1922.⁶ However, a letter to Louise Dumont contains evidence that she resigned as early as 1919.⁷ Some examples of roles she performed in Düsseldorf, in addition to Indra's daughter, were Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust* and Lady Milford in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*.

Between the years 1920 and 1925 Widmann worked at the Stadttheater Bochum [*an den Vereinigten Stadttheatern Bochum-Duisburg*]. From 1925 until 1928 she worked at the Volksbühne Berlin and collaborated with director Erwin Piscator, later joining the theatre collective he started. In 1929 she worked with director Max Reinhardt at the Berliner Theater, playing Lady Capulet in Shakespeare's *Romeo und Juliet*. She returned to Düsseldorf and made guest appearances in Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf in 1932, for instance as Mutter Baumert in *Die Weber* by Gerhart Hauptmann (1862–1946), directed by Leopold Lindtberg.

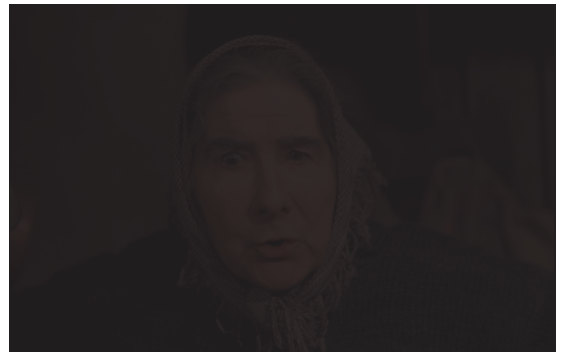
In 1939 Widmann returned to Switzerland and Schauspielhaus Zürich.

There she played over 50 roles between 1939 and 1965. In 1951 she started a talking choir, *Kammersprechchor Zürich*, together with conductor Fred Barth Gründung. From the 1930s until the 1970s Widmann also had a film career. Her most famous film role was as Frau Beckmann in Fritz Lang's *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (1931). She also had a role in Erwin Piscator's film *Der Aufstand der Fischer* (1934). She had numerous roles in Swiss Radio- and TV-dramas. For many years she worked as a theatre teacher and as a theatre speech teacher.⁸ Together with her husband Adolf Manz, also an actor, she started her own theatre school in Basel.⁹

Ellen Widmann may not be well known outside Switzerland today, but the theatre dominated her entire life and she worked until at least 1972, when she was 78 years old. Her interest in theatre began in her early years, according to an interview in connection with her eightieth birthday. In the quotation below, she recalls her first theatre experience in 1906, at age twelve, when she both acted in the leading role and served as director, as well as being in charge of the scenography:

Im Jahre 1906 erlebten die Aarauer eine nicht ganz alltägliche Theateraufführung. . . Hauptakteure ware ein Mann (ein Arzt) und eine Frau. Der Arzt war ein zwölfjähriges Mädchen, das auf den Namen Ellen Widman hörte. Ellen zeichnete auch verantwortlich für Bühnenbild und Regie.¹⁰

In her most famous role in Sweden, as “Kommandoran” in *Emil i Lönneberga*, she does an interpretation of the impoverished old woman, rejected by society, who has been sent to the poor house (*fattigstugan*). [Illustration 2] In the film however, Kommandoran is not supposed to be amiable or pitiful. Widmann wears makeup that is obviously intended to present her as “ugly”, with messy hair and missing teeth. In the film, Emil's mother sends him to the poor house at Christmas-



2. Ellen Widmann as Kommandoran in *Emil i Lönneberga*. © 1971 AB Svensk Filmindustri. Still photo: Lars Erik Svantesson

time with a basket full of Christmas food to share with the poor. Later Emil finds out that Kommandoran has kept all the food for herself and not shared it with the other paupers. Ellen Widmann portrays a body burdened by shame and sadness when playing the role of Kommandoran. The character gives in to her egoistic temporary pleasures and Emil punishes her later in the film by setting up a trap to humiliate her.

In *A Dream Play* Indra's daughter learns that it is impossible to do good deeds without hurting someone; even if you have good intentions, you always disappoint someone along the way. These are the words of the Officer's mother: "Oh this life! When you do a good deed, there is always someone who thinks it's bad...help one person, and you hurt another. Oh this life!"¹¹ Kommandoran committed one of the most unforgivable sins: she helped herself first. Emil thinks he is being "a good boy" by punishing her for being selfish. But what if we try to sympathize with the sadness in Kommandoran's eyes instead of admiring Emil's self-righteous attempt to do a good deed? We could ask ourselves: What does Emil know about the suffering Kommandoran has endured in her life? What gives him (and us the audience) the right to judge her? In the article "Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness", published in 2010 in *Signs*, Sara Ahmed introduces a term she calls *unhappy archives*, which she explains as follows: "It is not simply a question of finding unhappiness in such archives. Rather, these archives take shape through the circulation of cultural objects that articulate unhappiness with the history of happiness."¹² Indra's daughter in *A Dream Play* actually dwells in these unhappy archives when inhabiting a female body. This is repeated on Widmann's body when playing Kommandoran, the ugly and selfish old woman. But how can we ever understand her belief that enjoying the food by herself will bring her greater pleasure than sharing it with the other paupers? Simone Weil uses the word *affliction*, a translation of the French word *malheur* that I find interesting here and will use when discussing what experiencing life on earth in a female body does to Indra's daughter. Weil describes *malheur* as being deeper than suffering. Associated with physical pain and misery, suffering is more comprehensible than *malheur*, the unhappiness that according to Weil attacks the soul. Weil writes in the essay *L'amour de Dieu et le malheur*:

... those who, even having suffered much, have never been in contact with malheur itself have no idea what it is. It is something specific, irreducible to any other thing [...]. And those who have themselves been mutilated by malheur are out of commission and cannot offer help to anyone and are almost incapable of even desiring to do so. Thus compassion for those with malheur is an impossibility. When it actually occurs, it is a miracle more surprising than walking on water, healing the sick and even the resurrection of the dead.¹³

The story of Ellen Widmann in the role of Indra's daughter has not been told before. In the available biographical surveys describing her acting career, the Düsseldorf years are sometimes left out altogether. This is a text that does not place Indra's daughter in any specific time; instead I will show how and why she is timeless and is an important trans-time voice on the subject of gender captivity. To give her the body of Ellen Widmann I will begin on the evening of 16 October 1918, when August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* premiered at the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf and then follow Ellen Widmann after she stepped off the stage in Düsseldorf.

Less than a month after the premiere, on 11 November 1918, the First World War ended and in the same month a revolution broke out in Germany. It continued until August 1919, and was followed by the Weimar Republic period of German history. The political climate in Germany in 1918 was marked by the First World War and a desire to create a new society that would not lead to a new war. Another "revolution" in Germany during this period was the enactment of female suffrage. In November 1918 a law was passed giving women over the age of twenty in Germany the right to vote in national, state and municipal elections. This meant that the majority of entitled voters were women.¹⁴ A consequence of this was that the female body was made a political issue in order to attract female voters. The politics of the female body came into focus more than before the enactment of this law.

Acting on the assumption that women were different politically from men, all parties sought to articulate what they assumed to be female voters' interest by invoking a set of "women's is-

sues” – political and economic rights, maternity, religion, social welfare, and so on – a process that simultaneously anchored these themes in German political discourse in new ways. At the same time as it constructed political identities for women, propaganda revealed how each party conceptualized democracy, the war, revolution, class, the state, and culture.¹⁵

The context where *A Dream Play* was staged for the first time in Düsseldorf was thus a dramatic period in German history with strong political tensions. Was the interest in the politics of the female body reflected on the theatre stages at this time? How can this be discussed in relation to Indra’s daughter? It is clear that gender roles and the female body were subjects of political discussion.¹⁶ This was also the year after the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Rosa Luxemburg (1879–1919) describes the revolution of the workers as a “*sturmlut*”, in her text “The Russian Revolution” where she criticizes the revolution.¹⁷ Rosa Luxemburg was co-founder of the *Spartakusbund*, and also coined the name. At the end of 1918 the *Spartakusbund* became the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD).¹⁸ Rosa Luxemburg was murdered in 1919 by reactionary anti-communist militants (members of *Freikorps*), during the German revolution, when she was participating in the Spartacist Uprising.¹⁹ When this happened the influential and ground-breaking director Erwin Piscator (1893–1966) decided to join the *Spartakusbund*.²⁰ So why are these two names interesting in relation to Ellen Widmann? Although we will not get to know either of them well in this text, the connection between Widmann and Piscator will help to illuminate the female body politics surrounding Ellen Widmann’s subsequent career. The significance of her female body will follow her as an actress and, as we will learn, it follows the path bound to time and gravity, the path that Indra’s daughter chooses to leave.

Erwin Piscator is known for developing new stage techniques and experimenting with new media such as film, cartoons, photography and audio-recording. All this was in line with the Dadaist idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* – of joining together different art forms into one theatrical performance. Dada comprised a number of different anti-art movements scattered throughout Europe in the early twentieth century. Artists from

various art disciplines – painters, sculptors, singers, musicians, poets, actors and writers – joined together in the belief that traditional bourgeois art and everything it stood for failed to address the momentous political situation in Europe at that time. They wanted to create an anti-art movement to challenge the boundaries of traditional art and contest the ideals that they believed had led to the First World War. At the time when the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf production of *A Dream Play* premiered (1918), the theatre stages in Germany were influenced by these ideas, ideas marked by a climate of experiment and the breaking up of traditions. In accordance with the Dadaist ideas, the aim was to create a new theatre that discussed possibilities for social change in society.²¹ The opening of *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zürich, on 1 February 1916, marked the starting point of Dada.²² The members of *Cabaret Voltaire* were Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Hans (Jean) Arp, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco and Richard Huelsenbeck. What these artist had in common was that they all had come to Zürich to escape the effects of war in their home countries.²³ In June 1916 Hugo Ball wrote in *Dada Fragments*:

The Dadaist fights against the death-throes and death-drunk-ness of his time. Averse to every clever reticence, he cultivates the curiosity of one who experiences delight even in the most questionable forms of insubordination. He knows that this world of system has gone to pieces...²⁴

The Dada movement is a cultural context that includes ideas useful for discussing the corporeal presence of Ellen Widmann in theatre history after the 1918 production in Düsseldorf. “This world of system has gone to pieces” is not very far from the dystopian voice of Strindberg in *A Dream Play*. Piscator joined the Berlin Dada group in 1918 and organized several Dada events in Berlin during this time, but later he wrote, in an essay on the future of theatre, that Dada was not the answer.²⁵ He organized his own theatre collective, which Ellen Widmann joined after her time in Düsseldorf. Piscator was furthermore a member of the German Communist Party (CPD) from 1918 onward and, together with Berthold Brecht (1898–1956), is also known as a pioneer of epic theatre and documentary theatre. He created political theatre and also propaganda theatre with an

aim to recruit voters to the Communist Party.²⁶ Reviewing his version of *Hoppla wir leben* by Ernst Toller in a 1927 article “Den nyaste drömmen om livet” in the Swedish magazine *Tidevarvet*, Elisabeth Krey-Lange describes Erwin Piscator in the following words:

Alla teaterintresserade ha namnet Erwin Piscator på läpparna nu. Det är Berlins nyaste teaterdirektör. I den stora teatern vid Nollendorfplatz, ha traditionerna från Glada änkan och Czardasfurstinnan vädrats ut, så att Erwin Piscator kunde draga in där med ett nybildat sällskap av ungdomar, och de flesta övertygade kommunister.²⁷

So it is not a far-fetched conclusion that Ellen Widmann sympathized with communist ideas right after she left Düsseldorf; at the very least she practised these ideas and ideals as an actress on stage. In the following quotation Piscator explains his ideas about the power and function of the theatre:

Men Piscator vill låta åskådaren uppleva mycket mer än detta. “Av brist på fantasi, säger han i ett slags programförklaring, uppleva de flesta människor inte en gång sitt eget liv, mycket mindre världens. Annars skulle läsningen bara av ett enda tidningsblad vara nog att försätta mänskligheten i uppror. Man måste alltså skaffa starkare medel. Ett av dessa är teatern.”²⁸

In 1926, Alfons Paquet (1881–1944) wrote a drama called *Sturmflut* dealing with these issues related to revolution.²⁹ The play was produced at the Berlin Volksbühne with Piscator as director (premiered on 23 February 1926).³⁰ The earliest photograph I have found so far in my research on the traces of Widmann’s acting career is from this production. In *Sturmflut* Widmann played the character Rune Lewenclau.³¹ This picture shows Widmann eight years after she played the role of Indra’s daughter. Perhaps this is not too far from the visual appearance of Indra’s daughter in Düsseldorf 1918. [Illustration 3] Here we see her as “Revolutionärin” and a Swedish(!) amazon in Paquet’s play. In this role Widmann thus follows the path of transgender roles that I would claim began with In-



Heinrich George als Matrose und Ellen Widmann als Revolutionärin in der erfolgreichen Uraufführung des Dramas „Sturmflut“ von Alois Paquet an der Volksbühne, Berlin.

3. *Ellen Widmann as Rune Lewenclau, scene from Sturmflut in 1926.*

dra's daughter. She is dressed in a masculine costume, and the name of the character, Rune, is also gender-ambivalent. In these roles she has an opportunity to try out the possibility of escaping her gender captivity.

Another significant collaboration with Piscator that Widmann was involved in was the production of Carl Credé's (1878–1952) *Frauen in Not: § 218*.³² Her performance is mentioned in *Theaterlexikon der Schweiz*:

... (grosser Erfolg als Mutter in Carl Credés "Paragraph 218", 1929 im Apollo-Theater Mannheim, 1930 im Wallnertheater Berlin, insgesamt über 300 Aufführungen in ganz Deutschland) ...³³

In Widmann's involvement in the play *Paragraph 218*, which deals with the topic of abortion law, I found a way to approach the body politics of the interwar years in Germany. The Swedish word for pregnancy, "*graviditet*", has its etymological roots in the same Latin word as "gravity", that is, "gravis", meaning "heavy". The first and most obvious appearance of gravity in Strindberg's text is when Indra's daughter, travelling on a cloud, descends through different time zones to Earth where bodies, unlike hers, are tied to gravity. This could be described as her birth and it also marks a sort of birth of the drama. Here, we are also introduced to what I will here describe as trans-time. Furthermore, the space where the play takes place is a dream setting, and it is in this context that the laws of gravity can be overruled like some kind of mirage. By having access to this space through fantasy or fiction, which are closely related to dreams, the character of the Poet is depicted by Strindberg as someone with the ability to contest gravity. Gravity then also becomes connected to power. The Poet can create dreamscapes where gravity can be overruled. By using the professional life of actress Ellen Widmann as a background for discussing the immateriality and trans-time character of Indra's daughter in a political context of female body politics, the imaginary body performed through the character of Indra's daughter, moving across borders of gender identities, can be contrasted with the actual female body politics of the interwar period. In this text the bridge between performance theories and queer theories has been built from different components derived from words with the prefix "trans". *Trans time* describe a time and space where the transgender body exists, but also a state of existence where time is not linear, similar to what Strindberg creates in *A Dream Play*, a theoretical landscape where time is not viewed as progression but rather as a transfer back and forth between different events in history, as associated with the body of the actress Ellen Widmann.

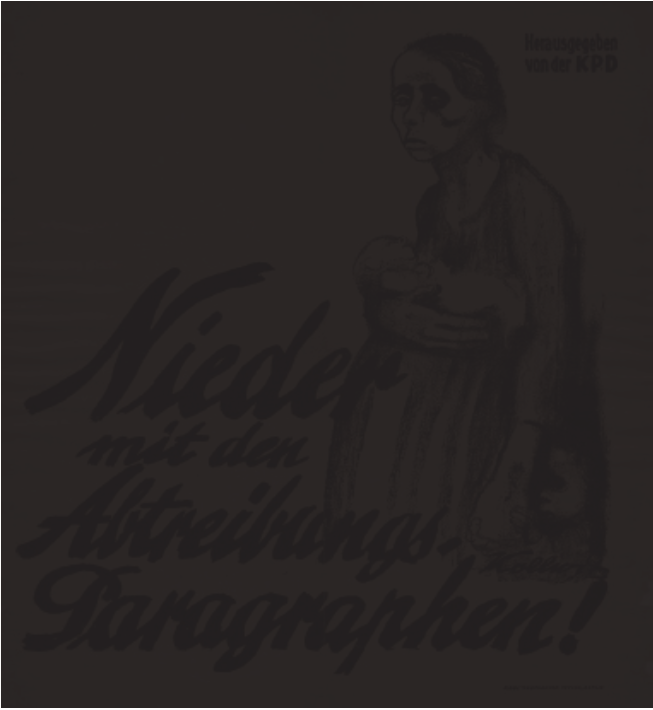
The theme of Carl Credé's *Paragraph 218*, abortion, certainly gives Widmann a female body. Carl Credé was a doctor imprisoned for violations of legal paragraph 218, the section of the criminal code prohibiting abortion. The actors in the collective collaborated on the creation of the play, which changed from night to night because the audience was invited to participate in the event. The play was set in a form where arguments for and against the legal paragraph were presented, and the audience

participated in the discussion at the end of the play. A fight was staged between some of the characters. Actors placed in the audience would walk up on stage and start arguing. In some locations a real local doctor would participate on stage and hold a speech on the subject. Finally, at the end of the play, the actual members of the audience were offered the possibility to come onto the stage and vote for or against the abolition of the paragraph.³⁴

Many artists in Germany in the 1920s were involved in the movement to abolish the law.³⁵ The influential artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), famous for her drawings on motherhood and poverty, made the poster for the performance in Berlin 1930.³⁶ [Illustration 4] Kollwitz’s drawing for the poster is only one of many illustrations she did on the subject. The main reason behind the movement to abolish the law was the hard economic times.



4. Programme for Carl Credé’s play § 218, Gequälte Menschen, illustration by Käthe Kollwitz.



5. *Nieder mit dem Abtreibungs-Paragraphen!*, poster by Käthe Kollwitz.

mother, holding both its hands tightly around her hand. The size of the mother's hands appears exaggerated. The second child, an infant, is sleeping, seemingly safe. Finally, a third child is present in the picture – though not yet born – even more closely bound to its mother's body than the other two, embedded in her womb.

Generally, the hands of the mothers in Kollwitz's art seem rough and heavy, though they tenderly caress the children. The faces of the mothers express a weariness that seems beyond desperation.

Another artist who engaged with the abortion question in his artistic work was Bertholt Brecht, who in 1929 wrote a song, *The Ballade of Paragraph 218* (*Ballade vom Paragraphen 218*), illustrating the dilemma for the poor families:

In another well-known poster on this subject, *Nieder mit den Abtreibungs-Paragraphen* (made by Kollwitz in 1924) we are immediately struck by the face of the pregnant woman holding her children while barely keeping her own body erect. [Illustration 5] But when we zoom in on her children, the image becomes even more touching and emphasizes the children's compulsive bond to their mother. The oldest child is only just visible where it is cautiously peeking out, covered by the shadow of the mother's left hand. The image shows a child that is already familiar with fear and knows that it is safe to shelter behind its

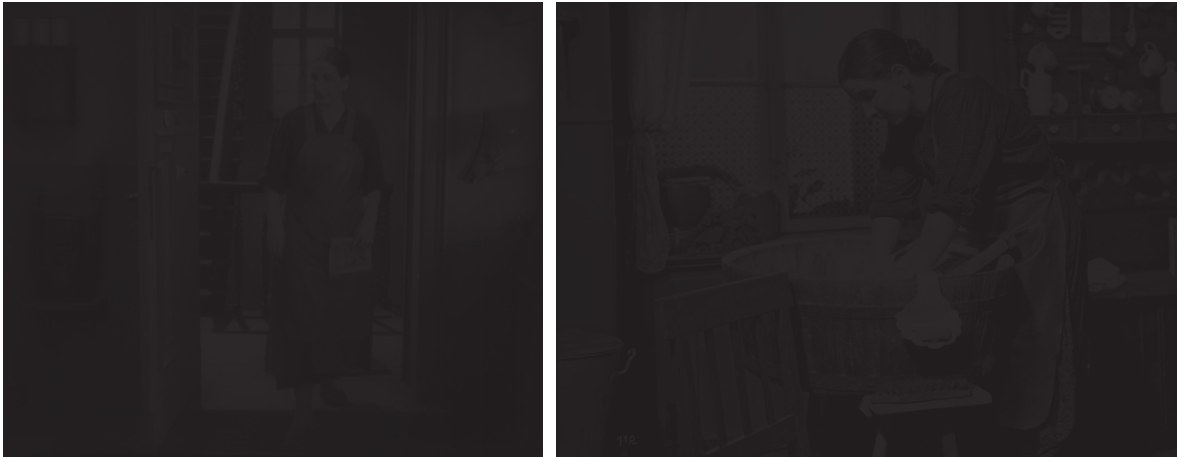
“Please, doctor. I’ve missed my monthly...”
Why, this is simply great!
If I may put it bluntly
You’re raising our birthrate.
“Please, doctor, now we’re homeless...”
But you’ll have a bed somewhere
So best put your feet up, moan less
And force yourself to grin and bear.
You’ll make a simply splendid little mummy
Producing cannon-fodder from your tummy
That’s what your body’s for, and you know it,
what’s more
And it’s laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You’ll soon be a mother, just wait.

“But, doctor, no job or dwelling:
My man would find kids the last straw...”
No, rather a new compelling
Objective to work for.
“But, doctor...” Really, Frau Griebel
I ask myself what this means
You see, our state needs people
To operate our machines.
You’ll make a simply splendid little mummy
Producing factory fodder from your tummy
That’s what your body’s for,
and you know it, what’s more
And it’s laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You’ll soon be a mother, just wait.

“But, doctor, there’s such unemployment...”
I can’t follow what you say.
You’re all out for enjoyment
Then grumble at having to pay.

If we make a prohibition
You bet we've a purpose in mind.
Better recognize your condition
And once you've agreed to put yourselves in
our hands, you'll find
You're a simply splendid little mummy
Producing cannon fodder from your tummy
That's what your body's for,
and you know it, what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother,
just wait.³⁷

In the pictures showing Ellen Widmann in the role of Frau Beckmann in Fritz Lang's film *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* she is 37 years old. In this role Widmann also plays a mother who loses her child, but from another perspective. Her character sets the tone of the film in both the opening and the closing scenes. [Illustration 6 and 7] In the first image we see Widmann as Frau Beckmann preparing and waiting for her daugh-



6. Ellen Widmann as Mutter Beckmann, in *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*. Deutsche Kinemathek. © Horst von Harbou.



7. *Ellen Widmann as Mutter Beckmann, in M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder. Deutsche Kinemathek. © Horst von Harbou.*

ter to arrive home from school. Her gaze keeps turning towards a large cuckoo clock on the wall. She carefully sets the table and eagerly prepares a meal. She does the laundry with powerful arm movements. Her sleeves are rolled up to keep them dry, and when she is done she shakes off the water from her hands. Her hands look big and ravaged by labour. Her gaze keeps turning to the clock. Anticipating. A few minutes later she hears steps in the stairwell and rushes out calling her daughter's name: "Elsie!" But Elsie never arrives.

Since the film is available on YouTube it is possible to study her movements and her voice. That has been important here. Plenty of later movies with Ellen Widmann are available, but here we can watch her when still fairly young, and get some sort of understanding of what Indra's daughter looked like on stage in Düsseldorf in 1918. I have only studied the scenes in the film *M* where Widmann is present. In the role of Frau Beckmann Widmann moves resolutely and carries out her household responsibilities with energy, determined to take good care of her daughter who will soon be returning from school. Her voice echoes more heartrendingly

each time she steps out into the stairwell and calls her daughter's name: "Elsie!" She is alone in her apartment waiting, worried. At this moment she wants her daughter to be at home with her in the apartment, but there is nothing she can do but wait, tormented by the passing of time. Her look may however seem unnaturally expressive for a woman alone in a room where no one can respond to her. The look is rather theatrical, because the gesture it reinforces has to spell out the core narrative of the movie. Without words (except for her calling her daughter's name in the stairwell and asking other children and the postman if they have seen her) Widmann uses gestures and her posture to depict the mother's gradually increasing anxiety as the clock continues its merciless ticking and the daughter does not arrive home. It is as if with her look she blames the clock for not slowing down and waiting for her daughter. Maybe she seeks comfort – looking at the clock to convince herself that it is running too fast, or that she mistook the time, that there is nothing to worry about. No matter how hard she stares at the clock, however, she cannot prevent the ruthless destiny that awaits her.

Here we see Ellen Widmann in the body of a mother and she is far from being a goddess. She is powerless when it comes to avoiding the fate of losing her daughter, but so was Indra's daughter when visiting the humans. She had no power to act against the injustices she saw and experienced; all she could do was be a spectator. She had no control over fate and Indra's daughter would probably not have saved Frau Beckmann's daughter Elsie. Indra's daughter only has the role of a temporary visitor, a student. She never even tries to put anything right; all she does is try to understand, to empathize with the humans. This is in contrast to the revolutionary ideas in Piscator's documentary theatre movement that Widmann joined after Düsseldorf. In the ideals of the cultural actions surrounding these contexts the hope of change lay in taking revolutionary action to change the present, collective actions inspired by a sense of human solidarity. Indra's daughter is stunned, amazed and devastated by how much suffering the humans have to endure in a life. To emphasize her divinity she is depicted as immaterial, ethereal, without a female body, both in Strindberg's text and in Ström's visual interpretations of her. In Widmann's role as Frau Beckman, she is also bound to the duties that ground her as a female body, a mother. She does the laundry, cooks

and takes care of her child. The film was made only a few years after *Sturmflut*, in 1930. We recognize her face from the picture depicting her as Rune Lewenclau. She still looks young. Her female body is not very feminine, perhaps because of the physical work she must perform in her role as a mother. She looks strong and is forceful in her movements. Her hands look big, like those of working-class women in Kollwitz drawings. Was this physicality of Widmann, which perhaps could be described as masculine, visible on stage in Düsseldorf? Or was it covered by her costume?

I argue that Strindberg lets the voices of the women's movements of his time be heard in *A Dream Play*, but it is as if he cannot get a sense of it. If we interpret the end as if Strindberg cannot bear the revolutionary changes in women's roles and the fact that Indra's daughter cannot possibly have a place in his world, I would then also suggest reading it as if Indra's daughter is pushed away into the future by Strindberg. I will let Indra's daughter walk into what José Esteban Muñoz calls a queer futurity (in *Cruising Utopia – the then and there of queer futurity*).³⁸ Indra's daughter functions as a transponder into a queer futurity with her transgender features. Therefore, my reading of Indra's daughter circles around this end. Indra's daughter has a vast advantage over the humans because she can choose to leave. She deals with all the sufferings and meaninglessness of this earth. A human being can choose to leave this life early too through death, but unlike Indra's daughter we do not know what awaits us. Indra's daughter shares the human experience for a short while, but she knows or comes to the conclusion that her "home" is elsewhere. Muñoz writes:

Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond

romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.³⁹

Indra's daughter, read as queer, can thus be described as an orientation towards the future. In *Queer Phenomenology* Sara Ahmed stresses the important energy that disorientation brings about. Ahmed often relates to arms reaching out, arms reaching towards objects. Is there anything or anyone for the hand to grasp and hold on to?⁴⁰ In Ström's 1915 visual interpretations of *A Dream Play*, hands and arms reaching out and grasping each other are a prominent feature. The characters connect by touching each other in different ways. This imagery is also present in Strindberg's text. One of the closing scenes has a stage direction saying that the Lawyer "comes forward, takes the Daughter by the arm".⁴¹ He tries to make her stay by reminding her of her duties, especially to her children who bind her to the Earth. Ahmed writes that moments of disorientation "are bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground."⁴² This too I relate to the mode of Indra's daughter. She tries in some sequences to see possibilities in human life, but she always gets dragged down in the dirt by the other characters representing the humans.

In this chapter the main character, Indra's daughter, is theoretically framed in what is defined here as *trans-time gender captivity*. This theory follows Judith Halberstam's idea of a queer time presented in *In a Queer Time and Place*. In these queer temporalities that Halberstam describes, queer subcultures make space for lives that point to a future of "new temporal logics" beyond "paradigmatic markers of life experience – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death".⁴³ Indra's daughter enters this logic, but she also contests it. My aim has been to enter Indra's daughter into the catalogue of the transgendered body, as a part of what Halberstam would describe as the *queer archive*. Then this text can hopefully function as a sort of a catalogue card ready to be filed under a "transgender" tag in this queer archive.⁴⁴ Questions of gender were important issues in August Strindberg's work, and of course also were burning questions at the time he wrote *A Dream Play*. The concept of *captivity* is very much present in *A Dream Play*. Indra's daughter releases

the Officer from the Castle: “You are a prisoner in your own rooms; I have come to set you free!”⁴⁵ Later in the play Indra’s daughter finds herself imprisoned in her female body.

In 1907 August Strindberg writes in a letter to Harriet Bosse: “Njut av Din frihet som Du så länge åtrått, jag vill icke binda eller vara fångvaktaren som man anser sig ha rätt att mörda! Farväl!”⁴⁶ With these words Strindberg claims he is ready to let Bosse go, but at the same time he attacks her with his harsh words. He keeps her captive in guilt. If he just lets her go he will lose control. Instead, we find him pushing her away with his own force, and thereby remaining in charge of the situation, as the active party. Indra’s daughter chooses to leave in the closing scenes of *A Dream Play*. Again, she (Strindberg) pronounces the word “Farewell”.⁴⁷ This is the word that ends the play. But here it could also be discussed whether she is being pushed away by Strindberg. Leaving is also a promise of something new and a possible new beginning. This thought is also present in a scene in *A Dream Play* where a brief dialogue between the Officer and the Lawyer zooms in on a detailed discussion concerning the characteristics of a hairpin. The Lawyer bursts out: “Look, now she’s gone and dropped the hairpins again!”⁴⁸ Commenting on this scene, Harry G. Carlson interprets the hairpin as symbolizing the two male characters’ different dreams, their impossible dreams about marriage.⁴⁹ The Officer calls the hairpin the “most perfect of all created things”.⁵⁰ He explains that the hairpin needs to converge to work, but at the same time has to be open to be able to function as a lock. The Lawyer claims that by leaving and closing the door behind him, he offers a way out for Agnes. The word “hairpin” is also sometimes used as another word for a U-turn – also described as a hairpin turn – and thus is another way of symbolizing change, the opportunity to turn around and go in a completely different direction. In my interpretation the hairpin rather symbolizes a transition closely connected to femininity and the physicality of Indra’s daughter, her struggle to keep everything in place while she manages the home and the children while dreaming of a completely different future. She still has to cope with the discontented husband who complains about her disorderliness; however, they agree that their unhappiness with each other is mutual. This illustrates how unfree and trapped she feels in her marriage. She is a prisoner; they both are.

What I find especially interesting about this scene and the other scenes I have chosen to examine more closely is the significance of the details. What does the hairpin do? Can it also symbolize an urge to imprison the feminine as a contrast to Indra's daughter who longs to escape into the seemingly impossible place, a place where she is not captive in her female body. Her reincarnated body gives hope of gender captivity emancipation. But Strindberg complains that he fears the women's movement will make sex differences go away:

Ty är det mödrar dessa som så brutalt bryta fram? Nej, de skrika tvärtom helt fräckt att de ej vilja vara mödrar! [...] De söka ju utplåna könsdifferensen på alla sätt. [...] Det är ju ett gravrande symptom och av degeneration att vilja utplåna skillnaden mellan könen, och det är icke likgiltigt om kvinnorna kläda sig som karlar.⁵¹

This fear of a future without sex differences seems timeless and is echoed in voices critical of queer theory and feminism even today. The trans-time concept used in this text refers to what Judith Halberstam has described as queer time, but I have also found it useful for illuminating the question of whether gender can be as impossible to grasp as the state without space and time that Strindberg creates in *A Dream Play*. According to the Oxford Dictionary Online, the prefix "trans-" is a Latin word meaning "across". It can be used to characterize something that crosses from one side to another, or moves "on or to the other side of". The second meaning of the prefix, according to OED, is "through", or crossing "into another state or place". Movement and change are thus embedded in the concept of trans-, the transmission, the transfer, which agrees well with both performance and queer theories.

It may seem as if transgender and trans-identity questions are important gender issues typical of discussions today, but in this text I at least want to reflect on whether these questions are as "new" as they seem. Strindberg's short story *Ensam* begins in a setting where he has returned to his hometown Stockholm and sits down for dinner with old friends. All the men in the group of friends are in their forties or fifties. Strindberg reflects on the repetition of life in a tone that we recognize from *A*

Dream Play. And he questions whether the progression of thoughts always develops toward something new and unique. Put more strongly, it could be claimed that he contests the future:

Allting föreföll dem gammalt och utslitet; allting upprepades, kom igen som evigt enahanda; det unga släktet trängde på hotande och tog ingen notis om de äldres bedrifter; ja, det förargligaste var att de unga gjorde samma upptäckter som vi hade gjort och vad värre var, de buro fram sina gamla nyheter som om de aldrig varit anade förut.⁵²

Indra's daughter is a time traveller when, in the Prologue, she descends from Indra's heaven, sinking on a "downward bound cloud",⁵³ travelling from the second world to the third world, in the words of the god Indra in the play.⁵⁴ Strindberg defines his use of time when explaining *A Dream Play* in the *Author's Note*: "Time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins and weaves new patterns: a blend of memories, experiences, spontaneous ideas, absurdities and improvisations."⁵⁵ In one of the reviews from the 1918 Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf production, the reviewer praises the risks taken in this attempt to stage *A Dream Play*, but also encourages people in the future to study *A Dream Play* in detail. Another reviewer states that it is impossible to analyse the work without distancing oneself from it.⁵⁶ I take these words as an invitation from the past, a message from the archives inviting me to conduct my research as a performative act – both in seeking to realize Strindberg's wish to contest time and space, but also by visiting the archives in Cologne and Düsseldorf, actually touching history with my hands and eyes, and unavoidably being emotionally touched by it in return. In *Touching History*, art historian Mathias Danbolt describes archive research as a performative act. Drawing on philosopher, dancer and visual artist Erin Manning's *Politics of Touch*, Danbolt expresses it in the following words: "These touches should, in other words, be seen as an inventive 'act of reaching toward' rather than as secure arrival."⁵⁷ This echoes Landauer's words in an article on *A Dream Play* written in 1918 for *Masken*, a journal published by the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus, where he argues that any attempt to write about *A Dream Play* must strive to leave the interpretations open, in order

to preserve the floating position of the text, or rather, the piece of art.⁵⁸

In *A Dream Play*, Strindberg offers a description of Indra's daughter's appearance. She asks the Officer, "What do you see in me?" to which the Officer replies, "The harmony of the universe and its beauty – your form has lines that are only to be found in the movement of the solar system, in music at its most beautiful, or in the vibrations of light."⁵⁹ Later in the play, the Blind Man describes her voice in a similar manner, with words associated with beginnings and hope; having a child, being young, being newly married, the beginning of summer holidays: "every time life smiled at me I heard that voice".⁶⁰ In Indra's daughter Strindberg embodies his idea of something otherworldly, a spiritual beauty. The character changes constantly (as do the other characters) during the play. For example, she is perceived by the Quarantine master as "Veruna himself". Veruna is a Hindu god, the ancient sky god. In earlier traditions he was also seen as the predecessor to Indra, as the King of Gods. The Quarantine master thus transforms Indra's daughter into a male god for a moment. Also, the name Agnes, as Gay G. Cima in *Performing Women* and Harry G. Carlson in *Strindberg and the Poetry of Myth* both argue, most likely alludes to the Hindu fire god, Agni.⁶¹ Like Indra's daughter, Agni too acts as a mediator between the gods and the humans. Indra's daughter is hope, and hope is modelled around the gendered body, but also constrained by it. The arm reaching out, the "act of reaching toward", is one result I have found among the visual depictions of Indra's daughter that I have studied. In the images her arms are raised away from her body. As a daughter of the gods, she is not bound by gravity. She stages a female character but her body is ethereal. The physical appearance of Indra's daughter is not obvious in *A Dream Play*. Sometimes she is not even visible to the other characters. She is in the position of being a female goddess and the daughter of the great Indian god Indra. In that position she has opportunities to explore new political territories not accessible by a person with a female body. Still she finds herself trapped by the obligations associated with having a female body. Strindberg presents her as a character who will endure human suffering, but in the end can choose to levitate away from this world, as if it were just a bad dream. I have followed the ideas planted in Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, as transferred through the cultural context of actress Ellen Widmann's career, with a focus on women's history and

the female body politics of that time. In doing so I wanted to show that discussing ideas about transgender bodies as being transmitted between transcendental spaces and the gravitational pull of the phenomenological world and its binary sex division does not lead to “a secure arrival”, but rather to a state of constant change through temporary, kaleidoscopic spaces, existing in *trans time*.⁶²

Time never stands still. Time shakes. Time quakes. Time is constantly moving, floating, streaming. Our bodies however are trapped in a zone of gravity. Through Indra’s daughter Strindberg gives us hope that there is an existence beyond gravity, a place where bodies are not bound to gravity, where there is no gender, where there is no time. Strindberg asks questions like: Why do we, in our gravity-bound bodies, still long for eternity in our minds, for a love that will never end, for constant happiness without interruption or misfortune? Through Indra’s daughter, Strindberg tells us we are impossible dreamers. We are stuck in the repetition of everyday tasks, face constant resistance, and must overcome many obstacles just in order to live, to survive. Can *A Dream Play* give comfort? Can August Strindberg really be a source of calm and comfort? Indra’s daughter tries. She strives. She cries out loud: “Human beings are to be pitied!” in several places in the play.⁶³ It could be a comfort to hear. It is like being told that you are not alone. Strindberg was an explorer. He sought answers in every religion, and *A Dream Play* in particular is an example of this.

NOTES

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Fashioning *A Dream Play*

*On Knut Ström's Costume Sketches 1915–18
from a Fashion Perspective*

VIVEKA KJELLMER

Trying on a fashion perspective

The aim of this chapter is to study a number of costume and scenography sketches made by Swedish scenographer and director Knut Ström between 1915 and 1918 for a production of *A Dream Play* in Germany. I examine how the costume-related parts of Ström's sketches connect to the visual culture of fashion and use it as a language. This makes it possible to understand the sketches as part of a social game, interwoven with the time-bound gaze and bodily experiences of an imaginary audience.

I focus primarily on the costume sketches for the main character, Indra's daughter, discussing them in relation to the scenography and the other costume sketches.¹ Analysing the sketches helps highlight Ström's visionary work with the set, and of particular interest is his use of a fashion-related idiom in the costume sketches as a means to visually express his modernist and artistic ambitions. The project aims to examine how Ström's visual language is related to the visual culture established within a fashion image discourse existing at this time, one inspired by the visual arts but mainly found in fashion illustrations and magazines. The idea is not to identify direct influences, but rather to show the importance of the graphic visual culture of the time, and its role of symbolizing a new era.

I do not speculate about whether Ström was actively inspired by fashion images, and if so, which ones. Instead, I examine the shapes and colours he used in his costume sketches, viewing them as part of a contem-

porary visual culture that included fashion. I start from the assumption that the fashion of the time influenced the costume creator/scenographer's ideas about costume, and that fashion also influenced the audience's way of seeing costume.

I would like to emphasize that the project is not about reconstructing the staged event; it is unclear what the actual costumes used in the play looked like. My interest lies in the process, the work that preceded the staged event, and the visual language used by Ström when testing and developing several costume concepts for *A Dream Play* through sketching.

Fashion, body and costume as visual communication

Body and clothing interact, shape each other and create a new whole. The actor on stage depends on the costume for the performance; not only does the costume frame and accentuate the character portrayed, it contributes physically to creating it – both through its visual shape and its physical impact on the actor's body, posture and movement patterns. Rachel Hann and Sidsel Bech discuss the role of costumes in “Critical Costume”, the introduction to a special issue on costume in the journal *Scene*. They write:

For costume is both an act of revelation and concealment, as it shapes action while simultaneously disguising the body's form and texture. While this includes the affect of fabric and the appearance politics of fashion, it is also intended to emphasize the reciprocal interactions that occur between performer and costume, spectator and action, fabric and movement.²

The significance of costume can thus be illuminated in several ways, and in this study it is a non-textual source of knowledge, both as sketch and as creative process.

Marvin Carlson points out that theatre is based largely on memory-awakening echoes of past experiences in the audience. He calls this phenomenon *ghosting* and shows how each theatre set on some level unknowingly carries the traces of – or deliberate references to – previous sets

of the play, previous works by the same author/director and past roles portrayed by the actors.³ But ghosting is not limited to internal theatrical references, it can also be external and cultural in general.⁴ Carlson writes: “The theatre’s tendency to incorporate elements of all other arts allows it to draw upon the audience’s previous acquaintance with works in those other arts in a direct manner that is not possible in those other arts themselves.”⁵ He further notes that there is a strong tradition in theatre to link costume elements (style, colour, type of outfit) to the specific characters.⁶ I find the concept of ghosting useful for explaining how costumes can use fashion references to help to position a character or a theatre production in a visual discourse already familiar to the audience.

The sketches were multifunctional. On the one hand they were Ström’s working materials; he used image and colour to experiment with various solutions to problems and develop his ideas. The sketches were also intended as instructions for the theatre workers responsible for implementing these ideas. In addition, the sketches could be exhibited separately, as artistic works at exhibitions. Ström had artistic ambitions for his creative work. He exhibited his scenography sketches from early in his career. He also collaborated with costume designer Rochus Gliese to create series of scenography sketches that were exhibited and published in the theatre press.⁷ In this sense, the sketches can be seen as examples of theatrical innovation but also as works of art in their own right. In addition to serving as costume sketches, they could take on the role of separate artworks to display at exhibitions. In addition, they became a kind of promotional materials for the artists whose scenographic images were written about and reproduced in the press.

Which of the many suggested costumes were used on stage in 1918? We do not know the answer to this question. Apart from a note from a costume fitting indicating that a blue dress with a long train was tried out for Indra’s daughter in the Prologue, no information is preserved about the costumes as far as I have been able to establish within the framework of this project.⁸ Clues about the costumes created for the final production were sought in the reviews, but this turned out to be a dead end. In the reviews, the performance as a whole is discussed as a coherent work of total art and a powerful, evocative experience.⁹ The critics mentioned that the preparatory work was thorough at all levels, and praised the leading actors.

Ström's work, the scenography and his solutions for rapid scene changes, were highlighted in particular.¹⁰ The music was discussed in some reviews.¹¹ But the costumes were not discussed, with one fragmentary exception.¹² One might conclude that they worked well in context and contributed to the whole without attracting specific attention from the theatre critics.

Another interpretation is that costume as object was not discussed, perhaps because the critics were not sufficiently interested in or knowledgeable about fashion and dress to specifically comment on the costumes. Here, we can consider the gap, the lack of specific comments on the costumes in the performance, as an indication that costume is a field that needs to be researched and illuminated. Or, to speak with Hann and Bech: "Costume is critical. It is critical to making performance, critical to spectatorship, critically overlooked within scholarship, notable when in crisis, and a means of critically interrogating the body. It is therefore critical that we discuss costume".¹³

Fashion drawings and the image of fashion

Paris was the undisputed hub of fashion and fashion illustration in the early 1900s. The links between theatre and fashion are known, one example being the significant influence of the Russian ballet on orientalism and on innovation in both fashion and theatre in France.¹⁴ In Germany, the Russian ballet was less influential; instead Austrian director Max Reinhardt's re-creation of the German theatre dominated the German-speaking parts of Europe.¹⁵

In this study, I do not go more deeply into the dance and theatre discourses, but discuss the sketches in relation to the fashion-oriented visual culture that spread throughout Europe at this time. As comparative reference materials for the costume sketches, I examine fashion plates in fashion magazines and other fashion-related publications. This study is linked to the question of what kinds of fashion images may have been available to Knut Ström and the general public in Germany at the time. I also discuss fashion caricatures as a possible source of visual inspiration.

The early 1900s saw repeated shifts in the perception of fashion and fashion images. From the point of view of both craftsmanship and com-

merce, fashion and its images increasingly came to be considered viable forms of artistic expression. An important figure in these developments was fashion designer Paul Poiret. I choose to focus my discussion on Poiret for several reasons: he was influential, part of the avant-garde, active in both fashion and theatre and quick to engage artists, and thus contributed to renewing both fashion and fashion images. Poiret also represents a clear example of how quickly fashion influences spread across borders, showing that the latest French fashions were also available to a German audience. Although many of the fashion pioneers were in Paris, the ideas spread rapidly across Europe. Paul Poiret toured Europe in the years before the First World War; among other things, he was invited several times to hold fashion shows and lectures at the department store Gerson in Berlin before large and enthusiastic audiences. Poiret's mannequin shows were not the only ones in Germany; several department stores in Berlin regularly hosted fashion shows from 1910 onwards.¹⁶ Although I am not looking to point out direct influences, I wish to entertain the thought that traces can be discerned in Ström's sketches of the same visual language of fashion illustration that Poiret actively helped to renew.

Nancy Troy has shown how Poiret collaborated with visual artists instead of doing traditional advertising, as part of his quest to present himself as an artist rather than a merchant. For example, he published exclusive albums in limited editions with artistic depictions of his dresses illustrated by two prominent artists of the time: Paul Iribe (*Les Robes de Paul Poiret racontées par Paul Iribe* 1908) and Georges Lepape (*Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues de Georges Lepape* 1911).

The images of Poiret's dresses in these albums are like scenography; both Iribe and Lepape consciously work with poses, groupings and interiors. They are certainly fashion images, but the garments are clearly orchestrated to interact with space and bodies. The similarity to scenography sketches is striking. One example is Iribe's lady in a pleated dress. The image portrays a woman in a white, ankle-length pleated dress, perhaps a tunic over a long skirt with a small trail that wraps softly around the hem. She stands relaxedly leaning against a dresser, her right hand resting lightly on its surface. Spatiality is marked by a painting on the wall and by the silhouette shadows on the wall behind the model and the furniture. A small statuette on the dresser heightens the theatrical effect and



1. Fashion illustration by Paul Iribe from *Les Robes de Paul Poiret racontées par Paul Iribe*, 1908. Courtesy of *Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris*.

2. Fashion illustration by Georges Lepape from *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues par Georges Lepape*, 1911. Courtesy of *Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris*. © Georges Lepape / Bildupphovsrätt 2016.

creates balance in the image. [Illustration 1] Another example is Lepape's two ladies standing on a terrace. The chequered stone terrace serves as the stage floor and the background is pictured as a night sky with brilliant fireworks. The two women are placed in dramatic poses with their backs to the viewer and their raised arms reflecting the fireworks' curvature in the sky. A balustrade with terracotta pots marks a clear boundary between the terrace and the night-time landscape resembling a painted backdrop. [Illustration 2]

The album illustrated by Iribe was later exhibited at the Autumn Salon in Paris, and Lepape's illustrations were shown in an art gallery.¹⁷ Poiret worked hard to stage himself as an artist. The fact that he managed to show his fashion plates in established artistic contexts says something about his personal quest but also about the changing perception of art. That fashion images were exhibited in a gallery could also have contrib-

uted to their spreading and attracting attention outside circles normally interested in fashion.

Several French fashion magazines that would play an important role in the repositioning of the fashion image were started during the years preceding the First World War. Some of the most significant were *Le Gazette du Bon Ton*, *Journal des Dames et des Modes* and *Modes et Manières d'aujourd'hui*. Troy writes: "These prewar publications participated in a reinvigoration of fashion illustration, initiated by the albums Poiret had commissioned from Iribe and Lepape, in reaction against the mechanical processes of illustration that had proliferated in women's magazines which, in turn, had themselves appeared in increasing numbers during the second half of the nineteenth century".¹⁸

Alice Mackrell notes that the renewal of the fashion image involved an exchange between the arts, with inspiration and technical know-how from different arenas inspiring each other. She writes: "The artists were experienced in painting, book illustration and poster art. To them, the fashion pictorial was an important graphic medium and they raised the fashion plate to an art form".¹⁹ This artistic ambition was explicitly stated in the first promotional dummy edition of *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, where it was written: "Now that fashion has become an art, a fashion gazette must also be an art revue".²⁰ Alongside pictures of real dresses from fashion designers, the magazine promised to include fashion images created independently by the participating artists.

Germany also had its fashion magazines. One of the most significant was *Die Modenwelt*, started in Berlin in 1865 and published until 1909. This magazine was published in 14 countries, translated into the local languages. Mackrell writes that this was probably the fashion magazine with the largest circulation, and its wide distribution shows how fashion spread across borders at this time.²¹ The story of *Die Modenwelt* and its large circulation shows that fashion was consumed and read about with great interest during the late 1800s and into the early twentieth century.

French fashion magazines also spread across the world. *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, for example, was sold in London, New York, Berlin and several other cities.²² The flow of images and fashion magazines across borders shows that there was a great interest in fashion, and it was possible to read these magazines in large parts of Europe. It is not unreasonable to

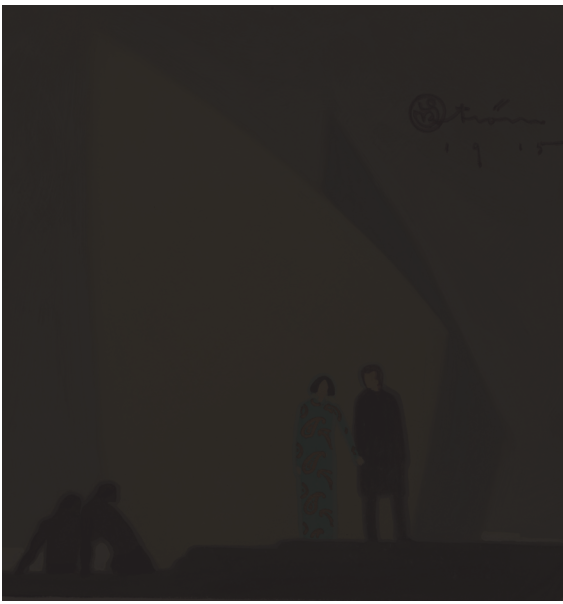
assume, I would argue, that an image-interested scenographer with artistic ambitions would choose to study these publications while working on costume sketches, something that furthermore was not his primary field.

Fashioning the sketches

1915: Indra's daughter and the modernist body

The sketches from 1915, in Stockholm and Cologne, are not detailed costume sketches, but paintings of the entire scenography, where the actors are inserted into the environments, and the overall patterns of colour and shape can be discerned.²³ This could be compared to the influential ideas of Edward Gordon Craig, who argued for a view of the theatrical production as a whole, combining design, rhythm and colour with performance. Craig writes: “No; the Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance.”²⁴ He also explains that he sees costume as part of the visual presentation: “When I say *scene*, I mean all which comes before the eye, such as the lighting, costume, as well as the scenery.”²⁵ Ström’s interest in contemporary theatre theoreticians like Craig is known.²⁶ The costumes as parts of the scenography, as well as tied to individual characters fit well into this view of the theatre production as an artistic whole.

In some of the sketches Indra’s daughter/Agnes is dressed in a bright bluish-green, straight, long-sleeved dress. The colour appears almost luminous against the dark environments and is also used in some of the interior design objects, such as a lampshade and a cooking pot. Ström reconsiders his colours, shapes and symbolic language several times; in one of the sketches the green dress is fitted with a paisley pattern, a gold-coloured ornamentation different from other sketches from 1915. [Illustration 3] The intense cold green colour of the dress stands out like an exclamation mark against this background; the wearer clearly does not belong in the earthly environment, she is portrayed as unnatural, supernatural, unable to fit in.²⁷



3. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for A Dream Play, at the Mediterranean. Indra's Daughter/Agnes in a green dress with a golden paisley pattern, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.*

In some of the sketches, Ström lets her wear a purple dress of similar linear design. The colour also appears on a purple chair in one of the scenes. The purple hue sticks out as much as the blue-green, both differing clearly from the dark palette of the interior and other costumes in the sketches. Standing out as they do, the colours become a sign of how much Agnes fails to blend in with the humans. It is notable how the blue-green and the purple dress are both very similar in shape and colour to dress designs appearing in contemporary fashion illustrations, for example by Lepape.

Examining the materiality aspects of visual statements opens up new ways to study such things as sketch materials. Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly write: “Embed-

ded in the *Visuality/Materiality* approach here is a concern with a situated eye, an attunement to the collective, multiple and embodied textures, sensibilities and productive meanings of the visual through the material, and vice versa”.²⁸ The authors point to the importance of examining the relationship between material and visual aspects, and its consequences for both image and interpretation. This line of thought is fundamental to my analysis of the sketches, and is a way to capture in writing how Ström used the material aspects of colour and form to design costumes. The interest in materiality also applies the other way around; the material traces that the working process left in the sketches reveal their making and I am thus able to read them as non-textual sources of the creative work that preceded the actual theatre performance.

When the sketches are analysed from a materiality perspective, the visible *process* and Ström’s experimentation with colour emerge. Examples

include the careful testing of the intense purple colour on Agnes' dress, a colour that is repeatedly used in details such as a chair or a law clerk's bow tie, and the luminescent blue-green colour which helps to highlight the linear shape of the dress and her body. These are choices that capture the colour schemes of the contemporary fashion plates, and they reveal Ström's sensitivity to a different image discourse than that which is normally observed in traditional scholarship. The materiality of colours and techniques affects the visual impression of the sketch. By selecting opaque colours, the character's material aspects and form are emphasized; by selecting the transparency of watercolours, dreamlike qualities are emphasized instead.

The sketches differ slightly in size and technique, and seem to have been produced at different times. Those featuring the purple colour are smaller (18.5 x 18 cm) and are detailed pencil drawings with watercolour. The purple dress has the transparency of watercolours and the details of the scenography that use the purple (a chair, the bow tie of a law clerk) are tinted with watercolour. The sketches featuring the green dress are larger (20 x 20 cm) and are not as detailed. They are not based on pencil drawings, but are painted directly with more opaque colours, giving a more sketchy impression overall. An interesting intermediate example can be seen in a sketch where Agnes, in a purple dress, and the Officer stand in front of the Mother, who is wearing a ruffled white cap and an old-fashioned dress. Ström has added the intense, opaque green colour to the lamp next to the Mother, probably at a later date. He has further added the same green colour to the Officer's collar. This particular sketch connects the green and the purple



4. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for A Dream Play, Indra's Daughter and the Officer with the Mother, 1915. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.*

colour schemes and shows how Ström experimented with possible colour palettes in his sketches, to test the effect of different colour schemes in the scenographical whole. [Illustration 4]

The sweeping, slightly elliptical shape of the dress represents a clear departure from the curvaceous female body, delineating instead an elongated, slender shape. Ström further chooses to highlight the elongated, linear form by giving Agnes' dresses long, narrow sleeves. In one of the sketches she is depicted with her back turned to the viewer and her arms raised high. Her body points upwards, towards the sky, in stark contrast to the Glazier who is standing at her side, bent towards the earth. The lines of the dress and the outstretched arms, marked by green colour of the the sleeves, mirror the hollyhocks' upward-striving stems. The golden bud crowning the dome-shaped roof of the growing castle forms an almond-shaped arrow pointing to the sky. The shape of the dress emphasizes the same direction, while the cold, green colour distinguishes the daughter

from the shimmering nature around her. The Glazier's dull purple-grey coat ties him to the drab earthen colours; his bent body strives downward, toward the ground. [Illustration 5]

Caroline Evans argues for a definition of the modernistic body that includes the renegotiation of perceptions of the ideal female body – in terms of body type, posture, poses and movement patterns – that occurred in the early 1900s.²⁹ Instead of the curvy S-shaped body, a leaner, more boyish bodily ideal was introduced, one that Evans calls the modernist body.³⁰ Evans shows how fashion shows played a major role in this development by introducing an element of



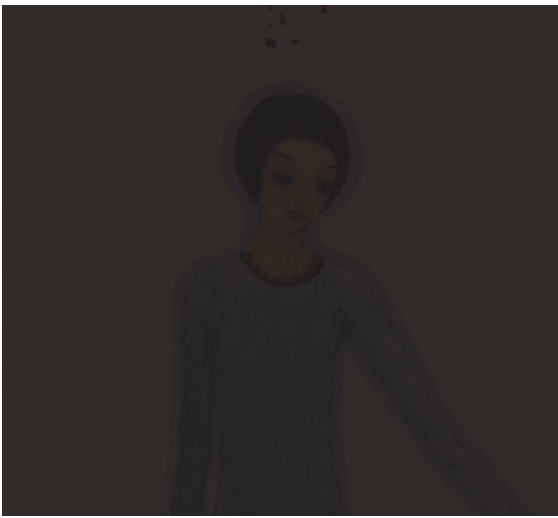
5. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for A Dream Play, Indra's Daughter and the Glazier in front of the growing castle, 1915. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.*

movement into the fashion discourse. Fashion was now seen as clothing on a body in motion, rather than lifeless garments. Evans points to the performative meaning of the moving body. She writes: “Firstly, I assume that the body itself can be modernist, in its articulation and styling. Secondly, I argue that the fashion show not only reflected modernist sensibilities, but also engendered them, which involves rethinking modernism through the agency of the body as both performative and gestural. Thirdly, I argue for the fashion mannequin’s place in what I call a modernist flow of images, commodities, bodies and styles that circulated in the early twentieth-century city”.³¹ Evans highlights the mannequin’s role as a new actor in the visual landscape.³² A mannequin modelled dresses for the customers so they would not need to try it on themselves. It was an unglamorous profession, far from today’s celebrity models. But women’s bodies demonstrating clothes by walking back and forth in front of customers, on a stage or catwalk, became a new visual trope during this time.

Evans’ discussion pinpoints how fashion and the new view of the female body were linked at that time. It is this new view of women’s bodies, I argue, that leaves an imprint on Knut Ström’s visual thinking concerning body and costume in the sketch material.

A contributing factor to the new silhouette was that the tightly laced corset with a narrow waist disappeared. But a new sleeker and sportier body ideal demanded other types of underwear. Although the laced corset disappeared, it was replaced by girdles or body stockings compressing the body and making it appear slimmer. One type of corseting was in reality substituted by another. Evans shows that the corset-less body began to spread as an ideal as early as 1910 and that it finally broke through in 1914.³³ Even if the new ideal of the corset-less body in fact often only meant a different kind of corset, it did not only mean a different body shape. Postures and ways of moving also became different. The sketch discussed above of Agnes in green dress with raised arms shows exactly this: a freer position where she can straighten her body and reach towards the sky.

The new silhouette also came with a new hairstyle. Ström chooses to depict the Daughter/ Agnes with cropped, dark hair. Her hair resembles a helmet, a compact shape that delineates the head. No loose curls or disorderly strands are implied; her hairstyle is an element of form that under-



6. Costume sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, *Indra's Daughter*, (cropped), 1916. Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.

lines the linear shape and solid form of the clothed body. [Illustration 6] I would argue that Ström makes a statement by choosing this hairdo; his Agnes highlights the new, the daring, by wearing a bobbed haircut. Short hair on women was not common when Ström made these sketches. Women's cropped hairstyles did not spread among the general public until the 1920s. Before then, it was the avant-garde, film stars and actresses, who wore short hair. Thus, this hairstyle could also be said to carry a certain celebrity status, which neither Ström nor the audience would have been unaware of

– a clear example of ghosting, where the hairstyle carries a meaning borrowed from the world outside the theatre.

Short hair on women was shockingly new. Earlier generations of women wore elaborate hairstyles with braids and hairdos made up of long hair that was never cut.³⁴ Paul Poiret is commonly cited as one of the first to embrace the new silhouette, and he showed dresses on models with cropped hair as early as 1908. In Paul Iribe's illustrations from the album of the same year, we see pleated loose dresses in the neoclassic style on models with short-cropped, curly hairstyles and hairdos with ribbons or turbans. The design is telling; here we get a first glimpse of the new silhouette with corset-less bodies and small, distinctively shaped heads instead of the earlier curvy corseted bodies with voluminous hairdos.³⁵

In Lepape's portraits of Poiret's dresses from 1911, we see hairstyles that are new in several ways. Many of the models are wearing turbans, a simple way to embrace the new profile without having to cut one's hair. There is a visual similarity between the turban and the cropped bob; both make a helmet-like impression and frame the face more tightly than long hair or a fluffy hairdo. The overview of accessories in the album shows a turban with an attached loose fringe. You only had to tug your long hair

into the turban – an elegant solution to how to wear the new, chic fringe without needing to cut off your hair.³⁶ The short hair in this album is also a clear attribute of youth. Under the heading “Celles de demain” (The Girls of Tomorrow) sporty adolescent girls are depicted bare-headed with cropped hair.³⁷ [Illustration 7] Worth noting also is that in this album Georges Lepape’s artist’s signature is a stamp depicting a girl’s head with cropped hair.

From a fashion perspective, the cropped hairstyle symbolized the new sporty and youthful fashion, just like the slender silhouette. I see this primarily as a visual trope, a design that Ström chose to try in the 1915 costume sketches to indicate that Indra’s daughter signified something other than the established and accepted. Thanks to the wide distribution of the fashion press and fashion images that I have shown, it is reasonable to assume that an (imaginary) audience would recognize this silhouette and understand what it meant.

Aoife Monks argues that the costume is a paradoxical entity, an inseparable part of the actor’s body on stage, but also an outfit that can be removed and viewed separately, though it remains linked to the character.³⁸ As she puts it: “Costume is a body that can be taken off”.³⁹ Monks uses the term *visceral empathy* to describe how clothing can trigger a bodily reaction in the viewer.



7. Fashion illustration by Georges Lepape from *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues par Georges Lepape*, “Celles de demain”, 1911. Courtesy of *Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris*. © Georges Lepape/Bildupphovsrätt 2016.

Taking the corset as an example, she shows how a garment can communicate on multiple levels: symbolically by communicating confinement and imprisonment; but also physically in our own body, when we imagine how it feels to wear a tightly laced corset and all that it entails.⁴⁰ This visceral empathy, or bodily recognition, helps the audience to identify with the performer, both as an actor and as a character in the situation being portrayed. The costume becomes a bearer of embodied experience, a bridge between the portrayed and the perceived. Monks' discussion of costume as a body that can be taken off highlights how theatre costumes are more than just dress, and how they create a visual but also a physical link between what we see and what we experience in our bodies.

Monks explains visceral empathy by describing how the audience may experience in their own bodies the feeling of a corset they see an actor wearing. This example is particularly interesting in Knut Ström's case, I think, because the opposite must also be valid: the imaginary viewer who sees Indra's daughter in an elliptical dress without a visible waistline, can perceive how the body has been released from the laced corset and can move in a completely new way. The slim silhouette stands in stark contrast to the previous curvy and corseted ideal woman. Through his costume choices for Indra's daughter Ström conveys not only a visual experience but also a different body shape with a new posture and a new pattern of movement, something that the viewers both see and to some extent also experience in their own bodies.

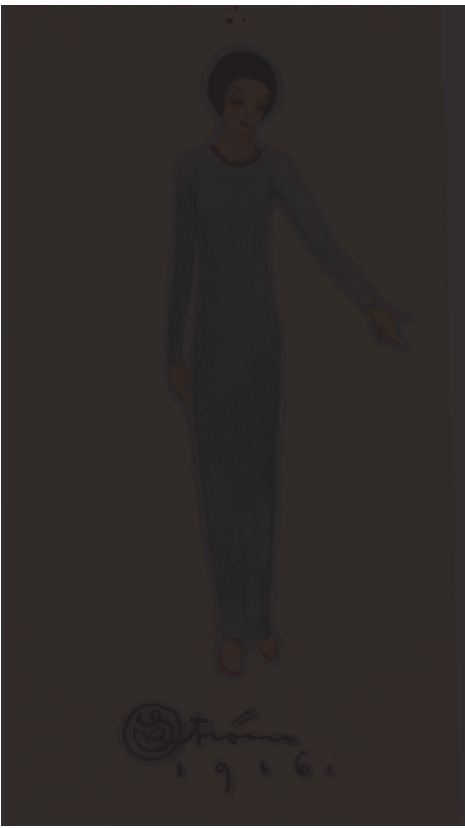
Joanne Entwistle argues that dress must be understood as an embodied and situated practice, a practice in which both social and physical agency must be considered.⁴¹ She writes: "In sum, the study of dress as situated practice requires moving between, on the one hand the discursive and representational aspects of dress and the way the body/dress is caught up in relations of power, and on the other, the embodied experience of dress as a means by which individuals orientate themselves to the social world."⁴² I would argue that Entwistle's view of body/dress is also applicable to the costume-body relationship on the theatre stage. Viewing the costume both as socially meaningful and as embodied personal experience enables the viewer to understand not only its symbolic meaning but also its physical significance for the wearer – and by extension for the viewer as well. Costumes can be symbolically charged, so much is obvi-

ous. Carlson's concept of ghosting can be used to understand this charged costume as a tool to mirror social or cultural values. But it is not only about the visual presentation; the costume affects the wearer physically by influencing patterns of movement and posture, perhaps changing how we stand and walk, as in the example where Agnes, in her green dress, can stretch her body and lift her arms towards the sky.

If we go beyond the social and symbolic meanings and consider the agency of costume, we understand that it interacts with the body of the wearer and has a physical impact on how the body moves in space. The costume affects the wearer and thus also the impression conveyed to the viewer. Entwistle's arguments underpin the understanding of costume and its role on stage. By considering costume as socially meaningful and as bodily experience, we capture not only its symbolic meanings for the viewer, but also its physical significance for the wearer – and in the next step also for the viewer. I choose to view the experience as an echo in one's own body. The clothed body on stage leaves a physical echo with the viewer; what we see becomes embodied through our memories of past experiences. Using Carlson's terminology, we can understand this as our past experiences ghosting what we see on stage and transforming it into another embodied experience.

1916–18: The sketches as fashion drawings and fashion caricature

A series of seven costume sketches from 1916 are preserved in Düsseldorf. These are postcard-sized pencil and watercolour sketches, colourful and elegantly abstracted. Six of the sketches depict men's costumes. Two depict the Billposter, dressed in oriental tunics of blue and yellow, with his green dipnet. The remainder show the Lawyer in a garment resembling a dress coat, the Teacher as an elderly hunched man in glasses and tail coat, the Officer in an exaggerated paisley-patterned uniform, and the Poet in a cape – the spitting image of August Strindberg, one might add. All the figures stand in expressive poses, conveying something about the character through posture and bodily expression. The Officer in his patterned fantasy uniform in blue and purple poses confidently, legs apart with his horse whip behind his back. The Billposter crouches over the dipnet, clutching it desperately. The Poet leans forward holding his



8. Costume sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, *Indra's Daughter*, 1916. Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.

stick with both hands in a powerful pose, his ankle-length cape draped over his shoulders like a magician's cloak.

The seventh sketch depicts Indra's daughter. She is posing in a bluish green dress with long sleeves. Her legs are pressed together in the narrow dress, and her feet peep out in dainty red shoes from under the hem. Her right arm hangs by her side and her left arm is raised with outstretched hand. Despite her outstretched hand, she gives a stiff impression. Eyes lowered, she does not meet the viewer's gaze but seems introverted, unreachable like a doll. [Illustration 8] To me this sketch of Indra's daughter resembles a fashion drawing. The pose is familiar from contemporary fashion illustrations where the staging of the body is meant to show a garment, not a personality. She resembles a doll more than a human being. This is a stylistic feature that appears in many of Ström's sketches of Indra's daughter. The doll-like appearance of the Daughter in this sketch could be read as a reference to Edward Gordon Craig's über-marionette; the ideal actor that he describes in his famous article from

1908.⁴³ The meaning of the über-marionette has been interpreted in many different ways, from a literal puppet on stage to a metaphorical description of the actor.⁴⁴ I will not go into the debate about the precise meaning of this term but would still like to point out that I find it interesting that Ström chooses to portray Indra's daughter in this puppet-like way, whether the meaning is symbolic or just one of his many experiments with style.

The same merging of fashion drawing and costume sketch can be seen in a sketch from 1918 – preserved in Düsseldorf as a photograph, as the original sketch has been lost – where the daughter poses in an ankle-length,

empire-style dress with a polka-dot pattern. The dress hangs down revealing her right shoulder, and her body is turned to the right in a contrapposto. She bends her head slightly forward with lowered gaze. [Illustration 9] The sketch is very similar to one of George Lepape's images of Poiret's dresses in *Les choses*.⁴⁵ [Illustration 10]

In Lepape's illustration the woman stands in a white empire-style dress with a similar silhouette; she bends her head forward with lowered gaze and smells a rose. Lepape's woman wears a pink turban with polka dots. In Ström's sketch Indra's daughter wears a cropped, helmet-like hairstyle, and the polka dots have moved from the turban to the dress. In both pictures, the women have very large eyes, downcast gaze, and eyelids drawn as narrow slots marked with black eyelashes. Both women have small, dainty noses and tiny, dark mouths. Lepape frames his model with striped curtains; Ström frames his with an oval. Although the resemblance between those two pictures may be a coincidence, it is clear that Ström has taken note of, and in this sketch tries out, a style of drawing that closely resembles fashion illustration. The

9. *Black and white photograph of costume sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, Indra's Daughter, 1918, (original lost). Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.*

10. *Fashion illustration by Georges Lepape from Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues par Georges Lepape, 1911. Courtesy of Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.*

© Georges Lepape/Bildupphovsrätt 2016.



style of contemporary fashion drawings is ghosting the costume sketch. I see this as an important part of Ström's working process – to consciously try out different styles as a way of tangibly connecting the costume sketches to different visual discourses, and thus to explore the visual connections that could be relevant and effective in the staged event. I understand the sketching process as a kind of experimental workshop where different styles, well known to the audience, are tested and evaluated.

Further stylistic experiments can be found in a series of five pencil sketches from 1918, now preserved in Stockholm. These are very different from the painterly scenography sketches, sketchy in form but containing detailed renderings of facial expressions and hats. A materiality perspective can help us understand the working process and notice the painstaking work that lies behind what at first glance may appear to be a series of rapid sketches. The distinct lines appear sharp against the grainy, yellow paper and all the sketches are marked with Ström's artist monogram.

The sketches are drawn on a heavy cardboard with a mottled surface. It is yellowish today, but has probably yellowed somewhat since 1918. Ström used a fine-tipped pencil reinforced with thin grey lines applied with watercolour. This also applies to his signature and the date. The watercolour provides the pencil drawing with shadow and depth without adding any colour. The dimensions of the sketches are 15.5 x 24 cm. Erased lines can still be seen in the sketches, revealing how Ström has changed precise details such as the rounding of Indra's daughter's headdress or the hem of her gown.

A close reading of the caricature-like pencil sketches from 1918 shows that they are more than just rough sketches. The thought process emerges in their materiality, through visible changes and erased lines, still present as traces in the paper. Ström's artistic ambitions are revealed in the precise pencil lines shadowed by delicate watercolour, as well as by his dating and signing (with his artist's monogram) of each and every sketch. His "grotesque" drawings are in fact carefully constructed style studies – parts of a process whereby costumes, personalities, and expressions are tested in several time-consuming steps.

Indra's daughter (still divine, and in my interpretation having just descended to earth – before she becomes Agnes), is portrayed barefoot in a full-length gown, with straight longitudinal stripes or pleats and with-

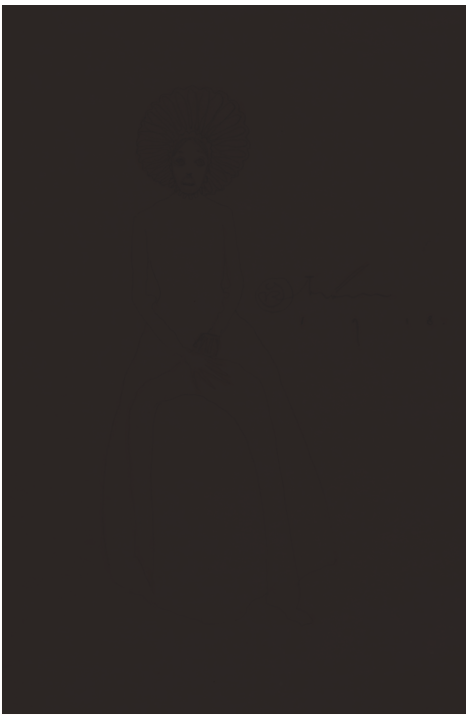
out a prominent waist. Around her shoulders, attached to a wide, beaded neckline, stiff leaf-like shapes stand up like a garland surrounding her neck. Her doll-like face, with its large, empty eyes, pronounced eyelashes and raised eyebrows, is depicted in great detail. Again, this puppet-like appearance could be interpreted as a reference to Craig's über-mariionette. She smiles faintly. On her head she wears a fan-shaped hat or perhaps a diadem, ending with hanging teardrop beads on both sides. The costume gives a masquerade-like impression, looking like a Greek column with the hat as its capital. She stands in contrapposto with her left foot positioned slightly forward and her arms lifted in a welcoming gesture. By referencing antiquity and mythological aesthetics, this costume underscores her god-like and non-human qualities. [Illustration 11]

From a fashion perspective, the Greek-inspired costume links to the neoclassical fashion that preceded the oriental style. Loosely pleated empire cut dresses in airy materials were followed by straighter dresses with greater focus on the linear female body with narrow hips. Examples of the neoclassical fashion style can be seen in Iribe's album *Les robes*, where pleated, empire-cut dresses, both white and coloured, are portrayed. Several of the dresses also exhibit the characteristic wide neckline that leaves the shoulders bare, sometimes framed by fur trim or a frill.⁴⁶ A clear kinship is visible with the leaf-like edge on the Daughter's costume that frames her shoulders. If we choose to see the dress this way, the neoclassical costume in the Prologue can be interpreted as a literal precursor to the modernist dresses in subsequent scenes.

In the sketch portraying Indra's daughter as the Portress, Ström has chosen to let a ruffled edge around the cap grow into a large headdress. The ruffles look like petals



11. Costume sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, *Indra's Daughter*, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.



12. Costume sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, *Indra's Daughter as the Portress*, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.

and the hat frames her face like a floral halo reminiscent of a chrysanthemum. This is a significant flower in the play; in the final scene – as the final, cataclysmic fire devours the growing castle – the bud crowning the castle finally opens into a chrysanthemum in full bloom. Agnes is portrayed as a slim Portress in a tailored dress with a wide skirt and narrow, long sleeves. Her face is young and her mouth is drawn as a stern line. Her hands are crossed in her lap where she holds a piece of fabric that may be a shawl or a crocheted bed-spread – both being key objects in the play. [Illustration 12]

In one sketch, the Mother appears like a massive, keyhole-like shape; only her head and her crossed hands in her lap are depicted in detail. Her head is surrounded by wavy ruffles; she wears a cap that forms a distinct frame around her small face, the most prominent feature of which is her peering eyes looking over the edge of a pair of spectacles. In another sketch, the Billposter is depicted as a worried old man with a grotesquely enlarged bald head and pronounced wrinkles on his forehead and beneath his round, staring black eyes. His head emerges from a large, circular, plate-like collar – a reference to the dipnet.⁴⁷ There is also a very sketchy picture of an angular male person, the Glazier/Father, with broad shoulders.

Fashion was a rewarding field for caricaturists, who created both general satire on the vanity of people who slavishly followed the fashions, and more specific caricatures of specific fashion houses. A telling example is Georges Goursat, better known as Sem, who caricatured the fierce competition between the new fashion houses advocating the oriental style, such as Paul Poiret, and the more classic houses, such as Jeanne Paquin. His album *Le Vrai et le faux chic* (1914) depicts Paquin, along with a number of other fashion houses on the Rue de la Paix as the height of elegance,

“genuine chic”, which is pitted against the “false chic”, illustrated with grotesque parodies of dresses clearly inspired by Poiret, though his name is never spelled out. The album was published in a limited deluxe edition and did not reach a wide audience directly, but it provoked a fierce debate and many of the images were reprinted in the press.⁴⁸

The album vividly describes, in words and images, how the fashion shows of the new fashion houses degenerate into shameless and depraved events where fashion is reduced to tasteless entertainment.⁴⁹ Under the headline “Les Chapeaux” (The Hats) he singles out hats as significant objects, complaining that women seem willing to put anything on their heads to attract attention. In a small but telling drawing, a clown throws a succession of household objects – lampshades, pots, pans – to a woman who eagerly places them on her head.⁵⁰ [Illustration 13]

The images are expressive; garments, accessories and poses are ex-



13. Fashion caricature by Georges Goursat (*Sem*) from *Les Vrai et les faux chic*, “*Les Chapeaux*”, 1914. Courtesy of British Library, London. © The British Library Board.

aggerated to drive home the artist's point. The illustrations clearly demonstrate the importance of body language and posture to the overall impression. Sem's drawings are not just about the clothes and the accessories themselves, but are also very much about space and bodies. There is something alluring in the powerful caricatures; as a viewer, I am fascinated by his ability to highlight the essence of a garment with just a quick stroke of the pen. The exaggerated poses of the models in Sem's caricatures demonstrate how the body becomes a bearer of meaning.

The exaggerated details in the sketches from 1918 – hats, wrinkles and the Billposter's large collar – give the sketches traits of caricature. Facial expressions and postures are taken to the extreme; the sketches are a play with shapes and details to test how far the expressions of the characters can be taken. They are at once sketchy and overtly explicit in a visual experiment where Ström has freed himself from colour in order to concentrate on shape and graphic design. It also shows how Ström uses the body to convey character. I see the cartoon-like representations as a means for Ström to work with how posture and pose interact with costume to visually convey the character's personality.

Fashion and theatre – fashion as theatre

The link between theatre and fashion was not new. Without going back too far in history, we find that fashion played a well-documented role in the theatre in the late 1800s and at the turn of the century, not least because actors often performed in their own clothes. A star could be renowned for her acting, but also build a reputation on her spectacular wardrobe. Bergman and Harning explain that the prima donnas of the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm rarely appeared without hat, gloves and jewellery – not even during rehearsals. The theatre was full of elegant actresses with matching hats, bags and fur coats.⁵¹

The actors and actresses were also judged by their stage costumes, which they had to buy themselves. An employment contract with the Royal Dramatic Theatre from 1907 shows that the actor himself had to pay for several sets of clothes, shoes, hats and accessories.⁵² This was around the same time as Knut Ström was beginning his career and de-

veloping an interest in theatre in the same city. Ström's mother and aunt had a successful sewing studio in Stockholm during these years. This may have contributed to his early awareness of the expressive power of fashion, on stage and elsewhere.⁵³

This well-established public interest in actors as people and their conspicuous attire diverted attention from the play itself, which was perceived as deeply problematic at modernist theatres such as Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. There the actors were expected to be less in focus and to subordinate themselves to the work.⁵⁴ In other words, it was undesirable that fashion and costume should function solely as eye candy and a distraction; costume should instead be an integral part of the artistic whole. This approach does not contradict Ström's interest in the communicative potential of fashion, but rather underlines the importance of understanding and using fashion/costume in a conscious way. The expressive power of fashion did not disappear simply because modernists like Ström worked an art discourse into the contemporary theatre costumes. Instead it channelled this power to strengthen the overall effect of the scenic event. The theatre may have designed the costumes and incorporated them into an artistic whole, but their symbolically charged connection to fashion remained.

It may be of interest to reflect on Strindberg's own view on the role of dress and costumes in his plays. This has been discussed by Hans-Göran Ekman in his study *Klädernas magi / The Magic of Clothes* (1991). Ekman highlights the agency of costume in Strindberg's dramatic texts, and points out how Strindberg wanted costumes to be integral parts of the play, rather than just props.⁵⁵ Ekman argues that Strindberg's view of costume depended on two things; first, an interest in (women's) clothing bordering on a fixation according to Ekman, and secondly his resentment of the fact that the splendour of costume was allowed to outshine the contents of plays in contemporary theatre, which he complains about in written satire.⁵⁶

Whatever the reason, it is clear that Strindberg was aware of the importance of dress and devoted attention to it in his literary and dramatic productions. Strindberg's flair for clothing and understanding of its importance also can be seen in his correspondence. In a letter to Fanny Falkner in 1909, for example, he discusses her attire in detail, including

the price and fabric quality of garments that she will have made at the theatre's expense.⁵⁷ Ekman shows how Strindberg imbues costume details and individual objects with psychological meaning in his plays. He clarifies how Strindberg, through instructions in the script, lets the condition and wear of garments reflect the character's mental state, and how handling clothing can signify love and care, for example when the Mother in *A Dream Play* sews name labels onto clothes.⁵⁸ Strindberg was, in other words, interested in the meaning of apparel and the communicative opportunity that lay in conscious use of costume.

The so-called clothing system existed all over Europe. Fashion and theatre have been linked throughout history by actors having to pay for their costumes themselves and thus helping to spread fashion from the theatre stage. In practice, the biggest stars dressed in the latest fashions and handed down their old clothing to less famous colleagues at the theatre.⁵⁹

Troy points out that while it is well known that the theatre was an arena for the modernist avant-garde artists, it is less known that it also played an important role for fashion designers during the same period. Not only were fashion designers hired to design theatrical costumes, entire "fashion plays" were arranged around new fashion collections. These were a kind of fashion show with dialogue, blurring the distinction between a fashion show and a theatrical performance. Another way to give exposure to fashion was to lend items of clothing to actresses and other famous people so that they would also be seen in the audience at premieres and other events.⁶⁰

Put differently, the theatre represented an established arena for fashion, both in the audience and on stage.

Fashion as a symbol of modernism

The immediacy of fashion, and its ability to bridge continents, positioned it at the vanguard of future sensibilities as an engine of modernist change.⁶¹

To conclude: my analysis shows that Ström's sketches contain traces of what Evans expresses in the above quote: that fashion can be a driv-

ing force for modernist change. My study provides clear indications that Ström expresses himself through a contemporary visual language, attributable to influential contemporary fashion images. I do not aim to show that Ström was directly influenced by any specific artist, only that the styles of contemporary fashion illustrators were spread in the fashion press and constituted a significant element in the visual and physical landscape.

Ström's costume sketches reveal how he captured lines, poses, colouring and handling of the clothed body that are also visible in contemporary fashion illustrations. A typical style of graphic representation, recognizable in fashion magazines and illustrations of the time, is thus ghosting his costume sketches.

In the sketches of Indra's daughter, a style similar to fashion illustration emerges.⁶² The concept of style can be used to categorize various garments or clothing styles, but in this case it is about how the costume sketches are transformed into fashion drawings, rather like how Ström's sketches for stage design are transformed – in terms of execution, mounting and signature – into exhibited works of visual art. It is not only the style of the depicted that interests Ström, but also the stylistic execution.

A telling example of Ström's experimentation with a fashion-inspired style is found in the five costume sketches from 1918 that are reminiscent of contemporary fashion caricature. Fashion caricature is expressive; its purpose is to drive home a point by showing both the beautiful and the ugly in an exaggerated form. Through caricature, the essence becomes clearer; as a communicative approach this should appeal to a designer of theatrical costumes. The dilemma of theatre is that audience members sitting far from the stage hardly can perceive the finer details of costume and decor. The costumes must therefore make a statement, perhaps even be excessive, for their message to be perceived at a distance. By using a visual language similar to fashion caricature in his costume sketches, Ström forces the essence of the costume to the surface. It can be seen as a tool that helps the designer to try out different forms of dramatic expression, a kind of stress test where the basic form of the costume can be tested in a visual form. Even if Ström never saw Sem's fashion caricatures, I would argue that it is likely that similar images were common in the press and thus could inspire Ström with their powerful imagery.

Ström worked meticulously for several years on the sketches. This

meant spending time and effort on getting every detail to be meaningful, which emerges clearly when the sketches are studied from a materiality perspective. The repositioning of fashion and fashion images towards increasingly being regarded as art is contained in these sketches.

Fashion plates and the illustrated fashion press served to raise both fashion and its illustrations to a new artistic context. Fashion can be seen as a powerful expressive means to draw attention to the modernist view of art prevalent at the time. The language of contemporary fashion is present in the costume sketches, and as an effective element of the scenographic motifs. I have shown that the poses and bodily expressions in the costume sketches closely resemble those in contemporary fashion illustrations.

The modernist body, with its changed perception of the agency of the female body was about a clothed body in motion, one where clothing, staging, posture and patterns of movement all helped create a new, more streamlined silhouette. Evans points to the performative significance of the moving body and also, I would argue, the theatrical aspects of the fashion show. The renegotiated ideal female body and the attention it attracted fitted well with the modernist reformist theatre's sometimes controversial goal of visual innovation.

In the visual language of the fashion drawings as well as in the sketches, the modernist female body is used as a powerful means of expression. Ström's sketched staging of Indra's daughter as a modernist woman gives the character visual impact and anchors her in the process of social change that was underway at the time. The daughter is portrayed as the modern corset-less woman, with a body shape that accentuates the linear rather than the curvy aspects of the female body. She is portrayed as a bearer of the modernist body in a straight dress and short hair.

Fashion and theatre have much in common, and both areas underwent significant renewal in the early twentieth century. Knut Ström was visually creative and sensitive to these trends. Moreover he was keen to contribute to the renewal of the field that later came to be known as scenography. He understood the visual impact of fashion and his ongoing work with the costume sketches for *A Dream Play* shows how he understood and harnessed the visual power of fashion on the stage, as well as the modernist female body, as a sign of the new *zeitgeist*.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, I use Edwin Björkman's English translation of *A Dream-Play* (1912) for names and wordings. This edition was contemporary with the 1915–18 Düsseldorf production. August Strindberg, *Plays by August Strindberg*, translated with an introduction by Edwin Björkman, Duckworth & Co., London 1912.
2. Rachel Hann & Sidsel Bech, "Critical costume", in *Scene*, vol. 2, no. 1 & 2, Intellect 2014, p. 4.
3. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage. The Theatre as Memory Machine*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2001.
4. See for example Carlson 2001, pp. 96–130.
5. Carlson 2001, p. 114.
6. Carlson 2001, pp. 119–129.
7. Astrid von Rosen, *Knut Ström's scenografi och bildvärld: Visualiseringar i tid och rum*, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Göteborg 2010, p. 24, pp. 33–36.
8. The note is in Grosse Sammlung, *Ein Traumspiel*, Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.
9. See for example *Kölnische Zeitung* 17 November 1918.
10. See for example *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* 18 October 1918.
11. See for example *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* 15 November 1918. For further discussion about the music, see Alf Björnbergs chapter in this publication.
12. In *Volkezeitung* 17/18 October 1918, Stritz writes of Indra's daughter (my translation, thanks to Herlitz for help with the German): "[...] although she should also wear a more pleasing costume than the non-beautiful one of this first performance."
13. Hann & Bech 2014, p. 3.
14. See for example Nancy Troy, *Couture Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. & London 2003, and Mary E. Davis, *Ballet Russes Style: Diaghilev's Dancers and Paris Fashion*, Reaktion Books 2010.
15. See for example Stefan Hulfeld, "Modernist Theatre", in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 15–32, and *Jahrhundert des Schauspiels: Vom Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf zum Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus*, Droste, Düsseldorf 2006.
16. Mila Ganeva, "Elegance and Spectacle in Berlin: The Gerson Fashion Store and the Rise of the Modern Fashion Show", in *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800–2007* (ed. by John Potvin), Routledge, New York 2009, pp. 126–129.
17. Troy 2003, pp. 52–54.
18. Troy 2003, p. 350.
19. Alice Mackrell, *An Illustrated History of Fashion*, Costume & Fashion Press, New York 1997, p. 166.

20. Alain Weil, *Parisian Fashion, La Gazette du Bon Ton 1912–1925*, Bibliothèque de l'Image, Paris 2000, p. 7.
21. Mackrell 1997, pp. 137–138.
22. Mackrell 1997, p. 163.
23. I have studied the Swedish material on location in Stockholm, and I have consulted the German sketches in digital form. My investigation is not focused on empirical studies of the near visual discourse in Düsseldorf but on viewing the theatre materials in the context of fashion as a broad visual current.
24. Edward Gordon Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre*, Mercury Books, London (1911) 1962, p. 138.
25. Craig (1911) 1962, p. 180.
26. See for example von Rosen 2010, pp. 34–36 and p. 75.
27. For a discussion about the alchemical meaning of the green colour, see Astrid von Rosen's chapter in this publication.
28. Gillian Rose & Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, "Visuality / Materiality: Introducing a Manifesto for Practice" in *Visuality / Materiality: Images, Objects and Practices*, edited by Gillian Rose & Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Farnham 2012, p. 4.
29. Caroline Evans, *The Mechanical Smile, Modernism and the First Fashion Shows in France and America 1900–1929*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2013.
30. Evans uses the term "S-shaped" instead of "hourglass-shaped" to illustrate the profile of a tightly corseted woman with a bustle on her skirt.
31. Evans 2013, p. 3.
32. Evans uses the occupational title "mannequin", the word used at the time for these women instead of today's "model".
33. Evans 2013, pp. 201–214.
34. Steven Zdatny, "The Boyish Look and the Liberated Woman: The Politics and Aesthetics of Women's Hairstyles", in *Fashion Theory*, vol. 1:4, Berg 1997, pp. 367–369.
35. Paul Iribe, *Les Robes de Paul Poiret racontées par Paul Iribe*, P. Poiret, Paris 1908.
36. Georges Lepape, *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues de Georges Lepape*, P. Poiret, Paris 1911, no pagination.
37. Lepape 1911, no pagination.
38. Monks, Aoife, *The Actor in Costume*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2010.
39. Monks 2010, p. 11.
40. Monks 2010, p. 24.
41. Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress & Modern Social Theory*, 2nd ed., Polity Press, Cambridge & Malden 2015.
42. Entwistle 2015, p. 39.
43. Edward Gordon Craig, "The Actor and the Über-Marionette" in *The Mask*, vol. 1:2, 1908, pp. 3–15, later published in *On the Art of the Theatre* 1911.

44. Patrick Le Bœuf discusses the complexity of the meaning of the term über-marionette and notes that it may be read in different ways, from literal to metaphorical. He specifically points to the lack of scholarly consensus regarding the meaning of the term. See Patrick Le Bœuf, “On the nature of Edward Gordon Craig’s Über-Marionette” in *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 26:02, 2010, pp. 102–114.
45. Lepape 1911, no pagination.
46. Iribe 1908, no pagination.
47. For further discussions on the symbolic meanings of the circle and the dipnet, see Astrid von Rosen’s chapter in this publication.
48. Troy 2003, pp. 174–191.
49. Evans 2013, pp. 38–39.
50. Georges (Sem) Goursat, *Le Vrai et le faux chic*, Succès, Paris 1914, no pagination.
51. Anna Bergman & Nils Harning, *Teaterns kläder*, Arena, Malmö 2008, p. 51.
52. Bergman & Harning 2008, pp. 51–52.
53. Söderberg, Lisa, “Regissör Knut Ström berättar för Lisa Söderberg”, *Sveriges Radio*, 25 May 1970. See also von Rosen 2010, p. 28.
54. See for example von Rosen 2010, p. 48; Monks 2010, pp. 57–77; Hulfeld 2013, pp. 24–25.
55. Hans-Göran Ekman, *Klädernas magi: En Strindbergsstudie*, Gidlunds förlag, Hedemora 1991.
56. Ekman 1991, pp. 5–6.
57. August Strindberg, Strindbergsällskapet and Björn Meidal (ed.), *August Strindbergs brev. 17. 13 juli 1908 – april 1909*, Albert Bonniers förlag, Stockholm 1991, p. 359. I would like to thank Astrid von Rosen for this reference.
58. Ekman 1991, pp. 109–112.
59. Diana de Marly, *Costume on the Stage 1600–1940*, Batsford, London 1982, p. 36.
60. Troy 2003, pp. 81–145.
61. Evans 2013, p. 58.
62. Willmar Sauter points to the usefulness of the concept of style. The specific styles he discusses are not directly applicable to the sketch material, but his approach to style as a concept for analysis is. As an analytical tool, style need not just relate to different theatrical styles but can be valid in fashion and costume as well, in a figurative sense. Linked to Ström’s sketches, this reasoning can be applied when analysing the content of the sketches but also, I argue, their actual execution. Sauter, Willmar, “Cyclic Perseverance and Linear Mobility of Theatrical Events”, *Representing the Past. Essays in Performance Historiography*, edited by Charlotte M. Canning & Thomas Postlewait. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 2010, p. 123.

Dancing with Strindberg

A Social Perspective

MATS NILSSON & ASTRID VON ROSEN

Dance and choreography are still rare topics in Strindberg studies. We argue that a more socially anchored understanding of dance in relation to *A Dream Play* can be helpful when seeking to understand Knut Ström's 1915–18 work with the drama in Düsseldorf. This idea is then followed up in von Rosen's chapter. Here we will look into how social dancing and the emerging new modernist dance were employed by Strindberg in the years after the 1907 premiere of *A Dream Play*. In particular we have sought to contextualize the waltz, a social dance genre enormously popular in the years around 1900, and the only form of social dance that is mentioned in the dramatic text.

Both of us have worked professionally with dance, Nilsson with folk dance and popular dancing, and von Rosen with contemporary and classical dance as well as a variety of kinds of social dancing in stage productions. The dance traditions (social and artistic) that we have experience of are connected over time with those that existed in the early twentieth century. As academic scholars from different disciplines we aim to combine ethnology and folklore (Nilsson) with art, scenography, and dance history (von Rosen).

Before exploring our main theme, we will provide a few examples of the presence of dance in the dramatic text. For the reader not familiar

with *A Dream Play*, we suggest first reading either the dramatic text itself, or von Rosen's chapter, where the drama is discussed in more detail.

Dance in the dramatic text

In the theatre corridor the Daughter asks the Billposter if the Portress "belonged to the Ballet" (B:35). He replies that "she was number one – but when *he* went, it was as if her dancing had gone with him – and so she did not get any parts" (B:35).¹ Here dance serves as a metaphor for life, love and happiness, and can be related to ancient symbolic systems where dance resembles the rhythms of divine creation. Ritualized and choreographed dances create weaves intended to make universe more comprehensible. Because dance disappears at the same moment as it occurs, it is easily associated with both death and liberation. The dance of life and the dance of death take part in the rich transformative weave that characterizes *A Dream Play*.²

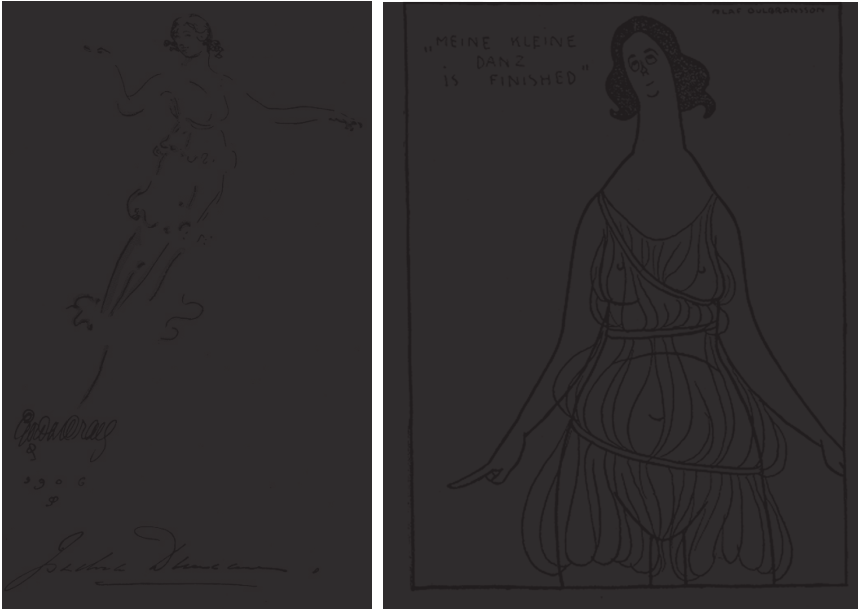
When "*faint dance music is heard from above*" [italics in original], the Officer says "oh, now the rehearsals have begun". While his remark indicates the time, and how time is being strangely compressed in the corridor, the distant dance music is an expansion of an imaginary space. Although the audience does not actually see the dancing that might be going on, they can hear the music and will associate it with whatever memories they have access to. This use of distant music is repeated in the scene at Foulstrand, when the Poet says: "Agnes, daughter of the gods! Do you hear that music and dancing up there on the hillside?" (R:210). Again we are offered the possibility to fill in the details, and experience the ongoing party in our imaginations, and to feel less at ease when we learn that the party is for Lena's (a character in the drama) wicked sister who has returned home. The Poet argues that "they should give a ball and a banquet every night for the spotless worker that never strayed into paths of error" (B:63). Here popular dancing and its music are linked with socially charged ideas concerning class struggle and sexual morality.

Male chorus members and ballet girls form a group of bodies, together with the rest of the characters, when the mysterious door in the corridor is about to be opened. This group is choreographically important, as it

transforms, travels through time and reappears in several scenes in the drama. At the Lawyer's office "one would think that the people in the group had been standing there forever" (B:45). Thus, even stillness is choreographically productive, and forms part of a larger pattern or system. In the church scene "[t]he chorus from *Die Meistersinger* become HERALDS carrying sceptres while the DANCERS carry laurel wreaths" (R:197). In this choreographed ritual the ballet girls or dancers have an important function, and when the Lawyer does not receive his wreath, they represent a societal and symbolic order. The painful failure of the system is apparent in how the Officer views receiving a wreath as just a sort of diversion.

At the ball in Fairhaven we meet Ugly Edith, sitting outside "the resort's assembly rooms with the windows open; inside couples dancing" (R:214). Three young maidservants are staring at the dancers through the windows. At first the Daughter does not perceive the horrors of the "music and dancing even in the morning" (R:214). But the deconstruction of the event begins when she asks the maids why they are not dancing, and the Officer replies: "But they are servants" (R:214). Edith, who has not been asked to dance for three hours, starts playing Bach on the piano. From inside the building, waltz music is heard, but it is drowned out by Edith's playing. This musical victory is brutally reversed when a man in the crowd grabs one of the dancers, Alice, and leaves with her. The dance of life is replaced by the dance of death, as Edith freezes; she has lost her love and her ability to move, thus echoing the faith of the Portress. In the humiliating and painful school scene, the Quarantine Master calls on the Officer to "Come and help us dance . . . we must dance before the plague breaks out" (R:218). Dancing is ambiguous; it brings life yet is also a way of escaping boredom and hard work. At the end of the scene, crying is heard from Foulstrand, because the people there do not have "music, and dancing, and young people" (R:223). However, having these things does not make the people of Fairhaven any happier.

It is worth noting that after the premiere of *A Dream Play* at Svenska Teatern in 1907, Strindberg himself began to engage creatively with the dance dimensions of the drama, seeking new ways of expressing its societal, aesthetic and psychological conflicts.



1 & 2. Two very different representations of Isadora Duncan dancing from the Swedish journal *Ord och Bild* 1906, pp. 385–386. The first one is a drawing by Gordon Craig co-signed by Duncan, and the second one is a caricature by Olaf Gulbransson.

Strindberg and Dance

When in 1906 dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan and theatre reformist Gordon Craig visited Stockholm, Strindberg avoided them as much as he could. [Illustrations 1 & 2] As a matter of fact, he never saw Duncan dance, and even asked his former wife Harriet Bosse to save him from the dancer’s “art of seduction”.³ We would suggest that this emotional reaction reveals that dance, and perhaps more specifically, the liberated and dancing female body, was a highly charged issue for Strindberg. However, his reluctance to engage with Duncan in any live setting did not stop him from wanting to include dances in her style in *A Dream Play* a few years later. In *Fem år med Strindberg* (1935) Falck recalls that in 1909 Strindberg composed three dances for two of the actresses at Intima Teatern, Fanny Falkner and Anna Flygare.⁴ Even if memories change over time, Falck’s narrative seems to be rather stable and it is also combined

with other source materials such as letters and drafts. For example Strindberg notes that the compositions were to be perfected by the actresses themselves, thus ascribing to them the status of creative and independent avant-garde dance artists. Strindberg's ideas on dance were in fact very much in line with the trends in avant-garde circles in Europe, and in his drafts they are specifically linked to the work of Duncan. Strindberg's attitude toward modernist and avant-garde dance thus feeds into a pattern of ambivalent rejection and incomplete incorporation, typical of his way of being creative.⁵

According to Falck, Strindberg's idea to create dances for *A Dream Play* arose at a party celebrating the one-year anniversary of Intima Teatern. In the evening Strindberg joined the party held at the theatre after a performance of his successful drama *Svanevit*. After dining, they used the stage for dancing, and to everyone's great surprise, Strindberg wished



3. *The Intima Teatern, where Strindberg enjoyed social dancing on stage during a party after a performance of Svanevit. Courtesy of Strindbergs Intima teater.*

to join in. In a good mood, he could be very charming, and so he proposed “français” and then asked the actress Manda Björling to dance. Falck followed and danced with the visiting actress Anna Norrie. There is a warm and intimate tone about Falck’s written description: “We danced for a long time. Strindberg seemed to surrender himself to the graceful atmosphere of the occasion”. Falck also reflects upon the unusual juxtaposition between this gracefulness and “Strindberg the Titan”.⁶ [Illustration 3]

Most kinds of parties usually involve elements of contemporary popular dance and music. Français, or *fransäs*, is a name used for contra dances (Contre Danse Français⁷) where the dancing couple face another couple, often in a square (*kadrilj*, Quadrille) but sometimes also in two lines. This way of dancing was popular along with the waltz during the second half of the nineteenth century. A dance for many couples alternated with a dance for couples, not organized in a specific way. These two forms supplemented each other. The waltz is for a single couple, while contra dances like the français foreground the collective dimension. The dancers have to adapt to the overall surroundings and are more closely observed by other dancers in the français than in the waltz. This emphasizes all the charm and elegance an individual dancer displays in the dance and is an important part of the social game – and Strindberg was well versed in this game. [Illustration 4]

The event at Intima Teatern shows how ubiquitous social dancing was in Strindberg’s theatrical context, in the midst of modernist artis-



4. This photograph from 2007 of dancers in Peterborough town hall demonstrates the social character and collective dimension of contra dances such as the Français, a dance Strindberg was well versed in. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

tic experimentations. When celebrating the one-year anniversary, social dancing seems to have been seamlessly integrated in the festivities, following rather strict social rituals and patterns. The dancing on the stage can on the one hand be described as a particular form of social dancing, resembling the dancing that takes place at private parties, but on the other hand it is a celebration of artistic life and the accomplishments of the theatre, taking place as it does at the heart of the theatre, on the stage. Strindberg danced in the artistic context, immersed in a particular air of belonging that probably glossed over certain pressing aspects of social dancing that have to do with finding a spouse. Apart from the français, the couples probably also danced other common and popular dances, such as the waltz.

As a Swedish European, belonging to the cultural cosmopolite elite of his day, August Strindberg knew the dances of his time and how to dance them in social settings. He was born in 1849 in Stockholm, Sweden's capital and largest city, and studied at Uppsala University, the oldest and most prestigious university in the country. His parents belonged to the lower bourgeoisie in the city of Stockholm. His father worked as a shipping agent and his mother as a hostess in a public house. We can say that Strindberg was born with one foot in the urban working class and one in the growing commercial society. He belonged to the educated cultural elite but at the same time was rooted in the broader popular culture.

Strindberg lived in the urban capital of Sweden, while the majority of Swedes lived in the countryside and performed hard manual labour in the agricultural sector or worked as servants or in similar occupations to survive. Thus, Strindberg belonged to the urban, intellectual and cultural middle class, people who were not accustomed to strenuous physical work. Worth noting is that, although there were social and economic differences between the classes, the most popular dances were the same across class borders, even if the different environments created different variations of the dance forms. It is not so much the dances that differed between the classes, but the clothing and arrangements surrounding the dancing. And, as can be seen in *A Dream Play*, people from different classes went to different dance events (and still do so). It is who you dance with, where, and when, that is important for class cohesion, not *what* you dance.

In Europe dance has been a common form of amusement and an important social arena at least as far back as mediaeval times.⁸ There have also been judgements and taste opinions about how to dance, where and when. Young people's dancing, at events where they meet the opposite sex, especially among the upper and middle classes, were more or less explicitly supervised by the adults and parents. A chaperone could exercise control while allowing young people to dance, but there have also been laws banning dancing.⁹ Still, dancing has continued to be an important – perhaps the most important – arena for seeking and finding a partner for life.¹⁰ It is during our youth, before we find a partner, that we dance the most.¹¹ Strindberg twists and makes use of this societal pattern in *A Dream Play*, at Fairhaven, when people dance, marry and immediately decide to die. Dance comes across as problematic and ambiguous. The waltz can be associated with dance's role as a tool for and symbol of the positive parts of the socially coded search for partners and having fun, but Strindberg quickly turns it into something that is very cruel when you fail to be asked to dance or to get the partner you want.

Strindberg lived during the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, a time that saw a shift in popular dance and dance music fashions in Europe.¹² Earlier, the social dances had their background in and around Europe. But from around 1900, new impulses from across the Atlantic increased in number and intensity. More and more influences came from America, mainly from the USA, while continental Europe became less significant when it comes to popular influence. Waltz and polka were two dance and music varieties that spread through all classes on the European continent in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the end of Strindberg's life, at the beginning of the twentieth century, people also danced modern popular dances from America like the Boston waltz, one-step, two-step, tango and foxtrot.¹³ And, as usual, it was the youth that adopted the new trends, while the older generations continued to dance the dances from their own youth. Strindberg's use of the waltz in *A Dream Play*, and his dancing the français at a social gathering of the cultural elite, are good examples of this. Against this backdrop it is also all the more amazing that he, a few years before his death, worked so intensely to integrate modernist dance into some of his dramas.

Strindberg's dance environment was not limited to spaces for social

dancing. Performances of theatre, ballet and opera also formed part of his social surroundings. Ballet was still the most highly esteemed of the dance forms created for the theatrical stage, but from the turn of the century and onwards it was challenged by what is usually called modern or avant-garde dance, which freed itself from the strict rules of ballet, but also invented new rules.¹⁴

Dancing in the style of Duncan

Returning to the party at Intima Teatern in 1909, after the previously mentioned social dancing on the stage, the party continued with Strindberg sitting in the auditorium flanked by Norrie and Björling. The stage had been decorated with velvet draperies. When they were lit by spotlights of different colours, “the most wonderful effects emerged, liver brown, ash grey, lilac, grape blue, old-fashioned pink, purple.”¹⁵ In this haptic and sensuous description, the colours can almost be touched and eaten with the eye. It was in front of these draperies that the actresses Anna Flygare and Fanny Falkner danced in the style of Isadora Duncan. Meant to appear improvised, the dances were probably the result of much hard preparation. The dresses – Flygare’s light lilac, and Falkner’s spring green – reflected the lighting in unexpected ways, resonating with the moving draperies and enhancing the continuously transforming effects. Strindberg became very excited, yelling for more light and more movement, and threatening to add ballet pantomime to all his future writings. On another occasion he stated that he avoids using the word “ballet”, and prefers “choreography”, thus emphasizing the artistic dimension of the dance and avoiding the ambiguous link between ballet and popular entertainment.¹⁶

As is often mentioned, Strindberg was not very pleased with the staging of *A Dream Play* at Svenska Teatern in 1907, finding the painted scenery and the built environment too materialistic. At Intima Teatern he repeatedly looked for opportunities to stage *A Dream Play* in more adequate ways, and during spring 1909 he had made drafts and sketches for a production.¹⁷ Without going into detail, Strindberg’s ideas for combining words, corporeal expressions, scenography, costume, lighting and mu-

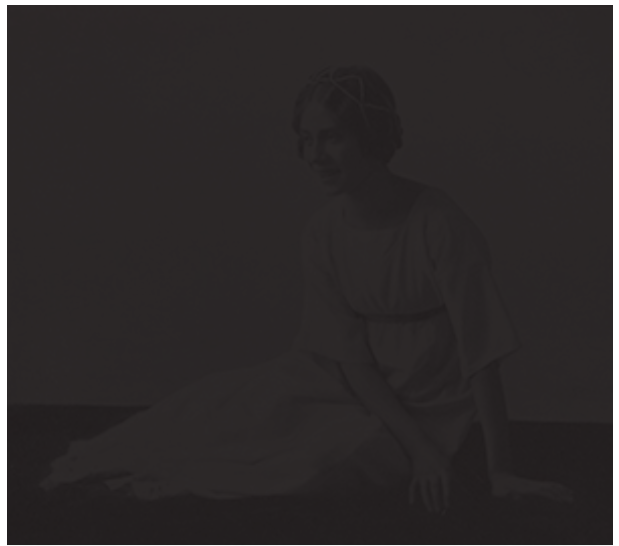
sic are very much in line with the theatre reforms on the continent. Stylization, abstraction, simplification, colour, fantasy, rhythm and movement all contribute to a unified art work. It is in these materials that he (contradicting his previous words about choreography versus ballet) presents three “Ballets” for Flygare and Falkner. [Illustration 5]

The three dances for *A Dream Play* would be performed in the theatre corridor, the church, and at Fairhaven. For the corridor the theme was “the not re-engaged and the engaged” artist. The dance in the church would feature the actresses fighting over whether or not the Lawyer

deserved his laurel wreath. For the Fairhaven choreography, Strindberg wanted a “Waldteufel’s waltz” (Falkner) to be danced down by Flygare’s “Bach’s Fugue”.¹⁸ Strindberg did not explicitly mention which of Émile Waldteufel’s (1837–1915) many popular waltzes that was supposed to be silenced by the Fugue by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), but the conflict is nevertheless obvious. Popular music and dance culture are exemplified by the waltz being played and danced to in a social and also sexualized space full of moving and sweating bodies. This is contrasted with Bach, another type of music that allows for artistic skill, and creativity, unlike the monotonic repetition in the waltz.

Waltzing at Fairhaven

In general, the waltz was not as charged with sexual connotations as for example the foxtrot, which would have been considered more morally du-



5. Fanny Falkner was one of the actresses for whom Strindberg created dances in the style of Duncan. Here we see Falkner as Svanevit in Strindberg’s play with the same name at *Intima Teatern* 1909. From *Ord och Bild*, 1909 (2), p. 119. Photo: Ferdinand Flodin.



6. "A vivid evening at the Dance Palace", from a chapter about waltzing in *Beyron Carlsson*, Hela Stockholm, Albert Bonniers förlag, Stockholm 1912, p. 233. Photo: unknown.

ologically wise, we would argue, to engage in what Ylva Sommerland in her chapter describes as a *trans time* movement. This movement describes the possibility of entering a space where gender is uncertain, and travel with and through non-linear time, in order to propel questions as well as critically embody them. In our case this would mean to listen and dance to some waltzes, for example by Waldteufel. They might come across as seductive and drag you into the heteronormative matrix. Or perhaps the opposite will occur: you may feel revulsion and wish to escape, longing for fresh air and another type of music, and a different form of social dancing. [Illustrations 7 & 8]

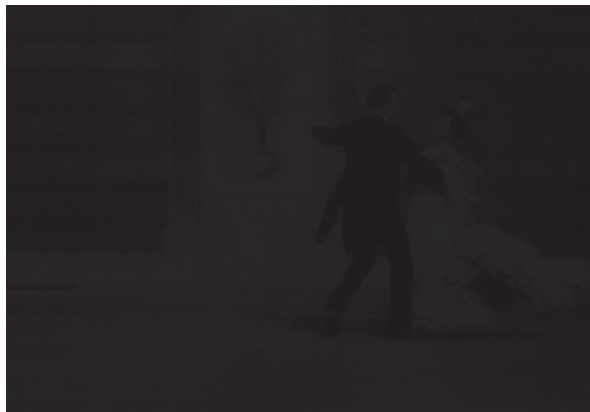
Strongly associated with Vienna, the waltz grew out of an ambiguous bourgeois culture of light-heartedness, militarism, and prostitution, personified in the operetta.²⁰ Probably the strongest impact Vienna had in terms of spreading the waltz took place in the days, or rather weeks and

bious.¹⁹ This provides us with a picture of the social dance context at the time when *A Dream Play* was written. The waltz was an older, more established dance, and was accepted as a part of social life, while the foxtrot and other forms of jazz dance would be associated with the dangerous and evil dances of bad taste invading Europe from abroad, and especially from the USA. [Illustration 6]

Thus, the inclusion of waltzes in *A Dream Play* probably made the audience feel at home, whether they liked or disliked the music. It is method-

7. Hofball in Wien, watercolour by Wilhelm Gause from 1900, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

8. Emma Meissner and Carl Barcklind waltzing in the Swedish movie Den glada änkan (*The Merry Widow*) from 1907. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



months of the Congress of Vienna in 1814, when the victorious powers negotiated how to divide Europe after the defeat of Napoleon. Hundreds of thousands of diplomats and other people lived and danced in Vienna during this congress.²¹ We can say that the bare-necked Mother at Fairhaven comes from this world, and perhaps the following lines capture some of what she experienced:

The man performed the waltz steps with a practised and exemplary military demeanour, and gripped the woman, whose wasp-waist was laced by her corset, and who was transformed into a mechanical angel doll that only the man could cause to swirl around and around. The dress shirt and pastel coloured skirt fluttered in a whirlwind of oblivion. To begin with, in the mid-nineteenth century, at a leisurely pace and then, after a few decades, with gradually increasing tempo.²²

Edith, on the other hand, represents the new avant-garde, managing to drown out the waltz, but soon feeling only despair, when the military man she is in love with runs off with a young and beautiful dancer.

It can be argued that in wanting to include dances in Duncan's style, Strindberg sought to embody conflicts between, for example, the irresponsible world of the operetta and waltz, and a world where social change and justice are possible, and where art functions as a vital catalyst. Theoretically, this makes him a *trans time* traveller capable of siding with current (as of 2015) ideas of art as an active participant in social life, especially in processes of meaning making, and in areas of unresolvable conflicts and traumas.

NOTES

1. For the English version of Strindberg's drama, we have chosen the expressions closer to the Swedish original the way we understand it. We use August Strindberg, *Plays by August Strindberg*, translated by Edwin Björkman, Duckworth & Co, London 1912, or *August Strindberg, Miss Julie and other Plays: A New Translation by Michael Robinson*, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, Oxford, [1998], 2008. To cite these sources we henceforth use the abbreviation (B) for Björkman and (R) for Robinson. The

- equivalent Swedish text, here and throughout the chapter, is from August Strindberg, *Samlade verk* 46 (*SV* 46).
2. This resonates with another Strindberg drama entitled *The Dance of Death* (*Dödsdansen*), where an ageing couple discuss whether they can still dance a waltz. See Egil Törnqvist, *Strindbergs dramatiska bildspråk*, Universitet van Amsterdam, Amsterdam 2011, pp. 136–137.
 3. Gösta M. Bergman, *Den moderna teaterns genombrott 1890–1925*, Bonnier, Stockholm 1966, p. 278. Our translation.
 4. August Falck, *Fem år med Strindberg*, Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm 1935, p. 275.
 5. This approach is discussed both in Eszter Szalczer, *Writing Daughters: August Strindberg's Other Voices*, Norvik Press, London 2008, and Per Stouenbjerg, “‘To Eat or Be Eaten – That Is the Question’: Incorporations and Rejections of the Other in Strindberg’s Autographical Prose Writings”, in *August Strindberg and the Other: New Critical Approaches*, edited by Poul Houe, Sven Hakon Rossel and Göran Stockenström, Rodopi, Amsterdam – New York, NY 2002, pp. 133–147.
 6. Falck 1935, p. 238. “Vi dansade länge. Strindberg tyckte ge sig hän åt tillfallets graciösa stämning”, “titanen Strindberg”. In Greek mythology, Titans are immortal children of Uranus and Gaia.
 7. The other main form of contra dance is the Anglais (*Countre Dance Anglais*), which consist of two lines where you face your partner in the other line.
 8. Ernst Klein, “Dans i Sverige i äldre tid”, *Nordisk kultur*, 1933, Band XXIV. See also Walter Salmen, *Tanz im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*. Musikgeschichte in Bildern. Band IV: Musik der Neuzeit/Lieferung 4. Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1989a, and Walter Salmen, *Tanz im 19. Jahrhundert*. Musikgeschichte in Bildern. Band IV: Musik der Neuzeit/Lieferung 5. VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig 1989b.
 9. Mats Nilsson, “‘Folkdjävlar’” – om moralisk panik”, *Vardagslivets fronter*, edited by Kerstin Gunnermark and Magnus Mörck, Arkipelag, Göteborg 2006, pp. 254ff.
 10. Theresa Jill Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870–1920*. Palgrave/Macmillan, 2011; Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz. A Study of Dance-Music Relations in ¾ time*, Indiana University Press, 2012; Eva Helen Ulvros, *Dansens och tidens virvlar: Om dans och lek i Sveriges historia*, Historiska Media, Lund 2004.
 11. Michael Mitterauer, *Ungdomstidens sociala historia*, Röda bokförlaget, Göteborg (1988) 1991; Mats Nilsson, *Dans – kontinuitet i förändring: Danser och dansande i Göteborg 1930 till 1980*, Etnologiska föreningen i Västsverige, 1998.
 12. It can also be mentioned that we found an interesting connection between Strindberg and dance, in the field of folkdance and folk music. Strindberg

- was a friend of Nils Andersson and wrote many letters to him. Andersson is an important contributor to the documentation and creation of a Swedish folk music canon. See Märta Ramsten, “Håll upp att röra i gammal urmusik: Några anteckningar om Strindberg och folkmusiken”, *Noterat nr 1*, 1995; Märta Ramsten, “En brevfråga från August Strindberg”, *Noterat nr 11*, 2003.
13. Egil Bakka, *Europeisk dansehistorie*, Gyldendal, Oslo 1997, and McKee 2012, and Tobias Norlind, *Dansens historia: Med särskild hänsyn till dansen i Sverige*, Nordisk rotogravyr, Stockholm 1941.
 14. Lena Hammergren, *Ballerinor och barfotadansöser: Svensk och internationell danskultur runt 1900*, Carlssons, Stockholm 2002.
 15. Falck 1935, p. 238. “de underbaraste effekter uppstodo, leverbrunt, askgrått, lila, druvblått, gammalrosa, purpur.”
 16. Falck 1935, p. 246, “pantomim i Duncans stil”, “baletten”, “choreografien”.
 17. Falck 1935, pp. 271–272.
 18. Falck 1935, p. 275.
 19. For a discussion of “bad social dancing” through time, see for example Nilsson 2006 and Mark Knowles, *The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances: Outrage at Couple Dancing in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, Jefferson, McFarland, London 2009.
 20. Ruth Pergament, “Operetten i världen av igår (1)”, *Dixikon* 2012, <http://www.dixikon.se/bloggarna/operetten-i-varlden-av-igar-i/> (accessed 20 May 2015).
 21. Knowles 2009.
 22. Pergament 2012. Our translation.

Scenographing Strindberg

*Ström's Alchemical Interpretation of A Dream Play,
1915–18 in Düsseldorf*

ASTRID VON ROSEN

Everything can happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins and weaves new patterns: a blend of memories, experiences, spontaneous ideas, absurdities, and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse, and converge. (Strindberg in his author's note for *A Dream Play*)

Because the space in which the dream drives the action forward immediately responds to each change of direction and, in a sense, constantly gives birth to itself anew. The way Knut Ström masterfully accomplishes this task, and in doing so creates this dramatic dream event, is admirable because, like the action, the setting itself is in constant transformation. (*Düsseldorfer Zeitung*, 19 October 1918)

Enter: Transformation

August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* is, at least from a scenographic perspective, a drama about multiple transformations. As Strindberg express-

es it in his author's note (also quoted above): "Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable" (R:176, *SV* 46:7).¹ In the drama *Indra's Daughter* leaves the celestial sphere(s) for the human world. A sort of journey begins when she enters a growing castle. Inside she moves in a continuously changing, deceptive, often cruel, but sometimes also enjoyable and beautiful space, while learning about human life the hard way. She encounters three men, or aspects of the same man, the childish Officer, the dutiful Lawyer and the artistic Poet, and takes on various female roles such as mother, wife and muse. The ending – when she departs through fire – is often understood as signifying the completion of a developmental journey, but it also comes across as notoriously ambiguous. For a scenographer in the early 1900s, as well as today, staging *A Dream Play* is a challenge because of the multilayered transformative weave and/or bricolage created for it by Strindberg.²

By looking into Swedish scenographer-director Knut Ström's work with *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf between 1915 and 1918, this chapter aims to add an alchemical perspective to the historiography of the early productions of the drama. Foregrounding visual materials and conducting original archival research on and with the traces of Ström's scenographic work, this study differs from approaches that view the dramatic text itself as the primary or self-evident point of departure. It also differs from studies where traces of scenography – without being properly investigated – are included as a sort of descriptive evidence, or "visual facts", in the analysis of a past event. Ström's visual, spatial, corporeal, and intellectual interpretation of *A Dream Play* has not previously been explored in depth.³ Importantly, the traces of his working process are not well suited for a straightforward analysis of how his scenography *looked* on stage during the performances in 1918. Rather they can provide valuable knowledge about how the scenographic event *was done* and the interpretive structures guiding it. Hence, this investigation has the ambition to explore the thematic coherence of Ström's scenography from the hypothesis that his sketches are products of a rather systematic and theoretically informed interpretation of Strindberg's dramatic text. I argue that alchemy – indeed a syncretistic blend of ideas and practices forming part of the occult zeitgeist – serves as an important source of inspiration for Ström's entire scenographic engagement with *A Dream Play*. Moreover, I will try

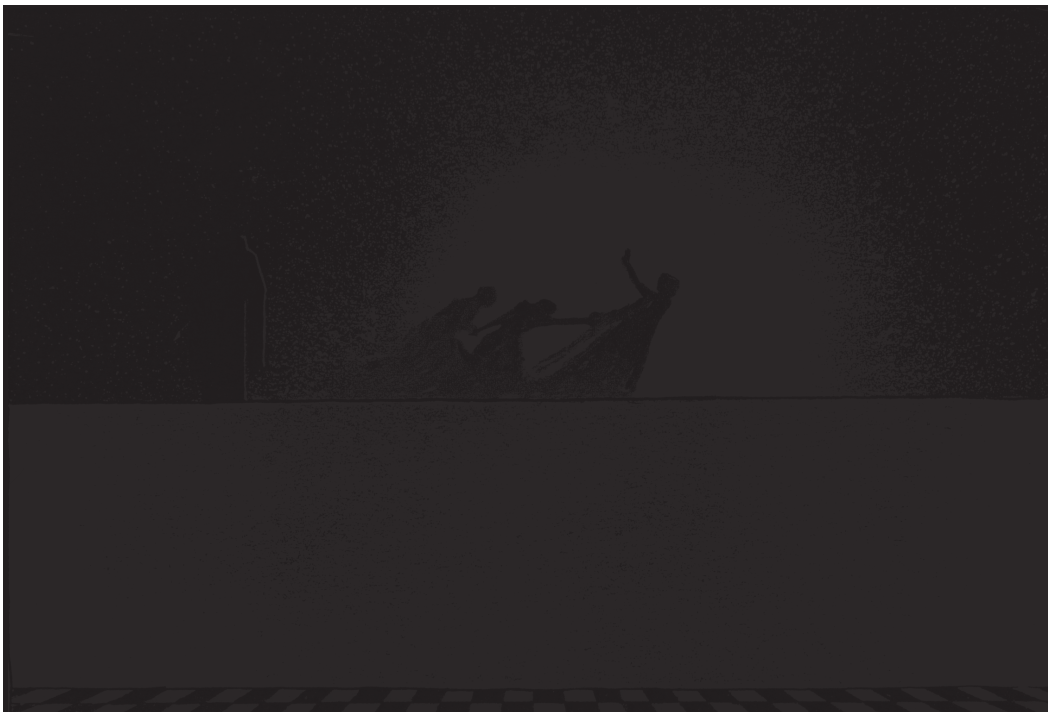
to demonstrate how his alchemical play with Strindberg's dramatic text incorporated influences from modernist and avant-garde dance into a scenographic choreography.⁴

The chapter begins by introducing the modernist dance discourse, viewing it as a junction where the ideas of the old yet still vital Strindberg, and the young and passionate Ström, intersect. This is also a continuation of the exploration found in Nilsson and von Rosen's chapter in this volume. I explain the concept of alchemy and the methodologies I draw on, and then continue in the second part with an analysis of the scenographic archive, and in particular the visual materials from Ström's work with *A Dream Play* in 1915–18.

I. Dance, alchemy and methodological ambiguity

The modernist dance discourse

In Ström's sketches for *A Dream Play*, the actors' bodies take on choreographed positions that I argue can better be understood if they are linked to the modernist dance discourse and the early twentieth-century interest in the actor's body and its expressive capacities. This interest in bodily expression has been addressed by, for example, Peter Behrens in *Feste des Lebens und der Kunst* (1900), Georg Fuchs in *Die Schaubühne der Zukunft* (1905), Gordon Craig in *The Art of Theatre* (1905), and *The Actor and the Übermarionette* (1908). Adolphe Appia published his *Die Music und die Inszenierung* in 1899 and, in collaboration with Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, explored bodily expressions in space. As summarized by Johanna Laakkonen, "the decreasing significance of text affected acting theory, and the actor's body became the central instrument of theatrical expression, moving the actor's role closer to that of a dancer."⁵ It is also worth mentioning that as early as 1895, Hugo von Hofmannsthal describes the central component in drama as being in the process of shifting from the word to "those arts that are executed without speech: music, dance, and all the skills of acrobats and jugglers".⁶ Among the traces of Ström's work in Berlin are several sketches for dramas by Hofmannstahl, indicating that Ström had a good sense for what was hot and edgy at the time: the



1. *Scenography and movement sketch by Knut Ström in collaboration with Rochus Gliese for Macbeth, project 1913. The Macbeth sketches spread in printed media, and were for example published in Design in the theatre 1927. Original lost.*



2. *Scenography and movement sketches by Knut Ström for Trojan Women, Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, 1917. Note how the golden strokes in the sky change according to the movements of the chorus and the soloist. Courtesy of the Ström family.*

intersection of avant-garde dance and theatre. To give an example from Ström's early work with Shakespearean drama, the discourse of dance, in combination with a strong influence from Craig and Appia, is explicitly present in sketches for *Macbeth* from 1913.⁷ [Illustration 1]

Archival materials such as reviews, articles, sketches and photographs reveal that the modernist and reformist intertwinement of the emerging avant-garde dance movement, the expressively choreographed body of the actor, and the use of scenography as an expressive agent in the event were all present at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. Two notable examples are Ström's scenography and costume sketches for *Hamlet* from 1914, and his work with what he calls "movement sketches" (*rörelseskisser*) for *The Trojan Women* from 1917.⁸ [Illustration 2] In fact, it would be useful to theorize some of the images for *A Dream Play* as movement sketches. There are also photographs depicting dancers with whom Ström worked in the Düsseldorf context.⁹ [Illustration 3] From a dancer's perspective, the choreographed bodies in his sketches for *A Dream Play* are highly stylized yet corporally still quite precise. This sensitivity in the midst of intense stylization shines through in a sketch from 1915, where he carefully gives shape to the Daughter's back, shoulders and arms, as she and the Glazier stand outside the growing castle.¹⁰

Arriving in Berlin in 1909, Ström stepped right into a vibrant modernist dance and art discourse and its practical manifestations. In productions by Berlin-based director and actor Max Reinhardt, many of the theoretical

3. Photograph of dancer Ewe Wippermann in Knut Ström's photo album from Düsseldorf, undated. Photographer unknown, but probably Knut Ström. Courtesy of the Ström family.



discussions on theatre reform were realized on stage. Reinhardt sought to bring together all expressive means in an aesthetic totality, and this was fed by his specific interest in dance and choreography. As discussed by Mary Fleischer, Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt's collaboration with Austrian dancer and choreographer Grete Wiesenthal typifies the many connections between modernist dance and theatre reformers at the time. As expressed by Wiesenthal herself, the main idea was that dance can embody psychological and spiritual dimensions that are beyond the reach of words.

The last secret [of the dance] perhaps is that the human body, this poor, profane body, which is subject to all the phases of decrepitude in the course of a human life, until it becomes dust, that precisely here, already in its earthly form, it allows us to sense the coming of a brilliant transformation beyond the earthly.¹¹

When seeking to express something profound, genuine, and spiritual, modernist dancers would look to ancient traditions, rituals and folk culture. Reinhardt and Wiesenthal began collaborating in February 1908. Wiesenthal's dance, expressing the essence of modernist dreams, namely transformation, was very successful in Berlin in the following years, and thus was accessible to Ström.¹²

Strindberg's manifest interest in modernist dance can be dated to 1908–09 and his ideas for the *Intima Teatern* in Stockholm. A few years earlier he had been approached by Isadora Duncan, but rebuffed her, and as a consequence he never saw her dance. Eventually, though, Strindberg's view of the new dance changed, and in written form as well as at a party held at the theatre, he actively endorsed Duncan's style (for further discussion see Nilsson and von Rosen's chapter).¹³ Or perhaps more correctly, he began to apprehend it as an artistic vehicle – thus incorporating it into his own art – though without abandoning the spoken dialogue so important to him. It is well known that Strindberg kept abreast of the artistic and avant-garde debates, as did the young Ström, albeit from a rather different stance. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Ström created his first scenography (called decoration) at *Intima*

Teatern in 1907. Asked about this in an interview late in his life, Ström stated that Strindberg “never talked with subordinates”, and explained: “well, a great poet can hardly talk with the theatre painter guys who run about”.¹⁴ The class perspective and the artistic hierarchies surfacing here are, I think, important to consider in relation to the sketches where Ström with great passion develops – choreographs – working-class characters such as the Billposter, the Maidservants, and the Coalheavers.

Preserved photographs and interviews with Ström’s relatives make it reasonable to assume that it was upon arriving in Berlin in 1909 that he first was influenced by modernist dance. He not only went to variety shows, but also took on assignments for them, and as is well-known, much avant-garde dance was performed in these establishments.¹⁵ At Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, where he was employed from autumn 1912 to summer 1919, Ström did not abandon this connection with dance and choreography; on the contrary, it feeds into many of his projects. As I will try to show, choreography serves a particularly important function in Ström’s interpretation of *A Dream Play* which, though expressed in the form of sketches, is highly visual, corporeal and spatial.

Alchemy

Strindberg writes in his author’s note that the “characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse, and converge” (R:176, *SV* 46:7), and for Ström this would, as I interpret his work, quite literally refer to alchemical transmutation. This argument builds on analyses of visual archival materials in Cologne/Wahn, Düsseldorf, and Stockholm, comparisons with the dramatic text and with alchemical imagery, as well as scholarly explorations of Strindberg’s relation to alchemy. Although Astrid Regnell does not explore *A Dream Play* in her study *Seeing Stars in Broad Daylight: Transformation and Reconciliation in August Strindberg’s Zones of the Spirit* (2009), her approach is relevant for my understanding of Ström’s work. Regnell finds that *Zones of the Spirit* (Swedish: *En blå bok*) “has been shaped by the notion that everything in nature and human life is characterized by different stages of transmutation” and she suggests that when Strindberg uses alchemical symbolism, he is writing in a cryptic manner.¹⁶ By and large this cryptic manner resembles what I

think Ström does in his sketches for *A Dream Play*, namely that he knows fairly well why and on what grounds he uses a symbol, or gives a body a choreographed position, but does not spell it out directly, for example in a scenographer-director's handbook, memoirs or interviews.

Before discussing how the archival traces have been methodologically handled, I will provide a brief introduction to alchemy, without any ambition to provide a comprehensive overview of what is a very broad and diverse set of tradition.¹⁷ Alchemical images and concepts circulate in many versions, and are still accessible for those who are interested. Without attempting to determine exactly which books or images Ström had access to, I am interested in linking his work to visual tropes and themes commonly found in the alchemical tradition.

The profound idea of the *Magnum Opus*, the great work of alchemy, is to seek the philosopher's stone, or to make gold. Not necessarily referring to literally making gold, this ambition can address an inner, psychologically transformative process. Mircea Eliade argues that gold-making, rooted in metallurgical craft, is completely intertwined with a mystical world view. This way of thinking builds on a sexualized understanding of the world, and alchemy's symbolic language draws on this. It is believed that raw ore grows like an embryo, slowly maturing into pure gold in the belly of Mother Earth.¹⁸

The various stages in the alchemical process are often described in terms of colour, but are also corporeally charged. For example, the alchemist's work would begin "with hymn-singing or dances" to connect with "cosmic forces and spirits in the form of tones, rhythms and vibrations".¹⁹ Black, or *nigredo*, is how the first step is often labelled (even if the terminology, the number of steps and their order are far from consistent in the literature). One should be cautious, though, about assuming that black in this context only refers to black colour or simply symbolizes an inner feeling.²⁰ In alchemy "black" captures a wide range of painful steps in a process through which the impure matter in the stone is broken down, "killed, putrefied and dissolved" through continuous cleansing and through fire (A:135). Tightly linked to these sufferings is "green vitriol", another name for the alchemical hell (A:212).²¹ The complex expression "the green lion" addresses for example the presence of an impure substance necessary to the process, as well as the maturation taking place

(A:92–94).²² When visualized we find images of a green lion eating the sun, or knowledge. It is important to note that impure substances are considered necessary to the work. When green appears in the alchemical vessel, it means that the transformative process is successful, and that the “child” has begun ripening and is imbued with new life (A:91). Strindberg’s words about *A Dream Play*, which he describes as “my most beloved Drama, the child of my greatest pain”, come to mind.²³ I would suggest that the alchemical understanding of green, in combination with Strindberg’s multifaceted use of the colour in *A Dream Play*, explains why Ström so persistently dresses the daughter in an odd and rather cold, glimmering emerald hue in many sketches from 1915. This explanation excludes neither the colour’s ambiguous status in the theosophical thought system, nor its resonance with the visual culture of fashion, as discussed by Kjellmer in her chapter.²⁴ Rather, a functioning scenography (imagined in a sketch, or live on stage) operates in and through entangled thought-systems and discourses. It will set cultural memory in motion and will activate and recycle both old and new elements, from previous theatre productions and from society.

After the difficulties in the nigredo phase have been worked through, the white (*albedo*) phase follows, resembling the Christian idea of resurrection. In the yellow (*citrinitas*) and red (*rubedo*) phases, the work is reinforced and perfected (A:4–5, 42, 174–175).²⁵ This is not to be understood as a clear and linear process, but rather as a repetitious mixture of not always easily understood successes and failures. At the culmination, a flower, for example a rose, blooms at the top of the vessel or castle; there are numerous examples of this in alchemical engravings.²⁶ Strindberg may well have used such an image in an idiosyncratic and inherently ambiguous way as a catalyst or creative inspiration for the ending of his play, when the castle burns and a chrysanthemum blooms.

As a way of approaching the alchemical playfulness that I argue characterizes Ström’s work with *A Dream Play*, I will look at the first page or book-jacket of one of the 1915 series of sketches.²⁷ On a piece of handmade paper with fragments of flowers still visible, Ström has in clear red paint written the words “Drömspelet af Strindberg”, and below it added a part of his artist’s monogram: within a circle the “K” in “Knut” and the “S” in “Ström” (English “stream”) form a knot or a nest of worms, in-

deed an ingeniously worked out riddle. For the other sketches in the series he uses the full monogram, where the remaining characters “-tröm” form a vivid tail after the circle. Both “worm”, and “stream” are terms for the “transforming arcanum”, “mercurial waters”, or “secret fire” of alchemy (A: 191–192, 220). These dual-natured forces are both destructive and lead to new life, and it must have been irresistible for Ström to create a monogram that played with this powerful symbolism. In a wider context, the artist monogram is signifying practitioner skill within reformist art contexts, as exemplified in the work of Wiener Werkstätte and the Arts and Crafts movement.

This said, I would also like to mention that it has been quite a challenge to find ways to access – get into – Ström’s visual work that could help answer the questions arising in the exchange with the materials. The resulting methodological ambiguity, which proved to be very useful, will be addressed in the following section.

Methodological ambiguity

In combination with the art-historical methods of formal analysis, visual semiotics, iconology and a creative montage technique, I have drawn on a combination of affective description and dance practice as means of activating the archival materials. Ström’s sketches contain colours and formal systems that need to be explored, if his interpretation of *A Dream Play* is at all to be made accessible. The same is true of his play with signs and symbols; if not investigated and translated into words, the sketches will remain mute in relation to the drama text. I am not talking about determining a fixed meaning for a sign or symbol, but using the art historian’s handicraft to uncover how the images are built and how they connect with prevailing practices of looking and cultural imaginaries.

What initially opened a path into Ström’s rich and complex scenographic work, as well as the visual language in Strindberg’s *A Dream Play*, was a creative and critical method stemming from art and culture historian Aby Warburg’s (1866–1929) *Mnemosyne Atlas*.²⁸ Warburg created highly performative, large-scale pictorial maps on panels, and I used the wall in my office to make a similar visual knowledge montage. [Illustration 4] This enabled me to set all sorts of cultural memories and associations



4. *Knowledge montage on Astrid von Rosen's office wall. Photo credit Christine Sjöberg.*

in motion and further explore them, both with art-historical tools and through the more dancerly approach described below. Over time, the montage on my wall took on the shape of a moving cloud, indicative of the continuous dissolution and fixation of the explorative process.

When staging and re-enacting the choreographic positions in the sketches, I have found useful Susan Kozel's ideas about a reflexive methodological practice bringing out affective sensibility. While this method differs from more firmly structured ways of analysing space and corporeal

movement, its aim is not to create complete vertigo or free fall. As Kozel argues: “For small ripples also provide toe-holds or tensions resulting in changes of direction, pauses for reflection or impetus for further movement.”²⁹ If this stance opens up a body of material and sets it in motion, I have also felt it necessary to move towards something that can be called professional precision. In her explorations of a dancer’s interpretive process Cecilia Roos describes an oscillation between (1) an outward scanning of the movements to learn the positions, and (2) an inwards focus, to repeat, and perfect them.³⁰ It has to be stated that even when standing still, a dancer is in motion, and in this respect an actor’s/dancer’s body in a sketch is also moving.³¹ Importantly the staged and danced repetitions create new traces in my “body as archive”. Once the investigator’s body has internalized some corporeal and spatial aspects of the (imagined) scenographic situation, corporeal memory assists with the act of exploring the often complex theatrical materials.

If conducted from an ethical stance – allowing the images to act, speak back and show themselves anew during the explorative exchange – the methodological toolbox described above seeks to work *with* images, while at the same time producing what is called historical truth: something never perfect, never closed, but as rigorously worked-out as possible.³² Actually, this resembles the alchemical process of *solve et coagula*, to repeatedly separate and set in motion, coagulate and fixate, until there is result.³³

It is now time to more directly address the visual materials.³⁴ The order of the scenes in the dramatic text is preserved, and I use headings that try to capture significant themes in Ström’s interpretation. Under each section (comprising one or more scenes) work from Ström’s four-year process is discussed in chronological order. In the body of the text I refer to the sketches with short descriptive terms, placing more detailed information about the materials in the notes. Thus, for the scenographical exploration conducted here, I refer to what seems to be an almost complete 1915 series at Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln (TWS) as the “golden series”.³⁵ Traces of an incomplete 1915 “dusty series” are found at Statens Musikverk (SMV) and Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf (TMA).³⁶ A far from complete but very useful 1915 “shimmering series” belongs to the Ström family.³⁷ A “miniature series” – not complete but serving as an artist’s statement

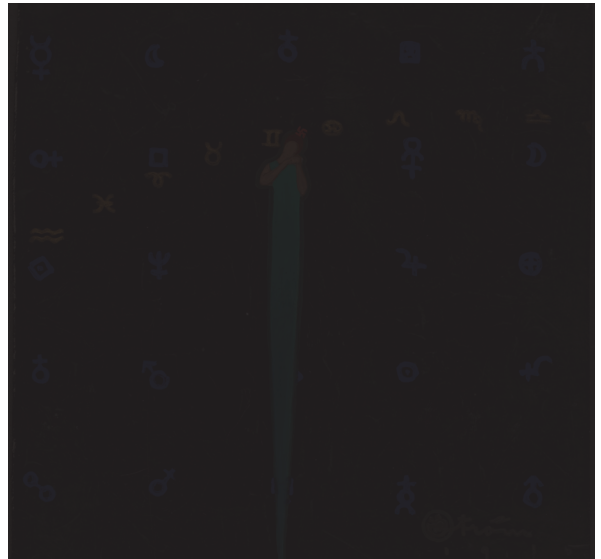
– that I date to 1918 is kept at SMV.³⁸ There are also several sketches at TWS and SMV where a “Y”-shape is used, and these also form a group that I refer to below.³⁹ As for costume sketches I discuss a 1916 series from TMA and a 1918 series from SMV. A technical description dated 1915/18 and an undated storyboard at TMA are combined with the 1918 “miniature series” and the 1917–18 “Y”-sketches into a reasonably coherent assemblage. This assemblage in turn connects with the analysis of Ström’s 1915 and 1916 work. A playbill (TMA), reviews of the 1918 premiere (TMA), and an essay in the theatre journal *Masken* (TWS, TMA) about *A Dream Play* have also been consulted. It should be noted that the selection of materials discussed in the following does not imply anything about the value of the unselected items.

II. Ström’s Dream Play 1915–18

The prologue: alchemical time

In a 1915 sketch (golden series) for the prologue, where Indra’s daughter descends to Earth, Ström has created an extended golden zodiac strongly resembling a zodiac found in *Philosophia Reformata* (1622).⁴⁰ [Illustrations 5 and 6] The zodiac reappears in the sketch for the growing castle, and is also found on the image for the intermission curtain. In combination with other alchemical influences in the sketches (some of which will be explored in the following), I find it reasonable to argue that the extended zodiac rep-

5. *Scenography sketch for A Dream Play, the Prologue, by Knut Ström, 1915 (project)*. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.





6. Alchemical engraving from Johann Daniel Mylius, *Philosophia reformata*, 1622.

resents the alchemist's ambition to override time, and chemically speed up the natural maturation of gold. Here and there in the dramatic text Strindberg also compresses time or plays with it, for example in the theatre corridor when the lights blink. In the stark black sky Ström has placed blue signs for the planets in a pattern resembling a large-scale grid or weave, signifying cosmic time. Abstract symbols placed directly on realistic features can be found in alchemical engravings in *De Goude Son* (1675), but I

am not suggesting any direct influence here.⁴¹ The alchemical influences in Ström's work range in a playful way from being rather straightforward and visual to more abstract and theoretical. Clearly he was well acquainted with alchemy's visual tropes and their ideational function.

When comparing Ström's 1915 sketch for the prologue with Strindberg's stage instructions, one may find the difference between image and text perplexing at first, especially considering that Ström took great pride in respecting the dramatic text. It is precisely this friction that prompts questions about what sort of interpretive system is guiding Ström's work. Before further investigating the visual materials, I want to look into Strindberg's stage instructions from an alchemical perspective, to get a better feeling for Ström's understanding of it. Strindberg writes: "The backdrop represents banks of clouds resembling crumbling mountains of slate, with ruined castles and fortresses. The constellations Leo, Virgo, and Libra can be seen, with the planet Jupiter shining brightly among them" (R:178). As expressed in *De Goude Son* (1675) alchemical transmutation needs symbolic ruins: "The carcass of the house is a reminder that there can be no generation without prior corruption [...]"⁴² Following Regnell, a cloud is a transformative medium, indicative of the continuous dissolution and fixation in the alchemical process.⁴³ In *Zoroaster's Cave* one can read that "there will rise from earth a certain humidity

of Argent vive like a cloud, and will stick to the upper part of thy vacant oval by its sides” (A:42, 140). The “oval” or egg shape is an important feature that, as we shall see will surface in many of Ström’s sketches. Strindberg’s Leo, Virgo, and Libra are prominent tropes in alchemical imagery. The green lion has already been discussed, and there is also a “red lion”, representing the male principle of the opus. Virgo signifies the pure material of creation, and the feminine principle of Mercury – the key agent of transmutation. Libra, the seventh sign of the zodiac, functions as a balancing mechanism, and links up with alchemy’s idea of unification of opposites (A:166–167, 124–125). Consequently Indra instructs his Daughter to steer by Libra when she is ready to return to heaven. In alchemy Jupiter symbolizes the metal tin, “the fire of nature, the colour grey in the opus”, a force of grey light that causes metals to mature. The fact that the sketch is mounted on a grey piece of paper strengthens the hypothesis that every one of Ström’s choices of medium and colour is based on a consistent interpretation of the drama.

In the sketch, the Daughter’s dress is not only green but is also shaped like an almond, or a mandorla. Drawing on geometry and Christian symbolism, a mandorla appears when two circles (or opposites) overlap, and it is thus the place of the mystic, symbolizing harmony. It is also a Christian Ichthus or fish symbol, and a passageway resembling a vagina. In *Buch von Vunderverken* (*Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit*), Luna, the female principle of the alchemical opus, is inscribed in a radiant mandorla (A:119). The Daughter then, resembles a moon goddess making her entrance, dressed in a multitude of ancient sign systems. Ström’s choice of cold emerald green makes her dress cut through the darkness with a strange light. I have previously described how green relates to hopeful, painful and strongly transformative passages in alchemy. The colour also appears in several places in the dramatic text addressing the beauties of a distant landscape, hope symbolized by a dipnet (and its pole and the cauf), paradise as a green shimmer beyond a passageway, transmutation through burning waves, and wilful ignorance as a “green-blind” way of not seeing. In recognition of this, I would suggest that Ström lets the daughter descend into an alchemical vessel, like a green lioness ready to eat knowledge and endure the pain of transmutation. Furthermore, the dress looks modern and elegant, and can, as hinted at before, also be linked to the fashion

system, and its ways of embodying dreams and societal transformation.

Ström's 1918 miniature sketch for the prologue shows the zodiac as a full circle composed of fiery red signs against a black background.⁴⁴ The Daughter's head is inscribed in a pentagon or the fifth element, the powerful quintessence of the opus, encircled by a blooming lotus flower, signifying wisdom grown out of muddy waters. The image conveys a deep longing for unification between the celestial and the subterranean. With silvery hair and her arms in an oriental dance position, the Daughter is an ancient Luna. Clad in an azure blue dress patterned with golden downward-pointing triangles, she brings an arcane substance, the mercurial water necessary for the production of the stone: "To clothe in an azure shirt or garment means to make projection of the tincture on molten metal in order to convert it into silver or gold" (A:15). A note from the costume fittings states that for the prologue a blue garment ("ein Blaues Gewand mit eine meterlangen blauen Schleppe") was tried out for Ellen Widmann, the actress playing Indra's Daughter.⁴⁵ So, we can imagine her (the character and the actress) dressed in a slice of heavenly fabric, arriving like an ancient queen on a spaceship – a *deus ex machina*.⁴⁶ While this goes on, the voice of her father Indra is heard, but the audience does not see him; instead cultural images of fathers emerge and form part of the scenographic experience.⁴⁷ Adding the sound of Stenhammar's music, as discussed by Alf Björnberg in Chapter One, the scenography conveys a sense of mystical austerity, and the religious idea of a woman saviour approaching a bemired world at war, as well as a family drama, where the Father seems disinterested and the Daughter wants a new life.

Growing castle: alchemical egg

In a 1915 sketch (golden series) for the second scene, the Daughter and the Glazier are about to enter a gigantic, golden, oval or egg-shaped hill (half an egg), surrounded by freely floating, abstract flower forms.⁴⁸ [Illustration 7] Apart from being a natural and recognizable form for creation and growth, the egg is a trope in alchemical sources and a way of addressing the sealed vessel "which holds the Arcanum, the secret of the philosopher's stone" (A:67, and ix).⁴⁹ [Illustration 8] Moreover, the "castle" is a name for the vessel (which can take on an endless variety of



↑ 7. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the Growing Castle, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.*

↗ 8. *Here we see the alchemical operation inscribed in the “philosophical egg”, in Heinrich Nollus, Theoria Philosophiae Hermeticae, 1617.*

code names, including “ship”) (A:31–32, 66–67, 183). The oval or egg shape – the outline of the golden form – is then multiplied and used for the passageway in the theatre corridor, the window in the lawyer’s office, the alcove for the organ in the church, and the entrance to the cave.

In front of the castle Strindberg’s multicoloured “gigantic hollyhocks” have in Ström’s rendering become “alchemical flowers” or sublimated substances floating, moving, rising, in the alembic (or in this case around it).⁵⁰ An image from an alchemical manuscript shows three flowers positioned on a Y-shaped stalk, growing out of a circular globe in which the world snake, Ouroboros, is eating its own tail.⁵¹ In the alchemical opus, flowers are understood as body parts being tormented during sublimation. In order for the process to work, the alembic needs to be gently heated, which is why the fresh, lukewarm stable litter or “dung” is useful (A: 58–59). It is no coincidence that the officer complains about having to work in a castle-stable and deal with horse-dung. Strindberg describes the officer as “in prison”, which is also a stage of the nigredo phase, mean-

ing that the matter must be confined so that it can dissolve (A:156).

In a sketch from the shimmering series, the Daughter raises her arms so that her body forms the Y-shape, and on top of the golden castle is a golden flame.⁵² The Glazier is holding a rectangular (a square in the process of becoming) non-transparent window pane, and in the castle three egg-shaped vaults appear, as if it were a mediaeval cathedral or the heavenly Jerusalem. Looking old, and clad in a grey-purple jacket, his body takes on a peculiar shape, resembling a bird, a stone and a mushroom, all possible to associate with alchemical symbols. Working with glass – purified in fire – the Glazier is “a type of angelic figure (angels are similarly made of fire and air; he is a messenger of sorts)”.⁵³

A 1918 miniature sketch of the castle shows a visually different, but thematically consistent idea of the alchemical vessel and what is supposed to take place inside it.⁵⁴ A full circle zodiac, a somewhat tangled or energetically vibrating weave (alchemical streams and worms) with multicoloured drops (an alchemical “rainbow”) and a heap (the vessel or growing castle) – are visible against a dark background (A: 163). The shimmering heap of dust, sand, and dung contains smaller buds, knobs

or embryos encircling a larger, upward-striving, ambiguous, organic and sexualized form, reaching for unification with the cosmic circle.

Castle interior: dissolving walls

In 1915 Ström made several suggestions for the wall or gauze behind the Officer and the Daughter. In one sketch (golden series) it is greyish and full of small crosses, indicating a weave or veil (techni-

9. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the Daughter and the Officer inside the castle, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.*

cally a gauze), and in another one (shimmering series) it looks like vibrating sand and vapour.⁵⁵ [Illustration 9] The wall dissolves or dematerializes before the eyes of an imagined audience. Both versions have to do with keeping the fire going, as grey is associated with Jupiter and heated sand is used as a bath to gently warm the “glass” or alchemical vessel (A:177). In both versions the Daughter and the Officer are masked (blank faces), suggesting that the actors are given a general rather than individual ap-



10. Alchemical engraving from Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens*, 1618.

pearance, and are lifted from the human to a divine sphere.⁵⁶ In the strict choreography of the shimmering version, the Daughter’s slender body becomes a stem, and her head a bud. Though seated, the Officer takes on a more aggressive posture, staring at her, while holding his sabre away. It can be mentioned that “weaponry” is considered useful in the early stages of the alchemical process (A:214). One of the emblems in *Atalanta Fugiens* shows a man with a sword – symbolizing the philosophical fire – about to pierce an egg placed on a table, meaning that the old matter must be killed.⁵⁷ [Illustration 10]

Ström’s 1918 miniature sketch shows a dark space with blue objects – fading heavenly glimpses – in the weave of roots, threads or worms.⁵⁸ A table and a chair are placed on a platform to stage left. The storyboard tells us that the shape of the castle multiplies and grows in the background. I will now zoom out, let the scenography expand, and look at the military man (the Officer is a part of a larger group) as a common trope in European society and its cultural expressions. In the years around 1900 he was everywhere, waltzing and flirting in ballets and operettas, and being scrutinized in literature. It is worth mentioning that Strindberg was a proponent of peace and had criticized the military mentality as early as in his psychologically charged novella *Samvetskval* (1885).⁵⁹ In autumn 1918, when performed on stage in Düsseldorf, this scene would be charged with

the stupidity and aggression of war, and the death and suffering of many soldiers and also civilians.

In sketches (golden and dust series) for the scene with the Mother, the Daughter and the Officer are – in line with the dramatic text – frozen, as if paralysed.⁶⁰ The Mother’s mysterious appearance makes the scene resemble an occultist séance, à la mode when *A Dream Play* was written, and well suited for Ström’s skills with the theatrical gauze technique.⁶¹ Their frozen positions communicate a strongly felt tension, as time and space are intertwined in a dreamlike – real and unreal – way. In one sketch (dust series) a modern green lamp replaces Strindberg’s candle. By turning off the lamp, the mother avoids the transformative green light of modernity and enlightenment. Her hands and cap are white, resonating with her interest in cleaning.

The 1918 storyboard has small bird’s-eye-view drawings showing how gauzes and other devices are employed, clearly demonstrating Ström’s technical skill and knowledge about complex scenographic transformations. In one section we see a boxlike arrangement behind the wall/gauze, which will facilitate the Mother’s appearance. A small frontal image shows that the opening is not rectangular, as the upper corners are chamfered. The transformative form is then repeated in the scenes for the theatre corridor, the Lawyer’s office and the church, in the form of a passageway, a document chest, and the door to the sacristy respectively. This is an example of how Ström works dematerialization and transformation into the minutest scenographic detail without slavishly following the literal descriptions in the dramatic text.

Theatre corridor: Opus Alchemicum

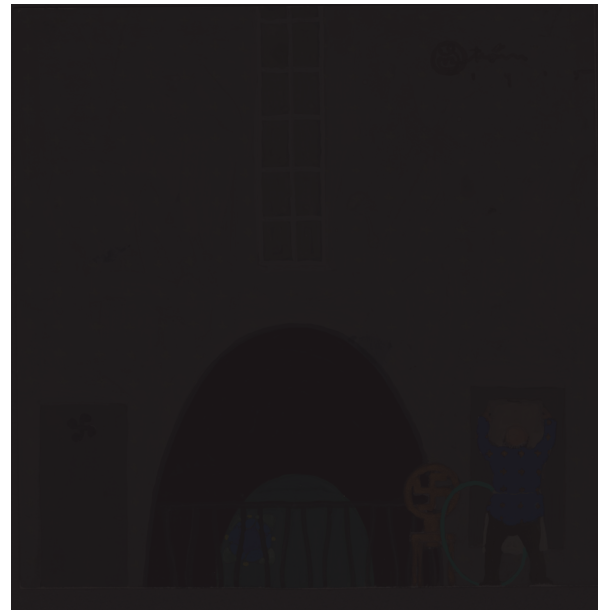
The most striking feature of a 1915 sketch (golden series) for the theatre corridor is the hyper-black darkness inside the half-oval penetrating the greyish, fire-proof wall.⁶² [Illustration 11] It looks like a large, hungry gap, ready to engulf anyone approaching. In order to reach the stone – the shimmer at the other end of the passageway – one has to go through something very difficult. Ström has emphasized the darkness by fusing the “coal-black trunk” of the linden tree, as well as the “small air-hole leading into a cellar” (a black hole leading into darkness) into the walls

of the passageway (B:35, *SV*46:18). From an alchemical perspective the hyper-black walls and the vault symbolize the entrance into the *opus alchemicum* and the difficulties of the nigredo stage.

Strindberg writes that the passage “opens upon a green, sunlit space, where is seen a tremendous blue monk’s-hood (aconite)” (B:34), *SV*46:18). Ström does not literally depict a monk’s-hood, and instead there is a six-pointed star, signifying in alchemy “the magical transforming Arcanum Mercurius, the divine light hidden in the prison of matter” (A:190). Turning to Greek mythology, the flower’s dual-nature is revealed, as it grows

where the three-headed dog Cerberus, who guards the entrance to the underworld, has drooled. With its toxic roots it points to the grim beginnings of the opus. In Swedish, the blue monk’s-hood is sometimes called “*duvvagn, Venusvagn*” (dove-wagon, Venus-wagon).⁶³ “Doves” are alchemical symbols for the “transforming arcanum” (A:58–59). For the practitioner, Ström, such a rich web of references would feed into the creation of a multidimensional space, giving the experience of oscillating between dual forces, positions and spheres in the drama.⁶⁴ Thus, the spectator is not invited to directly interpret alchemical (or other) signs and symbols, but rather to participate in a multisensory performative exchange where scenography is an active agent. Whether it works, and how it does so in this particular case is another story.

When the Billposter “is cleaning” (R:186, *SV*46:18) the billboard, the activity can be associated with the purification of unclean matter, sometimes symbolized in alchemy by laundresses handling alchemical sheets (square shapes) (A:182).⁶⁵ Ström lets the almost rectangular Billposter engage in a geometrical dance. Arms forming a circle, one foot drawn into



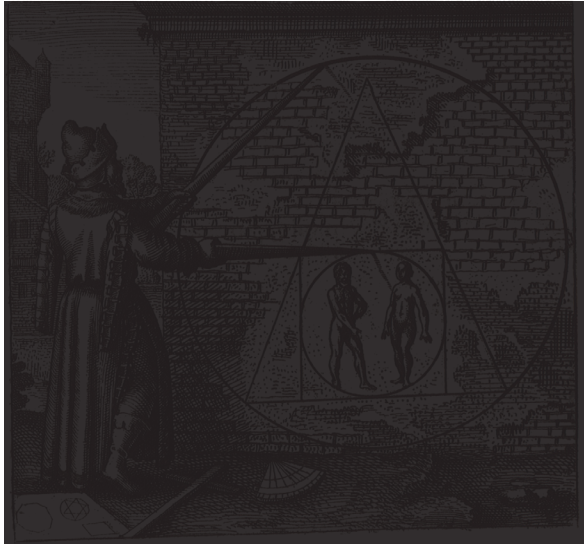
11. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for A Dream Play, the Theatre Corridor, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.*

the shining emerald circle – resembling a hoop, a children’s toy – placed next to him. Strindberg’s “dipnet with a green pole” (B:34, *SV*46:18) has thus been transformed by Ström into a symbolically powerful and also playful circle. This formal-visual-theoretical interpretation of written words and realist features is very alchemical, and typical of Ström’s reading of *A Dream Play*. When talking with the Daughter about suffering, the Billposter says that his situation is not so bad because after fifty years he has fulfilled the dream of his youth, to receive “a dipnet and a green cauf” (B:35, *SV*46:19). A play with circles (the dipnet), squares, and prisons (the cauf) is present within the ordinary, as well as the ambiguous but powerful colour green. The Daughter remarks: “Fifty years for a dipnet and a cauf”, and the Billposter adds: “A *green* cauf – mind you, *green*” (B:35, *SV*46:19). Here forbearance, suffering and a bizarre and persistent hope are intertwined.

The Billposter’s longing for unification with the divine circle relates to the goal of the opus, which is to merge opposites or impossibilities. This idea is visualized in *Atalanta Fugiens*, in an image of a dilapidated wall with geometrical figures.⁶⁶ [Illustration 12] Inside a large circle is a triangle in which are inscribed a square and a smaller circle, and the latter circle in turn inscribes a man and a woman.

On the ground lies a piece of paper showing among other things a circle with a six-pointed star – as Ström depicts the blue monk’s-hood. When the square is transformed into a circle, the four elements become the powerful quintessence of the opus, or the fifth element.

As in other metaphysical systems, the square with its four sides represents the four elements, the



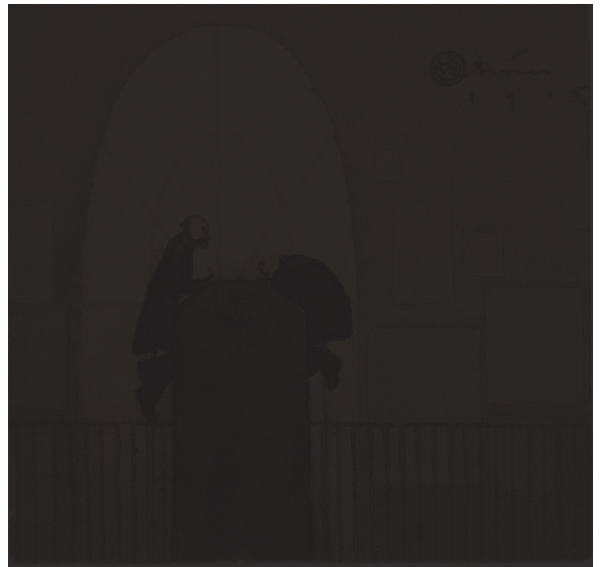
12. Alchemical engraving from Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 1618.

four seasons, the four compass directions, the four arms of the earthly cross and the mutable material world perceivable through the five senses. The circle (or sphere) represents the unending perfection of divine love, the unified spiritual realm of God. (A:189–190).

When drawn into the dark passage, the Billposter – clad in an azure blue tunic with golden crosses – is expressing the invisible secret wisdom of the alchemical process. In costume sketches from 1916, the Billposter’s desire for unification with the divine circle is made even more explicit. In one of them his tunic is covered with “spots (or stains)”, which is the sign of earthliness being washed away, and “MAMA, MAMA” is written in black next to him (A:189).⁶⁷ In alchemical language the “union of opposite forces and substances in the chemical wedding can be portrayed as an incestuous union”, to be performed secretly (A:106). Moreover, the Billposter’s tunic in the latter sketch takes on a fiery pattern of anthropomorphic Y-shapes. The figure “Y” can also be related to a Nordic-Atlantic tradition, where it is understood as the “Rune of Life”.⁶⁸

*Office and church: dismemberment
and divine vibrations*

In 1915 Ström created several sketches for the Lawyer’s office, but the choreographic theme, with the two scribes depicted as grotesque acrobats in a constantly transforming space remains essentially the same.⁶⁹ [Illustration 13] In two of them, the two men are clinging to a very high document chest or desk, and in another they



13. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the Scribes at the Lawyer’s office, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.*

are completely black bodies, crouching as if they were melting. Strindberg writes that “one has lost an arm, and the other an eye” (B:45, *SV*46:34). This dismemberment signifies the sorrows and sacrifice in the nigredo phase. The black has to be whitened and this process is what is going on in the tormented Lawyer’s “chalk-white” face with “purple shadows” (R:195, *SV*46:34). A very imperfect Y is indicated in the combination of document chest and bodies (dust series, the Ström family), and the low-positioned black melting bodies are helped by the shape of the sticks in the gate (in the golden series sketch new Y-shapes are coming into being in the gaps between the sticks). The people in the choreographically important crowd from the previous scene have travelled through space and are now present outside the Lawyer’s office, appearing “to have been standing there forever” (R:195, *SV*46:34). They are a chorus of witnesses, a group of bodies, expressing the passage of time, and time and space travelling, while standing still. This is a choreographic action (in projective stillness) that resonates with other frozen choreographies in the drama, such as the maidservants in the scene at Fairhaven.

Several series of drawings and more or less completed story boards, some probably from 1918, show how Ström is testing ways of integrating the gauze technique with other technical devices such as physical constructions that move vertically (the desk and/or document chest), move horizontally in various directions (wagons or sections of the floor), or create separation and new openings (sliding screens). In the midst of this disintegrating world we find the scribes in a state of metamorphosis. Interestingly the *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* mentions that “the lawyer’s office is grotesque in itself”, suggesting that Ström’s sketches capture something that was also present in the live event.⁷⁰

A sketch (golden series) for the church scene shows a large oval or egg shape encompassing an organ with blue pipes, forming a V against a black background. [Illustration 14] Looking stiff and holding on to the gate – transposed from the previous scenes – with one hand, the Daughter, clad in green, holds up a square grey – the fire of earth – mirror with her other hand. In the mirror the world is turned right. A weave of more or less distinct geometrical forms and alchemical symbols – squares, triangles, a pink dove (the transformative arcanum) on golden beams (the dream of gold raining down into the alembic) – can be seen, linking up

with the weave in other sketches. It can be noted how a V-necked (in this sketch) section of the Daughter's dress resonates with the larger V formed by the organ. When the Lawyer does not get his wreath (a circle of pain), and is humiliated, the Daughter saves him and they are transposed to Fingal's cave, where they decide to try marriage (or the alchemical wedding).

In the storyboard from 1918, a large V, or downward-pointing triangle is seen emerging in the church, and in the cave scene it is more fully developed, forming a Y, consisting of a triangle connected with a gap or stem growing out of a dark "thing" on the ground. Here the nigredo-phase dismemberment at the Lawyer's office is linked with the divine triangle, constructing the shape of a Y that keeps the vibrating but not obvious transmutation in motion.

Chamber and bed: chemical wedding

For the extremely plain and small chamber inside the Lawyer's office there are several 1915 sketches (golden, dusty, shimmering and

15. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the small chamber inside the Lawyer's office, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.*



14. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the church, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.*





16. *Alchemical engraving by Michael Maier, Symbola aureae mensae, 1617.*

miniature series). I have selected one (shimmering series) that in a particularly clear way handles the alchemical tropes.⁷¹ [Illustration 15]. The brutality of the transmutation becomes evident as the Daughter, dressed in green, turns pale – she is whitening – while the Lawyer both pities and torments his “poor little flower, with no light, no air...” (R:202, SV46:46). Next to the Daughter is a white candle, indicating the albedo phase. She is clinging to

the black stove (here rectangular) containing the fire – the air of enlightenment – that she so desperately needs. The Lawyer is halfway through the door but is looking back; with one arm he stiffly reaches towards the Daughter, but she looks the other way. In the space between the two bodies, a negative Y-shape appears, representing the unfulfilled unification of the opposites of hot and dry, male and female. The philosopher’s stone is often depicted as androgynous, a symbolical synthesis, a spiritual ideal, seeking paradisiac harmony.⁷² This creature, born of extreme pain and sacrifice, with two heads, two sexes and a body literally taking the shape of a Y is common in alchemical imagery, for example in an engraving in *Symbola aureae mensae* (1617).⁷³ [Illustration 16].

The chair, which plays an important role in the humiliating dialogue between the Daughter and the Lawyer, is hyper-black, and resonates with the other black items in the space, as well as in other scenes in the drama.⁷⁴ Moreover, the chair is constructed of squares, as is the window behind it. A cross divides the window into four squares, and these in turn are *pars pro toto* of a larger weave. Everything in the sketch – in liaison with other sketches – takes part in this geometrical, celestial choreography in the midst of brutal and dirty family life.

The wall, as well as the glass in the window, consists of a greyish-green, sandy, misty substance, strengthening the feeling of being enclosed in an alembic or alchemical vessel. As previously hinted at, the “bed” in the

plain room, as well as the room itself, is a vessel for uniting the opposites in the “chemical wedding” (A:35–39, 19–20). [Illustration 17] This is vividly depicted in alchemical imagery, showing for example two joined bodies – joined in a Y-shape of course – being grilled over fire.⁷⁵ Consequently the space has to be sealed off, so that the man and wife, the main components of the work, will not escape. Thus, Christine, depicted by Ström as a coal-black inhuman or infernal figure, pastes and pastes “until they can’t breathe!” (R:205, *SV*46:52). She uses “mercurial glue”, which is the “medium of conjunction”, to unite body and spirit (A:86).

In a 1918 miniature sketch for the small chamber, Ström creates a dark brown, compact dirty space, where what I interpret as an emerald-green hospital bed replaces the covered bed.⁷⁶ In the corner a black cylindrical heater lurks, and on the black rectangular stove (or table), there is an emerald green cooking utensil, with a strikingly white “thing” sticking out of it. In 1918 the bed is a blatantly painful affair, still green, but caught up in darkness. During the alchemical process, matter will scream like tormented children, so the crying child in Strindberg’s text fits nicely into Ström’s interpretive system (as I in turn interpret it). What is revealed here is that almost anything in our ordinary lives can take on a mystical and also aggressive charge. Who would not go mad and perhaps think unpleasant thoughts and dream of escaping after too many tormented sleepless nights with a crying child, or never-ending arguments about money and cleaning? The cruel quarrel about cabbage and fish between the Daughter and the Lawyer in the drama would, I suggest, resonate strongly with the audience because of the food shortages during the war.



17. *Alchemical engraving from Johann Daniel Mylius, Philosophia reformata, 1622.*

Foulbay and Fairhaven: ambiguous laboratory

In a 1915 sketch for Foulbay (golden series) Ström has transformed the heater already present in the sketch for the previous scene into a gigantic black heater dominating the picture.⁷⁷ It looks like a monster, with thin legs and red fiery eyes. Into this heater Ström has compressed Strindberg's quarantine station with its "ovens, furnace walls, and piping" (R:206, *SV*46:54), all necessary equipment in an alchemical laboratory. Moreover, in alchemical imagery, ambiguous cityscapes and landscapes, often including bodies of water – such as Strindberg's "narrow strait" (B:58, *SV*46:54) – set the scene for all sorts of brutally transformative activities.⁷⁸ From Strindberg's "pig-sties and outhouses" dung can be collected, and Ström's use of horribly ugly colours for the upward striving green-grey-blue triangles, and a diarrhoea-coloured semicircular form, creates the feeling of a stinking atmosphere. The Master of Quarantine is dressed in a purple robe signifying the "red elixir", a powerful transformative substance. In alchemical imagery the substance is literally depicted as a robe (A:159). His white turban and white cigarette indicate the albedo process, while his blackface mask is linked to the nigredo phase. Strindberg says that the Master of Q is "made up like a blackamoor" (B:59, *SV*46:54). In terms of alchemical imagery this would be "the mighty Ethiopian", the substance found at the bottom of the vessel that after torments will be resorted and reborn (A:71–72). In the black sky is the web of blue celestial signs.

In the words of the Officer, Foulbay "is a queer world, full of contradictions" (B:61, *SV*46: 58), and the Poet also expresses this when carrying mud and looking up toward the sky; the examples can be multiplied. Another 1915 sketch (golden series) shows a ship – or alchemical vessel – arriving with two happy young lovers. But earthly bliss does not last; a yellow flag is waved and a fire is lit that, according to Strindberg, burns with "blue, sulphurous flames" (B:65, *SV*46:63). Sulphur is the hot, male and, in its primitive states, violent principle that fixes the volatile spirit, while mercury, the feminine principle, dissolves matter (A:193). Foulbay can be understood as a hot dimension of a dualistic space and antagonistic hell, while the other dimension, Fairhaven, is equally twisted and violent, but covered in snow in the midst of summer.

For Fairhaven, Ström made two sketches in 1915 (golden series, and the Ström family collections) where the three maids are placed in a sculptural and choreographed position on the piano.⁷⁹ In the latter of them they are dressed in black, and their headscarves are light blue. When interacting with the sketch – staging it – I perceive how the pale and cold air makes the maids’ scrubbed faces shimmer in pink. The three deep-black dresses merge into a communal form, seemingly growing out of Plain Edith’s piano and merging with the music. While she plays – skilfully and artistically – they move, like a growing plant or a three-headed hydra, and a slightly bent Y takes form. Again, the profound idea of alchemical transmutation is enacted. The stultifying and mechanical character of the waltz, played for people hoping to meet, flirt, have sex, marry (in any order) and cheat on each other, is played down by Edith (not plain or ugly when she plays), and artistic skill and creation is taking over (at least in the dream).⁸⁰

The dancerly expressions of the maidens’ bodies and body parts are then reduplicated and transformed in a large hybrid pattern filling the sky and resembling branches or limbs covered in snow or condensed clouds. (Up close it looks like an image of dust in a microscope.) Behind these shapes are offset squares that look like repeated sails or handkerchiefs, forming a section of a large diffuse circular form. Outside the frame of the sketch – but within the scenography – the bourgeois people, including the Officer and Plain Edith’s Mother, are waltzing, moving their warm bodies to music that is à la mode. The maids are part of a much larger working class, and the waltz indeed becomes a powerful multimedia scenographic device representing a whole culture of light-hearted entertainment.⁸¹ In the other sketch the general idea is mainly the same, but the maids wear blue dresses, and there is a grid of red lines on the white head scarves, indicating a burning desire for change. Behind them, flowers – previously floating outside the growing castle – form a swirling “peacock’s tail”, symbolizing the multicoloured stage after the pains in nigredo (A:141–142).⁸²

For the school scene Ström shows the students, including the sitting Officer and the Daughter, as a choreographed group forming an upward-reaching triangle.⁸³ Above the teacher hovers a large square where opposing principles are symbolized as interpenetrating blue and orange

organic forms. Another square is grey, like ashes or earthly fire. In the black sky small orange and blue crosses glitter, indicating that the “veil of ignorance” (the gauze) is quivering. Looking into the choreography and the costumes, one finds that the grey-bearded teacher, dressed in a grey-green tailcoat, takes on a peculiar body shape resembling a bird – as did the Glazier before. The alchemical vessel is sometimes referred to as a “bird”, for example a stork, and this links alchemy with teaching and learning (A:23–24, 191). In order to achieve “*sapientia*” or wisdom, the pupil has to go through a process of dissolution and coagulation, and repeat it again and again until knowledge is born, something that completely fails in the school scene (A:178). Dressed in black, crouching on the bench, the Officer is a piece of raw ore, stuck in the nigredo phase, refusing to “mature” as Strindberg says (R:216, *SV*46:68). The Daughter not surprisingly is standing up and her blue (in this sketch) dress resonates with the blue signs of divine wisdom in the black sky and inside the square.

In a 1918 miniature sketch for Foulbay, Ström by and large follows the ideas from 1915, but the upward striving triangles are now brown gables, and are united in one form.⁸⁴ [Illustration 18] In several sketches for Fairhaven (Y-series), and the storyboard, Ström has chosen to empha-

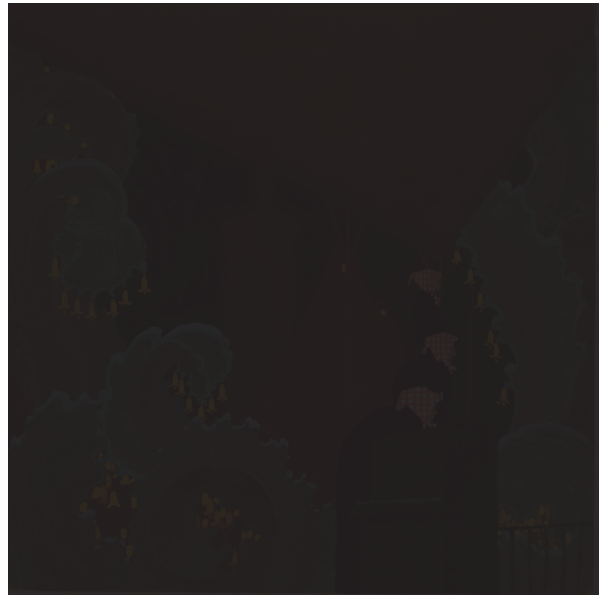
size the unification of opposites through the dominant Y-shape.⁸⁵

It consists of a large, brown, downward-pointing triangle, looking like a weird piece of architecture with thin stanchions (tiny Y-shapes). When it is combined with the force of the three maids and the piano (with green keys), it merges into an alchemical ballet. [Illustration 19]. Upward-striving brown house gables and the now brown heater fill the background,



18. *Scenography sketch, artist's statement* by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, at Foulstrand, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.

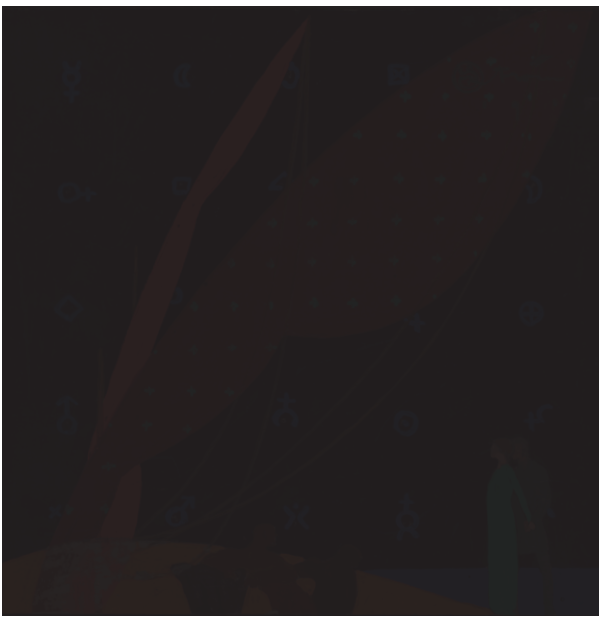
like a threatening industrial or war-torn landscape or, as I think Ström intended it, an ambiguous, indoors-outdoors alchemical laboratory. The three maids wear coal-black nigredo-phase dresses, and the red grids, signifying the element of fire in the white head scarves are still present. Growing like pieces of black ore – embryos that can become gold – out of the piano as the Bach music is played, they express an explosive force, although in fact they are standing still. Gigantic dirty green leaves with small yellow flowers, or monstrous waves forming whirling circular loops indicate a strong transformational movement. Through the bodies, as it seems to me, layers and layers of conflicting feelings move. This is also politically charged, as the Y, present in the realm of the social, is a symbol for the unification of opposing forces and classes. This idea of political upheaval followed by a utopian peace, is acted out as a choreographed dance, with the maids, the bodies in the margins, placed centre stage. There are also two 1918 sketches depicting dark brown spaces where Plain Edith with her piano, and the Teacher with his master's desk (the piano transformed), appear frozen against a large green square.⁸⁶ They symbolize the art of music and the art of knowledge, and while not moving, they travel through time, to us, as formulas to be re-enacted and reacted to.



19. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the Maids at Fairhaven, 1917–18. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.*

Beach and cave: heating and flooding

At the shore – or on the beach – of the Mediterranean Sea the heat increases, as the Daughter and the Lawyer enter a paradise that is also a hell. In all three preserved 1915 sketches (golden series, and two that I have not placed in a series) for this scene the choreography for the coalheavers re-



20. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, at the Mediterranean, 1915.*
Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.



mains essentially the same.⁸⁷ Having to work in the burning sun, the heavens appear like modernist dancers, taking on low and wide stances. They simultaneously melt and strive to form a Y-shape. In one of the sketches (golden series) two gigantic sails form a tilting Y, consisting of large knife blades, one vivid red, one brownish red. [Illustration 20] When one coalheaver speaks about the unfair brutality of industrial society, the other says that they “have to pull out the scaffolds soon and begin to operate on this rotten body” (B:81, *SV*:46:85). The guillotine from Foulbay echoes here, as does the French revolution, if we expand our view of the scenography to include cultural-imaginary dimensions and memories. “Beheading” or dismemberment is necessary in the alchemical opus, and represents the soul being liberated from the body. Through this operation it is believed that the soul is freed from illusion (A:20–22).

In a 1918 sketch (Y-series) for the Mediterranean beach, Ström again uses the large brown Y from

21. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, at the Mediterranean, 1918.*
Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.

previous scenes (1918 materials).⁸⁸ [Illustration 21] On the ground the coalheavers, still taking a low and melting position, strive to unite with it. In the background sharp knife blades, triangular teeth or the like, point upwards. The political force in the scene inspired the well-known mystical anarchist and editor/dramaturg at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, Gustav Landauer, to discuss utopian ideas of a better world after a revolution, in his seminal essay about *A Dream Play*, published in the theatre's journal before the premiere in 1918.⁸⁹ According to Landauer, the scene reveals Strindberg's deep concern for the oppressed and poor, and is ingenious in how it frames great issues in ordinary and material situations.

The cave is a common trope in alchemical imagery, and an image in *Atalanta fugiens* shows Luna and Sol, standing in water hugging in front of a cave (A:88). [Illustration 22] For Fingal's cave, Ström reuses the oval outline from previous 1915 sketches (golden series).⁹⁰ In the midst of a dark grey-green wall with small bleak crosses, the cave opens, at the same time as it is covered by an emerald green gauze painted with blue brush strokes. In the middle is a gap, an opening towards the black sky covered with blue signs. The Daughter, in emerald green, and the Poet, in black, stand by the opening. He holds her, and points out through the gap. According to the Poet a red, triangular buoy "is like a lung with a windpipe" (R:232, *SV*46:94). In alchemy, a "lung" is a bellows for stoking the alchemical fire (A:159, 221), which gives Ström an opportunity to read (through me) Strindberg's verses for the cave scene as alchemically charged. All sorts of fragments, things, symbols are shaken, stirred, boiled, cleansed, tormented and dissolved in



22. *Alchemical engraving, Michael Maier, Atalanta fugiens, 1618.*

the waters. Pain, wailing and crying increase as matter is tormented and broken down in the process of change. The dissolution operation can be compared with images of the “King swimming in the ocean” or “Noah’s flood where the waters threaten to overwhelm the matter completely and drown it” (A:163). A sign of success is when the vessel, the ship, safely lands on dry ground, but this is not really what happens to the ship in Strindberg’s cave.

In the 1918 storyboard the cave is another dimension or facet of a space dominated by the Y-shape, the symbol of transforming opposites into one. Alchemy’s mercurial water is the active force in one of Ström’s 1918 miniatures, where green and blue door-like shapes and then a float-



23. *Scenography sketch, artist’s statement by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, transformative cave impression, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.*

ing flame penetrate and dissolve something brown and muddy.⁹¹ [Illustration 23] The technical description states that a “grün Spaltlampe” and “grüne Linsenapparate” were used for the cave.⁹² These traces are suggestive of the common alchemical idea of cold fire and transmutation through water, as opposed to the path that liberates through fire. Ultimately the cave is a precarious space, where – to my taste – beautiful and seductive multisensorial poetry is performed at the same time as the world is going under.⁹³

Wilful blindness and blissful consciousness

After the cave scene the dissolving wall from the theatre corridor reappears, and the 1918 storyboard shows that Ström’s image for the corridor was used again. The secretive door – a rectangle – with its four-leaf clover air hole is finally opened, and the emptiness inside is revealed. A quarrel about truth and knowledge begins among the four deans representing the four faculties at the university. They are brilliant at mocking each other, but none of them seems to be interested in the emptiness in any serious or constructive way. The Daughter describes them as a monster with “four heads, four minds, and a single body” (R:240, *SV*46:109). Indeed, they are a horrible hydra of the “right-minded” threatening to “stone” her (B:97, *SV*46:110).⁹⁴ These warlords are speaking of throwing real stones, and are not looking for any symbolic, psychological or dreamt stones. Like the Officer in the school scene, they cannot give up the old to gain something new.

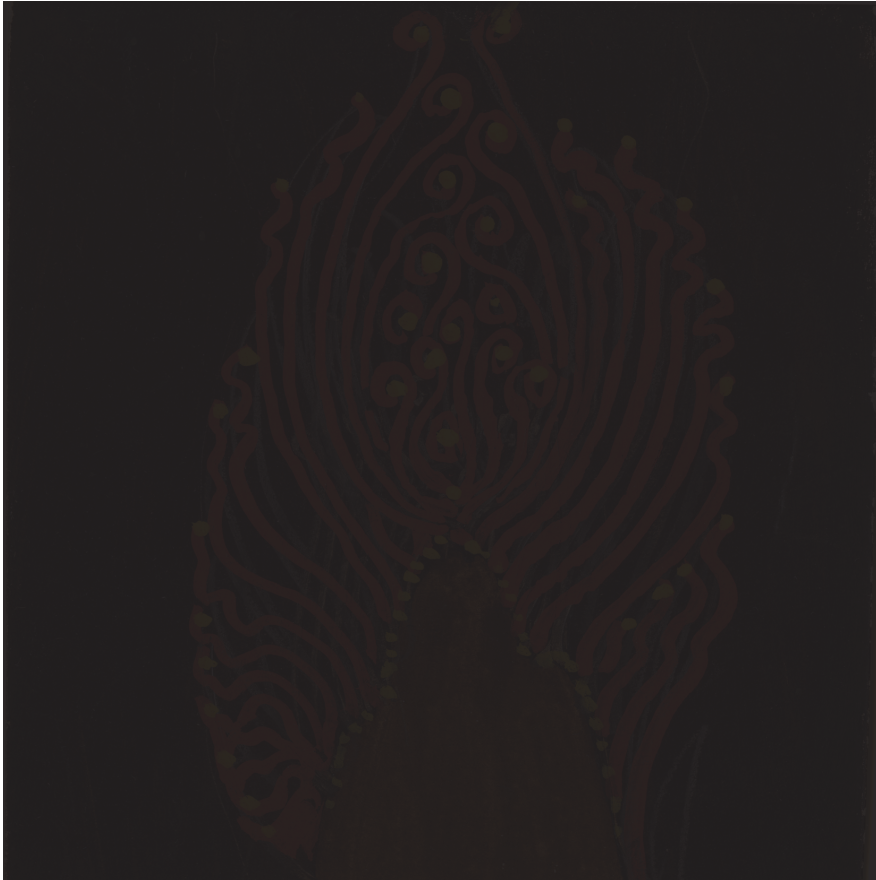
In such a state of immaturity, patience is required and, according to Eliade, the alchemist has to be “healthy, humble, patient, chaste”, and continuously work at a task that goes far beyond just experiments in a laboratory. Also, the work has to be performed in the manner of a “child’s game”, in a spontaneous, easy and playful way.⁹⁵ Moreover, the alchemist will have to transmute him or herself “into a Philosopher’s Stone” or the “Elixir”.⁹⁶ Although it is believed that the mysterious stone can be found everywhere, it is also extremely difficult to understand what it is. A source from the 15th century says that “birds and fishes bring the Stone to us” and from the stone “springs our *aqua permanens*”.⁹⁷ No wonder the Billposter went fishing on his vacation.

When the stage transforms into the place outside the growing castle, a group of people willing to transform themselves line up for a ritualistic dance procession, and then throw their attributes onto the fire. Interestingly, the Billposter throws his bills, but keeps the circle (dipnet). This choice resonates with the transformative play with geometrical forms that has been vibrating in the scenography throughout the drama. Possessing as he does a playful hoop or divine circle, the Billposter might be rather close to the stone.⁹⁸ A sketch from 1915 (series uncertain) shows the Billposter alone, holding the shimmering green dipnet.⁹⁹ The place on the other side of the vault is emerald green, the dirty wall is turning into gold, and the Portress's chair is now solid gold.

In a costume sketch from 1918, Ström makes the Billposter an imperfect flower-man on the move.¹⁰⁰ With the cap his head looks like a bud, and his large collar is the divine circle (the dipnet) that he has sort of penetrated or is stuck in. Either way the dual-natured process of the opus goes on: cleansing through water as he holds a bucket in one hand, and through fire, as the roll of bills held in his other hand resembles a log of wood for the fire.

In the archives explored for this study, no sketch from 1915 is found of the burning castle. But it seems reasonable to think that Ström would have brought the scenographic system from, for example, the golden series to a conclusion that corresponds with the other sketches. The fire, probably stylized, would be there, as would the golden castle and the alchemical flowers. While Strindberg does not say what colour the chrysanthemum is, we learn that the ground is covered with blue monk's hood, which heightens the deceptive and dual-natured character of the scenography. The mass of blue flowers creates a frightening and unnatural effect. Blue is commonly understood as symbolizing faith and is associated with heavenly characteristics, but the flower's poisonous roots and its relation to the drooling Cerberus and the underworld indicate, perhaps, that the terrors and trials of the nigredo phase begin anew as soon as the ruined vessel or castle has been rebuilt.

A miniature sketch from 1918 shows the growing heap of a castle.¹⁰¹ Out of it burst fiery red sprouts, worms or snakes, with small yellow heads, forming a gigantic, stylized, vaginal flower. [Illustration 24] I would suggest that it signifies the fountain of knowledge, "the water



24. *Scenography sketch, artist's statement by Knut Ström for A Dream Play, the burning castle, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.*

of life which nevertheless contains the most malignant poison". In the fountain, male sulphur and female argent vive are united, "which leads to their resurrection" after death (A:81). The alchemical child is created and born, but what really is created we do not know. In autumn 1918 a huge amount of horrific aggression was acted out in the world, and the situation in Düsseldorf was very unstable. Not far away, fire, mud, cold water, dirt, ruins, and destruction were a terrible reality, as the people at the theatre tried very hard to create what they believed was high-quality art relevant for a society in deep crisis.

Exit: Transmutation

My aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate that Ström to large extent read and interpreted Strindberg's dramatic text from the viewpoint of alchemical theory and imagery and combined this with influences from modernist and avant-garde dance. While visual images found in alchemical books were important resources and catalysts, Ström's knowledge of alchemy is very theoretical and, I would suggest, a product of intense research. This made it possible for him to create a coherent alchemical interpretation of Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, as part of the occult zeitgeist and its syncretistic ideas. It can be concluded that all the elements of Ström's sketches – colours, forms, signs, symbols, and their combinations – embody transmutation and are connected through a fungal mass of scenographic threads traversing the series of sketches throughout his long working process.¹⁰² In Ström's (sketched) scenography, the actor-dancers' bodies are choreographed and made into active and expressive parts of an ongoing process of transcending the polarities and conflicts of the human world. Visual tropes such as the Y-shape, in alchemy a symbol for transmutation and the transgression of dualisms, are acted out corporeally – danced – by the Daughter and the men she encounters, but also by the scribes, the maids, the coalheavers and the architecture. In the work from 1918, the Y has become a central unifying scenographic element, conveying a sense of mysterious and vigorous ambiguity; it is disturbingly ugly, yet resembles architecture. Another strong scenographic element, kept throughout the production process, is the use of dissolving walls and other surfaces, wherein the transmutational choreography oscillates between celestial geometry and earthly dust, vapour, ordinary wallpaper, doors and other openings. Thus, the in-depth exploration of the scenographic archive demonstrates how profoundly Ström's gauze technique – a means to enact a continuously changing and dissolving world – was integrated into the performance. Precisely this transformational and dreamlike character is highlighted in appreciative terms in the reviews, as exemplified in the following quotations:

Ever shifting like a dream and seemingly at random the moving poems glide past us, unrealistic in any earthly sense but

possessing deeper truth. To enable the spectators to experience these strange and often grotesque events with their own eyes and ears requires precisely the dramatic artistry unique to Schauspielhaus.¹⁰³

He [Knut Ström] had to create decorations that change from minute to minute; within sixty seconds a classroom must be transformed into a ballroom, a lawyer's office into a church. This can only be accomplished, of course, through stylizations that convey the essence of things.¹⁰⁴

Because the space in which the dream drives the action forward immediately responds to each change of direction and, in a sense, constantly gives birth to itself anew. The way Knut Ström masterfully accomplishes this task, and in doing so creates this dramatic dream event, is admirable because, like the action, the setting itself is in constant transformation.¹⁰⁵

Importantly, the gauze – in combination with lighting and stage architecture – is not only a means for creating a constant flow and swift scene changes but also a theoretically charged medium. It strongly resonated with contemporary occult ideas of the world as a deceptive weave and human beings as more or less blindfolded. In an undated archival fragment, Henckels recalls Louise Dumont's supportive attitude and enthusiastic response to the plan to use "schleiern" (veils of gauze) in *A Dream Play*:

Here's a typical example of Louise Dumont's encouraging impulses. When, together with the magnificent scenographer Knut Ström, I began staging *A Dream Play*, she said: "I can only see the piece in gauze, gauze, gauze, gauze". To which Gustav Lindemann, with scepticism and thinking about the cost, responded: "Louise! How will we get gauze, what do you mean?" "It's your business! It's the business of the men! Gauze, gauze, gauze!!!" And she was right. Knut Ström painted the decorations on tulle gauze. They were alternately lit and lit through. The atmosphere of dreams was there!¹⁰⁶

Louise Dumont, I would suggest, was not only suggesting a technical solution, but also relating the gauze to mysticism and the idea that the world we see is a deceptive weave. Bringing Henckels' memories into a dialogue with Ström's sketches and storyboards we find that the latter follows the drama's general idea about transformation, working transmutation into the minutest scenographic detail. As a result Ström managed to create the de-materialization that Strindberg longed for in 1907, as expressed in his *Öppna brev till Intima teatern*.¹⁰⁷ It can also be suggested that Ström's multifaceted use of gauze technique exceeds Svend Gade's much acclaimed 1916 Berlin solution (as far as I have been able to map it) with a gauze covering the proscenium, and another gauze used in the school scene. The practitioner Ström comes across as a skilled and scholarly interpreter of Strindberg and a scenographer-choreographer within the realm of theatre art.

Looking into the historiography of the early stagings of *A Dream Play*, the scenographic archive is seldom the subject of in-depth analysis of scenographic interpretation, and I find no studies addressing modernist dance and choreography in combination with alchemy.¹⁰⁸ Dance is often considered ephemeral and very difficult to access, and the same is true of scenography, understood as an event. By avoiding the rather impossible ambition to write directly about an event that is long gone (and that left behind no known photo or film documentation), which would require forcing the sketches to fit into this futile process, and instead choosing to view the visual traces as valuable interpretations of a dramatic text and as imaginary but technically functioning stagings, we enable a different and more performative history to emerge.

Ström's work with Strindberg's *A Dream Play* can also be discussed in relation to alchemical interpretations of later date.¹⁰⁹ I will provide two examples, the first being Katarina Thorell's 1996 master's thesis exploring Robert Lepage's *A Dream Play* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre 1994–95 from an alchemical perspective.¹¹⁰ She argues that "the alchemical elements are present, albeit unconsciously, in Strindberg's drama as well as in Lepage and his collaborators' interpretation of the drama".¹¹¹ While I find her analysis inspiring and useful, I am hesitant to relegate the agency of Strindberg and Lepage to the realm of the unconscious. In any case, alchemical imagery does seem to provide a rich visual and theo-

retical resource that is inspiring for scenographer-directors in that it takes transformation, fantasy, and motion seriously in playful ways. It can be suggested that Ström's alchemical interpretation resonates with Lepage's production from 1994–95, but this will not be further explored here.

My second example is Bettina L. Knapp's chapter "A Dream Play: Castle, Cave and Cauldron", in *Theatre and Alchemy* (1980). Knapp demonstrates that the dramatic text invites interpretation based on alchemical ideas and structures. She skilfully links alchemical phases with the scenes in the drama, and finally concludes that the "chrysanthemum bud at the top of the castle bursts into bloom, and with it the spirit of rebirth comes into being".¹¹² As I have tried to demonstrate, however, a contextualized dancery reading of *A Dream Play* – making use of Ström's visual interpretation – leads to a more ambiguous understanding of the drama. What Ström's interpretation reveals, I believe, is that Strindberg would set up and at the same time deconstruct the alchemical laboratory as a populated scenography. In Ström's way of reading Strindberg (as I see it) alchemical imagery functions as a catalyst, a resource and a creative language that manages to get a good grip on and critically and creatively twist any stable belief or image.

Belonging to a much neglected category of the theatre archive, scenographic traces are in need of further theorization so that the rich knowledge they possess can productively take part in a continuum of historical understanding. Even if we cannot visualize what Ström's scenography *looked like* in 1918, the exploration of the 1915–18 production process reveals not only *how* his successful dematerialization of space *was done*, but also which *structuring principles* he used. These results will not enable a reconstruction of one original true version, but instead can instigate creative and critical re-enactments of a plurality of possibilities in collaborations between academics and practitioners such as scenographers, directors, lighting and costume designers, technicians, dancers, actors, musicians and visual artists, across borders, in digital as well as real theatrical spaces. It is also important to find ways to bring the new understanding of Ström's work in Germany into Swedish scenography and theatre history. To provide one suggestion, I think we must return to previous historical writings and reimagine them from the perspective of practitioners and the scenographic archive.

NOTES

1. *A Dream Play* was written in 1901 and published in 1902. Before the first performance, in 1907, Strindberg added a prologue composed in 1906. Unless otherwise indicated, for the English version of Strindberg's drama, I use August Strindberg, *Miss Julie and other Plays: A new translation by Michael Robinson*, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, Oxford, [1998], 2008, or when closer to the Swedish original as I understand it, August Strindberg, *Plays by August Strindberg*, translated by Edwin Björkman, Duckworth & Co, London 1912. To cite these sources I henceforth use the abbreviations (R) for Robinson and (B) for Björkman. The equivalent Swedish text, here and throughout the chapter, is from August Strindberg, *Samlade verk 46 (SV 46)*.
2. These introductory lines build on my own reading of Strindberg's dramatic text in combination with the following publications in particular: Sven Delblanc, *Stormhatten*, Alba, Stockholm 1979, pp. 63–102; Harry G. Carlson, *Genom Inferno: Bildens magi och Strindbergs förnyelse*, translated by Gun R. Bengtsson, Carlssons, Stockholm 1995, pp. 332–335; Harry G. Carlson, *Strindberg och myterna*, translated by Sven Erik Täckmark, Författarförlaget, Stockholm 1979, pp. 181–251; Eszter Szalczer, *Writing Daughters: August Strindberg's Other Voices*, Norvik Press, London 2008, pp. 70–77; Egil Törnqvist, *Strindbergian Drama: Themes and Structure*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, Humanities Press Inc, Atalanta Highlands, N.J., 1982, pp. 147–162. Other important readings will be referenced later in the text.
3. When writing “Ström's interpretation” I am well aware that the collaborative atmosphere at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf was a necessary foundation for his work, and that it thus has what Derrida describes as multiple signatures. See Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL 1988, p. 32.
4. I will avoid the term “blocking” in the case of Ström, because, as I see it, the actors and/or dancers in the sketches are artistically choreographed, not merely positioned in space.
5. Johanna Laakkonen, *Canon and Beyond: Edvard Fazer and the Imperial Russian Ballet 1908–1910*, (diss.), Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki 2009, p. 205.
6. Quoted from Laakkonen 2009, p. 205.
7. Ström collaborated with Rochus Gliese for *Macbeth*. The sketches were published and thus widely spread. See Astrid von Rosen, *Knut Ströms scenografi och bildvärld: Visualisering i tid och rum*, Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture 32, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg 2010, p. 34.
8. von Rosen 2010, pp. 45–51.
9. These photographs belong to the private collections of the Ström family. During the “Dream-Playing” project, previously unexamined photographs

- from these private collections have surfaced. In addition, in Grosse Sammlung, Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf (henceforth: TMA), there is a playbill from April 1918 containing the information that Ström did the costumes for a dance programme by and with Ewe Wippermann. At Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (henceforth: GSM) there are updated photographs of Wippermann, in Teatersamlingarna, Knut Ström 1.
10. Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln (henceforth: TWS), Knut Ström's sketches for *Ein Traumspiel*.
 11. Quoted from Mary Fleischer, *Embodied Texts: Symbolist Playwright-Dancer Collaborations*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York 2007, p. 133.
 12. Fleischer 2007, pp. 112–148.
 13. Gösta M. Bergman, *Den moderna teaterns genombrott 1890–1925*, Bonnier, Stockholm 1966, p. 278, and August Falck, *Fem år med Strindberg*, Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm 1935, pp. 237–239.
 14. Lisa Söderberg, “Regissör Knut Ström berättar för Lisa Söderberg”, *Sveriges Radio*, 1970-05-25, radio programme, GSM. My translation.
 15. The information about Ström's time in Berlin builds on interviews I conducted with the Ström family in 2009, and again in 2015 while finalizing this article. The presence of dance in variety shows is explored in relation to historiography in Lena Hammergren, *Ballerinor och barfotadansöser: Svensk och internationell danskultur runt 1900*, Chora 4, Carlsson, Stockholm 2002.
 16. Astrid Regnell, *Att se stjärnor på ljusa dagen: Förvandling och försoning i August Strindbergs En blå bok [Seeing Stars in Broad Daylight: Transformation and Reconciliation in August Strindberg's Zones of the Spirit]* (diss.), Lund University, ellerströms, Lund 2009.
 17. My main sources are Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible [Forgerons et Alchimistes, 1956]*, translated by Stephen Corrin, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1978; Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century*, Thames and Hudson, London 1988; Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998. Abraham's book builds on an extensive assemblage of literary, intellectual and visual references from two thousand years. When citing I henceforth use the abbreviation (A).
 18. Eliade 1978, in particular pp. 8, 19–52.
 19. Bettina L. Knapp, *Theatre and Alchemy*, Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1980, p. 35.
 20. Mark Mussari mentions some probable alchemical connections in Strindberg's *A Dream Play* in “Färg, färg! – Strindberg's Chromatic Language in *Ett drömspel*”, *Scandinavian Studies*, volume 77, 2005, number 12, issue 4, pp. 486–487.
 21. See also Eliade 1978, p. 162.

22. Emerald green can also be associated with the mediaeval alchemical source, *The Emerald Table* (A:69–70).
23. August Strindberg, Strindbergsällskapet, Torsten Eklund (ed.), *Brev 15. April 1904–April 1907*, Bonniers, Stockholm 1976, p. 361. My translation, “mitt mest älskade Drama, min största smärtas barn” in a letter written on 17 April 1907, from Strindberg to Schering.
24. The ambiguity of green is specifically discussed in C. W. Leadbeater, *Man Visible and Invisible: Examples of Different Types of Men as Seen by Means of Trained Clairvoyance*, John Lane, The Bodley Head, New York 1903, p. 83–85. Again, several traditions and thought systems are entangled in Ström’s syncretistic blend.
25. See also Eliade 1978, p. 162.
26. Many useful examples can be found in Klossowski de Rola 1988. About the rose, see A:173.
27. TWS, Knut Ström’s sketches for *Ein Traumspiel* 1915.
28. See Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the image in motion*, Zone books, New York 2004; Georges Didi-Huberman, “Knowledge: Movement (the man who spoke to butterflies)”, *Aby Warburg and the image in motion*, edited by Philippe-Alain Michaud, Zone Books, New York 2004, pp. 7–19; Rachel Fensham, “Choreographic Archives: Towards an Ontology of Movement Images”, *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*, edited by Gunhild Borggren and Rune Gade, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen 2013, p. 150; Lena Johannesson, “On ‘the Irrational Remainder’ and the Instrumentalised Ego”, *Subjectivity and Methodology in Art History*, edited by Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf and Dan Karlholm, Eidos no. 8, Stockholms universitet, 2003, p. 74.
29. Susan Kozel, “AffeXity. Performing Affect with Augmented Reality”, *Fibre Culture Journal*, Issue 21, 2012, p. 92. Online: <http://twentyone.fibreculture-journal.org/fcj-150-affexity-performing-affect-with-augmented-reality/#sthash.b8v9LEn1.dpbs> (accessed 20 April 2015).
30. Cecilia Roos, “Ord skillnad blick den inre den yttre mellanrum form”, *Hänryckning och ohygglighet: Koreografi & samtid*, edited by Lena Hammergren and Madeleine Hjort, Chora skriftserie för dansforskning, vol. 7, Carlssons, Stockholm 2006, pp. 124–136; Cecilia Roos, “Från rörelse ur reflektion i tillblivelse: Dansaren och den konstnärliga processen”, *Ord i tankar och rörelse: Dansaren och den skapande processen: Konstnärlig och humanistisk forskning i samverkan. En delrapport*, edited by Cecilia Roos, Katarina Elam, Anna Petronella Foulter, Dans och Cirkushögskolan, Stockholm 2012, pp. 11–54.
31. Fensham 2013, pp. 146–162.
32. Thomas Postlewait and Charlotte M. Canning, “Representing the Past: An Introduction on Five Themes”, *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance*

Historiography, edited by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 2010, p. 10.

33. See the discussion in Knapp 1980, p. 13, about the dramatist's work. She says that the play must be "extracted from his unconscious, his prima materia, where it lives in a dormant and amorphous state". Unlike Knapp, what I try to describe with my dual-natured dynamic and ambiguous methodology are conscious processes, accessible, and socially anchored. Even experimental voyages and experiences of vertigo appear to me as conscious, albeit sometimes strange events.
34. The materials at TMA are kept in the Grosse Sammlung, *Ein Traumspiel*, the materials at TWS in the Knut Ström collection, and the materials at SMV in the scenography collections, Knut Ström, *Ett drömspel/Drömspelet*. Please note that dates and information about the sketches provided in the database at SMV are not always reliable. One aim of the "Dream-Playing" project could be to compile a more accurate catalogue of Ström's sketches.
35. "Golden" is used because of the colour's ostentatious presence in the sketches, all mounted on pieces of grey paper, in turn mounted on pieces of hand-made paper. Moreover, the use of small cross signs as transformative markers on earthly objects, and blue signs on black sky, makes them come across as a series. For a detailed list of the sketches at TWS, see Gerald Köhler (ed.), *Knut Ström, Illustrierte Räume: Eine Ausstellung der Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, vom 24. März bis zum 9. Mai 2003*, Universität zu Köln 2003.
36. "Dusty" refers to the use of shimmering brown watercolour for the dissolving walls in the sketches. The Daughter's purple dress, the oval shape as a transformative marker, and dark green features make them appear as a series (see DTM: 340, 341, 342, 343, and a sketch for the small chamber inside the Lawyer's office at TMA). Moreover, the images in a storyboard at TMA correspond with the sketches. (The storyboard also reveals that some sketches have gone missing.)
37. (With the exception of one sketch at SMV.) "Shimmering" refers to the airbrush-like quality – with vapour and dry dust merging – of the dissolving walls (the Daughter and the Officer inside the castle, the small chamber inside the Lawyer's office), and the castle and sky in a sketch at SMV (DTM:345). It comes close to the watercolour technique used in some of the other sketches, but nevertheless stands out as quite distinct.
38. A typewritten technical description (TMA), dated 1915/18 contains – among other things – details about a zodiac, and the use of Geissler tubes that can be related to the miniature series. The miniatures' connection to the 1918 materials is further strengthened by a storyboard (Grosse Sammlung, TMA) providing a useful overview of the scenographic flow of a probable 1918 performance. With the exception of the two abstract green-blue-brown sketch-

- es the miniatures corresponds with images in the storyboard. See also the sketches at TWS: G6861a, and G6861b, dated 1917 and 1918.
39. DTM:349, TWS:G6861a, G6861b, G6861c (undated). See also the corresponding storyboard in Grosse Sammlung, as well as notes in *Ein Traumspiel*, Düsseldorf 13 Dez 1915, in the Textbuchbestand, at TMA. Both these sources can be further explored and theorized in the future.
 40. See emblem nr. 300 in Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 170. The sketch is at TWS, G6862r.
 41. This way of placing abstract signs on, for example, a sky can be found in pedagogical alchemical engravings, Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 261.
 42. Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 264.
 43. Regnell 2009, p. 151.
 44. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:266.
 45. The note is in Grosse Sammlung, *Ein Traumspiel*, TMA.
 46. Freddie Rokem, “Voices and Visions in Fingal’s Cave: Plato and Strindberg”, *The International Strindberg: New Critical Essays*, edited by Anna Westerstähl Stenport, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2012, p. 130.
 47. For inspiring discussions addressing the importance of exploring and understanding imaginary aspects of theatrical space, see Marvin Carlson, “Space and Theatre History”, *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, edited by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 2010, pp. 197–98, and Freddie Rokem, “Scenographic Paradigms: Some principles of perception and interpretation”, *Performance Research* 18:3, published online 2013, pp. 75–83. I discuss imaginary aspects of scenography in von Rosen 2010, as well as in my articles “Sweating with Peer Gynt: Performative Exchange as a Way of Accessing Scenographic Action”, *Nordlit: Ibsen and World Drama’s*, edited by Lisbeth P. Wærp, 34, 2015, pp. 343–352, and “Scenografera Sillgateteatern: Ett spel mellan kropp, bild och språk”, *Lidenskap eller levebröd? Utövande kunst i endring rundt 1800*, edited by Randi M. Selvik, Ellen Karoline Gjervan, and Svein Gladsø, Fagboksforlaget, Bergen 2015, pp. 315–334.
 48. The sketch is a TWS, G:6862o.
 49. A useful example of the philosophical egg is found in Heinrich Nollius, *Theoria Philosophiae Hermeticae*, 1617. The egg or egg shape is also a trope in theosophical imagery, as becomes evident in Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, *Thought-forms*, The Theosophical Publishing House LTD, London 1901/ebook Project Gutenberg 2005, and Leadbeater 1903. Moreover, as shown by Freddie Rokem in *Strindberg’s Secret Codes*, Norvik Press, Norwich 2004, pp. 179–180, Strindberg, in his somewhat playful list of Hebrew roots and translations and transformations for “Father”, adds the Latin word “Ovum”, or egg. Thus, the egg is indeed *ghosted* – full of repeated and

- transformed cultural images and narratives – to use Marvin Carlson’s term from *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor [2001] 2008.
50. They are also strongly reminiscent of flowerlike images found in *Thought-Forms*; the systems are overlapping.
 51. This snake is also part of the Theosophical Society’s seal, well known around the turn of the last century in occult and mystical circles and now accessible on the internet in a myriad of versions. It is worth mentioning that Strindberg was familiar with the Ouroboros symbol. One example is his novel *I havsbandet*, where the central character, Inspector Borg, significantly has an Ouroboros bracelet. As for Ström’s knowledge of the seal, and the impact of it in his sketches, see my contribution “The Billposter as Alchemist: A Dream Play in Düsseldorf 1915–18”, *Strindberg across Borders*, edited by Massimo Ciaravolo, Istituto Italiano Studi Germanici, Rome 2016, pp. 305–326.).
 52. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:354.
 53. Knapp 1980, p. 26.
 54. The sketch is a SMV, DTM:269.
 55. Golden series, TWS:G6862n. Shimmering series, the Ström family collections. Again, it is of course possible to link the crosses and the vibrating features more closely to theosophical imagery and ideas, as expressed in for example Besant and Leadbeater 1901, and Leadbeater 1903.
 56. Susan Valeria Harris Smith, *Masks in Modern Drama*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1984, p. 55.
 57. Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 75.
 58. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:265.
 59. See Per Magnus Johansson, “Slitningar på den inre scenen”, August Strindberg, *Ensam, fyra noveller, två essäer av Per Magnus Johansson, efterord av Anna Ek*, Lindelöws Bokförlag, Göteborg 2012, pp. 27–42.
 60. Golden sketch, TWS, G6862p. Dust sketch, SMV, DTM:341.
 61. For an elaborated discussion of occultism in Strindberg’s writing techniques, see Szalszer 2008. Ström’s gauze technique is described in Ann-Margret Liljequist, *Sandro Malmquist och hans verksamhet som scenograf* (diss.), Theatron, Stockholm 1985, pp. 124–125.
 62. The sketch is at TWS, G6862m (there is also another version, G6860a, but my written description will make it clear which one I am referring to).
 63. Alice Rasmussen, *Strindbergs flora*, second revised edition, CMK förlag, Stockholm 2012, p. 548.
 64. Even if the theosophical resonance is not my main focus, it is interesting to compare Ström’s various renderings of circles (the Ouroboros symbol) and more or less transformational sun-crosses or swastikas with the, at the time very influential, theosophist (later anthroposophist) Rudolf Steiner’s *Four*

- Mystery Dramas*, written and published between 1910 and 1913, and accessible online <http://www.ptc-pku.yolasite.com/resources/Reading/Four%20Mystery%20Dramas.pdf>. Steiner visualizes the development of the human soul by way of circles (the Ouroboros) with various shapes inscribed, among them a twisted or moving sun-cross, resembling what Ström does for the four clover air hole in the secretive door in a 1915 sketch.
65. Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 172 (emblem 312), and p. 270.
 66. Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 81.
 67. The costume sketches are at TMA, Grosse Sammlung, *Ein Traumspiel*.
 68. Julius Evola, *The Hermetic Tradition: Symbols and Teachings of the Royal Art*, Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont 1971, pp. 11 and 89.
 69. Dust sketch, SMV, DTM:342; the Ström family private collections; golden sketch at TWS, G6862l. A black-and-white photograph as TMA, and the storyboard at TMA indicate that there exists (or once existed) a 1918 miniature – or perhaps larger – sketch for the scribes. This tells us that Ström’s main idea remained the same over the four years. The 1918 Stolz review mentions that the scene at the Lawyer’s office is a good example of the grotesque, which further strengthens the impression that this scene was also performed on stage.
 70. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918.
 71. The sketch is in the Ström family private collections.
 72. Carlson 1979, p. 241.
 73. Klossowski de Rola, 1988, p. 109 (emblem 84).
 74. The black chair is an interesting example of inter-visibility, resonating with an armchair that indeed comes through as an alchemical actor in a sketch Ström made for Goethe’s *Faust* in 1916 (the Ström family private collections, printed and discussed in von Rosen 2010 pp. 44–48). A vessel, a retort used for distillation in alchemy is found front stage, forming a black silhouette. The dark-green books in the equally co-creative back section in the space form an “emerald table” (A:69–70). From the lamp on the working desk an irregular yellow light is emerging, as if a golden sun is making itself present. It can also be suggested that the black chair Edward Munch created in a series of “mood sketches” for Max Reinhardt’s production of Ibsen’s *Ghosts* in 1906, was known at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. Munch’s chair is said to have captured the entire atmosphere of the drama, thanks to the skill of scenographer Ernst Stern. See Joan Templeton, *Munch’s Ibsen: A Painter’s Visions of a Playwright*, New Directions in Scandinavian Studies, University of Washington Press, Seattle, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen 2008, pp. 39–55.
 75. Klossowski de Rola 1988, p. 87.
 76. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:273
 77. The sketch is at TWS, G:20916b, see also G6862h.

78. See Klossowski de Rola 1988, and for example emblem 464 on p. 263.
79. The golden sketch, TWS, G6862f. The other one is in the Ström family private collections.
80. I am indebted to Mats Nilsson for spelling out the historical structures and purposes of social dancing. In my analyses I try to understand the meaning of the differences between artistic dancing and social dancing in context. Social dance reveals societal structures and the pressures these can create. Art might have liberating and critical capacities, but is equally dependent on structures, and thus is also capable of creating exclusion and oppression.
81. Waltz as part of the scenography in Strindberg's dramas is discussed in Ann-Charlotte Hanes Harvey, "Strindberg and scenography", *Strindberg, Ibsen & Bergman: Essays on Scandinavian Film and Drama Offered to Egil Törnqvist on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, edited by Harry Perridon, Shaker Publishing, Maastricht 1998, pp. 64-65.
82. There are, as previously mentioned, multiple ways of also linking various signs and symbols in Ström's sketch to theosophical thought and imagery, see the visual examples in Besant and Leadbeater 1901.
83. The sketch is at TWS, G6862q.
84. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:271.
85. The sketches are at TWS, G6861a, G6861b, G6861c.
86. The miniature sketch of Edith is at SMV, DTM:272. The sketch that I claim is of the Teacher – the piano transforms into a master's desk – is at TSW, G6861d.
87. The golden sketch is at TWS, G6862e, and there is another one, also at TWS that clearly depicts the coalheavers, but no second sketch for "An der Küste des Mittelmeers" is listed. The sketches also deal with transformation, so the motifs overlap. Instead of depending too much on the list, it is better to visit the archive and look at the sketches. There is also a sketch with dancery coal heavers in the Ström family private collections.
88. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:349.
89. Gustav Landauer, "Strindbergs Traumspiel: Zur Erstaufführung im Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus", *Masken*, 14, 1918-19, pp. 49-64. The essay was republished in Gustav Landauer, "Strindbergs Traumspiel", *Der werdende Mensch: Aufsätze über Leben und Schrifttum*, Gustav Kiepenhauer Verlag, Potsdam 1921, pp. 286-341. I am indebted to Alexandra Herlitz for her useful translation of the essay and for clarifying complicated German passages in it.
90. There is one golden sketch at TWS, G20916a, and one at SMV, DTM:344.
91. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:270, see also DTM:267.
92. The description is at TMA, Grosse Sammlung, *Ein Traumspiel*.
93. Rokem 2012, p.138.
94. Björkman and Robinson both translate "slå" (beat) by "stone", perhaps

- inspired by the word “stenad”, translated as “stoned” in an earlier passage. Both can be associated with the typical brutality of alchemical thinking.
95. Eliade, p. 164, note 1.
 96. Eliade, pp. 158, 160.
 97. Eliade, p. 163. This very special water is another name for “Mercury”, symbolizing “the universal agent of transmutation” found at the heart of alchemy (A:124).
 98. Without wanting to claim direct influence, I have found a remarkable resemblance between Ström’s images for the Billposter and the playful illuminations in a book of hours, *The Golf Book* (c. 1540). The February miniature features short stocky men in tunics and tights playing with large hoops, just as the Billposter plays with his emerald dipnet circle. *The Golf Book* (c. 1540), British Library, online: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/golf/accessible/pages3and4.html#content> (22 November 2014).
 99. The sketch is at TWS, perhaps G6860a (but the sketch can more reliably be identified from my description).
 100. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:451.
 101. The sketch is at SMV, DTM:268.
 102. A source of inspiration for this interpretation of the scenography is Rokem’s suggestion that Strindberg’s conception of ancient languages as procreative, highly transformative root systems, living and growing among us, has much in common with the poetic principles guiding *A Dream Play*. See Freddie Rokem, “Secret Codes: Strindberg and the Dead Languages”, *August Strindberg and the Other: New Critical Approaches*, edited by Poul Houe, Sven Hakon Rossel and Göran Stockenström, Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 63, Rodopi, Amsterdam, New York 2002, pp. 54–55.
 103. *Kölnische Zeitung*, 17 November 1918. There is no indication in the source materials that a revolving stage was used, even if the reviewer said so. My translation.
 104. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918. My translation. With one exception (*Volkszeitung* 17/18 October 1918), the reviewers were highly appreciative of Ström’s skill, but not surprised by it.
 105. *Düsseldorfer Zeitung*, 19 October 1918. My translation. The same quote is used in the beginning of my text.
 106. Grosse Sammlung TMA. According to a note by the archivist the fragment comes from “Ansprache (Auzug) aus der Rede von Paul Henckels ausslich des 45 Geburtstages (1950) des Schauspielhauses Düsseldorf.”
 107. August Strindberg and Per Stam (ed.), *Samlade Verk 64. Nationalupplaga. Teater och Intima teatern. Öppna brev till Intima teatern*, Norstedts, Stockholm 1999, pp. 233–234.
 108. My study differs in this respect from the following: Rikard Bark, *Strind-*

- bergs drömspelteknik – i drama och teater* (diss.), Studentlitteratur, Lund 1981; Kela Kvam, *Max Reinhardt og Strindbergs visionære dramatik*, (diss.), Teatervidenskabelige studier 3, Akademisk forlag, København 1974; Egil Törnqvist, “Staging *A Dream Play*”, *Strindberg’s Dramaturgy*, edited by Göran Stockenström, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1988, pp. 256–290.
109. As previously mentioned, Mussari 2005 discusses alchemical chromatics in *A Dream Play*. Strindberg’s alchemy is also discussed in Jon M. Berry, “The Alchemical Regeneration of Souls in Strindberg’s *To Damaskus, III*”, in *August Strindberg and the Other: New Critical Approaches*, edited by Poul Houe et al., Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 63, Rodopi, Amsterdam – New York 2002, pp. 57–75. And of course, Strindberg himself addresses alchemy in more or less direct ways in a number of texts, in particular from the so-called Inferno period.
110. Katarina Thorell, “En alkemistisk dröm: Alkemistisk analys av Robert Lepages uppsättning av *Ett drömspel på Dramaten 1994–95*”, (master’s thesis), Stockholms universitet, Teatervetenskapliga institutionen, Stockholm 1996.
111. Thorell 1996, p. 38. My translation.
112. Knapp 1980, p. 40.



1. *A selection of photographs from Julius Söhn, Düsseldorf während des grossen Völkerringens 1914-1918, published in 1919. The book demonstrates how the war immersed and structured every aspect of city life and work.*

A Dream Play at War

*A Concluding Discussion about the 1918
Performance in Düsseldorf*

ASTRID VON ROSEN & YLVA SOMMERLAND

Immersed in the war and its effects

The 1918 playbill for *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf, and in particular the information that ticket prices have been raised to support war-injured and needy artists, makes the war context palpable:

Zur Unterstützung kriegsbeschädigter und notleidender Künstler wird auf die Eintrittskarten Parkett und I. Rang ein Zuschlag von 10 Pfg., II. Rang ein Zuschlag von 5 Pfg. erhoben.¹

This reminds us that every single section of the playbill needs to be viewed in relation to the special circumstances created by the war. This is demonstrated in Alf Björnberg's chapter where we learn how procuring a Master Reed Organ helped the theatre successfully solve the problem of a decimated orchestra. The section of the playbill describing the scenery and listing the technical experts links up with von Rosen's chapter on Ström's scenography. We have a fairly good understanding of how his gauze technique worked, and we have gained insight into the occult, or more specifically, alchemical principles underpinning his interpretation of the play. But into the notably successful and hence dreamlike transformations created on stage there feeds a human dimension: the stage hands – not mentioned on the playbill – whose coordinated efforts made

the architecture, lighting and gauzes operate smoothly. As more and more men were drafted in the cause of the war this also takes on a gender dimension. In a 1970 interview, Ström recollects that the theatre ultimately depended on a single “amazon” for changing scenery, because this very strong woman could “carry bits”, sections, of the systematically worked out stage architecture.² Even if Ström’s description is somewhat anecdotal and does not serve as factual proof, it most certainly “extends beyond individuals” and gives us a glimpse of the working situation backstage at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf.³ According to Ström, another effect of the war on the Düsseldorf context was that the theatre could stage long and advanced versions of classical and contemporary dramas, as little other entertainment was available for the many people working in the arms industry. The ambitious, large scale and technically advanced production of *A Dream Play* fits into this pattern.

After a week’s delay, *A Dream Play* finally opened at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf on 16 October 1918. In hindsight we know that the armistice was only a few weeks away, but in October 1918 this belonged to the yet unknown future. As in many other places, the First World War had long permeated daily life in Düsseldorf, even for non-combatants. When exploring this context a book featuring documentary photographs from the war and bearing marks of being held and often looked into surfaced in the Ström family collections. Published in 1919 by photographer Julius Söhn *Düsseldorf während des grossen Völkerringens 1914–1918* appropriately demonstrates how the war immersed and structured every aspect of city life and work.⁴ To mention a few motives the photographs give close and unvarnished accounts of soldiers repeatedly marching through the city, buildings transformed into hospitals, people gathering to parade, collecting boxes for books, cigarettes, and packages, copper cooking utensils for use in the arms industry, war kitchens in many forms, graveyards, and emaciated horses returning from the front. We have chosen a selection of its pictures to provide a close war context for this chapter. [Illustration 1]

Framed by Söhn’s photographic account of the war, and by relating the playbill and the critical reviews to the results of the Dream-Playing project, this chapter aims to suggest how the 1918 Düsseldorf performance might have been understood there and then. Rather than taking

on the hopeless task of reconstructing the event, we highlight contextually and ideologically charged elements that we believe can stimulate further research and activities such as creative re-enactments.

Perfecting a total work of art

Schauspielhaus has daringly taken on one of the world's most difficult works of literature, Strindberg's *A Dream Play* – this poem of human suffering and the compassion granted to humanity by the higher powers. Indra's Daughter descends from heaven; sees with her own eyes the suffering of those who are disappointed, rejected, without rights; personally tastes the misery of a marriage in poverty; and finally ascends again to bring the complaints of humanity before the throne of God. Ever shifting like a dream and seemingly at random the moving poems glide past us, unrealistic in any earthly sense but possessing deeper truth. To enable the spectators to experience these strange and often grotesque events with their own eyes and ears requires precisely the dramatic artistry unique to Schauspielhaus. Paul Henckels, director, and Knut Ström, creator of the scenic images, have again staged a total work of art of self-contained unity and urgent force.⁵

As exemplified by this quote from *Kölnische Zeitung*, Schauspielhaus had successfully staged *A Dream Play* as a total work of art uniting word, image, music and technology into a unified whole. Even *Volkszeitung*, which strongly disliked the slow tempo of the music (see Björnberg's chapter for a more in-depth description) and of the dialogue, considered the performance a "great achievement".⁶ The quote also demonstrates that modernist and stylized unified productions were nothing new; rather this was the style of the theatre, as admirably operationalized by Ström and Henckels in particular. The above reviewer also coins a term to describe these dreamily "moving poems". This beautifully demonstrates the seemingly fragmental, illogical, unstructured narratives that still form a rhyth-

mical or flowing arrangement on stage, like a moving poem. With far above 40 performers (named actors on the playbill and extras) on stage, and with a very advanced technical apparatus (see von Rosen's chapter for an exploration of the gauze, lighting, and transformable stage architecture, and the reviews focusing on this), the staging of *A Dream Play* was not only an ambitious production but also a statement made by the theatre in a situation permeated by the First World War and its effects. The theatre proved that it was up to the challenge of staging Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, and the production was most certainly something to be proud of in the local context. During the 1918/19 season, Ström and Henckels' *A Dream Play* was performed 22 times, and in 1919/20, six times.⁷

A stern and down-to-earth Indra's daughter

In her chapter, Ylva Sommerland follows Ellen Widmann, who played Indra's daughter, on a trans-time dream-playing journey that involved giving Indra's Daughter a female body but also charging it with political content, which is discussed with the aim of illustrating *A Dream Play*'s timelessness. Here we will bring Sommerland's boundary-crossing exploration of Widmann's entire career back to the immediate theatrical context, and put Widmann back on the Düsseldorf stage by examining the reception of the event. This is a way of approaching the play's atmospheres and charged meanings with the help of Indra's daughter. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* wrote that a strong and stern determination radiated from Widmann, and that her acting technique resembled that of Louise Dumont.⁸ Thus Dumont's mystical emphasis on the spoken word haunts (appearing as a repetition in memory) Widmann's performance, but not in a negative way.⁹ An audience that knows and appreciates Dumont might feel at ease with the young actress's ability to master this special way of performing. Moreover, in a letter Widmann herself expresses her strong admiration for Dumont and her acting style.¹⁰ To this can be added *Düsseldorfer Zeitung*'s opinion that Widmann was "perhaps a bit too down to earth", and *Volkszeitung*'s description of her "natural warmth" and sometimes "chanting tone".¹¹ A similar opinion can be found in the 1907 reviews of the drama's premiere, with Harriet

Bosse as Indra's daughter at Svenska Teatern in Stockholm. Bosse was perceived as skilled and charming, but her tone was described as overly chant-like, as Per-Magnus Johansson mentions in his chapter when going through the reviews of the 1907 premiere. In a recording from 1947 we hear Bosse's captivating, sincere and chanting tone.¹² Even if her voice, technique and interpretation of the Daughter must have changed over the years, listening to Bosse may give insight into Widmann's – according to the reviewers – elaborate and physical way of speaking. In Sommerland's expanded exploration we find images of Widmann as an intensely present, stern and embodied actress and – if we wish – this could help us find a “down-to-earth” Daughter for a creative re-enactment. It can also be mentioned that Widmann later became a voice teacher and started a colloquial-language choir in Switzerland.

With a syncretistic shimmer

Indra's daughter, however, was primarily perceived as a divine person bringing consolation and hope to mankind. As can be seen in the quote from *Kölnischer Zeitung*, the reviewers speak of her as the Child of God or the Daughter of God, and her path on Earth is described as “the road to Golgotha”.¹³ All these expressions belong to a Christian worldview and paradigm still strongly present in German and European society in 1918. When *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, in a passage addressing Strindberg's text, says that the scene outside the castle at the end of the drama is “washed over by wonderful heavenly gloss”, the Biblical and religious coding is clearly visible.¹⁴ This suggests that Ström's delicate lighting technique and dematerializing scenography, explored by von Rosen, will probably take on a heavenly shimmer, at least for some viewers. While mystical anarchist and editor/dramaturge Gustav Landauer, in his 1918 essay about *A Dream Play*, propounds a syncretistic view and recommends “a compilation of statements in the spirit of the Indian Vedic texts, Buddhism, primitive Christianity, and the philosophy of Schopenhauer” as a formula for understanding the drama, the overarching paradigm that comes across in the reviews is nevertheless more narrowly Christian.¹⁵ We would also like to mention that Landauer, a well-known mystic, pacifist,



2. *Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for A Dream Play 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.*

activist, revolutionary, and author, left the theatre during the German November Revolution to work politically in Bavaria, which had been declared a council republic. His correspondence bears witness to how impossible the reform work was, due to unclear strategies and fragmentation. In particular Landauer's letters to his daughters are touching in the way he strives to convince them that the situation is under control and there is hope.¹⁶ On 1 May 1919 Landauer was arrested in Munich, and the next day he was brutally murdered. Against this background, it is not strange that Ström decided to leave Ger-

many and return to Sweden with his family.

An archival note describes Widmann trying out a blue garment for the prologue (and perhaps also for the end, when she leaves Earth), a garment whose colour will lend heavenly connotations to her descent.¹⁷ While we do not know what the costumes looked like at the 1918 performances, we can at least consider what Viveka Kjellmer writes in her chapter about the interrelatedness of visual culture and costume. If the reviewers generally interpreted the Daughter's wanderings on Earth as religiously coded, her costumes probably fit this pattern. In a miniature sketch by Ström from 1918 the blue garment is visible. [Illustration 2] Let us follow his suggestion in this sketch and play with the idea that Widmann arrives surrounded by a powerful zodiac and inscribed in a pentagon; she embodies the Lotus flower of wisdom and the unification of opposites in the fifth element. Indra's daughter becomes a syncretistic woman saviour approaching a bemired world at war, an eternal mother entering both the soft theatrical night and the brutal darkness in the trenches, a slender virgin or other preferred dream body, something des-

perately longed for. If we add Stenhammar's music, as brought to life in Björnberg's chapter, and the dissolving walls and worlds of von Rosen's scenographic exploration, the sense of mystical austerity grows stronger. It can thus be suggested that spectators familiar with occultism, theosophy and similar worldviews would embrace the performance.

Traversed by political struggle

In *Freie Presse*'s review, class-related social issues raised by the production are directly addressed:

Promenading on the sunny Mediterranean shore are those who suffer from the wealth of the world, the satiated who take some exercise to regain their appetite. In the coal bunkers of the sunny Levant work the hungry and afflicted armies of the dispossessed. From the depths, the voice of the proletariat thunders mightily. More demonic than Freiligrath, more bitter than Hauptmann's "The Weavers".¹⁸

The staging of Strindberg's drama is here linked with two German writers who can be described as revolutionary. In particular, Hauptmann's *The Weavers* deals with workers' suffering and the psychology of the masses. [Illustration 3] A reviewer who wished to find workers' liberation symbolized in the production could do so, and either approve of it, or – as in *Volkszeitung*'s assessment – claim that the scene by the Mediterranean is "rather superfluous".¹⁹ It can be mentioned that similar political divides are found in some of the reviews from Stockholm in 1907. Ström – who was politically engaged but not a member of any party, and attended meetings of the Spartacus League, a Marxist revolutionary movement – worked with these tensions, for example in the sketches for the coalheavers, where a red sail hovering in the sky becomes a broad-axe, or the buildings and vegetation transform into giant teeth.²⁰ In her chapter, von Rosen shows how Ström's sketches for the coal heavers or the maidservants function as a *pars pro toto* or a metonymy of a class or group of labourers fighting for their rights. As is demonstrated by Sommerland, the political tensions also concerned the right of women to vote



3. *Emil Orlik, The Weavers, poster from 1897. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*

and to decide over their own bodies. The cries for legal abortion, the cries from starving and dead children are, we would suggest, haunting the complaints, the music and sounds of weeping in the performance. In their jointly written chapter, Nilsson and von Rosen discuss how societal, political and aesthetic struggles can be acted out by way of embodiment and dancing, one example being the large groups of waltzing couples in Fairhaven symbolizing the carefree bourgeois mentality. Even if there is no way to know how Ström and Henckels actually worked with groups of performers on stage in 1918, in terms of a re-enactment we would suggest that the nameless groups of extras mentioned on the playbill could be choreographed as time-travelling choruses taking on affective tensions in the drama.

Dissolving views

While the unification of artistic means was highly esteemed by the reviewers, there are indications that the drama was not appreciated by all viewers. According to *Volkszeitung*, opinions were “divided in a multitude of ways”, both regarding the above-mentioned slow tempo, and as we understand it the societal and political conflicts it touches on.²¹ The last lines in the *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* review state that:

We will not forget the evening any time soon. In these days only the fist of a giant can pull our thoughts forcefully from the world stage to the small wooden stage; this evening we felt it.²²

The giant can be understood as Strindberg, the dramatist with clenched fist, diverting people’s attention away from the war raging on the world stage, not in order to forget it or ignore it, but only to strive to understand something of the ungraspable in the situation. As part of the iconography of the workers’ movement, the fist functions as a metonymy where a single hand stands for a large group of people fighting for their rights.²³ According to *Freie Presse* there are critical voices in the city arguing that theatres should not receive public funding in such difficult times. The critic, who both praises and passionately defends the effort to stage *A Dream Play*, calls out: “Defend yourselves, bearers of culture in the arts!”²⁴

Hope and change

The favourable opinions about the production seem to say: make theatre, not war, and raise urgent questions about the future. And because hope is born in the dream, it is crucial to turn to fiction and the Dreamer to be able to create new spaces for change. Where, for example, are the boundaries drawn between dream and reality in our society today? This question becomes especially interesting in the light of the growing online spaces into which we transfer our minds today, as compared to Ström’s ambitions to stage *A Dream Play* in 1918. What is a dream? In Johansson’s chapter, where he compares Strindberg’s dream with Freud’s theory of

dreams, one path is entered for gaining crucial insight into this question. The theatre's embodied, sensuous, spatial, temporal, imaginary and symbolic images can be productive in complex discussions of hope and change, precisely because theatre is a medium that creates a space where the boundaries between dream and reality become intertwined. Theatre is fiction, but it is performed in a space where time and space actually do exist. Not written, but performed – in the past (in 1918/19), the present (activated in our explorations), and possibly in the future (for example in a creative exhibition or computer-generated scenographic re-enactment) – Ström's and the other creators' precise yet indeterminable propositions will, we hope, continue to set such questions in motion.

NOTES

1. Playbill for *A Dream Play*, Grosse Sammlung, *Ein Traumspiel*, Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf (henceforth: TMA).
2. Lisa Söderberg, "Regissör Knut Ström berättar för Lisa Söderberg", *Sveriges Radio*, 25 May 1970, radio programme, Göteborgs stadsmuseum (GSM).
3. Jacky Bratton discusses the value of anecdotes and gossip as sources in historical research. See *New Readings in Theatre History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 102.
4. Julius Söhn, *Düsseldorf während des grossen Völkerringens 1914–1918: Eine Sammlung Kriegsbilder von Hoffotograf Julius Söhn*, Herausgegeben und Verlag von Hoffotograf Julius Söhn, Düsseldorf 1919.
5. *Kölnische Zeitung*, 17 November 1918. Our translation. There is no indication in the source materials that a revolving stage was used, even if the reviewer said so in a section not quoted here.
6. *Volkszeitung*, 17 or 18 (unclear copy) October 1918. Our translation.
7. We are indebted to Michael Matzigkeit for this information.
8. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918.
9. Marvin Carlson's term from *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, [2001] 2008.
10. TMA, SHD, 7302.
11. *Düsseldorfer Zeitung*, 19 October 1918. *Volkszeitung*, 17 or 18 (unclear copy) October 1918.
12. "Harriet Bosse läser ur Ett drömspel av August Strindberg, 1947." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9V4Eq2A_iI, (2015-12-20), and "Ur Ett drömspel med Harriet Bosse", <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=4453&artikel=5421670> (20 December 2015).

13. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918.
14. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918.
15. Gustav Landauer, “Strindbergs Traumspiel: Zur Erstaufführung im Düssel-dorfer Schauspielhaus”, *Masken*, 14, 1918–19, pp. 49–64. The essay was republished in Gustav Landauer, “Strindbergs Traumspiel”, *Der werdende Mensch: Aufsätze über Leben und Schrifttum*, Gustav Kiepenhauer Verlag, Potsdam 1921, pp. 286–341. About Landauer, see Michael Matzigkeit, “... die beste Sensation ist das Ewige ...”: *Gustav Landauer – Leben, Werk und Wirkung*, Dokumente zur Theatergeschichte 9, Theatermuseum, Dumont-Lindemann-Archiv, Düsseldorf 1995; Charles B. Mauer, *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*, Wayne State University, Detroit 1971, p. 150; Gabriele Kuhn, ed., *All Power to the Councils! A Documentary History of the German Revolution 1918–1919*, PM Press, Oakland, CA, 2012.
16. Kuhn 2012.
17. The note is in Grosse Sammlung, TMA.
18. *Freie Presse*, 19 October 1918. Our translation.
19. *Volkszeitung*, 17 or 18 (unclear copy) October 1918.
20. For Ström’s political engagement, see Astrid von Rosen, *Knut Ströms scenografi och bildvärld: Visualisering i tid och rum* (diss.), Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture 32, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg 2010.
21. *Volkszeitung*, 17 or 18 (unclear copy) October 1918.
22. *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger*, 18 October 1918. Our translation.
23. Lena Johannesson, “Den stora gestaltens formel och den knutna nävens estetik”, *Arbetarrörelse och arbetarkultur: Bild och självbild*, edited by Lena Johannesson, Ulrika Kjellman, Birgitta Skarin Frykman, Carlssons, Stockholm 2007, pp. 335–386.
24. *Freie Presse*, 19 October 1918. Our translation.

PART II



Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and Strindberg's *A Dream Play*

A Comparative Study

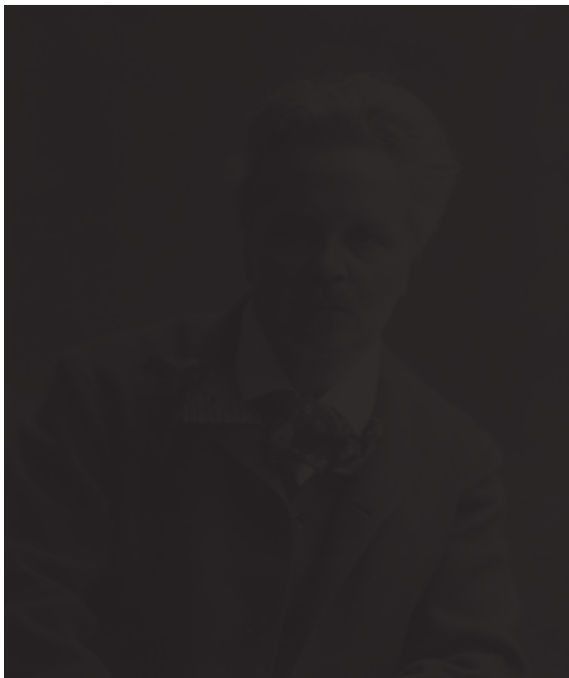
PER MAGNUS JOHANSSON

Introduction

How can one understand the differences and similarities between Sigmund Freud's approach to dreams, and August Strindberg's articulation of the place of dreams in the psychic life of mankind? This is one of the questions this text attempts to answer. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was written towards the end of the 19th century, and was published in the autumn of 1899; the upcoming new century became a deciding factor, and the year of publication went down in history as 1900. Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, the work by Strindberg that will be discussed almost exclusively here, but only one of several plays that Strindberg called "dream-plays" – was in most respects complete in 1902, but its preface, which provides a framework for the reality of the drama, was added first in 1907, in conjunction with the theatrical premiere. Which fundamental ideas about the dream do Freud and Strindberg have in common? On which decisive points do they differ?

There is no evidence that Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) read *A Dream Play*, and nothing to suggest that August Strindberg (1849–1912) read *The Interpretation of Dreams*. This significant historical fact, seldom pointed out in the secondary literature, is the point of departure for this text. Nor

Kungsträdgården in Stockholm, between 1890 and 1900. Street life on Graben, Vienna, around 1900. Courtesy of Wikimedia commons.



August Strindberg, in a portrait from 1901 by the photographer Herman Hamnquist. Courtesy of Wikimedia commons.

did Freud comment on *A Dream Play* in subsequent editions of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud made certain amendments in the no less than eight revised editions that were published during his lifetime. The last edition, the eighth edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, was published as late as 1930. Strindberg's drama *A Dream Play* is not mentioned anywhere in Freud's book about dreams. There are no indications that August Strindberg read *The Interpretation of Dreams* between 1900 and 1912, the year of his death. At the same time, it has been indisputably documented that Strindberg had a deep knowledge of German culture. Furthermore, during the 1890s, he was married to an Austrian, Frida Uhl (1872–1943). Which forms of inter-

textuality¹ can be found between *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *A Dream Play*, two masterpieces written within less than two years of each other?

Freud's text aims to fulfill the requirements of science, and he wrote it in his capacity as a medical doctor. He wished to persuade the scientific and medical community that the interpretation of dreams was of essential importance in the effort to understand the unconscious conflicts and the inner life of mankind; that was his approach to his object of study. In contrast, Strindberg, although influenced by scientific ideals, had no such ambitions. How is this difference reflected in their attempts to grasp the nature of dreams, and what dreams express?

Freud proposed that, as a consequence of his discoveries, the interpretation of dreams would become an important element in the treatment of patients suffering from mental disorders. The analysis of dreams became a prototype for the investigation of the mystery of the human psyche, which has an unconscious, and produces symptoms that are possible to analyze.

Strindberg had no such intentions; his goal was not to incorporate either his text or his understanding of dreams within the discourses of medicine or natural science, but to craft a story that could be dramatized on the theatre stage. Yet, at the same time, interestingly enough, Freud was forced to conclude that his book was not primarily reviewed in journals oriented towards medicine or the natural sciences. Neither the medical scientists preceding Freud, nor his contemporaries, considered dreams an obvious object of study, despite Freud's insistence on this point. For most members of the community of medicine and natural science, dreams belonged to the literary, religious and/or occult fields of knowledge. And this is still the case to a large degree. Strindberg was a literary author and dramatist, who from time to time was caught up in scientific aspirations. Freud was a practicing physician; his work provided him with material to write about. Strindberg did not have such a practice.

Hence, it can be said that Strindberg hardly breaks with a literary tradition, in which dreams can play an important role. However, it is also fair to say that Strindberg, in his dream plays and foremost in *A Dream Play*, creates a form of theatre which had never been seen before. He was a pioneer, even though one also can see that Strindberg's scenic innovations, in a historical perspective, have characteristics that forebode the broader modernist movement (expressionism) that had just started to take shape when Strindberg died in 1912.² Freud's work, in contrast, constitutes a radical break with the prescriptions of tradition regarding the contexts in which it was relevant to study dreams as such, that is in the form of the narrative the dreamer produces when he



*Sigmund Freud, in a photograph from around 1900.
Courtesy of Wikimedia commons.*

or she is asked to recount a dream, and his or her associations to the elements of the dream; the associations of the person who has dreamt the dream. This contrasts with other scientifically trained writers who studied dreams in the same time period.

In the following, I will maintain a chronological order. At the same time, I would like to state the case that Freud's more empirically based conclusions about the nature of dreams constitute a fruitful background to the subsequent description of Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, a drama in which Strindberg lets some of the typical expressive modes in dreams come into play on stage. In each chapter, I describe and comment on both the background and the reception of each work, and present their content. The presentations of their content reflect my reading of the works, with the goal to open up for a comparison between *A Dream Play* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*. After this there follows a section in which, from various points of departure, and close to the text, I attempt to elucidate similarities and differences, to finish with a summary and a discussion.

I: Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*

In 1878, when Freud was a researcher at von Brücke's laboratory, he came across Joseph Breuer (1842–1925).³ With Breuer, fourteen years his senior, Freud discussed various clinical problems, and in particular a patient Breuer was treating at the time. In the literature she is known as “Anna O”, and she suffered from the symptoms of hysteria. During the autumn of 1887 Freud also, through Breuer, had met the Berlin otalaryngologist Wilhem Fliess (1858–1928), two years younger than Freud, in connection with Fliess's period of service in Vienna. In the beginning, they wrote to each other on professional matters, but in conjunction with the death of Freud's father, their correspondence intensified. For Freud, the correspondence became his training analysis. In his letters, he basically applied the same method that he was working on with his patients to himself; he tried to understand the unconscious motives underlying his suffering, his conflicts and his dreams, both in his private life and in his work as a researcher. In the correspondence with Fliess, Freud started to shape the theory of the Oedipus complex, which in its original form entailed that



The original edition of Die Traumdeutung, The Interpretation of Dreams. A copy in the Austrian National Library photographed in conjunction with the exhibition Zwischen Königgrätz und Cordoba, Meldungen, die Österreich bewegten, 2013. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

the boy has feelings of hostility and jealousy towards his father, and at the same time is in love with his mother. Freud expanded on these ideas in various writings from 1910 onward. When Freud formulated the Oedipus complex, he also abandoned the theory of seduction, that is the idea that the cause of neurosis was a specific event comprised of the real life seduction of the child by a member of the opposite sex. During the same period of time, the 1890s, he wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

In late 1899, Freud finally published *The Interpretation of Dreams*; he himself valued it higher than any of the other books he wrote, and presumed that it would have far-reaching consequences. The historian and Freud biographer Peter Gay (1923–2015) refers to a letter written during the summer of 1910, in which Freud claims that if only *The Interpretation of Dreams* could achieve widespread recognition, it would constitute a new foundation for normal psychology.⁴ He spoke of the book as his “dream-

child”.⁵ At various times Freud emphasized that psychoanalysis is based on the analysis of dreams, and that the interpretation of dreams was “the most complete piece of work that the young science [of psychoanalysis] has achieved so far”.⁶ The year before his death, in the late summer of 1938, Freud wrote a concise text; *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*.⁷ In the fifth chapter, which is exclusively devoted to the theory of dreams, he makes it clear that the theory he developed during the late 1890s, and formulated in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for all purposes still had the same relevance for him, and had not been revised in any fundamental way.

Generally speaking, *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the book that most of Freud’s commentators, and most historians of science, give an exceptional position as the work that had the most decisive consequences for his thinking.⁸ It is also considered his most influential book,⁹ and marked the end of Freud’s isolation from colleagues and the scientific community.¹⁰ *The Interpretation of Dreams* is, as I will show, rich in content and complexity. The book is hard to summarize because it has steadily expanded as new editions have been published. The changes between editions are not insubstantial. The eighth and final edition is markedly different from the first edition from 1900; in fact it is almost unrecognizable. However, concerning the theoretical conclusions, Freud, as pointed out by his biographer Ernest Jones (1879–1958), from the outset explored his main theme, the dream life, in such meticulous detail that they have hardly been modified or supplemented at all in the newer editions.¹¹

The Interpretation of Dreams – *background and emergence*

Freud’s ambition was that his work on the analysis of dreams would be recognized by the scientific community. In line with this ambition, he investigated previously published work on the subject of dreams, and how they could be described and explained. The publications he studied were written by doctors and philosophers, as well as literary authors. In the first chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he gives an account of his predecessors’ research and theories about dreams. The task of summarizing the efforts of his predecessors was unrewarding, according to Jones, and Freud found it “frighteningly tiresome”, but at the same time it was necessary, in order to fulfill his ambition that the book reach beyond the

shallowness that in his view characterized several of his forerunners in the field.¹² However, Freud did find several contributions worthy of merit among the attempts to understand the question of dreams. He found support from the work of authors such as Friedrich Wilhelm Hildebrandt (1811–1893), and his *Der Traum und seine Verwertung fürs Leben* (1875), Alfred Maury (1817–1892) and his *Le sommeil et les rêves* (1861), and Karl Albert Scherner (1825–1889) and his *Das Leben des Traumes* (1861). Freud particularly appreciated the latter, and he refers to Scherner repeatedly. Scherner's was the hitherto most original and far-reaching attempt to describe the dream as a psychic activity. Freud also refers to Hildebrandt's claim that the subject matter of dreams already had appeared as a wish or desire in the individual when awake. Maury had experimentally influenced the formation of dreams, and made observations on the association between the controlled sensory stimuli that the test subject had been exposed to prior to falling asleep, and the content of dreams produced during the following night. All of them had, according to Freud, contributed to solving the riddle of dreams; Freud was to take the next step.¹³

In Freud's correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess¹⁴ one gets an idea of the deep and personal importance the book had to him. The earliest reference to the idea of writing a book about dreams can be found in a letter from May 16, 1897.¹⁵ It was, however, as late as in the autumn of 1897, about a year after the death of his father, that Freud first began to systematically compile his material.¹⁶ In February 1898, he was convinced that his work on dreams would result in a book. He wrote to Fliess; "I am deep in the dream book, am writing it fluently, and enjoy the thought of all the 'head shaking' over the indiscretions and audacities it contains."¹⁷

From time to time Freud himself felt that *The Interpretation of Dreams* was difficult to read.¹⁸ His opinion of the text also varied during the period he wrote on it. The letters to Fliess reveal that, in early 1898, he was satisfied with how the work progressed. But later that spring, he finds the text stylistically crude, and the chapter that Fliess was reading at the time "bad in some parts, that is, written without much liveliness."¹⁹ In the summer of 1899, Freud intensified his work on the book. He announced to Fliess: "I am working on the completion of the dream book in a large, quiet, ground floor room with a view of the mountains."²⁰ One of Freud's sons, Martin (1889–1967), has recounted how his father, during the hol-

idays in the summer of 1899, spoke of his work. According to the same source, Freud even encouraged his children to tell him their dreams. In August that summer, he writes to Fliess and announces that he will commence with the final, more philosophical chapter.²¹ On September 11, 1899, he announces to Fliess that the book is finished; hence it took him two years to write it.²² Less than two months later, on November 4, the book was available in bookstores.

During proofreading in September, Freud writes to Fliess about his dissatisfaction over his preoccupation with form, and his perception that “an appreciation of beauty as a kind of perfection” would have a negative effect on the clarity of the text. He reported finding his sentences complex and studded with unusual words, and this discovery made him concerned that the reader might form the impression that this was due to “insufficient mastery of the material”.²³ In a letter to Fliess from June 1900, he proposes the idea, or rather the hope, that in the future, there would be a marble tablet on the guesthouse where he had dreamt and interpreted the dream of Irma. Freud imagined the following inscription: “Here, on July 24, 1895, the secret of the dream revealed itself to Dr. Sigm. Freud.”²⁴

Freud underlined the importance of the book in other contexts as well. In the preface to the second edition of *Die Traumdeutung*, he wrote that the book had a personal meaning for him. The full extent of this meaning was not clear to him until much later, after it had been completed; the book turned out to have been part of his training analysis, and of the process of mourning the death of his father, Jacob Freud²⁵ – that is to say, the book followed upon what he considered the most important and decisive loss of his life.²⁶ In the preface of the third English edition, in 1932, he writes: “Insight such as this only falls to one’s lot but once in a lifetime.”²⁷

The Interpretation of Dreams was thus published in November 1899. However, as pointed out earlier, it is the year 1900 that has gone down in history as the year of publishing. Freud chose a verse from Virgil’s *Aeneid* (VII, 312) as a motto for the book: “Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.” [If I cannot move the heavens above, I will move Hell]²⁸. Gay comments that the motto reflected Freud’s sense of unrest about its publication, and also that he was prepared to be angry.²⁹ He foresaw that *The Interpretation of Dreams* would cause an uproar among doctors and other professionals who until then, according to Freud, had greeted his theories

with cold indifference. This apprehension, which I will discuss in the following, was not entirely justified. Jones recounts that Freud on May 14, 1900, commenced on a series of lectures on the subject at the University of Vienna. The audience was comprised of three persons.³⁰

The reception of The Interpretation of Dreams

There is an ongoing discussion among Freud's commentators regarding the book's reception. It was printed in 600 copies, but only 351 were sold during the first two years after its publication.³¹ A second edition did not appear until 1909, and a third two years later. Jones has pointed out that rarely has such an important book been ignored to this extent.³² Freud himself claimed that no scientific journal reviewed the book during the first 18 months after its publication.³³ However, Ilse Bry and Alfred Rifkin have shown that *The Interpretation of Dreams*, from the start, was at least reviewed in general journals and professional publications.³⁴ In his "Autobiography", Freud wrote that he did not have any followers for a period of ten years after the breakup from the collaboration with Josef Breuer. He stood isolated and felt that his colleagues avoided him. Outside Austria, no-one took any notice of him. He also wrote that *The Interpretation of Dreams* was hardly reviewed at all in the professional journals.³⁵

The first review of *The Interpretation of Dreams* was to be found in *Die Gegenwart*. It was published December 16, 1899, and was written by Carl Metzentin. Freud was disappointed for several reasons: the review was published in a literary, not a professional, journal; furthermore, and primarily, it was not positive. Five days after the review, he wrote to Fliess:

Otherwise there is little news. The book has had one single review, in the *Gegenwart*, as a critical evaluation it is empty and as a review it is inadequate. It is just a bad patchwork of my own fragments. However, I am willing to forgive everything because of the one word "path-breaking". Otherwise the attitude of people in Vienna is quite negative; I do not believe that I shall succeed in getting a review published here. We are, after all, terribly far ahead of our time.³⁶

Max Burckhardt (1854–1912), a former director of the Burg Theatre in Vienna, published a review in two parts in *Die Zeit*.³⁷ Two days after the first part was published, Freud wrote the following to Fliess:

The new century, the most interesting thing about which for us may be that it contains the dates of our deaths, has brought me nothing but a stupid review in the *Zeit* by Burckhard, the former director of the Burgtheater (not to be confused with our old Jacob). It is hardly flattering, uncommonly devoid of understanding, and – worst of all – to be continued in the next issue. [---] I do not count on recognition, at least not in my lifetime. May you fare better!³⁸

Freud complains to Fliess in a letter from April 4, 1900, saying that Burckhard's review "in its utter stupidity killed the book in Vienna".³⁹ In a review written – as he had promised Freud – by the literary author Jakob Julius David (1859–1906), Freud found a "kind and receptive, somewhat diffuse review of the dream book", according to a letter from February 1, 1900.⁴⁰ A gleam of light in Freud's general despondency concerning the reception of *The Interpretation of Dreams* was the review that was published in the Vienna newspaper *Fremdenblatt* under the initials H. K. In a letter from March 11, Freud writes to Fliess:

I have been virtually cut off from the outside world; not a leaf has stirred to reveal that *The Interpretation of Dreams* has had any impact on anyone. It was only yesterday that a rather friendly article in the feuilleton of a daily newspaper, *Wiener Fremdenblatt*, caught me by surprise.⁴¹

A review by Ludwig Karell (1858–1930)⁴² featured in the *Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung* on October 12, 1900. Freud makes the following judgement on Karell's review in a letter to Fliess: "There was a stupid review of the dream [book] in the *Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung* on October 12."⁴³

On March 22, 1901, Father Mero's positive review of *The Interpretation of Dreams* appeared in *Der Tag*. Freud was glad for the review, but was still disappointed that *The Interpretation of Dreams* had not been reviewed in

medical or psychiatric journals. While several such reviews did appear in 1901, they were hardly encouraging for Freud. Paul Näcke (1851–1913), head of psychiatry at the mental institution Colditz in Saxony, did however write a favorable review in *Archiv für Kriminal-Anthropologie und Kriminalistik*, calling *The Interpretation of Dreams* an excellent book.⁴⁴ In the same period of time, the professor of psychiatry Wilhelm Weygandt (1870–1939)⁴⁵ penned a review that was published in *Zentralblatt für Nervenheilkunde*. He claimed that Freud’s explanations were far-fetched, if not “distorted”, and described his efforts as “Traumdeuteri”; too many explanations and too much flawed reasoning.⁴⁶

Wilhelm Stekel (1868–1940) wrote a review in praise of the book, published in 1902, in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*.⁴⁷ The following year, Théodore Flournoy’s (1854–1920) review appeared in *Archives de Psychologie*. He is positive and underlines the originality of the work. Flournoy also approaches some of the Freudian theses with a “healthy respect”.⁴⁸

From this brief summary, one can infer that *The Interpretation of Dreams* did not reach a broader circle of readers during the first years after its publication. As early as in the spring of 1900, Fliess had suggested that Freud write an article as an alternative to the book – partly in response to the refusal of *Neue Rundschau* to accept a review of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. However, Freud declined the suggestion. In a letter from April 4, 1900, Freud writes to Fliess:

I want to avoid anything that might resemble an advertisement. I know that what I am doing is odious to the majority of people. As long as I behave perfectly correctly, my worthy opponents are unsure, only when I am doing exactly what they are doing will they feel certain that I am nothing better than they. [...] So I think the most advisable course is quietly to accept the Rundschau’s refusal as an undeniable sign of public opinion.⁴⁹

The situation would change. In 1911, the book received a positive review from Havelock Ellis (1859–1939).⁵⁰ In a supplement to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud comments on the new state of affairs, and notes that his book is no longer overlooked. By that time, in the previous year, it had

been translated to Russian and English.⁵¹ It took ten years for the initial resistance towards the book, and renunciation of it, to pass.

Between 1899 and 1902, it was reviewed 22 times, and between 1903 and 1915 there were 20 reviews. Some of these reviews were strongly critical, while others were more appreciative. In particular, the reviews published in philosophical, literary and artistic journals were positive to the book. In other words, the book was considered more acceptable in intellectual and literary circles than in the medical world.

During Freud's lifetime, *Die Traumdeutung* was translated into another six languages; Spanish (1922), French (1926), Swedish (1927), Japanese (1930), Hungarian (1934) and Czech (1938).

The Content of The Interpretation of Dreams

When Freud formulated the Oedipus complex, he also, as pointed out earlier, abandoned the so-called seduction theory. He also analyzed his own dreams during the writing of *Die Traumdeutung*. This would prove to be part of Freud's quest to understand his own difficulties and conflict-ridden wishes. The latter were at times conscious, but were mostly unconscious. The book contains over 220 dreams. Of these, slightly less than fifty are Freud's own, with the rest stemming from his students and their patients, and from his own analysts and relatives.

After the first long chapter in which Freud, as mentioned earlier, discusses his predecessors' theories about dreams, he describes, in chapter two, a dream; the dream of Irma's injection.⁵² Freud dreamt this dream, which was to have a symbolic and real meaning in the development of the psychoanalytic theory, on the night between July 23 and 24, 1895. The background was that Freud had treated a young lady who was a friend of his, and of the family. The treatment was not a complete success, in Freud's view; admittedly, the girl's anxiety had disappeared, but she still had several physical symptoms. Faced with the difficulties in making the patient's symptoms disappear, Freud had demanded that she accept a solution to which she was opposed. This led to the termination of the treatment. The way Freud tells it, one gets the impression that this was a joint decision, made by the doctor and the patient. One day he was speaking with a friend and colleague, Otto, who had recently

visited Irma and her family at their summer residence. Freud asked Otto how Irma was faring. His friend answered him that she was doing better, but was not completely restored. Freud understood these words as a reproach, and that dissatisfaction with the treatment in turn had bubbled up because her relatives had been negatively inclined towards his work with Irma from the beginning. The same evening, after the meeting with Otto, Freud wrote down Irma's medical history, which he would subsequently hand over to a common friend, a certain doctor M, who at the time was an authority in Vienna. The next night, Freud dreamt the following: He is in a large hall surrounded by people. One of those present is Irma. Freud takes her to the side and tells her that if she feels unwell in any way, it is her own fault. She answers Freud by telling him that she is in great pain; her throat, stomach, and lower abdomen hurt. Freud starts to doubt the correctness of his actions, and takes her to a window in order to examine her throat. The previous moment he had a worrying thought that perhaps he had missed an organic disease. Irma is recalcitrant and has difficulties opening her mouth – like, Freud writes, women with dentures. When the girl opens her mouth, Freud discovers that she has a big white stain to the right. He also sees that there are “extensive whitish grey scabs”.⁵³ These have the shape of the turbial bones of the nose. Freud then calls for doctor M, who confirms his observations. However, Doctor M is not quite himself; he is pale, he has a limp, and furthermore, he is clean-shaven. Freud's friend Otto is also standing next to the girl during the examination, as well as yet another friend, Leopold. The latter examines the patient by tapping on her corset, and remarks: ‘She has a dull area low down on the left.’⁵⁴ Doctor M then says: ‘There's no doubt that it's an infection, but no matter; dysentery will supervene and the toxin will be eliminated.’⁵⁵ Those present then know the cause of the infection; Otto had on one occasion been forced to give Irma an injection, when she was unwell. The injection contained a propyl compound, “propyls... propionic acid... trimethylamin...” The final formula Freud sees printed in bold type. In the dream, Freud thinks that he would not have given such an injection so thoughtlessly, and most likely the needle was unclean as well.

Freud analyzes the dream in slightly under ten pages. He discusses the various components of the dream, and demonstrates the connections

to the events of the previous day, as well as to events further back in the past. He analyzes his relationships with his colleagues, and the self-perceived injustices he has experienced in altercations with his siblings, for example his brother. He reveals the importance he attributed to Irma's treatment, and how he wished it had been more successful than it turned out to be; he also clarifies the guilt he felt as a consequence of this. He also recounts how hurt he was by his colleague's, Otto's, statement that Irma still suffered from various symptoms. Freud's conclusion is that the dream attempted to show him that it was not he, but Otto, who was to blame for Irma's continuing malaise, and the fact that she had not been completely cured. The dream exacts revenge on Otto, and in this way expresses the fulfillment of a wish.

In his endeavors to understand his own unconscious, Freud reached the conclusion that dreams have a latent content that is hidden in the narrative of the dream and the manifest content. If the analysand, the dreamer, in the therapeutic work can be brought to associate freely to the various elements in the dream, and, if the analyst listens with "evenly hovering attention"⁵⁶, as Freud would call it from 1912 onward, the latent dream thoughts can be deciphered. In as much as the analysand's resistance can be overcome, the unconscious and repressed wish that lay hidden in the dream can become conscious. Thus, after the labour of decipherment is finished, the dream reveals itself as the fulfillment of a wish.⁵⁷ The background is that due to outer circumstances or for other reasons, a wish that had been evoked during the day had been repressed, denied or rejected by the dreamer. However, a remnant of the ungratified or subdued impulse remained, and at night it was expressed in the disguised form of a dream. Freud presumes that somehow, a repressed emotional life is able to make itself known in the dream.⁵⁸ Even displeasurable dreams, in the form of dreams of punishment, in actual fact correspond to the fulfillment of wishes. In these cases, the generation of the dream derives not from the repressed, unconscious system, but from a reactive and judgmental component that is part of the ego.⁵⁹ The same overriding structure is also responsible for the formation of anxiety dreams or nightmares. Freud also demonstrated that dreams are often open to many interpretations. A dream can contain several wishes that are interwoven with each other. One wish can conceal another. A far-reaching and me-

ticulous labor of interpretation can lead to the discovery of a wish fulfillment that derives from childhood, that is a wish fulfillment that underlies a more manifest wish.

Another characteristic of the dream pointed out by Freud is that dreams always concern the individual. Dreams, he writes, are completely egoistic.⁶⁰ All dreams are inspired by egoistic tendencies.⁶¹ Dreams are also a mode of expression in which the infantile scene can come to the fore. Freud writes that the infantile scene must be content with returning as a dream.⁶² He also quotes Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who claimed that in dreams “some *primaeval* relic of humanity is at work which we can now scarcely reach any longer by a direct path”.⁶³

In the dream-work, that is, the process from dream-thoughts to manifest dream-narrative, there are two fundamental mechanisms, condensation and displacement, that are active in the distortion of the original dream-thoughts. The work of condensation (*Verdichtungsarbeit*) is most strikingly clear when its objects are words and names that crop up in the dream. It is not unusual for words that are both fantastic and comical to be formed as a result of condensation.⁶⁴ In one of the dreams analyzed by Freud, a person receives a remarkable name, which after analysis is revealed to be a fusion of the names of two persons. Regarding the work of displacement, from this follows that the central elements in the dream thoughts do not have tangible counterparts in the dream. Dreams, Freud writes, have a penchant for the more commonplace elements of the dream content. It is the dream-distortion that is responsible for this.⁶⁵ Freud’s principal and central idea is that “Dream-displacement and dream-condensation are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams”.⁶⁶

The psychic work in the formation of dreams achieves two things, Freud writes. One is the representation of the dream-thoughts, and the other is their transformation into dream-content.⁶⁷ The task of the dream-work is to preserve sleep, and transform unacceptable wishes and impulses into a story that is possible to tell. Freud draws a general conclusion about the nature of dreams: the dream is the hidden fulfillment of a repressed wish.⁶⁸ As the sum of these two achievements, every more complex dream is the result of a compromise between opposed psychic forces.⁶⁹

Freud also finds that there are typical dreams, as well as typical dream

symbols. In the fifth chapter; “The Material and Sources of Dreams”, he describes four typical dreams. Of the four so-called typical dreams, I will discuss one: the so-called dream of being naked, that is, a dream in which someone dreams that they appear naked in public. The dreamer is ashamed to be naked, while those who see him or her do not seem to be aware of the naked person, or are unmoved by his or her nakedness. According to Freud, this dream expresses a repressed wish to show oneself naked. He called this kind of dream a dream of exhibiting.⁷⁰ The wish to show oneself naked derives from the pleasure once taken by the child in taking off its clothes in the presence of an adult; a parent or other person who looked after the child. However, Freud points out that, in his experience, those who appear in the dream as spectators are never those who were actually present when the dreamer was a child, and was naked in real life.

Regarding typical dream symbols, described by Freud in the sixth chapter – “The Dream-Work” – he claims that the Emperor and Empress most of the time represent the father and mother of the dreamer. The King and Queen also represent the parents, whereas the Prince or Princess are images of their child, the dreamer himself.⁷¹ Boxes, canisters, chests, cupboards and ovens correspond to the womb. In dreams, a room often signifies woman. Staircases, ladders and someone who ascends or descends on them are symbolical renditions of sexual intercourse. Animals used as sexual symbols in mythology are also utilized in the same way in dreams, for example the mouse for the female genitals, and the snake for the male genitals. Small animals and vermin represent unwanted siblings.⁷² Freud gives countless examples, and also refers to his students’ observations in this context.⁷³

The seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the most theoretically advanced in the book, and deals with the psychology of the dream-processes. In it Freud develops the concept of the “primary process” to characterize the way the unconscious operates, and the complementary concept of the “secondary process” to describe a form of inhibition acting on the outcomes of the primary process. The primary process is the original mode of functioning of the psychic apparatus, whereas the secondary process is formed during the development of the individual. The primary process is characteristic of the unconscious, whereas the secondary process is typical of the preconscious and conscious systems.⁷⁴

Freud compares the path from dream-element to dream-thought with a process of interpretation, that works from elements to thoughts. In interpretation, the work proceeds from one or several dream-elements to the underlying dream-thoughts. The dream-work goes in the other direction, from dream-thoughts, by way of the dream-distortion, to the dream-content and its various elements. The common path of the dream-work is to transform ideas to visual images. There are also, Freud writes, dreams that only contain thoughts, that is words.⁷⁵ However, he emphasizes that there is most likely a form of one-way principle in action, that is to say, the path from dream-element back to dream-thought is not entirely passable.⁷⁶ This is because so-called healthy dream-material intervenes before and during the process of interpretation.

Conclusions and consequences of The Interpretation of Dreams

The Interpretation of Dreams had a fundamental meaning for Freud, and for the situation of psychoanalysis in and outside Austria. One of the consequences of the book was that several doctors, Wilhelm Stekel, Alfred Adler (1870–1937), and Sandor Ferenczi (1873–1933), became seriously interested in psychoanalysis, and became Freud's pupils. The first-mentioned also wrote, as we noted, an enthusiastic review. Henri F. Ellenberger (1905–1993) writes:

These unusual features of *Traumdeutung*, the provoking title and motto, the high literary quality, its intimate connection with Freud's life and personality, its humorous allusions to the Viennese life in those days, all this contributed to the effect the book had on its readers. Some were critical of what appeared to them as a lack of scientific rigor, but for certain others it was a revelation that shook them and set their lives on a new course. The German psychiatrist Blüher tells in his autobiography how he had little interest in Freud's work until a friend lent him *The Interpretation of Dreams* which he could not put down until he had finished it and which gave a decisive orientation to his career. It is through similar experiences that Stekel, Adler, and Ferenczi became disciples of Freud.⁷⁷

The book represents Freud's retrospectively idealized solitude, as well as his struggle to gain recognition. In 1902, Freud achieved the rank of professor, and at the same time the stream of patients to his practice at Berggasse 19 in central Vienna steadily increased.⁷⁸ This was the same year in which Freud started to gather a small group of doctors – Alfred Adler, Max Kahane (1866–1923), Wilhelm Stekel, Rudolf Reitler (1865–1917) – at his home, to discuss his theory.

Only a year after the publication of *Traumdeutung*, in October 1900, he started to write a concise summary of his theory of dreams. The booklet was published a year later.⁷⁹ After the year 1900, Freud came to apply the theory of dreams in various contexts. An early example of this is his analysis of Dora. The case study, which he wrote a year after the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is structured around two long analyses of dreams. In the preface to the first edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud wrote that anyone who has failed to understand the origin of dream images can scarcely hope to understand phobias, compulsive symptoms or delusions, or exert a therapeutic influence on them.⁸⁰ The first more comprehensive analysis of a literary work, Wilhelm Jensen's (1837–1911) *Gradiva*, published in 1909, is also borne up by an analysis of a dream.

As previously mentioned, Freud drew on the knowledge acquired by his predecessors in the field of dreams. However, his book adds to, and surpasses, the work of his predecessors and other contemporary work on dreams. Henri F. Ellenberger – who considers Freud as one in a line of philosophers, doctors, scientific and literary authors who have reflected on, written about or theorized about the unconscious – claims that there had been no innovations in the interpretation of dreams or the theory of dreams since the publication of Scherner's book about dreams in 1861.⁸¹ *The Interpretation of Dreams* not only proposes an original theory of dreams, it also lays the foundation for a new form of psychology. Furthermore, it involves the private life and personality of its author, in a way which is unprecedented in the history of science.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud describes his discovery that dreams are a way to access the unconscious in the psychoanalytic treatment. The book became the foundation for Freud's new theory. He emphasized that there was nothing arbitrary in psychic life.⁸² Psychoanal-

ysis took a leap from a medical speciality to a theory of mankind, the conscious and unconscious conflicts and repressed wishes of the psyche. Freud shifted psychoanalysis from psychopathology to a theory of the unconscious. Gay emphasizes that *The Interpretation of Dreams* constitutes Freud's first cohesive presentation of a "psychology for psychologists". *The Interpretation of Dreams* also has literary qualities. Freud adopts a conversational style and the text is studded with literary references to lighten up the reading.⁸³ Quotes by Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine, Mozart and Offenbach, among others, appear in the book. The texts from popular songs, typical of the time period, are also included in Freud's "imaginary walk".⁸⁴

Freud reluctantly observes the wittiness of dreams, which drives him to investigate jokes and humor with the aid of psychoanalytic theory. This line of inquiry results in the book *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). In it, he explores yet another ubiquitous human activity from a psychoanalytic perspective. Freud also discovers a similarity between dreams and symptoms. As noted, Freud considers symptoms as expressions of a compromise, in which a repressed wish is hidden; two opposed wish fulfilments, deriving from different psychic systems, are expressed simultaneously and united in the symptom.⁸⁵ The analysis of dreams has a key position in psychoanalytic theory, and became the model for the analysis of other psychic phenomena, the hidden meanings of which one could become conscious of, such as mistakes, slips of the tongue and the neurotic symptoms; phobias, conversion syndromes, and compulsive thoughts and behavior. When Freud summarized psychoanalysis in a more popular form in *Lectures*, a sizable passage is related to the theory of dreams: eleven of the twenty-seven chapters in the lectures published in 1915–1917 are devoted to dreams. In the lectures published in 1932, Freud considers dreams in two of the eight chapters. In the aforementioned fifth chapter of *Abriss der Psychoanalyse (An Outline of Psycho-Analysis)*, he would point out that the study of the dream-work, which gave him the explanation for the formation of dreams, also contributed in spreading light on the remarkable fact of the psychic symptom; this meant that understanding the dream-work also made it possible to acquire a deeper knowledge of neurosis and psychosis.⁸⁶

Freud never abandoned the discoveries that he claimed to have made

in the analysis of dreams. On the contrary, these insights were the foundation of psychoanalysis for forty years.

II. Strindberg's *A Dream Play*

Overall, it is fair to say that Strindberg, before completing *A Dream Play* (first printed in 1902) had devoted a not insubstantial amount of preparatory work to several of its main elements.⁸⁷ The play has a prehistory that can be reconstructed to a large extent, and with a large degree of certainty. There is also a plentiful secondary literature that comments the origin of the play.⁸⁸ The facts that emerge are largely consistent, though different commentators sometimes have different opinions on certain issues, for example on whether Strindberg's writing method was planned and structured, or if it was hasty, improvisational, intermittent, and lacking calculated plan. The conclusion I can draw is that the dream-play appears to have occupied Strindberg's thoughts for a long period of time. At the same time there is something improvisational about how the reality of the dream was created, the framework around the action; two crucial elements appeared in a late stage of the process, namely the realm of the gods, and the disordered world of the dream, and became guiding principles in the play.

An early comparison can be made concerning how Freud and Strindberg treat their own dreams. Freud comes to a halt before, and ponders over, his dreams, and lets them have a decisive impact on his understanding of his own inner conflicts and repressed wishes; he lets associations spring forth. The dream about Irma, discussed previously, is a case in point. Every dream has the potential to become such an example. Strindberg was also a dreamer. This much can be inferred from *The Occult Diary*. Here, Strindberg recounts, among other things, the contents of his dreams from the previous night. His diary is typical for the format; short notations that oscillate wildly from subject to subject. There is no story, nor is there any form of action in the conventional sense. Broadly speak-

The first page of the original manuscript of A Dream Play. From the collection of the Royal Library. Courtesy of Wikimedia commons.

Ein Beispiel:

—

Das

Wort "Staat"

—

[Die Wörter, die quantitativ stärker sind
sind im Vergleich zu den anderen
Wörtern im Satz.]

—

ing, and without claiming any deeper or more detailed knowledge about *The Occult Diary*, there appears to be a pattern in the dream narratives. They are short, and they stay on the manifest level. Three examples can illustrate the character of Strindberg's dream narratives. The first dream was dreamt on the night between March 21 and March 22, 1897, and the notation reads:

Dreamt the night 21 x 22 that I was on the ladder up to a bookshelf, and wanted to get down (it was in a theatre). Saw Algot Lange. Waldemar B(ülow). "ill". Chest all in knots and pounding heart.

The second dream was dreamt on March 31, 1897:

The night = dreamt I met King Oskar whose hand I refused to kiss. The King said he had donated 1000 Kronor for a new lens in a telescope at the observatory in Naples, but the lens was useless.⁸⁹

Strindberg dreamt the third dream on May 29, 1897. In this dream the principle of condensation appears at the manifest level:

The night 29 x 30 I dreamt that I arrived with Siri [ex-wife], came across Frida [current wife but divorce is imminent] dressed in brown and tearful: she wanted to throw herself familiarly in my arms, since I imagined Siri as my stepmother. Then we walked together and I showed them to August Lindberg's mother.⁹⁰

These are poignant dream images. But nothing follows, for these notes are either unaccompanied or succeeded by other images, unconnected to the previously related dream images. In order to explain them, Strindberg looked for other signs in the external world. Strindberg's familiarity with his dream world is nonetheless indubitable, and it seems certain that he drew inspiration from his personal world in the creation of a dream world that was made accessible to others in the form of a poetic drama.

In the following, I will describe *A Dream Play* with the aid of the comments chiefly of Martin Lamm (1880–1950) and John Landquist (1881–1974), and in regard to certain details, Gunnar Brandell (1916–1964) and Sven Stolpe (1905–1996). On the subject of Lamm’s often biographically tinted interpretations, one can of course object to his approach. Nonetheless, I allow Lamm to play an important role in my text. It is not my intention that the reader should be misled into thinking that there is a direct, unmediated link between a poetic text and its author’s subjective reworking of his or her personal store of memories. However, the perspective on the drama *A Dream Play* proposed here considers dreams in their context as unedited subjective creations; their elements are drawn from fragments of reality that the dreamer, by means of which he or she is unaware, brings to expression in the manifest dream. Later on, I hope to provide a more in-depth view of *A Dream Play*, in this endeavour leaning more heavily on Brandell, and the support he finds in psychoanalytic theory. There are several reasons for the use of the older literary commentators of a *A Dream Play*. One is that the sources used here are fruitful for the comparisons that I am hoping to make. I have made a selection, but I have chosen among sources that I judge to be reliable. The central focus of this research is to analyze the relationship between *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *A Dream Play*. Which forms and expressions of intertextuality can be discovered and reconstructed? But first, to the play itself.⁹¹

The Reality of A Dream Play

If *A Dream Play* has a heroine it is surely Indra’s daughter, the wayward offspring of a divinity, who descends to earth in order to experience the conditions of mortal life. It is during her stay among ordinary humans she finds the phrase “Human beings are to be pitied”. The prelude, composed of a dialogue between the god Indra and his daughter, presents the creation of the world, in a miniature format. Everything in creation was once beautiful, Indra claims, but then something happened, “a disturbance in its orbit, perhaps something else, a revolt followed by a crime, that had to be suppressed. . .” (SV 46:163, R:179)⁹². Indra argues that the language of humans “is called Complaint”, a claim that Indra’s daughter feels is too

harsh a judgment, and it is due to this difference of opinion that Indra calls for his daughter to descend from her heavenly realm: “Descend and see, listen and return, and tell me if their complaints and lamentations are well-founded...” (SV 46:164, R:180) In the final scene in *A Dream Play*, we meet a more experienced Indra’s daughter, who bids humanity farewell; she has met quite a few of their number on her wanderings on earth. In particular, she addresses the Poet, a human being like everyone else, but the one who “understands best how to live” (SV 46:121, R:246). In an earlier scene with him, the two of them attempted to discuss if there was some form of connection between reality, dreams and poetic creation. This is a scene full of reminiscences; both characters feel that they “have been through this before” (SV:102, R:236). At the end of the scene, Indra’s daughter claims to know that, at a different time and place, she has had exactly the same conversation. The Poet answers: “Then you can soon work out what reality is.” Indra’s daughter responds: “Or dreaming!”. And the Poet: “Or poetry!”. In the end of the play, which is thus a farewell, Indra’s daughter says:

Now when I am about to leave... at the moment of parting
As one takes leave of a friend, a place,
How the loss of all one has loved rises up,
And regret for what one has destroyed...
Ah, now I know all the agony of living,
So this is what it means to be a mortal – – –
One regrets even misdeeds never done
One yearns to go, and yet one longs to stay...
So the heart’s two halves are rent asunder,
As if wild horses were pulling it apart, torn to pieces
By contradiction, indecision, disharmony...
(SV 46:121, R:247)

With these words she promises to state the complaints of humanity to her father. The drama evolves between these two endpoints. How the god Indra receives her words, is a tale untold.

Strindberg precedes the drama with a preface, an “Author’s Note” (SV 46:7, R:176).⁹³ Here, he connects *A Dream Play* with *To Damascus*,

which is also described as a dream-play. He says that his aim is to mimic the “inconsequent yet apparently logical form of a dream”. He maintains that anything can happen in dreams, “anything is possible and probable”. Neither time nor place exist in dreams. Dreams are built on “an insignificant basis of reality”, from which “the imagination spins and weaves new patterns”. They represent a “blend of memories, experiences, spontaneous ideas, absurdities, and improvisations”. Regarding persons who appear in dreams he claims that they can “split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse”, and then converge again. Here we find that considered as a whole, Strindberg’s words in some ways are similar to the observations Freud presented in regard to the characteristics of dreams, and elucidated in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). I will return to this similarity.

Strindberg claims that there is an overriding consciousness in dreams, and that is the consciousness of the dreamer; here, Strindberg’s view differs from Freud’s. This difference will be illustrated in greater detail further on. Strindberg’s position is that there are no “secrets, no incongruities, no scruples, no law” for the consciousness of the dreamer. The dreamer “neither acquits nor condemns”. It is on the basis of this attitude that Strindberg understands his experience of dreams as primarily painful, and seldom “happy”. Through the meanderings of the action in dreams, “a tone of melancholy and pity for all mortal beings runs through this uncertain tale”. Strindberg calls sleep a liberator, but it also comes with pain, and when the suffering becomes too much to bear, the awakening begins. The sufferer is “reconciled with reality”, and however agonizing reality is or can be, waking up is “yet a mercy”.

One should not consider the “Author’s Note” a scientific exposition, but rather a reflection of Strindberg’s personal experiences of dreams, and more generally, the literature that Strindberg had studied on the subject.⁹⁴ However, this preface is in close contact with the phrase “Human beings are to be pitied”, which must be considered a key phrase for the theme of the play. In a letter from the day of the premiere of *A Dream Play*, he called it “my most beloved drama, the child of my greatest suffering”, and on the same day he wrote in his diary that he was worried about how the play would be received.⁹⁵ He refrained from attending the premiere; he stayed at home. Interestingly enough, in a diary entry from the day

before the premiere, he writes that he is hesitant about publishing *Svarta fanor* (1907) [*Black Banners*], a novel which he gives the epithet “a terrifying book”.⁹⁶ In *Svarta fanor*⁹⁷, he judges and punishes. A different tone resonates in *A Dream Play*; the dreamer does not condemn, as Strindberg wrote in the “Author’s Note”.

One of the keys to *A Dream Play* is to be found in the dialogue between Indra’s daughter and Indra in Fingal’s cave – a symbol for Indra’s ear, his daughter claims – for here, the King of the Heavens listens to “mankind’s complaints”.⁹⁸ Towards the end of the play, Indra’s daughter takes the Poet there, which means that at this stage, she has had time to gain an insight into the conflicted conditions of human life; hence it is clear that there is a lack of justice and that a guilty conscience awaits after each neglected duty, and overshadowing both of these conditions reverberate the words of the Officers’s sick mother – who also can be considered as a symbol for the mother – spoken early on in the Daughter’s earthly wanderings: “Oh, this life! When you do a good deed, there is always someone who thinks it’s bad. . . Help someone, and you hurt another. Oh, this life!” (SV 46:17f, R:185). There, in the cave, the Poet claims to hear nothing aside from the whispering sounds of the wind. Indra’s daughter then takes on the role of the interpreter of the winds. What she delivers is a form of lamentation which claims that the earth is impure, life is not good, humans are not evil but they are not good either; they live as best they can. They were given feet with which to tread the earth, not wings; thus they inevitably get dirty, and the question is whether it is they or Indra who is to blame. During the recital, the Poet comments that he is sure he has heard this before, at some point in his life. Somewhat later, after the Poet amongst the wreckage that the sea has swept into Fingal’s cave finds the nameplate of the ship of Justice, which they previously saw leave Fairhaven with the Blind Man’s son and Alice’s sweetheart on board, Indra’s daughter peers into her own depths, and sees “The Blind Man? Fairhaven? [. . .] And Alice’s sweetheart, and ugly Edith, Foulstrand and the quarantine, sulphur and carbolic acid, and the graduation ceremony in the church, the Lawyer’s office, and the corridor, and Victoria, the Growing Castle and the Officer”, but she does not consider what she sees as memories, but says that she “dreamt it all”. To this the Poet answers that it is his poetic creation. “Then you know what

poetry is”, Indra’s daughter answers. “Then I know what dreams are”, he answers and asks: “What is poetry?” Indra’s daughter replies: “Not reality, but more than reality... Not dreams, but waking dreams” (SV 46:91, R:230). As demonstrated, this dialogue constitutes a forerunner to the previously related exchange in which poetic creation, dreams and reality are shown to be interrelated. This forerunner is played out while Fingal’s cave is shown on stage, whereas the concluding reflection takes place after the set, according to Strindberg’s instructions, “has changed to the theatre corridor” (SV 46:99, R:235). Before the viewers’ eyes the room changes; poetic creation, dreams and reality are inseparable, interchangeable, and practically synonymous.

Dreams in reality

To perceive the drama as the progression of a single continuous dream narrative would be to misunderstand it. No dream narrative is as complex in terms of build-up and structure as the play, and Strindberg arranges its various scenes according to a calculated plan, as the “Author’s Note” hints at before the story even begins. The available knowledge concerning the origin of the play also seems incompatible with such a view. This is not the way we dream. Yet elements which are typical of dreams also characterize the play. This obviously applies to the manner of the set-changes, but also to the fact that many of the characters represent something greater than their specific individualities. Among them we find the Mother, the Father, the Lawyer, the Blind Man, the Poet, the Gentleman and his Wife. And Indra’s daughter is called the Daughter, even after she is united with the Lawyer. It is interesting that Strindberg, in the “Author’s Note”, emphasizes that every dream requires its dreamer, that is the consciousness of the dreamer, which neither judges nor absolves, but simply relates. There is no dreamer in the play, in the conventional sense, except perhaps in the scene in which the Officer “dreams” that he once again sits at his desk at school, in a cross-examination with the Schoolmaster that is never-ending, in a manner of speaking. To suggest that Strindberg is the dreamer can hardly be considered a valid interpretation; the character he perchance is closest to would be the Poet, but as we have seen, poetic creation, dreams and reality are so intertwined that the boundaries some-

times become blurred. Perhaps the question is most effectively resolved with the aid of Brandell's term "the reality of the play". It corresponds to the reality that is conveyed to the viewer, the "reality" that the viewer is invited to accept. It is usually presented in the prelude, the so-called exposition, and often it is conveyed by the means of questions posed and answered by the characters on stage.⁹⁹

Rather, one must bear in mind that Strindberg was often struck by the thought that life on earth is a dream.¹⁰⁰ It is presumably this standpoint that drives him to represent reality with the artistic aid of several dream-like features. Perhaps one can say, like Martin Lamm, that the characters in the play are sleepwalkers, who share a common reality and dream about each other at the same time; the whole "becomes intertwined into one great dream-tangle, the impenetrable nightmare of existence".¹⁰¹ The story is controlled by the creative consciousness of Strindberg, and it unfolds according to his conscious plan. There is a prologue and an ending that narratively encompass a story that is only supposedly a dream, a would-be dream. In Strindberg's view of life, a pessimism with shades of Buddhist thought, the bottom line is perhaps the Daughter's answer to the Poet's question about what she has suffered from the most during her sojourn among the humans: "From – just being alive, from feeling my sight dimmed by these eyes, my hearing dulled by these ears, and my thoughts, my bright, airy thoughts bound in a labyrinth of fat." (SV 46:117, R:244) At the level of the creative consciousness, this is, in my interpretation, the message that the play seeks to convey.

In the "Author's Note", Strindberg claims that dreams are built up on an "insignificant basis of reality", in which memories and experiences are interwoven with more impromptu fantasies and inventions. Strindberg's directions regarding scenery, which recur throughout the text, contribute to the dreamlike atmosphere, an aspect I have touched on previously. Images blend seamlessly together – are transformed – but some kind of basic structure is retained. For example, the billboard, the gate, the door with airholes in the shape of a four-leaf clover, and the lime tree are used in several different scenes, and with changed functions. The billboard serves as a place where announcements and verdicts can be posted, but also displays the numbers of psalms, as if in a church. The gate in the firewall becomes an office cubicle in the Lawyer's practice. The lime tree

functions as both hat-and-clothes stand and candelabra. The door with the four-leaf clover becomes the door of the Lawyer's filing cabinet, and in another scene, it leads into the sacristy. One can also see the Officer's recurring courtship of Victoria, with a bouquet of flowers, as drawn into the way time is handled in dreams. Time does not simply pass, it flies, and this shows in the wilting of the bouquet, and the unrealistically rapid aging of the Officer. Furthermore, at the beginning of the play, the Officer speaks with his parents, who passed away long ago, and there is nothing remarkable about this until he discovers a cupboard and is astounded that it is still around after twenty years. . .

Even if many of the details in the drama can be considered to belong to the style of naturalism, the whole becomes symbolically charged. In his short text "*August Strindbergs Ett Drömspel*" [August Strindberg's *A Dream Play*] (1935) – which will be quoted in the following – John Landquist argues that its naturalism is the naturalism of dreams, by which is meant that dreams often draw out insignificant moments from everyday life, "but these images also become saturated symbols for typical experiences or moods in life". Another element in this naturalism of dreams is that the dreamer is never surprised and never questions absurdities. This is the mode of "the growing castle". This improbable image is accepted, in Landquist's view, thanks to the fact that, for the dreamer – or the theatre-goer who has experience of dreams – it functions as a "symbol for another, correct perception". For example, "the growing castle" is interpreted by Lamm as representing "existence on earth"; "beautiful on the outside, but inside there are cold rooms, in which the inhabitants feel like prisoners".¹⁰² The changes of scenery seem to follow impulses that emanate from some form of powerful, underlying idea. The Daughter liberates the Officer from the growing castle; now free, the expectant Officer enters the next scene, and courts Victoria. Together with the Daughter, now under the name of Agnes, he meets his dead parents and his mother bids him to refrain from quarreling with God, and from feeling wronged by fate. In a subsequent scene, in which he enthusiastically – despite having repeated the same action for seven years, in total "two thousand five hundred and fifty-five" times – sounds his cry of "Victoria!" (SV 46:22, R:188), it is as if he suddenly discovers the door with the four-leaf clover, and wonders what is hidden behind it, where it leads. He holds that

thought for a few short scenes, during which he ages remarkably quickly, and then calls on the Smith to open the door. His drastic action attracts the attention of the Policeman, who forbids the opening of the door, which leads the Officer to pronounce: “To the Lawyer, then!” (SV 46:33, R:194) Once there he forgets the reason he came, and what he finally says, after he has fingered the door of the Lawyer’s filing cabinet, as if he recognizes it, is simply that he wonders if Victoria has left. After this, the Lawyer takes over as the main character, and the Officer retreats into the background, and the action focuses on the Lawyer’s attempts to live with the Daughter. Towards the end of the play, the “main role” is transferred to the Poet. Martin Lamm describes the play as contrapuntal without being consistently “fuged”; instead, the contrapuntal element is dominated by a “free-flowing fantasy”.¹⁰³ John Landquist describes it as “illogical and capricious”, in the manner of dreams, yet retaining a “cohesive and forceful pervading mood”.

Reality transformation

Concerning Strindberg’s relationship to the scenes he interweaves in *A Dream Play*, Martin Lamm emphasizes that in several of them, one can discern links to reality. The Officer who courts Victoria has traces of Strindberg himself, waiting for Harriet Bosse (1878–1961) on the steps of the Royal Dramatic Theatre. And according to Lamm, the scenes of marital conflict between the Lawyer and the Daughter reflect how Strindberg and his wife experienced their life together. Similarly, in the scenes between the Daughter and the Lawyer at Fingal’s cave, there are aspects of reality present. He writes poems (“I put it into poetry once”), which she reads by heart, from within (“I dreamt it all”). According to Lamm, there is a door within the Royal Dramatic Theatre with a four-leaf clover, and Strindberg, waiting for Bosse, supposedly once wondered where it led.¹⁰⁴ In the play there is an answer. Behind it lies the mystery of the world, and when the door is finally, and belatedly, opened – after the involvement of many others, among them the four faculties (theology, philosophy, law and medicine) – “nothing” is to be found. Once again we can note that dreams, poetic creation and reality flow together, so to speak, throughout the play.

Martin Lamm, in the company of many more recent Strindberg researchers, places *A Dream Play* in the aftermath of what is usually known as Strindberg's Inferno period.¹⁰⁵ The latter results in a practical religious morality that says that we humans should bear our suffering with fortitude, based on the idea that one should consider the pain we must endure as a trial or punishment for our transgressions. And the trial or punishment has its ultimate cause in the fact that it is part of "the eternal one's" design for life on earth. An inkling of this attitude is conveyed in how Indra's daughter beseeches the Poet, that he not complain about all the misery of humanity. She says: "Hush, you presume too much! The creature should not censure its creator. No-one has yet solved the riddle of life." (SV 46:93, R:231) At the same time, Indra's daughter expresses compassion in regard to the conditions for human existence; they are merciless. Hence, this is an aspect of her statement that one must pity humanity. Another aspect is that she also expresses the insight that we humans, to some extent, "drag fires to our own funeral pyre, and that of others".¹⁰⁶ Not all suffering is undeserved. The character in the play who most clearly reflects the existence of suffering that, to some extent, has been deserved, is the Lawyer, who is perhaps also the character who most clearly springs from Strindberg's own, more mundane view of life (as one encounters it in his letters, for example). The Lawyer sees himself as the defender of humanity, and ingratitude is his only reward. And within the intimate sphere, in which he loves Indra's daughter, he realizes the painful truth that "my likes are your dislikes" (SV 46:48, R:200). This experience drives the Lawyer to increasingly defend the concept of duty; in this respect he increasingly likens the "right-thinking", whom he previously viewed with ire. Lamm is of the opinion that the Lawyer is a representative of the "Inferno period Strindberg"; humans are faced with inhuman demands. An opposed figure is the Poet, a representative of the later Strindberg's hard-won compassion for humanity.¹⁰⁷

This division can also be discerned in Johan Cullberg's book *Skaparkriser* [Creative crises] (1992), in which he describes Strindberg's so-called Inferno period. Cullberg (born 1934) does not mention *A Dream Play*. This work was produced after the Inferno period, which is usually placed around the mid-1890s. What Cullberg has to say about Strindberg can be encompassed by the terms "crisis and development". The period of

creativity that starts at the beginning of the 1900s can be likened to Strindberg overcoming the crisis, and finding a new direction, with a more conciliatory attitude to life, that can be summed up in the words of Indra's daughter, "Human beings are to be pitied", and the fact that there is a divine being who is the cause of it all. In Cullberg's interpretation, one gets the feeling that this phrase is open for different interpretations, and that towards the end of the *Inferno* period, 1896–1897, it is fairer to say that the phrase implicitly reads that one must inevitably pity humanity, for Strindberg, at this time, according to Cullberg, had been deeply affected by three powerful sources of influence; firstly, Swedenborg's doctrine about hell and the possibility of a redemption that is within reach for humans, secondly, Linnaeus' ideas about nemesis, which contain the concept that no-one can avoid God's judgement, and that persons who abuse their free will be punished by God in the form of "an inevitable destiny", and thirdly, an eastern-inspired theory of karma, which holds that the cleansing of the soul becomes possible by means of meeting oneself in an previous existence; a reincarnation in the opposite direction.¹⁰⁸ The basic concept in these three lines of thought is that God desired to make human beings humble, not happy.

Inner conflicts

An earlier and a later Strindberg cross paths in the play. But in regard to *A Dream Play*, the relatively long creative process plays a part. For example, the prelude – the dialogue between Indra and Indra's daughter – was added before the premiere in 1907, that is, at a quite late stage in the genesis of the play. The poetic position in *A Dream Play* is far removed from the Strindberg who penned *Black Banners*. Perhaps one can sense this displacement in how Indra views humanity. He considers humans an "unsatisfied, ungrateful creed". Harsh words, and the question is how he will act on the Daughter's testimony, when she returns to the heavenly realm.

The shift is evident when one considers *En blå bok* [A blue book] (1907) and Strindberg's views on Émile Zola's (1840–1902) naturalistic depictions of reality.¹⁰⁹ On the question of whether Zola is unfair, if he has vilified humanity in his pessimistic portrayals, which, according to

Strindberg, remind one of “the calm, supreme disdain for all things human in the Far East, where one knows that Brahma, the Creator, through the original sin with Maya, the material world, created [...] this illusory world, which is just a shadow of a dream” (SV 65:180), Strindberg responds: “I have been honest with myself, it is seven times worse.” (SV 65:181) And he adds, in a vein reminiscent of the door with the four-leaf clover in *A Dream Play*:

But we have the capacity to dazzle ourselves, momentarily, or create inner images of light that we place on top of the negatives, which the photographers call masks. Perhaps our illusions are ancestral memories of something better that we once saw, and we slide these original images of beauty under the distorted picture. We don't live in reality, we live in our conception of reality. Perhaps it is our duty to shut our eyes and hide certain things, just as we hide our needs of nature. We may dwell in a spectacular apartment, but we know that there is a secret room, that hides something very ugly. But no-one thinks of this, and it doesn't strike anyone to point at the closed door, even though it is plain sight. (SV 65:181)

As pointed out previously, Martin Lamm uses the term counterpoint in reference to *A Dream Play*, a term that stems from the world of music. In Strindberg's estate an expanded version of the “Author's Note” was found, possibly intended for the premiere in 1907. In this document, Strindberg does not refer to the structure of dreams, but instead speaks of musical structure. For example, there is an allusion to the formal principles of music in the term “chamber play”, which is used by Strindberg to describe several of his later works.¹¹⁰ Brandell points out that music, like the dream, eschews an “informatively organized content”.¹¹¹ He also perceives that the meandering dialogue opens up for retakes, variations and repetition, and even unclear questions can be encompassed in dialogue which is not informatively organized. This is the quality that Brandell finds the most characteristic of Strindberg's dream-plays, which, apart from *A Dream Play*, also include *Dödsdansen* [*The Dance of Death*], *Till Damascus* [*To Damascus*] and *Spöksonaten* [*The Ghost Sonata*].

The analytical drama

The analytical theatre of antiquity was intensely familiar to Freud, and he employed it as the point of departure for several of his works.¹¹² This form of theatre is based on the principle that there is a prehistory to the events in the play, which is brought to light during the telling of the story; a forgotten history reappears in the moment of truth, and in the Greek tragedies, in a world of gods who intervene in the lives of humans, the truth entailed that fate was immutable; there was no way back. Freud's psychoanalytic method, Brandell notes, follows the fundamental pattern of analytical theatre. However, one must bear in mind that Freud overtook "the method of theatre from antiquity", and not the religious ideas of antiquity, one of which was that fate had already set up the rules, and the outcome was a foregone conclusion. There are no metaphysical forces at play for Freud. Instead, tangible circumstantial factors in the surrounding society are proposed as influential elements, as well as the past, in terms of upbringing, conventions, ideals of morality, all forces that can lead to conflict within the individual who strives for a freedom that is not always attainable.¹¹³ According to Brandell, Freud uses the method of the analytical drama, within "the framework of individual psychology and a critique of society".¹¹⁴ The analytical drama, which is also tied to the concept of catharsis, works to reconstruct a portentous truth, the origin of which lies in the past. Strindberg uses this dramaturgic model within the boundaries of the artistic ideals of the fading 19th century. Strindberg, however, is not an archetypal realist; his artistic ideals, in my view, appear more radical and lean towards what I would call "expressionist" artistic modes. Strindberg allows his own inner drama to resonate in the conception of the poetic work. Considering *A Dream Play*, in terms of its genesis and development as a drama, as well as its diverse manifest sequence of events, it seems reasonable to me to suggest that Strindberg allows something of himself to come to expression in the play. He did not flow with the current, but sensed – or foresaw – a nascent undercurrent.

Brandell points out that the public availability of traditional realistic plays with an analytical approach (the work of Henrik Ibsen [1828–1906] is an example), as well as expressionist forerunners in poetry and theatre, coincides with Freud's use of the analysis of dreams in his psychoanalyt-

ical therapies; the patients told him their dreams and associated freely to the elements of the dream, and the work of interpretation sought the presence of the unconscious in the world of memories that took shape. Brandell uses this reference to Freud to get under the skin of the often incomprehensible world of dreams. In Freud's work, Brandell distinguishes two phases.

In the first, which recalls Strindberg's dream-plays, the material lies before the patient and the physician in a state of chaos, albeit with certain recurring motifs, and refuses to provide any useful information. But after analysis and interpretation, one gets a more coherent picture of the patient's prehistory, an exposition that precedes the psychoanalytic treatment, which is more reminiscent of Ibsen's dramatic feats. One could very well organize Strindberg's dream-plays, and one way is to subject them to the same procedure that is used in the analysis of dreams, elucidated by Freud. This can be readily done, and the lack of clarity thereby dispersed, but the dramatic force of Strindberg's work lies precisely in the fact that there is no explanation or analysis.¹¹⁵

Brandell also speaks of traces of mystification in Strindberg's work. At times it appeared threatening to him, at times consoling. Brandell finds a yet clearer image in the fact that Strindberg saw life as "a drama, engineered by unknown powers [...] a drama with far more dark secrets than evident truths".¹¹⁶ A quote from a letter by Strindberg from 1887 supports Brandell: "If light falls into this darkness I will tumble down, crushed".¹¹⁷

Another literary historian and author who has written about Strindberg's *A Dream Play* is Sven Stolpe (1905–1996). He points out that Strindberg's way of revealing the conditions for human life is ambiguous. Strindberg is treated in volume VI of *Svenska folkets litteraturhistoria* [The Swedish People's History of Literature] (1978). On the one hand, Stolpe emphasizes that *A Dream Play* is "the most important and significant play that has been written in the Swedish language".¹¹⁸ On the other hand, he underlines that it is a work that, despite all attempts to analyze it, remains unfathomable. Stolpe conjectures that some new idea presumably took

hold of Strindberg during the process of writing and obscured the pervasive theme that “Human beings are to be pitied”. For Stolpe, an often quoted notation from Strindberg’s diary from November 18, 1901, illustrates how this – relatively speaking – new idea takes hold of Strindberg:

[I am] (R)ead[ing] about the doctrines of Indian Religion – The whole world simply an illusion. The divine Power (Maham-Atma, Tad, Aum, Brahma) was seduced by Maya or the Drive of Procreation. Hereby the Original Substance of Divinity sinned against itself. The world thus exists solely due to a sin – if it exists at all, for it is just a dream-image, a phantom, the eradication of which is the task of the ascetic. But this task is opposed to the drive for love, and the end result is a never-ending tottering between lustful adventures and trials of repentance! This seems to be the solution to the riddle of the world! (SV 59:1:317)¹¹⁹

In the play, the solution appears in the guise of Nothing, for which Stolpe gives Strindberg credit, for, as Stolpe writes, “life on earth *is* in itself, Nothing”.¹²⁰ At the same time, he claims that this new idea also obscures the main theme of the play. As I have discussed previously, this divine fall from grace is an idea that Strindberg returns to in *A Blue Book*.

Stolpe bases his claim that *A Dream Play* is a convincing work of art on the writings of Strindberg in his letters and his diary around the time of the play’s conception. Thus, he introduces autobiographical aspects and, like Lamm, lets them cast a “shadow” over the play and its main characters. For example, the question of guilt plays an important role in Stolpe’s arguments, and Strindberg’s life with Harriet Bosse was far from plain sailing at the time of the play’s origination, even though he was deeply in love with her, according to Stolpe.¹²¹ Hate and love were intermixed in a painful love affair. At the same time he insists, with the support of Karl Vennberg (1910–1995), that the pervasive agony in many of Strindberg’s plays is seldom well motivated. Vennberg even claims that the motivation for the statement that “Human beings are to be pitied” is “wretched [...] if one perceives the leitmotif as an intellectual theme”.¹²² Agony is an answer to the existential torment of humanity, and thus does not require motivation.

The reception of A Dream Play

As pointed out previously, *A Dream Play* came out in print during the late spring of 1902.¹²³ Among the reviewers are Johan August Runström (1852–1906) (*Aftonbladet*, June 6), Tor Hedberg (1862–1931) (*Svenska Dagbladet*, June 10), Georg Nordensvan (1855–1932) (*Dagens Nyheter*, June 11), Carl David af Wirsén (1842–1912) (*Vårt land*, June 13), Jacobine Ring (1862–1912) (*Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, June 20), and Karl Warburg (1852–1918) (*Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, June 25).¹²⁴ Most of them are positive in their evaluations of the play, but primarily view it as a “suggestive closet drama”.¹²⁵ Af Wirsén is scathingly negative. He asserts that the play Strindberg in a letter from April 17, 1907, considered to be the child “of my greatest suffering” is incoherent.¹²⁶ He is also critical of the style of writing employed by Strindberg. It is simply convenient, he feels, in that it requires no plan. According to af Wirsén, the play lacks “profundity, but the bizarre and dreamlike aspects of its mode of expression can cause naive souls to believe that there is a deeper meaning in the empty imagery”. Nor is Warburg completely entranced; he dislikes the lack of rationality in the play’s structure. He realizes that the dream world is portrayed with great skill, but to master it demands “a not inconsiderable effort from the reader”, and in the end the whole thing is like a tangle of thoughts, that is well nigh impossible to sort out. However, Tor Hedberg is very appreciative. He finds that Strindberg in his dream play “in a surprising manner, with a force of imagination that is simultaneously distressing and entralling, and with somnambulatory certainty, has mimicked the confusing, incoherent, yet for the dreamer himself so natural, dream life”. Hedberg still refrains from trying to describe the content; it has to be read, he writes, although he also senses that it could be “performed with a powerful and peculiar effect”. Nordensvan is similarly enthusiastic. Among other things he notes the changes of scenery and the transformations they entail. He finds them “highly original, everything is genuinely Strindberg, and some of it is recognizable from his earlier plays, life passes before the inner eye of the dreamer, in constant change; the overriding mood is the feeling of pity for human beings, for their suffering, which finally ends in death – the liberator”. Runström is less awed by the “intensity of the creative imagination of the author, in this

heaping up of more or less intentionally confused images, which create a kaleidoscopically mottled picture of the great misery of existence". Jacobine Ring, too, notes the intensity; she describes the play as violent, but judges *A Dream Play* to be the "most psychologically interesting" of the three plays in the edition.

In this context it is interesting that the play was quickly translated to German, and was published in Germany as early as June 1902. Strindberg wanted the work published without delay, and one reason appears to have been that he wanted to defend his claim to innovation; "The dream play is a new form, of my invention."¹²⁷ Even if Strindberg obviously was conscious of the fact that he had created something new, and intent that his pioneering work should become available to the public, also outside of Sweden, there are relatively few comments on the reviews after the three plays were published in 1902. However, in a letter to his brother Axel Strindberg (1845–1927) from July 13, 1902, he writes:

Since you move about among the people, you can keep an eye on what af Wirsén writes about my plays this time around. I just want to know if his persecution is systematic, or if he has some modicum of honor. And I do not wish do him an injustice!¹²⁸

Strindberg keeps his head down, in a manner of speaking; he is prepared for negative criticism, but at the same time he does not wish to respond unjustly or based on preconceptions. His inner life, his confidence in himself and his writing, are more important to him than the words of a single critic.

As I noted earlier, there was a delay of several years before the theatre premiere. Strindberg was aware that his dream play could be challenging in a theatre production; the transitions between scenes were not simple considering the technology available at the time. Strindberg made several attempts to have the play performed – for instance, there was a plan for a production in Paris, 1905¹²⁹ – but as noted it was first on April 17, 1907, that his efforts were successful. According to Richard Bark, Strindberg wanted *A Dream Play* to be produced at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, largely due to its successful production of *Till Damaskus I* [To Damascus

part I], with a premiere in 1900.¹³⁰ The premiere of *A Dream Play* took place at *Svenska Teatern* [The Swedish Theatre] in Stockholm. The director was Victor Castegren (1861–1914). Castegren had high hopes for the new stage technology, but they were in vain. Turning dreams into scenic imagery proved difficult; instead of appearing as a dream-image, the dream was to a large extent materialized.¹³¹ It seems that Strindberg did not attend many of the rehearsals. However, in *The Occult Diary*, there is a notation two days before the premiere. Strindberg writes that he “saw the rehearsal of the Dream Play and suffered terribly; my impression was that this should not be performed. . . .”¹³² It strikes him as conceited, and “probably blasphemous”¹³³. On the day of the premiere, April 17, Strindberg writes in *The Occult Diary* that he has read the final chapter in the Book of Job “in which God punishes Job for his conceit in finding fault in His work; Job begs for forgiveness and is forgiven.”¹³⁴ Hence, the specter of conceit still haunts Strindberg, a sentiment that reverberates in the play, briefly but clearly. At the same time, forgiveness is close at hand.

On the day of the premiere, at “eight o’clock in the evening”, Strindberg writes a letter to Emil Schering (1873–1951), his German translator, and informs him that “now the curtain rises for the Dream Play, but I sit at home, just as I always do at the premieres”. He writes that all his happy confidence disappeared when he saw the dress rehearsal, that is, on April 15. He says he had been expecting a catastrophe to “hinder the play”. He also judges that “these airy images cannot be materialized – that is how I, the author, feel”.¹³⁵ Later, during the evening after the premiere, more precisely at eleven o’clock – according to the letter to Schering – Bosse, Castegren and the theatre director Albert Ranft (1858–1938) all telephoned him and informed him that “the Dream Play was a success”. Strindberg writes: “G.v.t” [*Gud vare tack*, Thanks be to God].¹³⁶ Thank God, in the end. Relief. But already the next day he feels the hatred well up in him, partly identifiable as the hatred of envy. It concerns his infected relationship to Harriet Bosse. According to Strindberg’s notation, Bosse supposedly “from a distance cursed the play to fail [. . .] following its initial success”.¹³⁷

Strindberg writes grateful letters to both Castegren and Ranft in the days immediately after the premiere. He thanks the former for his “un-

tiring work with the Dream Play” and he begs forgiveness for his “extraordinary demands”. He also asks that “. . . all the participants, major and minor, on or behind the stage, be told that I am very much in debt to them”.¹³⁸ The latter he thanks for “taking the risk of the Dream Play”.¹³⁹

On April 22, he makes a notation that the Dream Play has “gone well since last Wednesday”, which causes him to remark that it “was allowed after all, but I had to suffer through it”.¹⁴⁰ He still feels “disharmonious”, but the disharmony has been reduced. From these brief comments, which must be taken at face value, it is difficult to draw any further conclusions. However, one can note Strindberg’s choice of words; on the one hand the phrase that the piece “should not be performed”, and on the other hand that it “was allowed”. It is as though Strindberg directs his words to some “higher” authority, perhaps as a consequence of his own inner uncertainty, reflected in the disharmony that took hold of him when he saw the rehearsal. Part of the background of *A Dream Play* is of course the relationship with Harriet Bosse, which casts its shadow over Strindberg’s judgements of *A Dream Play*, captured as he was in their unresolved conflicts and their unhappiness.

As noted, Harriet Bosse played Indra’s daughter, which had been Strindberg’s intention from the beginning. As also mentioned previously, Strindberg was nervous on the day of the premiere. And perhaps he sensed that the reception would not be unanimously positive; it was mixed and the general impression of the piece, according to many of the reviewers, was affected by the many set changes, which made it difficult to concentrate on the dramatic action on stage. Bo Bergman (1869–1967) (*Dagens Nyheter*, April 18) felt that the lyrical text lost its specific character in some scenes. On the question of whether a work “of ‘A Dream Play’s’ depth and brittle beauty should be turned over to the stage”, Bergman’s answer is not entirely affirmative. The greatest drawback is to be found in the lack of a pervasive mood; the dream tone failed “in the dialogue and in the action in many respects”, and the light effects were not sensitively balanced enough. Harriet Bosse’s performance fascinates him, however, and, for Bergman, she seems to have been able to uphold the “spirit of the piece”. Daniel Fallström (1858–1937) (*Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, April 18) was skeptical beforehand to the idea of producing the play, and claims that his apprehension regarding “this theatre experiment” was warranted.

He claims that “Strindberg’s ‘Dream Play’ belongs to literature, not theatre”. A negative aspect is what Fallström calls “a mixture of styles, which invalidated the overall effect and robbed the ‘Dream Play’ of its charm, its dream-like character”. Tor Hedberg (*Svenska Dagbladet*, April 18) reviews the theatre production as well. His opinion is that the impression of a dream is lost due to the fact that the images in the scenery do not successfully blend together. He maintains that the “visualizations of the associations to ideas, when reading the text, are what makes the strongest impression of a dream”, which is something the production does not achieve, in his view. Hedberg too calls for a more cohesive style in the performance; on stage, some lines are recited in the tradition of Maeterlinck, and some are delivered in a naturalistic manner. Anna Branting (1855–1950) (*Stockholms-Tidningen*, April 18) holds that the author, thanks to Harriet Bosse’s performance, could never have hoped for “a clearer or more sublime enactment of this wonderfully lofty fantasy”.¹⁴¹

A review by Sven Söderman appears in *Stockholms Dagblad* (April 18). He expresses that the experiment of “taking reality out of dreams” has, in contrast to *To Damascus*, “succeeded in the Dream Play and [Strindberg’s] ingenious creative craftsmanship has caused amazement”. Söderman has been moved in reading the play, and has been able to enter into its reality. For this reason he perceives the prologue as an unnecessary distraction, it “disturbs the delicate atmosphere of the piece” and it was not given “an acceptable rendition”. He considers Indra’s daughter “the only weak point in the play, for she is a hint of a consciously imposed, demonstrative thematic clue of a kind that would never occur in a dream”. Hence, the production does not reach the same level achieved by the work in the literary format. He feels that the overall impression of the premiere was that it did not “give any idea of the artistic novelty and individuality of the piece”. This is partly because the theatre machinery was not up to the task of suggesting “the fluidity of the dream images and the self-willed transformations of the locations”. When the curtain fell, there followed “numerous expressions of approval”, which Söderman seems to be in agreement with, albeit not without reservations, when he writes that they

[...] probably entailed a form of recognition of the labour of love that has been put into the staging and performance of

the work, but mostly they were for its poetic value, and for its ingenious originator.

However, Vera von Kramer (1878–1940) (*Social-Demokraten*, April 18) describes that the production is “shimmering”; she can feel the atmosphere of the dream. She regards the “Dream Play” as a symphony and she emphatically calls for her readers – even though Ms. Bosse admittedly “on occasions succumbed to the temptation of preaching” – to go and see the production:

Not just for what Strindberg says about the bitterness and injustice in the world, not just for the dream image of the tired coalheavers in the blue, sun-drenched, fervent hell of the South, not for the scourging and revealing of the ridiculous ideas of society, not for the searing words and the stinging wake-up calls of a restless brain. But also for the beauty, the splendor and the atmosphere in this play, the rarest kind of beauty, the kind that makes us happy.

Von Kraemer notes that Strindberg was not present to receive the acclamations. In the end, Director Ranft took to the stage and promised to “telephone the author”, which is also what happened, according to Strindberg’s letters, and the notation in *The Occult Diary* from the day of the premiere.

Johan Nordling’s review appears in *Idun*⁴² on April 25. Nordling is of the opinion that producing the play was a brave experiment. It must have required “a basis in idealistic enthusiasm”, he senses, and for this reason, among others, “[the whole thing] deserves recognition, even if the result was somewhat lacking in comparison with the intentions”. Nordling discusses the theatrical and technical difficulties involved in conveying the “wisp-like effervescent mood”, emanating from the poetic text, from the stage. He sees a conflict between intention and means, between form and spirit. On the whole, however, he finds that *Svenska Teatern* have been successful. Harriet Bosse’s “soulful delivery” appeals to him, and he contends that this “interesting premiere was among those which will make a mark in our theatre history”.

Carl G. Laurin (1868–1940) is the author of a longer column about theatre life in Stockholm, featured in the journal *Ord och Bild*. Its title is “From the Theatres of Stockholm”.¹⁴³ Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* is thus placed in a broader context. Laurin calls Strindberg “the great Swedish genius” and likens him to the biblical character Jacob who wrestles with God. However, Laurin sees Strindberg as more resigned in this play, a notion which I feel that I too have supported in various ways. The place of logic in the play appeals to Laurin, or rather the form of logic that entails that “two times two does not make four”. According to Laurin, people can hold by this kind of logic in their dreams, but not in waking life; Strindberg, he suggests, “always has such a hard time accepting” it. Laurin is convinced that the play has “something to say to all of us”. He gives several examples of scenes that involve a form of recognition, and overall he claims that for “some people life appears to be a painful bad dream most of the time”. These are words which resonate with the “Author’s Note” and with the phrase “Human beings are to be pitied”. But Laurin cannot agree that “everything stinks”, and he finds that Indra’s daughter is wrong when, in the scene in which Kristin is pasting and the Daughter is arguing with the Lawyer, she claims that she does not like cabbage. With a gleam in the eye he begs her to remember “*kåldolmar*” [a Swedish dish comprised of meat wrapped in cabbage leaves]. In addition, he finds Bosse “charming, but perhaps occasionally, if one is to be completely fair, a bit too advocacy of voice”. In his concluding judgement Laurin writes that one

[...] remembers this Dream Play with pleasure, so characteristic of its author, whom one in the end must accept as he is, just as he himself in this play at last accepts Life and its Creator, albeit preserving for us the right to take up the argument again, when we are in the mood.

In Strindberg’s letters from April 17 there are few comments on the reviews that had been published. However, Schering receives one on April 26, in which Strindberg imagines that Schering has been misled by Hedberg’s review. He informs Schering that “the Dream Play was fabulously received, and is showing for the tenth time today”. He also lets him know that the play will be a “repertory play”.¹⁴⁴ It is perhaps fair to say

that Strindberg's worry was slightly exaggerated, at least in view of the reception. In his correspondence from this time, it appears that Strindberg is already looking ahead, considering new projects.¹⁴⁵ In the conflict between his sensitivity to other's judgements of his text, and the inner drive to continue to live his own drama, in the form of the life of a writer, the latter will gain the upper hand and come out victorious.

If this was a survey of the reception of Strindberg's *A Dream Play* during the first decade of the 1900s, commentators such as Gunnar Ollén (1913–2014) have concluded that with the developments in theatre technology, which facilitate advanced changes of scenery with the aid of high-quality light effects, movable decor and a revolving stage, the play has become one of the most frequently produced of Strindberg's plays, both in Sweden and abroad.¹⁴⁶ There are of course many reasons for the popularity of *A Dream Play*. The broad range of interpretations, from all over the world, and the varying degrees to which technology has been used to augment productions (from the use of extremely advanced machinery to the simplest possible), show, if nothing else, that the drama has the capacity to harbor conflicts and themes that have been central for humans over several generations. The obscurity and openness to interpretation emphasized by Stolpe, in combination with the plentitude of moving and even comic dialogue, as well as the drastic images, are crucial components in its success.

In his book *Strindbergs dramatik* [Strindberg's Drama] (1982), Ollén also comments on the reception and mentions that Strindberg's metaphysics were not well received by the Stockholm critics of the budding century.¹⁴⁷ According to Ollén, Strindberg was consciously opposed to “the widespread atheism and materialism that he came across in Sweden at the turn of the century and that he himself had propagated in the 1880s”.¹⁴⁸ In *A Dream Play*, Strindberg expresses a form of “religious musicality”, which by no means was certain to appeal to the contemporary critics, Ollén claims.¹⁴⁹

From my summary of *A Dream Play*, it is clear that Strindberg valued it highly.¹⁵⁰ He gives the work an exceptional position. We saw the same phenomenon in regard to Freud's relationship to *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

To finish this summary of *A Dream Play* and some of its offshoots, I would like to mention Brandell's observation that Strindberg, in letters

to Harriet Bosse, supposedly wrote to Harriet Bosse that he could create a world with two people, “and move one with three”.¹⁵¹ The number three is clearly present in *Fröken Julie* [Miss Julie], *Fordringsägare* [Creditors], and *Dödsdansen* [The Dance of Death]. This moving trinity can, as I understand it, also be found in *A Dream Play*. Beyond the meetings Indra’s daughter has with others, perhaps most profoundly with the Poet, the paternal god Indra mysteriously keeps a watching eye on everything that occurs on earth.

Interpretation

There have been many psychoanalytic interpretations of literary texts since the beginning of the 1900s.¹⁵² At the same time, it should be emphasized that this form of interpretation must be considered as extremely difficult. Many times, those who have interpreted literary texts from points of departure inspired by psychoanalysis, have ended up in petrified and oversimplified interpretations. I shall try to illustrate this question with the aid of *Strindberg as Dramatist*, written by Evert Sprinchorn (born 1924) and published in 1982. The title of the tenth chapter is “The world of dreams”. At the beginning of the chapter, Sprinchorn states that even if *A Dream Play* demonstrates several of the characteristics of (nocturnal) dreams, the play first and foremost should be considered an “artistically constructed drama”.¹⁵³ Overall, Sprinchorn claims that, in order to mimic how the dream presents its material to the dreamer, Strindberg used projections and fragmentary composition in various parts of the drama. Sprinchorn is critical of those commentators who consider the play a chaotic conglomeration of scenes without mutual connections. He claims to see a logic that characterizes dreams as well as poetry, at work.

Sprinchorn finds three important motifs in the events of the play. 1. Human beings are to be pitied. 2. Love conquers all. 3. The mystery of life/the world/the universe. If one keeps these three themes in mind, the logic of the play becomes apparent; scenes, scene changes, and events can all be related to these three motifs, in Sprinchorn’s view.¹⁵⁴

An important point of departure for Sprinchorn’s analysis is the thought that Strindberg considered life, or more precisely life on earth, as an illusion, which is, as we have seen, a notion that several commentators

have emphasized in different ways. This aspect leads him to the thought that “the deeper the dreamer sleeps” in other words, “the deeper the Daughter sinks into the mire of human existence”,¹⁵⁵ the closer she comes to an embodiment of human life, for example in the marital scenes with the Lawyer; in these, the Daughter dwells in the very deepest pit of life. In this perspective, the final scene in the play, in which the Daughter enters the burning castle to reascend to the god Indra, becomes a sign that the dream-life, the life-dream, is over, and death becomes an awakening to a higher form of life. Thus, underlying this idea, Sprinchorn discerns the ideas of theosophy as well as what he calls a quasi-Buddhist philosophy of life.¹⁵⁶

This analysis corresponds to one possible path towards an understanding of the drama. Sprinchorn, however, attempts to approach the drama on a path of interpretation that is also inspired by psychology. He finds it more fruitful to see Strindberg’s dramaturgical choices as inspired by Schopenhauer and by, in Sprinchorn’s words, the awakener of the modern world, namely Sigmund Freud. He proposes this despite the fact that there is little evidence that Strindberg read Freud – Sprinchorn acknowledges this¹⁵⁷ – and the fact that Freud very sparsely references Strindberg.¹⁵⁸ He underlines that both Freud and Strindberg were indebted to Arthur Schopenhauer (1778–1860) and Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), and were inspired by the work of among others Théodule-Armand Ribot (1839–1916), Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), Hippolyte Bernheim (1840–1919), and Carl du Prel (1839–1899). Strindberg owned a copy of the latter’s *Die Philosophie der Mystik* (1885), and Freud also refers to du Prel and regrets that he did not mention him in earlier editions of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and apologizes for this.¹⁵⁹ Freud noted that du Prel pointed out that “the gates to metaphysics [...] do not appear in wakeful life but in dreams”.¹⁶⁰

Concerning Freud, Sprinchorn notes that Freud described five techniques by which an unacceptable thought could be transformed, and thus, in disguise, reach consciousness: secondary reworking, symbolic representation, condensation, displacement, and dramatization through regression to visual images.¹⁶¹ Thus, Sprinchorn is in full agreement with Freud’s observations regarding the path from dream thoughts to manifest dream images. He also notes that the associations that are present

in conscious thought processes – connections that are created by the use of “because” and “as a consequence”, for example – can in dreams be conveyed by means of apparently unrelated scenes.¹⁶² As noted earlier, this is an aspect that has been described by other commentators in their interpretations of *A Dream Play*. The lack of rationality-based logic opens the field for interpretation, an element of the dream that Freud also discusses at length. In Freud’s work, the absent logic could be drawn out by the means of the analysand’s free associations to various elements in the dream, and the interpretations of the psychoanalyst. His account of the dream of Irma’s injection reflects how the logic of dreams can be clarified.

Regarding Sprinchorn’s psychological interpretation of *A Dream Play*, with roots in Freud’s theories, he does not refer to Strindberg as a subject; instead he bases his thinking on a form of universal symbolism. Elements and images in the dream are considered to be symbols for human expressions that are described within psychoanalysis. This is reminiscent of Freud’s conclusions in regard to dream symbols with fixed meanings, but in Sprinchorn’s reasoning they are never connected to the dreamer as a subject, always an important aspect of Freud’s interpretations of dreams. Sprinchorn also equates the secondary dream work with “the attempts of the poet to escape from being bound like a slave to the material world and the prison of the body”.¹⁶³ Perhaps these are two aspects which are not possible to regard as one and the same, but there is a similarity in that both reflect attempts to overcome some form of inhibition. Sprinchorn finds two phallic symbols (the castle, the flower bud), symbols for the vagina (the corridor, the cave), a symbol for masturbation (the Officer’s rocking and hitting the table with his sabre in the first scenes of the play), and an orgasm (in the form of the Daughter’s approaching death in the final scene); the fact that the orgasm reminded Strindberg of death is a thought that Sprinchorn finds support for in the following notation by Strindberg: “The most intense moments of love resemble death”,¹⁶⁴ and finally ejaculation (in the bursting chrysanthemum bud in the burning castle in the final scene of the play). This way of fixating the meaning of symbols is not uncommon, and constitutes a problematic method of interpretation among authors who have utilized psychoanalysis. In summary, for Sprinchorn, the trilogy of *To Damascus I-II* and *A Dream*

Play represents a journey that starts with “the hope of reincarnation and intimations of immortality, and culminates in the little death of the orgasm”.¹⁶⁵

Interpretations which like Sprinchorn’s seek to define a specific meaning with the aid of a theory that contains general interpretations of symbols or other psychic phenomena seldom lead to well-founded conclusions.¹⁶⁶ The reading of the play is reduced, implicitly or in the worst cases explicitly, so that there is only one reasonable interpretation of the essence of the play and/or of the symbols that appear in the text. The interpretation becomes a straightjacket that the reader must free himself from in order to access the force and dynamic of the text. This kind of interpretation becomes locked, rather than open for a deeper understanding. The author’s unproved assumptions and wild speculations become the prerequisites for the interpretation.

To return to Sprinchorn, he makes yet another connection between *To Damascus* and *A Dream Play*. He claims that the former play ends in “the blind alley of childhood, where a lie distorted the hero’s [The Unknown One’s] moral universe”.¹⁶⁷ His position is that this lie becomes the point of departure for Strindberg’s deepest investigation of the unconscious, which is *A Dream Play*. Strindberg is not satisfied, in contrast to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with the answer that mankind resorts to a lie because he seeks to avoid shame more than death itself. For Strindberg, this answer leads to more questions. He sensed that the demon of guilt lurked in the unconscious, Sprinchorn presumes, in what du Prel called “the dark realm”, and it was a source of anxiety. For Sprinchorn, Strindberg’s dream cycle ends with “the most representative single image of the century of the id and the age of anxiety”.¹⁶⁸ The final words in *A Dream Play* are:

(The Daughter) goes into the castle. Music is heard. The backcloth is illuminated by the burning castle, showing a wall of human faces, questioning, sorrowing, despairing... As the castle burns, the bud on the roof burst open into a giant chrysanthemum. (SV 46:122, R:247)

With this I end my account of the work of a thinker and literary researcher who was inspired by psychoanalysis to take on the task of comparing two crucial texts, one belonging to the history of literature and the theatre,

and the other to the history of ideas. It is central to be aware of the fact that both *A Dream Play* and *The Interpretation of Dreams* are key texts for Strindberg and Freud, respectively. They are, as I have emphasized, held in high regard by their authors. Many commentators and critics also value them highly. The works have a high status among experts on Strindberg and Freud, respectively. The works were published within two years of each other, 1902 and a few months before 1900, respectively. From widely divergent points of departure, both works take on fundamental human questions of deep psychology, about the difference between dreams and reality, between poetry and dreams, between the real and the unreal, and between day and night. Both works ask the question about what is real – the reality of the dream, or real reality? Psychic reality or external reality? Material reality or psychic reality, to use Freud’s expression?

A fundamental difference between the texts concerns how far one can go in the interpretation of a dream. Freud assumed that dreams were open for extensive interpretations. Dreams contain the unconscious wishes of the dreaming subject, that is, the truth about what is repressed in the dreamer. Strindberg never had any thoughts of that kind in regard to his dream play.

However, for both Strindberg and Freud, dreams are expressions of universal and extremely important questions for humanity. Strindberg was moved by the problem of dreams and dramatizes it within the framework of a literary work and a dramatic text, primarily intended for the stage. Freud had a completely different intention; he wanted to cast light on dreams from a theoretical and scientific perspective. The analysis of dreams became the royal road to the unconscious, and, in Freud’s mind, the potential foundation for normal psychology. He was convinced that dreams could be subjected to a systematic, logical and scientific analysis. The goal of every analysis of dreams was the same. The dreams could vary widely, but the basic premise for the analysis of the dream-thoughts, hidden within the dream-narrative, was that they could be understood. Strindberg portrayed the drama of dreams without seeking an unequivocal conclusion regarding the phenomenon of dreams. He used dreams to artistically express important existential questions.

III: Close to the text

Finally, allow me to perform a comparative reading, close to the texts, of August Strindberg's dream-play, written for the stage, and Sigmund Freud's attempt to reveal the mechanisms and driving forces behind the manifest dream, the so-called dream-narrative. Several aspects that have been discussed earlier appear again, but now the focus is on a comparison between Strindberg's and Freud's texts.

As stated previously, Strindberg's point of departure is the subjective use of his dream experiences to dramatize a sequence of events on stage. In addition, he also drew from his complex and passionate life in his writing, as well as, of course, from his private and professional experience. The first aspect appears in two different ways in *A Dream Play*. There is an "Author's Note" in conjunction with the play. It can be regarded as a kind of declaration; Strindberg clarifies the singular characteristics of dreams, from his point of view.

Everything can happen, everything is probable and possible. Time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins and weaves new patterns: a blend of memories, experiences, spontaneous ideas, absurdities, and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse and converge. (SV 46:7, R:176)

Strindberg's "Author's Note" is an example of a literary way to describe the process of condensation. Strindberg explicitly uses the word condensation, and provides plenty of examples, from the Freudian perspective, in the form of the other words he uses. It is as if Strindberg senses that man expresses his inner life in dreams. Another way in which Strindberg subjectively utilizes his experiences of dreams corresponds to the dramatization itself, and his choice to concretize his views in the "Author's Note".

Staying within Strindberg's drama, it is interesting to note how the possibilities for condensation appear. As I have mentioned previously, Indra's daughter takes the Poet to Fingal's Cave, a cave by the sea, where the winds roam free. I have already described when this takes place in the narrative structure, after Indra's daughter has experienced Skamsund

[Shamestrand, literally “The Straights of Shame”], at the lexical level a form of opposite to Fagervik [Fairhaven, literally “the Fair Cove”], and realized that Skamsund by no means is a Paradise; in actual fact it is Hell, as one of the hard-working Coalheavers informs her in parting words before she, together with the Poet, suddenly appears in Fingal’s Cave, or the Ear of Indra. She tells the Poet that here “the Lord of Heaven” listens to “mankind’s complaints” (SV 46:87, R:227). The Poet has a hard time discerning anything decipherable in the sounds that fill the cave; Indra’s daughter becomes, as I have mentioned previously, their interpreter. Her delivery appears to be a form of lamentation. Regarding humans, she states that they are neither good nor evil:

They live as they can,
One day at a time.
Sons of dust in dust they wander,
Born of dust
To dust they return.
They were given feet to trudge,
Not wings to fly. (SV 46:88, R:228)

The Poet feels that he has already experienced what Indra’s daughter is speaking of. And among the flotsam and jetsam that lie there, objects that derive from earlier scenes in the play turn up. A form of remembrance is concretized. It starts hesitantly, but in the end, most of the settings and many of the characters in the play have been mentioned. The question of dream or fiction or reality is accentuated. Finally, Indra’s daughter utters the words that I have already quoted in regard to this question: “Not reality, but more than reality. . . . Not dreams, but waking dreams” (SV 46:91, R:230). The dialogue between Indra’s daughter and the Poet leads to him wanting to hand over a poem, or rather, in his own words, a petition, “to the ruler of the world” (SV 46:92, R:231). Indra’s daughter recites it, but “recites from memory” (SV 46:93, R:231), as Strindberg specifies in the stage direction. This suggests a form of fusion of the two. At this stage in the play, she knows which questions humanity asks of life, as well as of the heavens above:

Why were you born in pain,
Why do you torment your mother,
Child of man, when you would give her
The joy of motherhood,
The joy beyond all other joys?
Why do you wake to life,
Why do you greet the light
With a cry of anger and of pain?
Why do you not smile at life,
Child of man, when the gift of life
Should be joy itself?
Why are we born like beasts,
We children of the gods and men?
Our spirit craved another garment
Then this one of blood and dirt!
Must God's own image cut its teeth...?
[...]
And so begins our wandering
Over thistles, thorns and stones;
Walk upon a beaten path
And it is at once forbidden you;
Pick a flower and straight away
You find that it belongs to someone else;
If your way goes through a field
And you have to go directly,
You trample on another's crops;
Others trample then on yours
To make the difference less.
Every pleasure you enjoy
Brings sorrow to all others,
But your sorrow gives no-one joy,
Because sorrow is heaped upon sorrow.
So goes the journey until your death.
And you become another's breath!
(SV 46:93-94, R:231-232)

Still in the cave, the Poet notices that the sea is rising, becoming unruly. Suddenly they glimpse a ship out at sea. Which ship is it? A ghost ship, *The Flying Dutchman*. Finally, they see that it is a ship in distress. They witness the crew dying watery deaths to the sound of a “Christ Kyrie” that becomes distorted into a cry of pain. Out of this chaos comes a chain of associations, expressed by the Poet. It can be considered a form of “condensation by association”:

To tell you the truth... I don't think it is a ship... It is a two-storied house, with trees outside... and... a telephone tower... a tower reaching up into the skies... It is the modern Tower of Babel, sending its wires up there – to communicate with those above... (SV 46:98, R:234)

And when the Poet expresses that he is unsure of what he sees, the Daughter asks him to tell her what he sees. He answers:

I see a snow-covered heath, a parade ground --- the winter sun is shining behind a church on the hill, and the tower casts its long shadow over the snow --- Now a troop of soldiers is marching across the heath; they are marching across the tower and up the spire; now they have reached the cross, but it seems to me that the first man to tread on the cock must die... they are almost there... the corporal is at their head... Ha! a cloud is darting over the heath, blotting out the sun, of course... now all of it has vanished... the cloud's water quenched the sun's fire! – The sun's rays created the dark image of the tower, but the cloud's dark image extinguished the tower's. (SV 46:99, R:235)

As these words, which capture the approaching darkness, are spoken, the scenery changes; once again the corridor in the theatre appears. It is time to open the door, behind which the solution to all the mysteries in the world supposedly lies. Throughout this sequence of events, Strindberg works in dream-mode. There is a flow of creativity, one could say, but it is not aleatory; rather, it has a direction that in the end leads to the conclusion that the human beings on this earth are to be pitied. In paren-

theses, one can mention that the Officer is present at the first appearance of Skamsund in the play. The first person he meets is greeted with the words: “Well if it isn’t Ordström [literally ‘Stream of Words’] (SV 46:54, R:207). This is a hint that, in what follows, as suggested by the names Shamestrand and Fairhaven, the play operates with metaphorical means and is open to condensations at multiple levels.

Turning to Freud’s description of the mechanisms of dreams, what he called the work of condensation is most clearly evident when it has chosen words and names as its objects. It is not unusual that, as a result of the work of condensation, words both wondrous and comical are produced.¹⁶⁹ In a dream discussed by Freud, a person receives an odd name, which after analysis proves to be a fusion of the names of two persons.

Regarding the work of displacement, this for Freud entails that the central aspects of the dream thoughts lack a tangible equivalent in the dream itself. Dreams, Freud writes, have a penchant for the subordinate elements of the dream-content. The dream-distortion is responsible for this.¹⁷⁰ Freud’s principal and central position is that condensation and displacement “are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams”.¹⁷¹ According to Freud, mankind has an inner need to express thoughts and wishes that he himself considers unacceptable.

Both Strindberg and Freud use the word condensation. For Freud, it also has the status of a concept. In this context it is important to point out that there is a qualitative difference between words, terms, and concepts. A concept has the highest degree of precision. It is part of a theoretical context and acquires its meaning by means of its relationship to the other concepts that constitute the theory. A concept can be defined, whereas a word does not seek its meaning by being theoretically defined by other words. In this respect, a term is midway between a word and a concept in regard to clarity and degree of precision. The difference between Freud and Strindberg in this respect shows in that they use the word condensation at different levels on the scale word-term-concept. For Strindberg, condensation is a word that in itself conveys its meaning. Freud’s concept of condensation is guided by other concepts that serve to specify its field of meaning.

Through this brief exposition, I can support the claim that Freud is

working with a theoretical investigation of “the dream-experience that can be used by an author in the creative work”. This means that, in comparing Strindberg with Freud, one must bear in mind that they have two fundamentally different approaches to a central question of their time – dreams, poetic creation, fantasy, and different forms of reality.

As I pointed out earlier, Freud maintained that the formation of dreams also involved a process that he named dream-displacement. Strindberg does not use the word displacement in the drama *A Dream Play*. A reasonable point in this context is that if a story is to be shown on stage, it stands to reason that it is harder to make use of apparently unimportant aspects of the story. However, we should recall John Landquist’s standpoint. He is of the opinion that Strindberg in *A Dream Play* follows the naturalism of dreams, which draws out the trivial moments of everyday life. And so it may be, but, as Landquist writes, “these images also become saturated symbols for typical experiences or moods in life”. Landquist thus suggests that the displacement can be rectified by the viewer, in a manner of speaking; the trivial becomes saturated with mood and depth.

In the context of acted dialogue, on the theatre stage, one often speaks of “subtext”. If the subtext is the more essential, the explicit dialogue can be regarded as if its meaning was displaced. The subtext reaches out beyond the manifest words and exchanges of meaning in the dialogue. Strindberg does not explicitly indicate that the recipients of the drama should seek its subtext. It seems that he puts his faith to a greater extent in the words he has written, and the scenic imagery he conscientiously describes. The subtext is inevitably there anyway. On the one hand, it emanates – in a more or less concealed way – from within the author. On the other hand, it is always an invention of the recipient, which is perhaps an even stronger element in the context of theatre, since the production also in itself constitutes an interpretation, giving the viewer access to yet another subtextual dimension. Strindberg, however, does not encourage the reader of the drama – for example the director, actors and scenographer – to seek the subtext, which in itself should not come as a surprise.

In Strindberg’s text, the word condensation figures in its own right, without the explicit support of displacement as a possibility. In contrast, Freud’s concepts are interconnected and cannot be easily separated – the

concepts of condensation and displacement create an inner structure and constitute an attempt to create a cohesive whole. They are the building blocks of the theory underlying the analysis of dreams.

In the “Author’s Note” in *A Dream Play*, it is apparent that Strindberg regards the dream as agonizing and sees sleep as a painful liberator (from reality). Awakening occurs when the dream is unbearable. The question is to what degree Strindberg here speaks in general terms, or if his “Author’s Note” is more closely related to the drama and the “awakenings” that occur/are portrayed in the dream-play? Strindberg writes:

Sleep, the liberator, often seems a source of torment, but when the torture is at its worst the sufferer awakes and is reconciled with reality – which, however painful, is yet a mercy compared with the torment of the dream. (SV 46:7, R:176)

Perhaps one can regard some of the scene changes in *A Dream Play* as “awakenings”. These dream-like and magical transformations of the set occur when the characters are in hell, or when the pain is unbearable. As early as in the first change of scenery, one can sense an awakening. Indra’s daughter perceives that she is “sinking”, and what she is sinking in is

a forest of gigantic holly-hocks in flower: white, pink, purple, sulphur-yellow and violet. Above them can be seen the gilded roof of a castle topped by a flower-bud resembling a crown. At the base of the castle walls lie heaps of straw spread out over the stable manure. (SV 46:9, R:181)

At the same time, Strindberg suggests that even solid matter can be part of a transformation, for this stage direction ends with instructions that “*the wings, which remain the same throughout the play, are stylized wall paintings simultaneously representing a mixture of interiors, exteriors, and landscapes.*” (SV 46:9, R:181)

A change of scenery occurs after the Officer’s Father and Mother, in a dialogue that has been discussed previously, are moved by the realization that they treat each other poorly, and the Mother states that: “When you do a good deed, there is always someone who thinks it’s bad. . . Help

someone, and you hurt another. Oh, this life!” (SV 46:17-18, R:185). After this the following stage direction: “She trims the candle so that it goes out. The stage goes dark and the screen is drawn across again.” (SV 46:18, R:185) And straight after this, in the next scene, the Daughter says: “Human beings are to be pitied!” Like an awakening, not easy, but possible to get through in order to get to somewhere else. A similar transition – in a form of repetition – occurs after the newly married couple have said that they wish to die together and, according to the stage directions, start to “go towards the sea” (SV 46:73, R:219). In the following scene the Daughter tells the Officer: “Life is evil! Human beings are to be pitied!” (SV 46:73, R:219).

Thus, scene changes that can be compared to awakenings are present in the drama, but they cannot be said to constitute a recurring pattern.

For Freud, dreams can be means by which mankind can express the darker elements of his psychic life. In *A Dream Play* Strindberg’s takes the right, and makes it possible, to express how difficult it is for mankind to reach happiness, vitality, and faith in life. The mode of dreams gives both Freud and Strindberg the opportunity to deal with the darker aspects of life. The dream of light and happiness is clouded by life’s limitations, and human shortcomings, in both *A Dream Play* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

To “awaken” in Fingal’s Cave, as Indra’s daughter does, first with the Lawyer and later on with the Poet, is more rightly to be considered as a continuation of the dream. To this we must add the fact that in *A Dream Play*, there is no dreamer in any obvious sense. In principle, one could also say that no character is awake, based on the observation that none of the peculiarities that occur in the dream play seem to surprise those involved, just as in dreams. The latter phenomenon, that everything that happens is taken for granted by the characters in the dream-play, can be linked to the way dreams convey reality, an aspect of the play that John Landquist called the naturalism of dreams. The only person to react is the Officer, when he speaks with his parents, who are deceased, and is surprised that a cupboard is still standing in the same place, “after twenty years [...] and my mother died ten years ago” (SV 46:16, R:185). But his reaction has no consequence, as it were; the conversation just continues as if no impossibility had been noted.

Freud's idea was that dreams involve a wish fulfillment; the goal is that the dreamer can stay asleep and does not have to "be in reality". Both in *A Dream Play* and in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the logic of reality is surpassed, and therefore also its limitations. Dreams are a path that leads away from one form of reality (material reality) to another form of reality (psychic reality). For Freud, the dream points towards the inner need of mankind to escape from one form of reality to another, and towards the possibility of creating a reality that is not concerned with the limits and boundaries of external reality.

Strindberg takes the opposite view in comparison to Freud. The dream play offers messages that appear to be concerned with external reality, and one can assume that Strindberg intended the viewer to reflect on it, and the fact that it undeniably puts humanity in difficult dilemmas.

In conjunction with the latter thought, namely that Strindberg in his drama addresses the issue of external reality, lies another important question, concerning the fact that in the "Author's Note", he speaks of a consciousness that controls the dream; nothing unconscious is mentioned despite all the confusion in terms of composition, sequentiality and logic:

But one consciousness holds sway over them all, that of the dreamer; for him there are no secrets, no incongruities, no scruples and no law. He neither acquits nor condemns, but merely relates, and just as a dream is more often painful than happy, so a tone of melancholy and pity for all mortal beings runs through this uncertain tale. (SV 46:7, R:176)

For Strindberg, it seems that everything is open to the consciousness of the dreamer. It is free, and achieves, according to Strindberg, a mode of "merely relating". Looking at *A Dream Play*, Strindberg's words are accurate. The reality of the drama is conveyed just as it is. The state of things is clarified, opinions are expressed. It is a peculiar world that the Daughter encounters, and of course she sometimes notices that something is wrong, for example when – and here Strindberg introduces another change of scenery – she meets the grimy, hard-working Coalheavers on the Mediterranean coast. The reality of the drama here approaches a tone that is critical of society, for instance when the Lawyer, in an

angry response to the Daughter's question as to whether humans try to do anything to improve their lot, states that all who attempt to reform society end up in prison. The final verdict passed by the Lawyer is that humans are not entirely evil, it is "just the way things are run" (SV 46:86, R:226). That is all that is said.

Freud emphasizes that unconscious conflicts, wishes and ideas are transformed into a manifest dream narrative that can be consciously and retrospectively reconstructed, if the dreamer makes an effort. Freud never speaks of any form of consciousness in dreams. The formation of the dream is an unconscious process.

For both Strindberg and Freud, symbols occur in the dream. In Strindberg's text, inner ideas are visualized. Many of the characters in the play are named in such a way that they represent a more open symbolic role, compared to if they had been given individualized names. Strindberg also consciously uses the scenery (the growing castle, the door with the four-leaf clover, which is transformed into other rooms, just to mention a few of the symbol-laden elements) to mimic the limitless movements in time and space of dreams, and to create symbolic depth.

Freud discusses metaphor and metonymy, that is, forms of mobility within the sphere of language, to a greater extent than he takes up the presence of symbols in dreams. Symbols tend to become more static and culturally fixed. Freud realized this, but at the same time he did assign certain recurring dream images a recurring symbolic value, those he referred to as universal symbols. As we have seen, Freud maintained that the King and the Queen, for example, represent the dreamer's parents, while the presence of a prince or princess corresponds to the dreamer. As I have pointed out, Sprinchorn tends to attach this kind of fixed symbolic value to many of Strindberg's scenic images. It can be said that this practice in a way misses the mark, since it does not tie the symbols to the meaning they may have had for Strindberg himself. And most likely we must be open to the fact that Strindberg never left any indication to posterity in regard to how he personally viewed them.

In general, it can be said that every play is a visualization of the author's inner ideas, perhaps even more so in the specific case of *A Dream Play*. To follow the events of the play, the transitions, transformations and irrational contortions, it is required that the viewer enter a dream-

like state. The ability to receive the dream-play depends on a form of recognition within us.

Freud held that the dream is subjective; the dreamer is always the subject in dreams. The dream's expressions revert to the dynamics of the subject. Dreams reflect the inner world and inner ideas of the subject. For Strindberg, these ideas – even when they are not presented in the form of a scenic enactment – are subjective, but perhaps not to the same extent as nocturnal dreams. And the dream play was intended for public performance, that is, so that its narrative would be possible for the other to accept. We can recall the answer of Indra's daughter when the Poet asks her what poetry is: "Not reality, but more than reality... Not dreams, but waking dreams" (SV 46:91, R:230). These are dreams in a state of wakefulness, not even daydreams. The Daughter's answer, which might equally well have been the Poet's, points to the position of the writer. Poets do not create poetry in their sleep, or in their dreams, but awake. Still, poets can make use of their dreams in their creative work.

Both Freud and Strindberg make general statements about dreams. Freud does this by means of the analysis of the individual dream, and Strindberg with the aid of literary portrayal. Freud interprets dreams, and posits that the truth about the repressed and unconscious wishes of the subject can be found in dreams. Strindberg does not interpret the drama, dreams, or the *Dream Play*. He lets two of the main characters in the play, Indra's daughter and the Poet, establish that the other, no matter if the other is the Daughter or the Poet, knows what poetry is: more than reality, wakeful dreams. The drama itself appears to be a form of narration based on "a manifest dream", the hyper-reality of which has been the starting point for a series of free associations, in other words, it belongs to the realms of wakeful dreams/poetic fiction. The interpretive element of Strindberg's text primarily concerns the whole, humanity must realize that it is abandoned; a nothingness underlies everything, despite the existence of gods. Freud's analyses of dreams are deeply anchored in language, images are translated into words. In a similar fashion, Strindberg lets the poetic text, that is, words, constitute the ultimate truth and reality.

A Dream Play becomes a statement about the conditions for human life, and the tortuous earthly existence. In the drama, Strindberg wanted to surpass the individual or specific, and reach a more general conclusion

regarding the conditions for human life. We can note Indra's presence, as a power that controls reality, that is, the reality of the play. A distance between the dream-like scenic elements and the associations of the viewer arose at the premiere of the drama, and still arises; no-one believed/believes in Indra, but Strindberg gives Indra a function in the wakeful dream/the poetic fiction; a heavenly god with the power to create, but who also engineered a "Fall from the Heavens". Someone – unseen and out of reach – controls everything. At the same time there are Christian colorings; the symbol of the crucifixion appears more or less disguised. Indra's daughter has some of the features of Christ. As some commentators have pointed out, Strindberg was captivated by the idea that life and humanity was just "a phantom, a guise, a dream image". The fusions are multitudinous in Strindberg's wakeful dreams.

For Freud, dreams belong to individuals and can only be interpreted with the aid of the individual subject; in the work of interpretation, the path of interpretation follows the free associations of the dreamer, accompanied by the "evenly hovering attention" of the analyst. The logic of the dream, in which time and space and rationality are turned upside down, is transferred to the logic of waking life, characterized by rationality. Dreams contain a specific truth about the dreamer. Freud's analysis of dreams represents a general model for how the unconscious operates.

For Strindberg, neither time nor place exist in the dream. It is a notion that he shares with Freud. Dreams, Strindberg writes in the "Author's Note", represent a fusion of "memories, experiences, absurdities and improvisations" (SV 46:7, R:176). Regarding the persons who appear in dreams, he claims that they can "split, double, evaporate, condense, disperse and converge". As we have noted earlier, the "Author's Note" also clarifies that there are no secrets, no incongruities, no scruples and no laws for the dreamer. Logic, as we know it from philosophy, has no place in this view. Concerning logic there is a wonderful scene in *A Dream Play*. It is the Officer, who once again ends up in the school bench; perhaps he is dreaming, as Martin Lamm claims. There is a discussion about the nature of time. The Schoolmaster's answer to the question of time is: "While we are talking, time flies. Therefore, time is something that flies while I talk!". To this one of the boys immediately responds, in a logical yet comical way: "You are talking now, and while you are talking,

I am flying, therefore I am time!". The Officer answers that the laws of logic must be mad, since the Schoolmaster claims that the boy's answer is "[a]ccording to the laws of logic perfectly correct" (SV 46:70, R:217). The scene sparks a sense of recognition in us as viewers. We come into contact with the absurd side of life; its tragic and comical aspects appear.

Darkness and light – the dark enlightenment

Freud claims that neither the logic nor the rationality of wakeful life apply in dreams. Dreams are ruled by a different form of logic. Freud investigates the relationship between the logic of wakeful life and the logic of the unconscious; the latter follows a logic of its own, or rather, it follows the logic of the subject as it is influenced by the unconscious. Both Strindberg and Freud pose questions about a form of pervasive logic that at times seems to overwhelm mankind. One could also say that they both seek an answer to the question of whether there are other forms of logic. Both of them answer the latter question in the affirmative. In a previously referred-to letter Strindberg claims: "If light falls into this darkness I will tumble down, crushed"¹⁷². This answer suggests that he at times felt it was necessary to keep some elements of the different forms of logic hidden, even from himself. We sense that he is referring to the logic that Freud ascribed to the unconscious. Concerning Strindberg, perhaps one can say that these elements are sublimated in *Black Banners*. Whether Strindberg would have agreed is another question. Freud's main idea was that knowing the darker parts of the soul is a path to emancipation. More light in the darkness seems to better correspond to Freud's striving, than Strindberg's anxiety that the light would cause him to lose something that he felt he could not do without, even if Freud towards the end of his life was more dubious as to whether the light could illuminate the darkness to the extent that he had hoped for, when he wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The question of the relationship between light and darkness, in the context of dreams, was posed by both Freud and Strindberg around the turn of the century 1900. What kind of reality does the dream convey? Why do we dream?

NOTES

1. The Bulgarian-French psychoanalyst, author and linguist Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in 1969. To summarize, it refers to the fact that no literary text stands alone, isolated from other texts; texts are related to other texts in one way or another. Also, intertextuality can function as a tool for textual analysis, and guide the process of interpretation. In order to demonstrate intertextuality, one seeks, for example, quotes, allusions and imitations. Concerning Freud and Strindberg, and the two main texts considered here, the intertextuality is not in plain sight, but must be sought in a more contextual way, and via textual intermediaries.
2. Several researchers have studied questions about how Strindberg's dramatic oeuvre, or more precisely the plays of his that have dream-like qualities, point towards an approaching modernism. See for example Rikard Bark, *Strindbergs drömspelsteknik – i drama och teater*, Studentlitteratur, Lund 1981, and Carl Dahlström, *Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1930. In addition, Bark, in his doctoral thesis, provides a historical overview and shows that the term dream-play appears in German literature as early as in the 1740s. "Traumspiel" can be said to correspond to "how the thoughts play with the imagination during sleep" (Bark, 1981, p. 8). The term dream-play, for Bark, refers to a form of drama in which the "fictive reality continuously or occasionally appears dream-like, (in other words, 'with an atmosphere that resembles that of the dream')" (Bark, 1981, p. 9). As will be demonstrated in the following presentation, Bark's definition is applicable to the view of Strindberg's text provided here, although Martin Lamm for example, according to Bark, does not strictly follow the definition presented by Bark. Lamm speaks only of dream-like elements appearing in the play, he does not apply the term dream-play to the whole.
3. Joseph Breuer was an Austrian Jewish physician. One of his patients was Bertha Pappenheim, who in the literature was known as Anna O. She is considered to have coined the expression "the talking cure". Freud and Breuer had a falling out in 1896.
4. Letter from Freud to Darmsteuder, July 3, 1910. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, Norton, New York, 1988, p. 131.
5. Norman Kiell, *Freud Without Hindsight*, International University Press, Madison, 1988, p. 91.
6. "die Traumdeutung ist das vollständigste Stück Arbeit. das die Junge Wissenschaft bis heute geleistet hat." Sigmund Freud, "Einige Bemerkungen über den Begriff des Unbewussten in der Psychoanalyse", 1913, in *Sigmund Freud Gesammelte Werke* (GW) VIII S, Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1945, p. 437. My translation.
7. Peter Gay recounts that Freud wrote to his daughter Anna, who was in Paris at a conference, and told her that he was working on a holiday project,

- which was an entertainment for him. Gay adds that in actual fact *Abriss der Psychoanalyse* is “a powerful, if succinct, statement of his mature views”. Gay 1988, p. 634.
8. Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud Life and Work I*, Hogarth Press, London, 1953, p. 384.
 9. Ronald W Clark, *Sigmund Freud – The Man and the Cause*, University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p. 145.
 10. Clark 1980, p. 141.
 11. Jones 1953, p. 385.
 12. Jones 1953, p. 393.
 13. Gay 1988, p. 107.
 14. The otalaryngologist Wilhelm Fliess was two years Freud’s junior, and had a practice in Berlin. Through Josef Breuer, Freud met Fliess in Vienna in the autumn of 1887, when Fliess was pursuing studies and doing research there. The two met regularly over the course of several years. The last time they met was in August 1900. They corresponded between 1887 and 1904. With Fliess, Freud came to analyze and understand the most important conflicts in both his professional and intimate life. In Freud’s letters to Fliess, one can study the development of the psychoanalytic theory.
 15. Freud writes: “Dagegen hat es mich gedrängt, mit der Bearbeitung des Traumes zu beginnen, wo ich mich so sicher fühle und es auch nach Deinem Urteil darf.” Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (ed.), *Sigmund Freud Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*, S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1986. Freud to Fliess, May 16, 1897 (letter 127), p. 258. English translation in Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (ed.), *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985, p. 243. From now onward, references to Freud’s letter to Fliess will be abbreviated SFB (German) and CL (English translation). See also Jones 1953, p. 390.
 16. Jones has pointed out that the first evidence in print of Freud’s great interest in dreams was a long footnote in his first case study (that of Emmy von N), the material for which derives from May, 1889. The case study was written in 1894, and Jones’ view is that the footnote was added during the spring of 1895 at the latest. Jones 1953, p. 386.
 17. “Ich bin tief im Traumbuch, schreibe es fliessend und freue mich in Gedanken an all das Schütteln des Kopfes über die Indiskretion und Vermessenheiten, die es enthält.” Freud to Fliess, February 9, 1898 (letter 157), SFB: 325, CL: 298.
 18. GW II–III, p. ix, and Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (henceforth abbreviated as SE), Volume IV and V. Hogarth Press, London, 1953, p. xxv.

19. "und in einzelnen Stücken schlecht, d.h. leblos dargestellt." Freud to Fliess, May 1, 1898 (letter 166), SFB: 341, CL: 312.
20. "Ich arbeite in einem grossen, ruhigen Partererraum mit Bergaussicht an der Vervollständigung der Traumarbeit." Freud to Fliess, August 1, 1899 (letter 208) SFB: 399, CL: 363.
21. Freud to Fliess, August 20, 1899 (letter 210) SFB: 402, CL: 367.
22. Freud writes: "Ich bin fertig, d.h. alles Manuskript ist abgesendet." Freud to Fliess (letter 213), SFB 406 CL: 370. Ernest Jones also concludes that Freud worked directly with *The Interpretation of Dreams* for a period of approximately two years. Jones 1953, p. 391.
23. Freud to Fliess, September 21, 1899 (letter 215), SFB: 410, CL: 374.
24. "Hier enthüllte sich am 24. Juli 1895 dem Dr. Sigm Freud das Geheimnis des Traumes." Freud to Fliess, June 12, 1900 (letter 48), SFB: 458, CL: 417. Freud's dream came true; the marble tablet was inaugurated on May 6, 1977.
25. In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess just a few weeks after the death of Jakob Freud, Freud writes: "Auf irgendeinem der dunkeln Wege hinter dem offiziellen Bewusstsein hat mich der Tod des Alten sehr ergriffen. Ich hatte ihn sehr geschätzt, sehr genau verstanden, und er hatte viel in meinem Leben gemacht, mit der ihm eigenen Mischung von tiefer Weisheit und phantastisch leichtem Sinn. Er war lange ausgelebt, als er starb, aber im Innern ist wohl alles Frühere bei diesem Anlass aufgewacht. Ich habe nun ein recht entwurzelttes Gefühl." [By one of those dark pathways behind the official consciousness the old man's death has affected me deeply. I valued him highly, understood him very well, and with his peculiar mixture of deep wisdom and fantastic light-heartedness he had a significant effect on my life. By the time he died, his life had long been over, but in my inner self the whole past has been awakened by this event. I now feel quite uprooted.] Freud to Fliess, November 2, 1896 (letter 109), SFB: 212f, CL: 202.
26. "Für mich hat dieses Buch nämlich noch eine andere subjektive Bedeutung, die ich erst nach seiner Beendigung verstehen konnte. Es erwies sich mir als ein Stück meiner Selbstanalyse, als meine Reaktion auf den Tod meines Vaters, also auf das bedeutsamste Ereignis, den einschneidendsten Verlust im Leben eines Mannes." [For this book has a further subjective significance for me personally – a significance which I only grasped after I had completed it. It was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death – that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life.] Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (1900) GW II/III. sid x. The preface to the second edition was written in 1908. See also Gay 1988, p. 89.
27. Jones 1953, p. 384.
28. According to Kiell, Freud did not take the quote from Virgil, but from Fer-

- dinand Lassalle's *Der italienische Krieg und die Aufgabe Preussens*. Kiell 1988, p. 187.
29. According to Gay, Freud's own interpretation of the motto was "straight-forward enough: the line tersely summarizes his fundamental thesis that wishes 'rejected by the higher mental authorities', resort to 'the mental underworld', (the unconscious)' to secure their aim." Gay 1988, p. 105.
 30. Jones 1953, pp. 389–390.
 31. Jones 1953, p. 395.
 32. Jones' view must be considered part of the mythology surrounding Freud, in which Jones portrays his idealized master as a hero of science, ignored by most of his contemporary colleagues. Kiell has shown that 21 reviews were published between 1899 and 1902. Some were sharply negative and critical, while others were more appreciative. Kiell 1988, p. 89.
 33. Jones 1953, p. 395. In this context, scientific can be equated with medical.
 34. Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Basic Books, New York, 1970, p. 783, quotes Bry and Rifkin, who write: "*The Interpretation of Dreams* was initially reviewed in at least eleven general magazines and professional journals, including seven in the fields of philosophy and theology, psychology, neuropsychiatry, psychic research and criminal anthropology. The reviews are individualized presentations. . . and together amount to more than 7500 words. . . Furthermore, the editors of international annual bibliographies in psychology and philosophy selected Freud's books on dreams for inclusion." Ilse Bry & Alfred H Rifkin "Freud and the History of Ideas: Primary Sources 1886–1910", *Psychoanalytic Education*, Grune & Stratton, London/New York, 1962, pp. 6–36.
 35. GW XIV, p. 74. Concerning the fact that the book was initially and primarily reviewed in non-medical journals, Kiell points out that the explanation for this was also that the subject was not considered suitable for medical journals. Kiell 1988, p. 89.
 36. "Sonst wenig Neues. Eine einzige Kritik des Buches in der 'Gegenwart', als Kritik inhaltslos, als Referat mangelhaft, aus meinen eigenen Brocken schlecht zusammengekittet; wegen des einzigen Wortes 'epochal' will ich alles verziehen haben. Das Benehmen der Leute in Wien sonst sehr ablehnend; ich glaube nicht, dass ich hier eine öffentliche Besprechung durchsetzen werde. Wir sind doch schrecklich weit voraus." Freud to Fliess, December 21, 1899 (letter 229), SFB: 430, CL: 392.
 37. Burckhardt's review was published January 6 and 13, 1900.
 38. "Das neue Jahrhundert, von dem uns am interessantesten sein dürfte, dass es unsere Todesdaten in sich schliesst, hat mir nichts gebracht als ein blödes Referat in der 'Zeit' von dem ehemaligen Burgtheaterdirektor Bur[ckhard[t] (mit unserem alten Jacob ja nicht zu verwechseln). Es ist wenig schmeichelhaft, ungemein verständnislos und — was das Ärgste daran — in

- nächster Nummer fortzusetzen . . . Auf Anerkennung zu Lebzeiten wenigstens rechne ich nicht. Möge es Dir besser zugehen!" Freud to Fliess, January 8, 1900 (letter 232), SFB: 433 CL: 394.
39. Kiell 1988, p. 99.
 40. Kiell claims that the insight perceived by Freud probably derived from the fact that David regarded "childhood sexuality as a source of dreams". Furthermore, Kiell comments that while Burckhardt unsuccessfully tried to apply Freud's interpretations to his own dreams, David confirmed that long slumbering, hidden or repressed childhood experiences actually did return in the dreams of the adult, much later. Kiell 1988, p. 114
 41. "Von der Aussenwelt war ich so gut wie abgeschnitten; kein Blättchen rauschte, um zu verraten, dass die Traumdeutung irgendwem das Gemüt bewegt. Erst gestern überraschte mich ein recht liebenswürdiger Aufsatz im Feuilleton einer Tageszeitung 'Wiener Fremdenblatt.'" Freud to Fliess, March 11, 1900 (letter 239) SFB: 441, CL: 402-403. Kiell discusses both Freud's experience of being isolated from the outside world, and his perception that his dream-book was met with silence or negative criticism, despite the evidence to the contrary. Kiell's idea is that Freud's perceptions are in accordance with his feeling of rejection, and that his feeling of isolation rather was evoked by a desire for "a martyrdom in which he could be triumphant while suffering". Kiell 1988, p. 120.
 42. Ludwig Karella, who had a doctorate but was not a physician, wrote several books, among them *Die Naturgeschichte in den Dichtung Grillparzer*, published in 1907, and *Die Welt im Film* (1926).
 43. "Dummes Referat über Traum in der Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung [vom] 12. Oktober." Freud to Fliess, October 14, 1900 (letter 255), SFB: 469, CL: 427. In conjunction with Ludwig Karella's review, Kiell discusses the great divergence between different commentators of Freud regarding the content of the reviews of Freud's books. The historian Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson agrees with Freud, and also finds Karella's review to mostly consist of quotes. In contrast, Decker writes that Karella acclaims Freud, among other things for the many and poignant examples of condensation and displacement that he has collected, which are conscientiously explained and illustrated by Karella. Kiell claims that these differences of opinion reflect a problem that both historians and psychoanalysts confront when they attempt to reconstruct the history of psychoanalysis. Is there *one* truth? Kiell 1988, p. 124.
 44. Ellenberger 1970, pp. 783.
 45. Wilhelm Weygandt was Professor of Psychiatry, first in Würzburg, and later in Hamburg.
 46. According to Kiell 1988, p. 146, Weygandt's review can be regarded as rep-

- representative of the criticism directed at Freud from his colleagues in the medical profession.
47. The review was published in two parts, on January 29 and 30, 1902. Ellenberger 1970, p. 596.
 48. Kiell 1988, p. 165.
 49. "Fünftens will ich alles vermeiden, was einer Reklame ähnlich sieht. Ich weiss, was ich mache, ist der Mehrzahl widerwärtig. Solange ich völlig korrekt bleibe, sind die Herren Gegner unsicher, erst wenn ich dasselbe tue wie sie selbst, werden sie sich sicher fühlen, dass ich nichts Besseres mache als sie. [...] So meine ich denn, es sei am geratensten, die Absage der Rundschau als Zeichen der öffentlichen Stimmung, das nicht wegzuleugnen ist, ruhig hinzunehmen." Freud to Fliess, April 4, 1900 (letter 241), SFB: 447, CL: 408. See also Kiell 1988, p. 167.
 50. Clark 1980, p.183.
 51. *The Interpretation of Dreams* is a difficult book to transfer to other languages. It contains several passages that are almost impossible to translate, among others analyses of dreams that consist of lexical bridges and words with double meanings, which require that the translator retains all the nuances of the original in order to convey the subtleties of the interpretation. Ellenberger goes so far as to say that many nuances are lost even in the best translations. Ellenberger 1970, p. 450.
 52. The dream about Irma is the first more complete dream analysis published by Freud. Jones reports a previously published, less comprehensive dream analysis, in which Freud discusses a dream of Rudi Kaufmann, who was the nephew of Josef Breuer's wife. Freud underlines the analogy between wish fulfilment in dreams, and a so-called dream psychosis. Jones 1953, p. 388. The year before, Freud had written to Breuer that he could interpret dreams.
 53. "Ausgedehnte weissgraue Schorfe." GW II/III: 112, SE:107.
 54. "Sie hat eine Dämpfung links unten." GW II/III: 112, SE IV/V: 107.
 55. "Kein Zweifel, es ist eine Infektion, aber es macht nichts; es wird noch Dysenterie hinzukommen und das Gift sich ausscheiden ..." GW II/III: 112, SE: 107.
 56. "Gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit". Sigmund Freud, "Ratschläge für den Arzt bei der psychoanalytischen Behandlung" GW VIII: 377.
 57. GW II/III: 126. SE IV/V: 121.
 58. GW II/III: 556, SE IV/V: 551. Finally, Freud points out that even wishes without connection to the day preceding the dream can appear in dreams, even if this is unusual.
 59. GW II/III: 564, SE IV/V: 558.
 60. GW II/III: 327, SE IV/V: 322.
 61. GW II/III: 442, SE IV/V: 437.
 62. GW II/III: 552, SE IV/V: 546.

63. GW II/III: 554, SE IV/V: 549.
64. GW II/III: 301, SE IV/V: 296.
65. GW II/III: 224, SE IV/V: 218.
66. "Traumverschiebung und Traumverdichtung sind die beiden Werkmeister, deren Tätigkeit wir die Gestaltung des Traumes hauptsächlich zuschreiben dürfen." GW II/III: 313, SE IV/V: 308.
67. GW II/III: 510, SE IV/V: 506.
68. GW II/III: 166, SE IV/V: 160.
69. GW II/III: 471, SE IV/V: 468.
70. GW II/III: 250, SE IV/V: 245.
71. GW II/III: 358, SE IV/V: 353.
72. GW II/III: 362, SE IV/V: 357.
73. For example, Freud mentions Paul Federn who believes that dreams of flying are dreams of erection. GW II/III: 399, SE IV/V: 394.
74. GW II/III: 607, SE IV/V: 603.
75. GW II/III: 540, SE IV/V: 535.
76. GW II/III: 537, SE IV/V: 532.
77. Ellenberger 1970, p. 452.
78. He moved there in the autumn of 1891, and stayed there until the Nazis forced him to leave his home country in the summer of 1938.
79. Jones 1953, pp. 396.
80. GW II/III: vii. SE IV/V: xiii.
81. Ellenberger 1970, p. 450.
82. GW II/III: 519, SE IV/V: 514.
83. Peter Gay comments on Freud's style, noting that his reasoning moves forward with the aid of the dream-examples Freud provides, and that Freud skillfully anticipates objections, disarming his critics. Gay 1988, p. 106. One must also bear in mind that, prior to their publication, Freud was aware of many reasons why his books might not be well received.
84. Freud to Fleiss, August 6, 1899 (letter 209) SFB: 400, CL: 365.
85. GW II/III: 575, SE IV/V: 572.
86. GW XVII: 94.
87. This is clear when one considers the primary data, that is Strindberg's own preliminary versions and notes. These are reproduced, with commentary, in Gunnar Ollén, "Tillkomst och mottagande" in *August Strindberg Samlade Verk* (SV), *Nationalupplaga 46, Ett drömspel*, Norstedts, Stockholm, 1988, pp. 125–160, and compiled in Barbro Ståhle Sjönell, *Katalog över "Gröna säcken"*. *Strindbergs efterlämnade papper i Kungliga Biblioteket, SgNM 1–9*. Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm, 1991 (henceforth abbreviated as BSS). If one consults the catalogue of the so-called "Green sack", documented by Ståhle Sjönell, one finds, among other things – here I present only a few aspects, but they can serve as forerunners to the subsequent discussion – that the "Dream-

play” and “Indra’s daughter” take up four pages (BSS:84–87). Among the preserved notes and preliminary versions one finds the name “Dream-play” but also “The Growing Castle”. Indra’s daughter is mentioned, and also “An Exposition for the Dream-play”. One reference concerns a note that treats “Time and Space”. In that note, one finds the following: “Time can only be defined by means of before or after; ‘now’ is impossible to place; possibly, ‘now’ can be considered the border between or the synthesis of the past and the future. [...] Space can only be defined through activity, movement. When one sits still for a long time, one loses the perception of space. When one moves, one becomes aware of both time and space. [...] In dreams, neither time nor space exist. [...] Souls are not in space = Ubiquité.” (BSS: 85). Under the heading “Indra’s daughter”, one finds notes that clarify that Agnes and Indra’s daughter are one and the same. A note about the story in the play reads: “Agnes enters as a Schoolgirl; speaks out from and up at Indra’s daughter who is represented by a red thunder cloud.” Further on in the note, the text reads: “Now she has to give throughout life: /School /The Girl and the Suitors/ Marriage and the Kitchen/ Children and the Nursery/ The Widow and Loneliness/ The End and Death.” (BSS: 87). The title “Indra’s daughter” is also seen connected to the alternative title “The Seasons”. The first act is described as follows: “Agnes’ impression of earth. The air is heavy from breathing, smells etc., the earth of blood and corpses, battlefields, cemeteries.” (BSS: 87). Another note suggests that Strindberg considered the fifth act “The Widow – Loneliness” as a reflecting mirror-image, a “Revue of Life. All the friends from youth pass by.” Neither the black and white reproductions in Ollén’s work, nor the listings in the catalogue, convey how precisely, professionally, knowledgeably and conscientiously Strindberg worked as clearly as studying the original documents; this has become apparent from archival research and discussions within the framework of the Dream-Playing project.

88. In my presentation of the origination and the reception I will chiefly refer to Gunnar Ollén 1988. Strindberg’s collected works (SV) are accessible at litteraturbanken.se. Here, the English translation used is by Michael Robinson in August Strindberg, *Miss Julie and Other Plays*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998 (abbreviated henceforth as R). I have also consulted some other sources regarding the origination and reception: Gunnar Brandell, *Nordiskt drama – studier och belysningar*, Svenska litteratursällskapet, Uppsala, 1993; John Landquist in the anthology *John Landquist om Strindberg, personen och diktaren*, Legenda, Stockholm, 1984; Martin Lamm, *Strindbergs dramer II*, Bonniers, Stockholm, 1926.
89. The diary entries are from August Strindberg, Karin Petherick (ed.) and Stockenström, Göran (ed.), *Samlade Verk. Nationalupplaga. 59:1. Ockulta dag-*

- boken* (1). *Etablerad text*, Norstedts, Stockholm, 2012, p. 49 and 59. (Henceforth abbreviated as SV 59:1, and pages for quotes.)
90. SV 59:1, p. 65.
91. This is the question that has guided me, and so far I have not discovered any other researcher who has answered it as carefully as I attempt to do. There is a plentiful literature regarding Strindberg, as one can see in Michael Robinson (ed.), *An International Annotated Bibliography of Strindberg Studies 1870–2005* (4 volumes), Modern Humanities Research Association, London, 2008.
92. Quotes from *A Dream Play* are from litteraturbanken.se, see *August Strindberg Samlade Verk* (SV), *Nationalupplaga 46, Ett drömspel*, with English translations by Michael Robinson from August Strindberg, *Miss Julie and Other Plays*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, references to which will henceforth appear in parentheses in the main text, as SV and R, respectively.
93. The short quotes that follow are all from the “Author’s Note”.
94. I will return to this question in the final comparative discussion, with references to among others Evert Sprinchorn, *Strindberg as Dramatist*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1982.
95. August Strindberg, and Torsten Eklund (ed.) *Brev 15. April 1904–April 1907*, Strindbergsällskapets skrifter, Bonniers, Stockholm, 1976, p. 361. One finds the phrase in a letter from April 17, 1907, from Strindberg to the translator Schering. In the letter, Strindberg expresses his nervousness and anxiety over the premiere. The diary entry is from SV 59:1, p. 485.
96. See SV 59:1. The note is from April 16, 1907, p. 485. See also August Strindberg and Rune Helleday (ed.), *Samlade Verk* (SV), *Nationalupplaga 47, Svarta fanor*, Norstedts, Stockholm, 1995, p. 322.
97. *Svarta fanor* came out in 1907, but Strindberg had completed it in 1904. This suggests that the view he proposes in this work was the fruit of a long period of origination, a similarity to *A Dream Play*. Regarding the origination of *A Dream Play*, see SV 46, pp. 125–160, chiefly p. 149 and p. 158. In addition it is worth mentioning Freddie Rokem’s claim that a letter Strindberg wrote to Siri von Essen June 20, 1876, about a dream he had dreamt, can be read “as an *ur*-version of *A Dream Play*”. See Freddie Rokem, *Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2010, pp. 89, 104–109, and August Strindberg, *Brev. 1. 1858–1876*, Albert Bonniers förlag, Stockholm 1948, pp. 360–363. This no doubt feeds into the context of Freud and his own dreams as self-analysis, and also demonstrates how long and complex Strindberg’s work processes could in fact be.
98. Lamm 1926, p. 315.
99. Brandell 1993, p.37. Brandell points out that the reality of the drama can be improbable, as in *A Dream Play*; it does not have to be realistic. If one considers the Greek drama from antiquity, it always employs the reality of

the drama, even when the play also utilizes source material from mythology (1993, p. 37). We accept what are told about King Oedipus as true; the effect of the drama depends on this. In the case of Oedipus, Brandell mentions that, for a major part of the story, he tries to “consider the real as unreal”, which reflects how he has been mistaken/ lied about the reality of the drama. Concerning *A Dream Play*, Strindberg clearly states the framework for the reality of the drama. In other works by Strindberg that can be regarded as “dream-plays”, the reality of the drama is less clearly explicated. This is the case for instance concerning *The Dance of Death* and *The Ghost Sonata*, according to Brandell 1993, p.72.

100. Just how important this thought is for Strindberg is apparent in an expanded version of the “Author’s Note”, first published in 1965. See Ollén, 1988, pp. 157–158, and the literature he refers to there. For a further discussion of the theme of life-as-a-dream, see Egil Törnqvist’s chapter about *A Dream Play* in *Strindbergian Drama: Themes and Structure*, Svenska Litteratursällskapet skrifter, vol. 37, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm & Humanities Press, Atalantic Highlands, N.J., USA, 1982, pp. 147–162, and Harry G. Carlson’s chapter “Ett drömspel: Den stora livsdrömmen och mayas slöja”, in his *Strindberg och myterna*, Författarförlaget, Stockholm, 1979, pp. 181–251.
101. Lamm 1926, p. 316.
102. Lamm 1926, p. 326. Regarding the use of symbols in the context of a drama, a short reference to Brandell is useful. In the use of symbols – his discussion mainly concerns Ibsen but can also be applied to Strindberg, not least *A Dream Play* – Brandell is of the opinion that there can arise a problem reminiscent of what can happen in the framework of what he calls a Freudian analysis of dreams: “no matter how many individual symbols one gathers together, one cannot convince the sceptic that it really is the author (patient) who is the creative force, and not perchance his interpreter (analyst)”, Brandell, 1993, p. 24. We will never know what the growing castle meant to Strindberg; nonetheless, Landquist’s interpretation seems to be in line with the philosophy of life expressed by Strindberg.
103. Lamm 1926, p. 325.
104. Lamm 1926, p. 326.
105. Lamm 1926, p. 327.
106. Lamm 1926, p. 327.
107. Lamm 1926, p. 329.
108. Johan Cullberg, *Skaparkriser: Strindbergs inferno och Dagermans*, Natur och Kultur, Stockholm, 1992, p. 89.
109. August Strindberg, in Gunnar Ollén (ed.), *Samlade Verk. Nationalupplaga. 65. En blå bok avlämnad till vederbörande och utgörande kommentar till “Svarta fanor”*, Norstedts, Stockholm, 1997, pp. 180–181.

110. See Ollén, 1988, pp. 157–158, and the literature he refers to. A deeper analysis of the meaning of the musical terminology for Strindberg can be found in Erik Höök, “Med musiken som förebild: Några reflektioner kring musiktermernas betydelse i Öppna brev till Intima teatern”, 20 x *Strindberg: Vänbok till Lars Dahlbäck*, Margareta Brundin et al. (ed.), Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis 48, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 2003, pp. 217–224.
111. Brandell 1993, p. 73.
112. Here one can mention anecdotally that the philologist Jacob Bernays, the uncle of Freud’s wife, had written an extensive study on the concept of catharsis.
113. Brandell 1993, pp. 62–63.
114. Brandell 1993, p. 63.
115. Brandell 1993, p. 73.
116. Brandell 1993, p. 74.
117. Letter to Axel Lundegård November 12, 1887. The quote above comes in the following passage in the letter: “I feel as if I am sleep-walking, as though life and poetic fiction were intermixed. I don’t know if The Father is a poetic fiction or if my life has been that; but it seems to me as though this will be revealed to me any moment soon, and then I will collapse either in guilt-ridden madness or in suicide. Due to my poetic work my life has a shadow-life; I no longer feel that I walk on the earth, but rather hover weightless in an atmosphere made up of not air but darkness. If light falls into this darkness I will tumble down, crushed!” See August Strindberg, *Brev 6. Augusti 1886–januari 1888*, p. 298. See also Brandell, 1993, p. 74 (here the quote has been rewritten).
118. Sven Stolpe, *Svenska folkets litteraturhistoria 6: August Strindberg*, Askild & Kärnekull, Stockholm 1978, p. 288.
119. The note is recounted, albeit somewhat rewritten, in Stolpe 1978. In SV 59: 1, there is a comment added by Strindberg. It concerns the word “dream-image”. Strindberg has added: “Because my Dream-play is an image of life.” From Ollén, 1988, pp. 138–139, it is clear that Strindberg had been familiar with Indian religion since the 1870s, and in Carlson, 1979, there is an expanded discussion of Indian and other mythological influences in *A Dream Play*.
120. Stolpe 1978, p. 288.
121. Stolpe 1978, p. 282.
122. Stolpe 1978, p. 287.
123. In addition to *A Dream Play*, the dramas *Kronbruden* and *Svanevit* were included in the volume of dramas published in 1902.
124. The excerpts from the reviews in the following can be found at litteraturbanken.se: SV 46, pp. 150–160.

125. Sverker Ek, "Brytningstid", *Ny svensk teaterhistoria: 1900-talets teater*, band 3, principal editor Tomas Forser, Gidlunds förlag, Hedemora, 2007, p. 18.
126. August Strindberg, *Brev 15. April 1904–april 1907*, p. 361.
127. Letter to Emil Schering from June 14, 1902, August Strindberg, *Brev 14. 1901-mars 1904*, p. 192.
128. August Strindberg, *Brev 14. 1901–mars 1904*, p. 192.
129. Strindberg had translated the play himself, probably as early as 1902, under the title of "Réverie". In this translation there is a tendency towards austerity. The content is somewhat different; for example, the passages that refer to the Bible have been removed (Christ's failure on earth and the apostle Peter, who in the original text supposedly "sank like a stone" when he tried to walk on water). Furthermore, some aspects that approach repetition were eliminated, as well as some of the more meditative passages (for example the exposition about the ear-drum). There is also an addition. It concerns the Lawyer's complaint to the Daughter, when he tells her of the unpleasant atmosphere that surrounds his professional activities. Strindberg has added an enumeration of a number of – coarse – accusations hurled at the other when married couples want to divorce: "vol, viol, inceste, essai de muertre, voies de fait..." (theft, rape, incest, attempted murder, assault...). SV 46: 150-160.
130. Bark 1981, p. 83.
131. Ek 2007, p. 16.
132. SV 59:1. p. 483.
133. SV 59:1, p. 483.
134. SV 59:1. p. 485.
135. August Strindberg, *Brev 15. April 1904–april 1907*, pp. 361-362.
136. SV 59:1, p. 485.
137. SV 59:1, p. 485.
138. August Strindberg, *Brev 15. April 1904–april 1907*, p. 363.
139. August Strindberg, *Brev 15. April 1904–april 1907*, p. 363.
140. SV 59:1, p. 487
141. SV 46, p. 160.
142. Johan Nordling, "Ett drömspel på Svenska Teatern", *Idun*, 20:17, April 25, 1907, p. 207.
143. Carl G. Laurin, "Från Stockholms teatrar" in *Ord och Bild*, 1907, 16th year of publication, pp. 290-300. Strindberg's *A Dream Play* is treated on pp. 299-300.
144. August Strindberg, *Brev 15. April 1904–april 1907*, p. 366.
145. There are many signs that Strindberg, during the work with *A Dream Play*, also dreamt of a reunion with Harriet Bosse in real life as well. But that is another story, and it ended with a definite break about a year later, when Bosse with somewhat wobbly clarity informs Strindberg that she belongs to

- another man. For those interested, this course of events is treated in *BLM* 1963, no 7. *BLM* chose to include a section on Strindberg as a response to the publication of parts of *The Occult Diary* in the autumn of 1963.
146. SV 46, p. 160. Gunnar Ollén, *Strindbergs dramatik*, Sveriges radio, Stockholm, 1982, pp. 452–453. The first edition was published in 1948. Ollén’s comments are from the perspective of comparative literature, and the view that technology and advances in technology are required to do the play justice stands for him.
147. Ollén 1982, p. 451.
148. Ollén 1982, p. 451.
149. Ollén 1982, p. 451. Ollén also points out that many directors have chosen to “cut out the religious [parts]”.
150. See also Ollén 1988, p. 152.
151. Brandell 1993, p. 78. Many researchers have interpreted the various trinities in the play, two stringent examples are Törnqvist, 1982, and Carlson, 1979.
152. For psychoanalytic interpretations of Strindberg’s dramatic works, see Robinson 2008.
153. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 153. The text about *A Dream Play* was published for the first time in *Modern Drama* 5, no. 3, 1962.
154. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 155.
155. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 156.
156. Sprinchorn 1982, pp. 155–156.
157. No Strindberg researcher has ever, to my knowledge, pointed out or been able to show that August Strindberg read or ever referred to reading Sigmund Freud. Sprinchorn is thus aware of this, see Sprinchorn, 1982, p. 157.
158. We know that Freud very seldom referred to August Strindberg. One of the few times he did was when he wrote about mistakes in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904). In this work, Freud claims that no one has understood parapraxis better than the Swedish dramatist and author.
159. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 169.
160. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 169.
161. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 158.
162. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 158.
163. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 168.
164. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 166.
165. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 174.
166. This does not mean that there are no allusions to sexuality in the drama, or that it is not possible to sensitively and carefully discuss them, or perceive that they have been given a certain scope in the drama.
167. Sprinchorn 1982, p. 173.
168. Sprinchorn, 1982, p. 175.
169. GW II/III: 301, SE IV/V: 296.

170. GW II/III: 224, SE IV/V: 218.

171. “Traumverschiebung und Traumverdichtung sind die beiden Werkmeister, deren Tätigkeit wir die Gestaltung des Traumes hauptsächlich zuschreiben dürfen.” GW II/III: 313, SE IV/V: 308.

172. August Strindberg, *Brev. 6. Augusti 1886–januari 1888*, p. 298. See also Brandell 1993, p. 74 (here the quote has been rewritten).

Reimagining the Research Archive

A Dialogue

ASTRID VON ROSEN (EDITOR AND CONTRIBUTOR), ALF BJÖRNBERG, PER MAGNUS JOHANSSON, VIVEKA KJELLMER, MATS NILSSON, YLVA SOMMERLAND (CONTRIBUTORS)

The following text is a dialogic way of temporarily bringing the Dream-Playing project to a close, as well as to prepare the ground for further interdisciplinary research and cross-border collaborations. It is an attempt to offer something that describes at least some aspects of the participants' experiences, expressed in their own words. What is presented here is inspired by roundtable discussions, and consists of an edited version of notes from our working process as well as the individual contributors' written statements in dialogue with me, in my role of editor and project leader. Two of the participants have also taken on the role of posing questions to me. By and large the discussion is structured around issues concerning creative and critical aspects of archival access and activation in relation to the entanglement of collaborative and individual scholarly endeavours. Towards the end of the text the questions and answers focus on the main results of the project.

ASTRID VON ROSEN: Alf, we have had quite a few discussions about how to track down and gain access to the non-digitized and – even in traditional archives – rather inaccessible traces of Stenhammar's music for *A Dream Play* and its appearance in the 1918 Düsseldorf performances. At times it has felt as if we were moving in the margins or beyond them, digging out fragments of dubious value for the project. Also, it is

as if archivists and the structures they represent can take on the role of mythological dragons guarding a treasure, or Strindbergian Portresses not allowing anyone onto the stage. You have to pass a test and be found worthy. What do you think is at stake here in terms of knowledge production, digitization and democracy? What does it take to be allowed onto the archival stage (or several platforms) and, once there, to be able to conduct some sort of performance? How can we understand the relation between historical methodologies in transformation and critical thinking in ways that enable students to conduct substantial and productive archival research?

ALF BJÖRNBERG: I believe we must realize that we'll probably never reach the point where all relevant archival materials have been digitized and made accessible together with the requisite metadata – because we don't know what future researchers will consider relevant. In practice “all relevant archival materials” means “all archival materials”. A danger inherent in the digitization of archives is that the availability of archival material in easily accessible digital formats may have a constraining effect on the research questions asked, with the result that questions which require a strenuous search through non-digitized and often insufficiently catalogued archives will tend to be discarded. Thus, I find it important to impart to students an understanding that there may well be research questions worth asking that cannot be answered solely with the help of digitized material. There is a measure of truth to the proverbial caution of archivists and librarians about giving researchers access to materials; however, in my experience, with careful preparation, enabling the researcher to pose relevant questions, the custodians of memory institutions may well prove generously helpful.

With regard to the Düsseldorf production of *A Dream Play*, it appears certain that while preparing his Stenhammar biography, Bo Wallner was unaware of the existence of the archival material which I found in the TMA. In all probability, we will never know on what grounds he draws his conclusion that Stenhammar's music was not used in the Schauspielhaus production of the play. However, even if Wallner had known about this archive and consulted its materials, I suspect it would not have made much of a difference for his account, as his research questions appear to

have been focused on assessing the value of Stenhammar's music as an "independent composition", rather than its functioning in the multimedia context of a particular stage production.

AvR: A second question for you, Alf, concerns epistemological conditions in relation to the musical archive. In a workshop quite early in the process, you played some examples of Stenhammar's music – activated it – and all the scholars listened together, and we talked about it. What for a musicologist (I would assume) is a normal working process is not so for an art historian, an ethnologist and so forth. I still remember the powerful impression of time and space, and perhaps also a sort of contrived artiness the music seemed to create for me. This feeling is archived in my body (a collection that grows and changes every time I listen to the music), and it comes back when for example I work through a technical description and a visual sketch for Indra's daughter's entrance. The activation definitely does something to my explorative process and its results, but the focus on the music and its detailed exploration are presented in your text. So, if you agree with me that the activation of the music functioned well for the project, how can a methodology be devised that crosses borders between our different subject areas, without destroying the useful aspects of our differences? What traits do you see as worthy of developing?

AB: I believe that "activating" historical musical material by listening to the actual music whenever possible is a necessary and productive element of music-history research. In principle, a well-trained musicologist should be expected to be able to reconstruct mentally the sound of a particular piece of music from the information provided by the musical notation in the score, but this is a highly specialized skill which cannot be expected of a wider academic readership. However, what we listened to in the workshop was not Stenhammar's music as conceived by him for the staging of *A Dream Play*, but Rosenberg's concert-version arrangement, which, as I state in my chapter, is based on a rather extensive rearranging of Stenhammar's score in order to enable the music to function as a stand-alone composition. The lengthiest section where Rosenberg's version adheres strictly to Stenhammar's original score is the melodrama and interlude of the Prologue, where the recording I presented also has retained the

dialogue between Indra and his daughter. This section may thus be construed as a fairly “realistic” representation of how the “soundtrack” of an actual staging of the drama may have sounded, but the same cannot be said of the rest of Rosenberg’s arrangement.

Incidentally, in this context I find it highly significant that both Strindberg and Stenhammar refer to the concept of *symphony* in their comments on *A Dream Play*. It appears clear that their respective uses of this concept focus on different aspects. For Strindberg, the musically knowledgeable author, the symphony metaphor indicates the transfer to the domain of dramatic text of structural principles from the musical domain – multi-voiced polyphony and the use of repetition and varied repetition as a basic syntactic procedure. For Stenhammar, the musician, “symphonic” principles motivate his providing the music with a “recapitulation” structure; apparently for him this constitutes an attempt to counter-balance the disjointed character of the dramatic text by means of the long-term tonal – and, as it were, narrative – procedures of symphonic music. Of course, Rosenberg’s rearrangement renders the music even more “symphonic” in Stenhammar’s sense.

To return to your question: I have no very definite answers, but I believe it would be quite valuable to experiment with various forms of “activation”, perhaps with the help of digital multimedia technology – such as sonic reconstructions of parts of Stenhammar’s score by means of digital sound production and sequencing, visual animation sequences based on scenography sketches, etc. A full-scale reconstruction of the Düsseldorf staging including all its elements appears unrealistic for economic reasons, but it may well be worthwhile to attempt partial reconstructions.

AvR: Mats, allow me to start with a scene from the daily life at our workplace. When you and I meet in the corridors a dance battle is likely to break out; we use our bodies as communicative devices, crossing the border between theatrical (me) and social/participatory (you) dancing. In our collaborative text, this performance of different corporeal archives, embodying centuries of transmitted dance training and professional experience, became useful. However, corporeal practice and performance are not easily stored and preserved in traditional text-based collections, and the voices of dancers and dance communities tend to be silenced. So,

I would like to know more about how you, as a dance-ethnologist make use of your practice-based knowledge when exploring the dance archives, and more specifically in relation to the Strindberg materials? You brought several categories of multimedia, audio and visual materials – including film – into the project early in the process. Among the images you showed to our group were dancers in national costume performing outside museums around 1900. (In the political climate of 2015 these images become uncanny.) In due course we not only read Strindberg’s text from a dance perspective, but also exchanged images and films found on the internet, for example of waltzing in various contexts. To my mind, the employment of such fragments is a good example of what helps us reimagine the concept of a research archive as a device operating across borders, because we recognize different things in the items and texts, and unexpected questions can be posed and produce creative friction. What strategies would you suggest for better accessing social/participatory dance in relation to various productions of Strindberg’s dramas, across time and space?

MATS NILSSON: We know rather well which dances were fashionable in Strindberg’s days and among his friends. What I have learned is that he did at least dance the français. How he uses dance in his plays is interesting, as the Dream-Playing project also demonstrates. If the project continues in some form I think it could be fruitful from a comparative perspective to look more deeply into Strindberg’s dramatic texts, and into how different directors/choreographers/scenographers stage dancing. Through such an endeavour we would be able to explore traversals across time and space, as well as situated societal connections. The activity of reading a text, or exploring some other form of archived (in the broad sense of the term) materials, describing a dance, creates moving images in my mind. Exactly how I use these images is difficult to say. I probably scan the text and videos/films/pictures and compare them to my “embodied movement data base” to see – or somehow feel – if they are similar to anything I already know a little about. Concerning *A Dream Play*, as written text, I quickly realized that the waltz played an important part that was relevant for the time when the drama was conceived. However, a TV version of *A Dream Play* from 1980 that I explored – in a trans-time manner, to use Ylva Sommerland’s concept – at the beginning of the

working process made it obvious to me that dance and choreography took on a role in the performance that far exceeded what was manifestly written in the dramatic text. There were examples of modern couple dancing and of contemporary theatre art dancing. Continuities as well as differences between the early 1900s dramatic text and context and the 1980s interpretation trigger processes in my mind and body, and I think we can really access important dimensions in Strindberg's work if movement and corporeality are further activated and explored from our different dance perspectives.

YLVA SOMMERLAND: Astrid, what I find fascinating in your main contribution is the way you are able to activate the scenographic archival materials by way of finding a sort of translation code in alchemical imagery. If we think about the meaninglessness of everything pointed out in the drama, that there is somehow no point in trying to find answers in words, then you show other kinds of answers in Ström's work that lie behind the words of Strindberg's text. Clearly Ström is eager to follow Strindberg "in his dance". When reading the two texts examining dance, it becomes clear that a non-text, such as dance, is an important tool for enduring and understanding the world when words fail. Perhaps it could be explained as dance and music being able to lift the spirit and activate hope through the body when no explanations can be formulated in words and reason fails to bear the chaos and despair in the un-choreographed world of human suffering that existed at the time when Ström worked with *A Dream Play*. Could you elaborate on your thoughts about Ström's relation to the meaninglessness that is the main theme of *A Dream Play* and the hope that Indra's daughter mediates?

AvR: This question about a world falling apart, losing its foundations, and becoming meaningless brings to mind a brownish sketch by Ström, showing the small chamber inside the Lawyer's office. In this space the Daughter cannot endure the pains of family life, of being poor, of being socially degraded. This is psychologically interesting, but during the war, when the food shortages were acute, this scene, with all the talk about cabbage and fish, must have resonated strongly with the audience. In other sketches Ström tries out various choreographed positions (to be

understood as transformative movements) for the Daughter, the Lawyer, the chair and so forth. The wall can shimmer, dissolve, or become impermeable dirt in tandem with the actor's actions and words. My main impression, drawing on Landauer's essay and the reception of the 1918 performance, is that in general the Daughter was perceived as a syncretistic goddess (embodying several religious and philosophical thought systems), a humble visitor and a listener, sharing human suffering, as well as all sorts of shortcomings and stupidities. When she listens to the Billposter's story about the dipnet not being exactly the same shade of green as in his dreams, his ugly world and loneliness start to vibrate, shift and change. These scenographic-dancerly aspects are clearly expressed in Ström's sketches, showing that a precarious hope for change permeates everything on stage. The Daughter embodies a presence of the other that is fundamental in human life, and the Billposter experiences – and is capable of experiencing – that someone hears what he says and understands him. This is a miracle of sorts, small-scale and divine at the same time. The strong transformative character of the scenography in relation to the Daughter's presence (even if she is not manifestly depicted) signifies – I think – the possibility of change rather than destruction.

AvR: Viveka, when reading your contribution, I realize how immersed we all are in fashion, dress, clothes or whatever it is called. Fashion cannot be avoided, and I agree with you, and the scholars you quote that fashion is indeed critical. It is linked up with the social and political in ways that to a large extent remain under-researched, at least when it comes to the early stagings of *A Dream Play*. You are exploring sketches that essentially are imaginary ideas of a performance on stage. More specifically the sketches refer to an event meant to come alive in a complex exchange with an audience in Düsseldorf during the First World War. To my mind your exploration effectively brings in an interesting audience-related aspect, when you relate the sketches of actors in costume to the visual culture people had access to in manifold ways. The fashion culture you have explored seems to be border-crossing in an unstoppable way, and I was wondering if you could tell us more about how you have accessed the vast fashion context and its archives, in relation to better understanding the role of fashion in theatrical processes and events?

VIVEKA KJELLMER: Yes, we have seen how widespread the interest in fashion and style was in Europe at this time, how fashion images were circulated and readily accessible, and how clothes and hair styles stood out as significant aspects of social life. I find it interesting to see the impact fashion turns out to have on a social and broadly cultural level, how fashion both mirrors societal development and takes part in it, all the way onto the theatrical stage. Today's world is often described as dominated by images, and it is said that the ongoing visual flow from commercials and media affects our ways of living, as if this was unique for our time. My exploration presents, I think, a useful counter-example, by showing how strongly the visual cultures immersing people impacted on them one hundred years ago, even if the media were different. On a general level the exploration shows how deeply human mechanisms, such as pondering over how we look or if we can fit in socially, affect the everyday, regardless of what time we live in. Alison Matthews David calls the functioning of fashion *social camouflage*, which for individuals translates into following etiquette and dressing properly to fit in. The concept of social camouflage highlights precisely this: that being interested in fashion does not necessarily mean that one is superficial or dissolute – instead fashion consciousness fills basic functions concerning social belonging. Knut Ström's work with the costumes for *A Dream Play* clearly shows, as I see it, that he was very conscious of this.

AvR: This question concerns the concept of materiality, employed by you Viveka. In art history (and I belong to this field myself), there is a dogma saying that the scholar must always experience the art work *in situ*, which means experiencing it in a place where the object is physically present. The usefulness of such encounters depends of course on the questions posed to the materials and the explorative process. Simply being there is never enough. I am interested in the epistemological procedures for activating Ström's sketches and bringing out knowledge about his work in relation to the fashion culture, to mention two possible contexts to set in motion. What do you think about the digitized – high-resolution – materials that our reimagined research archive has employed, in relation to the *in-situ* imperative?

VK: Ideally of course it is always best to really stand in front of the item, to see and experience it *in situ*, in reality. The context matters for the holistic experience – an art work, for example, is encountered in its environment, perhaps surrounded by other artworks in an exhibition, or by a park if it is a sculpture. A fashion image is often encountered in a different type of context – perhaps accompanying an article in a magazine. The environment matters; how we experience and perceive the image or object is affected by its context. For example a fashion image is connected to, and bears traces or imprints of the fashion-related discourse where it is normally viewed. When we look at a fashion image, or an image *resembling* one, in another context, similar connotations are evoked. (They appear as a sort of ghosts.) When Knut Ström uses a visual language resembling that of fashion images, it is precisely this contextual connection and its associative traces that can create associations in a performative – co-creative – exchange with an (imagined) audience. Here I have found the notion of style useful in discussing what style, or image category, that has left associative, ghostly traces in the costume sketches.

Regarding the close reading of an image – that is, studying a work close up, really noticing the details and the material traces that can be read through this procedure – the so-called digital revolution has generated new possibilities. I reckon, however, that it is still essential as far as possible to study the materials in real life. This will provide a better feeling for colour effects, textural qualities such as weight, thickness, roughness and so forth – qualities which are difficult to represent digitally. At the same time a digital high-resolution image provides the opportunity to observe details which otherwise cannot be seen with the eye. A visit to a traditional museum where a work of art can be studied at a distance in soft lighting will provide one type of experience, while a close study of a high-resolution image will of course give far better access to details important for the scholarly exploration. I see digitized images not as replacing the originals, but as a valuable complement to studies *in situ*. From the perspective of availability, digitization could open up hitherto underexplored and inaccessible archives and collections as well as connect them in new ways.

AvR: Ylva, you and I have crossed geographic borders when visiting

conferences to present works in progress, and we have also spent some time discussing activities like jogging very slowly and concepts such as gravity over pasta in Rome or pizza in Warwick. I now realize that all of this feeds into and was important to what I think is the main result of your individual project: the development of the concept of *trans-time* and the way you tested it, using the archival materials connected to Ström's work in Düsseldorf as a point of departure: "*Trans-time* describes a time and space where the transgender body exists, but also a state of existence where time is not linear, similar to what Strindberg creates in *A Dream Play*, a theoretical landscape where time is not viewed as progression but rather as a transfer back and forth between different events in history." So, Ylva, I was wondering if you could describe the explorative – digital, physical, creative and intellectual – journey you conducted when accessing and activating (these two approaches being deliberately entangled in my question to you) the very diverse set of materials used to give the anonymous name of the actress Ellen Widmann a female, professional, ageing body, and last but not least a body that gives us hope.

YS: The body of Indra's daughter is carefully and closely led by the other characters through the (dream) world of the humans in *A Dream Play*. They let her perceive the world through their human eyes, but also through the touch of their hands, pushing her in the directions they decide are crucial for her to explore. In particular, by living she has to endure the physical experience of being human and being bound to gravity. She is taken care of, but at the same time she is held back, and is never given the opportunity to make use of her full capacity as a goddess. This captivity captured my interest. I see it as an important theme in Strindberg's text and as leaving loose ends that can connect to contemporary discussions on queer time and transgender which I have tried to merge into a discussion on *trans-time*. This physical closeness between the characters is also visible in Ström's sketches in Cologne and strongly affected the path my research took. I saw this repeated in photographs of the other actresses playing Indra's daughter, Irene Triesch and Inez Lundmark. I found these photographs in the digital archives of Göteborgs Stadsmuseum, made digitally available by the City of Gothenburg, Sweden, and in the Irene Triesch Collection, made digitally available by the Leo Baeck Institute

Center for Jewish history, situated in New York. Irene Triesch played Indra's daughter in Berlin in 1916, and Inez Lundmark did so the same year in Gothenburg. The earliest photograph I use in this text, showing Ellen Widmann in 1926, I found on a German website presenting the life and work of Alfons Paquet and research about him (www.alfonspaquet.de). Ellen Widmann had a long career, and although theatre was her main area of activity, she also had a film and TV-career, so there are many possibilities to study her body in motion and the sound of her voice. Through the few articles written about her, especially in her later years, I have also studied photographs of the older woman Ellen Widmann, though these findings are not explicitly present in my chapter. I follow the voices of female emancipation heard in the early years of the 20th century, letting them echo across time, blurring today's discussions on transgender issues. This convinced me of the fruitful creative force of playing with the thought that Strindberg might enjoy coming along and discussing these concerns with us across the intervening time, as we follow him in his writing where a future that now is here resonates in his words.

The link between Strindberg's text, Ström's pictures and the visual appearances of Ellen Widmann became the symbolism of the touching of hands that I use to visually explain the concept of trans-time. In my text the aim was to shed light on important issues linked to the experiences of Indra's daughter. In my imagination I put my hand in her hand, and followed her on a trans-time journey by looking into the eyes of the actress Ellen Widmann in order to try to understand the political climate that formed her acting career. This time she got to lead. I wandered with her back to Switzerland before her German career, when she was a little girl aspiring to be an actor. I followed her to Germany and then back to Switzerland again. I stumbled onto the words of Swiss actor Buddy Elias in the book *Anne Frank's Family: The Extraordinary Story of Where She Came From* by Mirjam Pressler. Buddy Elias was a cousin and the last surviving relative of Anne Frank, and a student of Widmann at the theatre school she started with her husband Adolf Manz. I found this source while looking for titles mentioning Widmann. Buddy Elias describes a meeting with Widmann where she laughed uncontrollably when he auditioned for her theatre school in Basel with a speech by Faust.

I have not yet followed Ellen Widmann physically to Switzerland.

However, she did come to Sweden. She had a part in the Swedish movie *Emil i Lönneberga*. I guess I have to stop following her for a while by publishing this article, but I feel that perhaps I should go to Switzerland. But it is not clear to me why and what it is I hope to find. Why can't I let go of her hand? Perhaps a breath of meaning, elevating my life, is transferred from her hand to mine. A meaning in being completely immersed in finding a way through history trying to touch a person who is long gone. It could be described as me wanting to be imprisoned to escape myself. I was thinking that perhaps fiction is that prison – where I have to close the door to be free!

AVR: Per Magnus, when exploring Strindberg's texts, it has been very helpful for you and others in the project to find his works accessible on the internet (litteraturbanken.se) in reliable versions. When Martin Lamm began exploring Strindberg's legacy, there were not many other scholars with access to the archives – a fact that he made use of in ways that are not always appreciated today. We, on the other hand, can in most cases quite easily look up a Strindberg text, which must be considered a great democratic effect of the digital paradigm. On the negative side, we find that the vast majority of the materials left behind by as well as concerning Strindberg's daughters or the traces of many stagings of his plays are not digitized, and hence are less likely to be chosen for studies. And perhaps most problematically, even if Strindberg's work is quite accessible, it is so immersed in layer after layer of master narratives and counter-narratives, that it sometimes seems difficult to find a way into the texts. When you were working with the analysis and reception of Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, we had a discussion about how to manage the vast amount of previous research. One rather common strategy, of course, is to pinpoint errors. You chose another strategy, and I was wondering if you could tell us more about your way of accessing, reading, listening to, and working with Strindberg?

PER MAGNUS JOHANSSON: Both Strindberg's drama *A Dream Play* and Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* are texts that demand time if one is seriously to engage with them. They presuppose that the scholar enters deeply into the text, rests in it, and is worked upon by it. This demands a slow and time-consuming reading process. It requires the scholar to read

repeatedly and with endurance. For the scholar this is a necessity; for the common reader it is obviously of importance, but perhaps one cannot call it a demand. It is about getting a firm grip on the text, not being careless, not letting go. If you are not going to make a commentary on previous commentaries and, for example, show that previous Strindberg scholars have one way or another reached insufficiently substantiated conclusions, and that you yourself have understood better or found a favourite among the predecessors, it is of course quite crucial that the results of your new research are thoroughly underpinned and accounted for. One must never forget that writing about Martin Lamm's commentary on *A Dream Play*, for example, and writing about August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* are two very different matters, as are writing about Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* or about Fritz Wittels' (Freud's first biographer, 1880–1950) comments on the *Interpretation of Dreams*.

The encounter with the original text sometimes requires being liberated from previous commentators. As a scholar in the history of ideas, I am aware of the shifting valuations of previous scholars' comments. Scholars work within differing historical conditions, and their ideals are not always in agreement, with the consequence that over time different aspects of the original text will be foregrounded. To me, it seems honourable and reasonable to reconstruct in a scholarly article what has been underlined and highlighted by previous Freud and Strindberg commentators. I have also done this in my text. But one must not forget that these two texts are key works in the production of both authors, and moreover, as I write, they have been regularly and thoroughly commented upon over the course of more than one hundred years, from one generation of scholars to the next, worldwide. And we have not yet seen the last scholar to comment on the *Interpretation of Dreams* and *A Dream Play*. However, in my text I wanted to show the close intertextuality – to use Julia Kristeva's expression – that exists between *A Dream Play* and the *Interpretation of Dreams*, and which I suddenly discovered when I joined the Dream-Playing project.

AvR: Per Magnus, your text about Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, and Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, builds on a considerable amount of scholarly activation of two vast archives: the Freud and Strindberg legacies and the sprawling commentaries they have spawned. Could you tell us why it can

be considered important to read and to reread Strindberg? Why do we do it, and how can this type of humanities activism – I mean, reading truly transformative and performative texts for hours and hours and not doing anything else – be considered useful and productive in society (including the university) today? What is so important about dreams and hope, and a drama about suffering?

PMJ: Strindberg's complex and composite text offers an opportunity to recognize what Freud called deep psychology – the complex human being replete with contradictions. In a world – the end of the nineteenth century – where the dialectic between repression and struggle against repression was set in motion, the question of the relationship between dream and reality, between psychic and material reality, between fantasy and reality, between escapism and the necessity of dreaming, takes on crucial significance. Among those who have highlighted how these paradoxes characterized the late nineteenth century are historian of ideas Michel Foucault (1926–84) and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–81). Not least Vienna was affected by these contradictions. The dream is the place that protects our inner life, our secret life; the dream makes it possible to separate word from action, and that distinction constitutes the foundation of culture, and separates nature from culture. The individual subject dreams instead of acting, and at the same time she or he dreams about acting. The most paradoxical, contradictory and conflicting things find their place in dreams. For contradictoriness to generate meaning, however, requires time, place, and a passionate interest in knowledge from the dreamer as well as the recipient, if I may refer to both reader and researcher as recipients. The time-consuming activity of reading, pondering one's reading and reading again is today endangered. Ideally everything should be fast, and it has to be efficient. To close-read *A Dream Play* is to reach another aspect of what it means to be human. Exploring how two undisputable points of reference in the Western history of ideas treat the dream from such different points of departure is fascinating and meaningful. And despite their different premises, Freud and Strindberg arrive at relatively similar conclusions. This is a significant intellectual experience. In a society turning toward superficiality and a university being drawn into this societal process, the type of reading I am arguing for constitutes a counter-force.

As Israeli author David Grossman (b. 1954) said in *Le Monde* on 19 August of this year: “To write and read is to take part in the other’s suffering.”

PMJ: Astrid, you have a background as a dancer and you have worked professionally as a dancer. In your family there is a prominent dancer – your aunt, Elsa-Marianne von Rosen – who in different ways has meant much to you. You have had a long and profound relationship with dance performances, with theatre and with opera. On the culture pages of daily papers, as well as in specialized periodicals, you have written reviews and other texts about art and dance. You have viewed, observed, experienced, read and written about cultural creations. You wrote a doctoral thesis in the field of art history and visual studies; it deals with director, scenographer and theatrical worker Knut Ström, in whom, as we know, you have been passionately interested, in relation to his (and Paul Henckel’s and the rest of the creative team’s) 1915–18 production of *A Dream Play*, which serves as an important framework for your contribution to the Dream-Playing project. The project you have led is interdisciplinary, and it is my understanding that you feel this has been very important to you and to the others in the project. My question to you is: how do you unite the various parts of your professional background – your practical experience of dance and your theoretical experience as a humanities scholar – in this project? Knut Ström, as I view him, was a person who also found himself at the intersection between on the one hand the practical and hands-on and on the other hand the theoretical – inspired by August Strindberg’s elaborate text *A Dream Play*. How do you understand your own relationship to Knut Ström? Can you say something about the dialectical movement between observing, experiencing, reading again and writing again – not least in relation to your own background? What is it about the interdisciplinary that you perceive to be so fruitful?

AvR: The creative and collaborative space for dream-playing that I have wished to establish for this project can, to use Peter W. Marx’s term, be understood as a *scena* – a material and physical space for collaborative and creative action.¹ This action is multifaceted, experimental, professional, and intellectual, and builds on a dynamic relationship between passionate devotion and pragmatic solutions. Theatre (in the broad sense

of the term) is intrinsically interdisciplinary, and in my experience, when it works, very different people with varying languages, bodies and skills can have useful and productive functions on the scena, even if the friction it necessarily generates is sometimes maddening. The complex process is held together because there is a common commitment to producing and performing a work (or whatever you may prefer to call it) on stage. People create, rehearse and repeat, test and perfect, over and over again, in a manner that is both disciplined and dreamlike. Slowly, a new creation, with care given to every detail, takes shape and then comes to life in the encounter with an audience, again and again. This is something I know about; the scena is a structure deeply traced into my body and mind. When writing scenography history as a humanities scholar I move and think with this knowledge. The scena is a good model for an interdisciplinary endeavour, and in our case the commitment to study Strindberg's *A Dream Play* as process, stage production and text has held the project together.

Early in my career as a dancer – employed at a theatre producing opera, operetta, musical, drama, classical ballet and contemporary dance – I chose to read for example Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* in relation to my performing as a dancer in them. What I did not know was that I read as a practitioner, a dancer, in an embodied, spatial, choreographed, visual-multisensorial way, when wanting to grasp what these dramas were about, and how they could take shape on stage. One has to remember that the theatre, through a complex mutual exchange (performer, artistic techniques, audience), has the capacity to consciously create what can be called the performer's inner light. Also spaces, walls, chairs, and so forth can be considered actors, or active and expressive participants in the performance. (Even boring or ugly features play a part.) It is here, through the experience of non-text-based practice, that Knut Ström's work with and interpretation of Strindberg's *A Dream Play* comes to life. I interpret Ström's interpretation, and try to provide good arguments for claiming that he understood the transformative qualities in the drama as aspects of alchemical transmutation, and used alchemical imagery and modernist dance as sources of inspiration.

I think, for me at least, that the creative and practical process on the scena, and the explorative endeavours of a humanities scholar and archi-

val researcher are structured in related ways. So, when I create a theoretical model for scenography analysis, work in the archives, and conduct in-depth visual explorations using art history methodologies, I feel like a dancer in an endless process of rehearsal, repetition and hopefully also transformation: something I am used to, and trained to endure. Both at the theatre and in the academy there are (promises of) wonderful moments of discovery, invention, and improvement on the journey towards an outcome that is and has to be uncertain, and cannot be known in advance. Something new can only be developed if there is desire, an openness and an emptiness – such as behind the mysterious door in *A Dream Play*.

YS: If you view this publication as a whole, consisting of a temporary synthesis of the scattered materials left from the production of *A Dream-Play* in Düsseldorf now being dream-played and activated by the researchers in this project, what is the main transformational result? I can see a clear transmission/transformation here. You are still “in touch”, particularly with the work of Ström, but what are your reflections on the collaborative result in terms of the transformation beyond Ström? Is Ström still the focus of this project, or has it transformed into something else; and what was gained in that movement?

AvR: Firstly, I see this publication growing out of a small-scale and short-term project, as a beginning, and not as something whole or complete. We have only covered some aspects of a vast field – but hopefully we have opened a door that will lead to continued collaborative and border-crossing research. I wish more people would engage in this, and contribute to the exploration of Ström’s engagement with Strindberg and the endeavour to actually say something about human hopes, dreams, and transformation. The reason for “still being in touch” with Ström’s work is that the materials he left behind are rich and unique, in particular if accessed or opened from a non-text-based stance in resonance with the dramatic text – in context. Ström leads us directly into vital, theoretically productive, but under-researched aspects of Strindberg’s dramas and their stagings, such as dancerly and scenographic dimensions. Ylva, in your exploration you chose another path, not in favour of Ström’s work, but this does not refute the fact that Ström utilizes these often down-played

and devalued realms of the aesthetic hierarchies, and that is precisely what I like about him. The transformational movement beyond Ström that you mention has, I believe, been productive, because a true collaboration builds on the participants' ability to genuinely contribute by way of independent thinking in dialogue with the group. We have real differences in the project, and I find them invigorating in all their vertiginous difficulty; the very purpose of dream-playing is to deal with such challenges! And it is indeed important not to reduce Ström to one single image; he would most certainly have been interested in moving beyond that.

To conclude: *Dream-Playing Across Borders* positions itself within the field of interdisciplinary Strindberg research that has abandoned biographical and narrow literary perspectives to explore Strindberg's radical modernity by highlighting visual, multimedial, corporeal and transnational aspects. I would suggest that a useful and transformative result of the project is the reimagining of the concept of the research archive as a collection of non-textual, hybrid and (canonized and not canonized) textual traces that can serve as starting points for new paths that help re-map the Strindbergian landscape across time and space. Not only has new knowledge been presented about a surprisingly unknown but important early production of *A Dream Play*, we have also developed concepts such as *trans-time* and *dream-playing* that seek to give names to creative, critical and transformational research strategies. The collaborative scena devised in the project might well be described as a useful model for interdisciplinary multimedia investigations. Furthermore the juxtaposition of Freud and Strindberg has opened up new trails that help us rethink and better understand the role and importance of dreaming and hoping in complex societal settings in the past, present and future. The creative and critical power of the reimagined archive finds itself in the dynamic movements between different approaches and perspectives; this type of archive only functions well when worked with across borders.

Throughout the studies undertaken in this project, we find multiple arguments for a performative historiography, and an openness towards interpretations, in combination with basic archival research as well as readings of Strindberg's drama. To dream-play is to reach the horizon of knowledge, and at the same time to take part in its transformation in



Mats Nilsson and Astrid von Rosen testing their bodies as archives in relation to the Dream-Playing project. Photo credit Bo Hansson.

reflective ways. As expressed by art historian and performance theorist Amelia Jones, we should “allow ourselves to be moved and, if ever so slightly, changed by the work we ‘relationally’ engage”, at the same time as we preserve “an awareness of how these processes of activation are occurring.”² This is an argument for a continuous and reciprocal exploratory process that has more to do with “experiencing” than with “seeing”.³ Also, the processes of reading and writing are intrinsically – albeit not always acknowledged – entangled with corporeal, multisensorial, affective and habitual dimensions. The scholars in the Dream-Playing project have striven to take responsibility for the importance of accounting for past events and texts in informing the future.

NOTES

1. Peter W. Marx, “Making a Scene! Considerations on the Concept of Scena”, presented at the “Making a Scene” workshop of CRASSH at King’s College Cambridge, 12 January 2015. I am thankful to Marx for permission to cite his text.
2. Amelia Jones, “Unpredictable Temporalities: The Body and Performance in (Art) History”, *Performing Archive/Archives of Performance*, edited by Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen 2013, p. 68.
3. For a rewarding discussion about kinesthetic ability see Cecilia Sjöholm, “Whose Body? The Difference between Seeing and Experiencing”, in *Material of Movement and Thought: Reflections on the Dancer’s Practice and Corporeality*, edited by Anna Petronella Foltier and Cecilia Roos, Firework Edition, Stockholm 2013, pp. 145–163.

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age: Performance, Place and Politics: Key Issues in Cultural Heritage, Routledge (forthcoming 2017).

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ABBREVIATIONS

GSM	Göteborgs Stadsmuseum
KB	Kungliga Biblioteket
SMV	Musikverket/Statens Musikverk
SRMB	Sveriges Radios Musikbibliotek
TMA	Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf
TWS	Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln

SOURCES

ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

Germany

Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf (TMA), Düsseldorf
Grosse Sammlung
Press Collections
Textbuchbestand

Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln (TWS),
Wahn-Cologne
Materials after Knut Ström
Press Collections

Sweden

Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (GSM), (Gothenburg Museum), Gothenburg
Theatrical collections, sketches and other materials after Knut Ström. Anna
Ström's letters.

Kungliga Biblioteket (KB), (Royal Library), Stockholm
Strindberg collections, manuscripts, materials from *Gröna säcken*

Musikverket, (SMV), (Swedish Performing Arts Agency), Stockholm
Musik- och teaterbiblioteket, sketches after Knut Ström
Musik- och teaterbiblioteket, Bo Wallner's working materials for the book
on Stenhammar

Ström/Söderberg family private collections, Stockholm
Materials after Knut and Anna Ström

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- Cover: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 9: This cast of the hand of Anna Ström when she was a child indicates the embodied and sometimes touching character of the archive. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 10: The Dream-Playing project has crossed borders, visiting archives in the following cities: Düsseldorf, Cologne/Wahn, Gothenburg and Stockholm.
- p. 13: Photograph from *Peer Gynt*, performed at Münchener Künstlertheater in 1914, and at Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf in 1915. Knut Ström created the scenography and Gustav Lindemann directed. We see artistic director and actress Louise Dumont as Aase, and Knut's friend Otto Stoeckel as Peer Gynt. Courtesy of the Ström family; Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *Faust*, Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, 1916. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 23: Knut and Anna dating in Stockholm, before 1913; Anna and the children Lillanna and Carl Johan in 1919, Dylta Bruk, Sweden; Anna with Carl Johan in 1914, and Knut with Carl Johan, the same year; No photographs are preserved of Lillanna from the years in Düsseldorf. Their third child, Greta, was born in Gothenburg in 1922. All the children had artistic careers. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 32: The Playbill for *A Dream Play*, 16 October 1918, Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.
- p. 42: Wilhelm Stenhammar (c. 1920). Courtesy Humanities Library, Gothenburg University Library.
- p. 65: Collage consisting of excerpts from Knut Ström's 1915 sketches for *A Dream Play* in Düsseldorf and photographs of two actresses playing Indra's Daughter in 1916: Irene Triesch in Berlin and Inez Lundmark in Gothenburg. For full representations of Ström's sketches, see von Rosen's chapter. Courtesy Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln and Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (GTM:5015:3) and Leo Baeck Institute Center for Jewish History, Irene Triesch Family Collection (AR 1550)
- p. 67: Ellen Widmann as Kommandoran in *Emil i Lönneberga*. © 1971 AB Svensk Filmindustri. Still photo: Lars Erik Svantesson.
- p. 73: Ellen Widmann as Rune Lewenclau, scene from *Sturmflut* in 1926.
- p. 75: Programme for Carl Credé's play § 218, *Gequälte Menschen*, illustration by Käthe Kollwitz.
- p. 76: *Nieder mit dem Abtreibungs-Paragrafen!*, poster by Käthe Kollwitz.
- p. 78: Ellen Widmann as Mutter Beckmann, in *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*. Deutsche Kinemathek. © Horst von Harbou.
- p. 79: Ellen Widmann as Mutter Beckmann, in *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*. Deutsche Kinemathek. © Horst von Harbou.

- p. 97: Fashion illustration by Paul Iribe from *Les Robes de Paul Poiret racontées par Paul Iribe*, 1908. Courtesy of Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; Fashion illustration by Georges Lepape from *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues par Georges Lepape*, 1911. Courtesy of Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. © Georges Lepape/Bildupphovsrätt 2016.
- p. 100: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for *A Dream Play*, at the Mediterranean. Indra's Daughter/Agnes in a green dress with a golden paisley pattern, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.
- p. 101: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter and the Officer with the Mother, 1915. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
- p. 102: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter and the Glazier in front of the growing castle, 1915. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
- p. 104: Costume sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter, (cropped), 1916. Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.
- p. 105: Fashion illustration by Georges Lepape from *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues par Georges Lepape*, "Celles de demain", 1911. Courtesy of Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. © Georges Lepape/Bildupphovsrätt 2016.
- p. 108: Costume sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter, 1916. Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf.
- p. 109: Black and white photograph of costume sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter, 1918, (original lost). Courtesy of Theatermuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf; Fashion illustration by Georges Lepape from *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues par Georges Lepape*, 1911. Courtesy of Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. © Georges Lepape/Bildupphovsrätt 2016.
- p. 111: Costume sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
- p. 112: Costume sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter as the Portress, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
- p. 113: Fashion caricature by Georges Goursat (Sem) from *Les Vrai et les faux chic*, "Les Chapeaux", 1914. Courtesy of British Library, London. © The British Library Board.
- p. 125: Two very different representations of Isadora Duncan dancing from the Swedish journal *Ord och Bild* 1906, pp. 385–386. The first one is a drawing by Gordon Craig co-signed by Duncan, and the second one is a caricature by Olaf Gulbransson.
- p. 126: The Intima Teatern, where Strindberg enjoyed social dancing on stage during a party after a performance of *Svanevit*. Courtesy of Strindbergs Intima teater.
- p. 127: This photograph from 2007 of dancers in Peterborough town hall demonstrates the social character and collective dimension of contra dances such as the Français, a dance Strindberg was well versed in. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
- p. 131: Fanny Falkner was one of the actresses for whom Strindberg created dances in the style of Duncan. Here we see Falkner as *Svanevit* in Strindberg's play with the same name at Intima Teatern 1909. From *Ord och Bild*, 1909 (2), p. 119. Photo: Ferdinand Flodin.
- p. 132: "A vivid evening at the Dance Palace", from a chapter about waltzing in Beyron

- Carlsson, *Hela Stockholm*, Albert Bonniers förlag, Stockholm 1912, p. 233. Photo: unknown.
- p. 133: *Hofball in Wien*, watercolour by Wilhelm Gause from 1900, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Emma Meissner and Carl Barcklind waltzing in the Swedish movie *Den glada änkan* (The Merry Widow) from 1907. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
- p. 140: Scenography and movement sketch by Knut Ström in collaboration with Rochus Gliese for *Macbeth*, project 1913. The Macbeth sketches spread in printed media, and were for example published in *Design in the theatre 1927*. Original lost; Scenography and movement sketches by Knut Ström for *Trojan Women*, Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf, 1917. Note how the golden strokes in the sky change according to the movements of the chorus and the soloist. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 141: Photograph of dancer Ewe Wippermann in Knut Ström's photo album from Düsseldorf, undated. Photographer unknown, but probably Knut Ström. Courtesy of the Ström family.
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- p. 153: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, the Growing Castle, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln; Here we see the alchemical operation inscribed in the "philosophical egg", in Heinrich Nollius, *Theoria Philosophiae Hermeticae*, 1617.
- p. 154: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, the Daughter and the Officer inside the castle, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 155: Alchemical engraving from Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 1618.
- p. 157: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström, for *A Dream Play*, the Theatre Corridor, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln.
- p. 158: Alchemical engraving from Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 1618.
- p. 159: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, the Scribes at the Lawyer's office, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 161: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, the church, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln; Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, the small chamber inside the Lawyer's office, 1915. Courtesy of the Ström family.
- p. 162: Alchemical engraving by Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae*, 1617.
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- p. 166: Scenography sketch, artist's statement by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, at Foulstrand, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
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- p. 168: Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, at the Mediterranean, 1915. Courtesy of Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung der Universität zu Köln; Scenography sketch by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, at the Mediterranean, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
- p. 169: Alchemical engraving, Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 1618.
- p. 170: Scenography sketch, artist's statement by Knut Ström for *A Dream Play*, transformative cave impression, 1918. Courtesy of Scenkonstmuseet.
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- p. 188: A selection of photographs from Julius Söhn, *Düsseldorf während des grossen Völkerkriegens 1914–1918*, published in 1919. The book demonstrates how the war immersed and structured every aspect of city life and work.
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- p. 196: Emil Orlik, *The Weavers*, poster from 1897. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
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- p. 207: The original edition of *Traumdeutung, The Interpretation of Dreams*. A copy in the Austrian National Library photographed in conjunction with the exhibition *Zwischen Königrätz und Cordoba, Meldungen, die Österreich bewegten 2013*. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
- p. 223: The first page of the original manuscript of *A Dream Play*. From the collection of the Royal Library. Courtesy of Wikimedia commons.
- p. 297: Mats Nilsson and Astrid von Rosen testing their bodies as archives in relation to the Dream-Playing project. Photo credit Bo Hansson.

