

THE INTERNATIONAL
STRINDBERG

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THE INTERNATIONAL STRINDBERG

New Critical Essays

EDITED BY
ANNA WESTERSTÅHL STENPORT



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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction: The International Strindberg Anna Westerståhl Stenport	3
Stockholm—Berlin—Moscow: Strindberg and Avant-Garde Performance in the 1920s Eszter Szalczer	27
Castration Anxiety and Traumatic Encounters with the Real in the Works of August Strindberg and Lars von Trier Mads Bunch	49
Reconsidering the Place of Strindberg in Surrealism: André Breton and the Light of the Objective Chance Encounter Maxime Abolgassemi	71
Standing at the Bourne of the Modern: Strindberg's Ecological Subject in <i>By the Open Sea</i> and His Archipelago Paintings Linda Haverly Rugg	89
Paris, Laboratory of Modernity: Modernist Experimentation and August Strindberg's Search for "the Equation" in Paris Sylvain Briens	107
Voices and Visions in Fingal's Cave: Plato and Strindberg Freddie Rokem	127
Money Metaphors and Rhetoric of Resource Depletion: <i>Creditors</i> and Late-Nineteenth-Century European Economics Anna Westerståhl Stenport	145

1	A Nineteenth-Century Long Poem Meets Modernity:	
2	<i>Sleepwalking Nights</i>	
3	Massimo Ciaravolo	167
4		
5	<i>By the Open Sea</i> —A Decadent Novel? Reconsidering Relationships	
6	Between Nietzsche, Strindberg, and Fin-de-Siècle Culture	
7	Tobias Dahlkvist	195
8		
9	“The Spoken Word Is All”—“Ordet det talade är allt”:	
10	Translating Strindberg for the International Stage	
11	Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey	215
12		
13	The Art of Doubt: Form, Genre, History in <i>Miss Julie</i>	
14	Leonardo F. Lisi	249
15		
16	Notes on Contributors	277
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
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A Nineteenth-Century Long Poem Meets Modernity: *Sleepwalking Nights*

MASSIMO CIARAVOLO

Sleepwalking Nights on Wide-Awake Days: A Poem in Free Verse (*Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar: En dikt på fria vers*, 1884, 1890)¹ is one of August Strindberg's texts that deals most explicitly, both in terms of its form and content, with questions of international late-nineteenth-century modernity—including aspects of displacement and disjuncture both private and public. The poem details the experiences of a Swedish poet who travels from his hometown of Stockholm to France, stops in Grez-sur-Loing at an international colony of artists, and thereafter continues to a prolonged stay in Paris. The idea expressed in the title reveals the structure of the plot; the protagonist is a sleepwalker in the sense that he, during his journey and stay in France, dreams, or daydreams, of revisiting Stockholm. The poem thus juxtaposes several distinct geographical locations and mediates these through the practices of dreaming and subjective recollection. The multiple Stockholm places recalled by the poet include a church, a museum, a library, an academy of science with astronomical observatory, and other emblematic locations. These refer, concretely or symbolically, to his life and development. The flashbacks are connected to the exile motif that runs through the poem and provide a vehicle to intertwine autobiographical references with a modernity critique that links the personal with the public as part of a proto-modernist European poetic idiom.

Although eminent Strindberg scholar Gunnar Brandell has defined this work as “undoubtedly one of the most important in his production” (18, my translation), *Sleepwalking Nights* still occupies a minor position in Strindberg's oeuvre, internationally as well as in Sweden. Poetry is not this writer's best-known genre; in addition, the hybrid form of the long

1 poem used in *Sleepwalking Nights* is difficult to place within a predomi-
2 nantly lyrical modern standard. Swedish anthologies of poetry seldom
3 include *Sleepwalking Nights*, with the one exception of the self-contained
4 prologue lyric “At Avenue de Neuilly” (“Vid avenue de Neuilly”),² which
5 is, in fact, one of Strindberg’s best-known poems. *Sleepwalking Nights*
6 was composed when Strindberg left Sweden for France in the autumn
7 of 1883. A later section, “The Fifth Night,” also called “The Homecom-
8 ing” or “The Awakening,” was written in the autumn of 1889, when the
9 author had returned to Stockholm after his first period abroad (Spens,
10 “Kommentarer” 407). In this fifth section of the poem, the poetic speaker,
11 too, is physically back in his hometown. As he did in Paris, he strolls
12 around, gazes, and reminisces. By interpreting the new signs of the city,
13 he guesses what has happened there during his absence, while places
14 and circumstances still evoke memories of events prior to his departure
15 from Stockholm. *Sleepwalking Nights* is an innovative, hybrid long poem
16 which is at the same time a travelogue, a *flânerie*, a reportage, and an
17 autobiography in verse. In this work, lyrical subjectivity is interwoven
18 with reflections on religion, art, philosophy, society, and politics as well
19 as with recurring references to myth (Prometheus, Lucifer, the Wandering
20 Jew, Faust, the Descent into Hell, and the Apocalypse). In his disloca-
21 tion in Paris, while meeting modernity in the streets, the poetic speaker
22 is engaged in an ambitious existential quest, which makes him critically
23 reconsider his origin and past stages in life, and reflect on the meaning of
24 development and progress, both on a personal and on a socio-historical
25 level. This is a poem about European modernity, communicated in a voice
26 both skeptical and enticed.

27 Divided into five sections, five “Nights,” *Sleepwalking Nights* devel-
28 ops a coherent narrative despite its formal and thematic heterogeneity
29 (Bellquist 73–114).³ In fact, the heterogeneity of this poem—as well as
30 its relation to forms of contemporary prose narrative, including that
31 of the urban novel, the reportage and the autobiography, its insistence
32 on temporal and geographical displacements, its voicing of a moder-
33 nity critique, and its explicit juxtaposition of Paris with Stockholm as
34 mediated by dreaming and subjective recollection—suggests the radical
35 modernity expressed in and through it. In this chapter, I seek to address
36 these aspects by focusing on two specific traits. First, I address the signifi-
37 cance of Strindberg’s adaptation and mixing of the *knittel* verse form, the
38 nineteenth-century European long poem, and the contemporary forms
39 of city life representation in literature. This *mélange* creates a poetic syn-
40 thesis capable of transmitting a modernist experience in line with and in
41 anticipation of Benjaminian modernity. Second, I propose a consecutive

reading of the five “Nights” in light of the poem’s autobiographical elements and relate these to the political critique and modernity critique implicit within the poem’s thematic emphasis. This political position takes its cues both from Sweden’s political situation and from multiple international thinkers and is fostered in the physical locations of Grez, Paris, and Stockholm, as well as in the dreamed and subjectively constituted transnational space that connects them. This poem, as I propose to show, reveals that an emerging modernist experience goes hand in hand with, indeed, can be seen as inseparable from, an intertwining of the personal and the political, of autobiography and modernity critique. Finally, by considering these two traits, I aim to demonstrate that *Sleepwalking Nights*—in spite of its multiplicity, complication, and fragmentation—has a coherent structure and plot.

What can be perceived as dissonant and “ugly” verses are deliberately used by Strindberg to reshape traditional verse in Swedish poetry. Specifically, Strindberg adapts the medieval and originally German *knittel* verse form to his poem set in Paris and Stockholm. The *knittel* line has a rather free form, consisting normally of four stressed syllables and a varying number of unstressed ones. Moreover, a *knittel* poem has no stanzas, as either very few or many lines can form a unit. This form had been employed in important literary works preserved in Old Swedish, such as the translations of courtly romances and the historical chronicles, and was commonly used for epic, didactic-religious, and historical-political purposes even into the beginning of the seventeenth century. In particular, this verse became a popular form in the late Middle Ages and during the Reformation, adaptable to the spoken language and easy to memorize thanks to its rhymed couplets. When the normative rules of classicism introduced “higher” verse forms in Swedish literature, the *knittel* survived in the popular history of the *folkböcker* and in the ballads (Stähle 12–57).

Strindberg’s use of the *knittel* is provocative. He had already practiced it in 1876, in the verse version of his first masterpiece, the historical drama *Master Olof* (*Mäster Olof*, 1872) about Olaus Petri, the Swedish humanist of the Reformation period; but with *Sleepwalking Nights* he went a step further. His new strategy of actualization must be related, as James Spens has pointed out, to the ongoing fight in Swedish literature of that time between tradition and innovation, and the conservative and the radical (“Kommentarer” 360–70; “*I Musernas bide*” 15–22). The writers and artists of the radical front were struggling for their right of expression, and for a more open and democratic society. Strindberg, the most talented among them, wanted to provoke his literary and political enemies of the academy, whose faultless poetic exercises were only

1 apparently innocent from an ideological point of view, while aiming to
2 preserve the good old “idealistic” values against the purported disrepu-
3 table literature of realism and naturalism (i.e., aimed at the social and
4 political status quo).⁴

5 Through the popular *knittel* form Strindberg could show that he was
6 aware of the poetic traditions, but that he actualized them for his own
7 purposes. Not only did he vary the fixed rhyme pattern (besides *aabb*,
8 also *abba* or *abab*), but he recontextualized the verse toward a modern
9 freethinker’s “poetry of ideas” (*tankedikt*), which could deal with high
10 metaphysical and philosophical questions, while lowering the gaze to the
11 level of ordinary and prosaic life, making him travel by train, walk on
12 the crowded boulevards, and see the machines at work. In this respect,
13 the poet’s experience of Paris is not depicted by chance, since this big city
14 in particular was playing an important role in determining what Sylvain
15 Briens, with reference to Bourdieu, defines as the cultural counter-field
16 of the Scandinavian writers and artists of the so-called *Modern Break-*
17 *through* (Paris 41–108).

18 In fact, we can think of Strindberg’s deliberate use of an old-fashioned
19 verse form as one way to accentuate, if not announce, the modernist
20 impetus of his poetic strategy in *Sleepwalking Nights*. By molding his
21 *knittel* into “free verse,” Strindberg could embed the tradition and, at the
22 same time, prefigure twentieth-century modernism. His verses, with their
23 “deliberately prosaic poetic mode” (Bellquist 82), convey the signs of the
24 big city and the industrial age, their cacophony and restless movement.
25 Gunnar Ekelöf, the great voice of Swedish poetic modernism, confesses
26 that he has learned to hear the noise of Paris in *Sleepwalking Nights*:
27 “Behind these free, unpredictable and yet rhythmically bound verses
28 I think I can actually hear something of the world city’s never ceasing
29 street noise and traffic murmur, penetrating into the hotel room day and
30 night and creating its atmosphere, whether your balcony door is ajar or
31 not” (215, my translation).

32 Lyric poetry prevailed as a highly significant literary form in Europe
33 during the second half of the nineteenth century. With Charles Baudelaire
34 it became a sign of the modern.⁵ Baudelaire’s urban poems—his lyrical as
35 well as his prose poems—offer a model by which poetry can specifically
36 cope with the new reality of big cities and the experience of modernity
37 in the age of capitalism (Benjamin, “Das Passagen-Werk” 54–56). At the
38 same time the modern novel gives writers (Strindberg among them) more
39 resources than the long poem, which has been inherited in the course of
40 the nineteenth century but seems now less adequate and adaptable as a
41 narrative form. In *Sleepwalking Nights* Strindberg moves boldly against

this trend and experiments with a long, narrative form of poetry that still belongs to a post-romantic tradition. The German author Heinrich Heine was important to Strindberg's development as a poet (see Sjöstedt 450–51; Spens, "Kommentarer" 275, 334–35, 374). If we compare *Sleepwalking Nights* with Heine's long poem *Germany: A Winter's Tale* (*Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*, 1844), we see the connections: the radical and democratic tendency; the satiric and ironic modes that contradict national indisputable truths; the public, political poem that expresses concern for the destinies of one's nation, combined with an autobiographical "confession"; the peculiar position of the nostalgic exile as oppositional patriot who returns to his country; Paris and France as the exile's external viewpoint; the travelogue; reality interwoven with dreams and visions (whereby the soul can even depart from the body); and, last but not least, a basically continuous narrative.

The comparison also shows, however, the differences from that model. In *Sleepwalking Nights* the traveler's speed and anxiety are characteristic of the new age of the train, the big city, and machines; the modern subject's identity is multilayered, contradictory, and thoroughly questioned by the distant standpoint offered by the Parisian dislocation, and it ultimately resists completion and definition. The urban experience produces a particularly restless encyclopedic effort, whereby the poem aims to solve life's riddle. Without yet being the fragmented and heterogeneous form of a long poem that plays such an important role in twentieth-century modernism, especially in North American poetry (see Dickie; Kamboureli), *Sleepwalking Nights* announces some of its traits. These proto-modernist fragmentation techniques include the effort to "embody the whole knowable world" and search "the great theme of historical interpretation" (Dickie 13) and the reshaping of traditional and modern elements into a new text, which "tempts us with a lyric, epic or documentary reading," but "breaks free from their specifications" and "lies within and beyond the grammar of the various genres it includes" (Kamboureli, *On the Edge of Genre* xiv). *Sleepwalking Nights* also thematizes the impossibility of escaping the shock and disorientation of the big city as fundamental existential condition, and includes a will to express, in the mode of the public poem, a criticism of Western modernity's dream of progress.

It is interesting to observe that these cultural processes belong to the increasing sense of transition and crisis in the early phase of modernism, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane argue that this perception reached in Scandinavia "a much higher degree of self-consciousness, of articulateness, of documentation

1 than perhaps any other part of Europe” (37). And they consider Strindberg’s work, primarily as a dramatist, a strong evidence of this cultural
 2 atmosphere. Strindberg’s poetry is an important, if overlooked, part of
 3 the self-reflexiveness we associate with European modernism and which
 4 Bradbury and McFarlane see as critical to Strindberg’s oeuvre. Indeed,
 5 the years between the first four sections of *Sleepwalking Nights* and the
 6 final one include, among other things, Strindberg’s fundamental theory of
 7 the discontinuous subject formulated in the preface to *Miss Julie* (*Fröken*
 8 *Julie*, 1888). Historically and in an international context, a poem like
 9 *Sleepwalking Nights* becomes even more significant if related to Heinrich
 10 Heine, Charles Baudelaire, and the modernist long poem.

12 Section after section, *Sleepwalking Nights* builds up a network of strictly
 13 related themes. In the prologue lyric “At Avenue de Neuilly” the psychical
 14 interplay that characterizes the structure of the long poem is offered in
 15 short form. The subject is walking in the streets of suburban Paris and a
 16 detail he observes passing by makes his thoughts fly back home; the gutted
 17 heart in a butcher’s shop corresponds metaphorically to the exposed book
 18 in a bookshop window in central Stockholm. The scene can be connected
 19 to the categories proposed by Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project*,
 20 in which the condition of modern literature as commodity to be sold on
 21 the market is examined.⁶ Benjamin stresses the particular vulnerability of
 22 poetry in the new historical conditions that arose in the nineteenth century
 23 and Charles Baudelaire’s heroism to face the challenge in the big city
 24 of Paris. Baudelaire’s poet, who chooses the low, prosaic perspective of
 25 the streets in his pursuit of authenticity and beauty, is interpreted as a
 26 last version of the urban flaneur (Benjamin, “Charles Baudelaire” 537–69;
 27 Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk* 54–56, 301–489, 524–69). The raw and
 28 naturalistic image in Strindberg’s lyric stresses his intention to write “ugly”
 29 verses in opposition to the academic poets, but at the same time works as
 30 an intimate and idealistic reminder about the subject as artist and nostalgic
 31 exile. Placed on the threshold of the long poem (Genette, *Seuils* 150–60,
 32 183–94), this short poem also serves as a form of autobiographical contract
 33 proposed to the reader as buyer, implied in the picture of the shop
 34 window, a *captatio benevolentiae* and a guarantee of authenticity: the article
 35 being sold is my book, my heart, my life.

36 Henry Olsson stressed already in 1931 that *Sleepwalking Nights* is
 37 Strindberg’s first more outspoken autobiographical text (329), written
 38 before the works that, from a generic point of view, must be considered
 39 his “real” autobiographies (e.g., *The Son of a Servant*, *Tjänstekvinnans*
 40 *son I–IV*, 1886–87, 1909). The structural interaction in the poem between
 41 the present time of action (France, Paris) and the past stages (Stockholm)

illustrates how the reconstruction of the past through several analepses exists as a pragmatic function of the present state (Genette, *Figures III* 90–105). Through this use of analeptic technique, the protagonist is facing a critical moment and needs self-scrutiny—including a reassessment or reintegration of the past into the present—to make a new start. From “The First Night” to “The Fourth Night” anachrony’s reach (Genette, *Figures III* 89–90) diminishes, so that a dialectical and approximately chronological process in the subject’s development is represented. This process involves a move from religious faith to art, from art to the idea of a more useful form of knowledge that must serve justice and human progress, to a criticism of the model of Western material progress, and, finally, to a public position that corresponds to the poet’s present standpoint and his need to search for future perspectives.

Strindberg uses several suggesting devices to create an autobiographical space in the poem, and thereby propose an autobiographical contract to his readers (Lejeune, *Le pacte* 165–96). For example, the art museum and the library, visited by the poet’s spirit respectively in “The Second Night” and “The Third Night,” are made to correspond to the National Museum and the Royal Library in Stockholm (where Strindberg pursued his studies and worked as a librarian), without being explicitly named in the text.⁷ On the whole, the reader never doubts the identity between author, narrator, and protagonist, which Philippe Lejeune considers as the primary condition to recognize a text as autobiographical (Lejeune, *Le pacte* 7–46). At the same time, the unity of Strindberg’s subject is made up of different layers and fragmented. The character’s personality is split in a Parisian body and in a spirit visiting Stockholm. These two subjects are alternatively represented in the first and in the third person, and on some important occasions (such as the conclusion of “The Fourth Night”) in the second person. Again Lejeune has explained this uncommon but existing autobiographical strategy as a way to stage identity as multiple and oscillating, caught as we are in a paradoxical condition, between the impossible unity of our ego and its intolerable division (“L’autobiographie” 38).

As an autobiographer, Strindberg adopts Kierkegaard’s method of experimenting with his contradictory points of view and different stages in life, and although this method aims to reach a point of synthesis, it consciously develops into a process that is always in the making (Robinson, *Strindberg and Autobiography* 1–18, 87–88). This is the case of *Sleepwalking Nights*. The end of “The Fourth Night” was in fact left open, without closure, in the version published in 1884. Coming back to Stockholm in 1889, Strindberg appears to have felt a need to take up that narrative and

1 conclude it with a fifth section. What is particularly fascinating about this
2 last section, published in 1890, is that it respects the stylistic, formal, and
3 thematic markers of the previous four sections, but reconsiders these from
4 a new personal and political standpoint. The peculiar genesis of the poem
5 illustrates therefore what Per Stounbjerg has termed the “reluctance to
6 conclude” in Strindberg as an autobiographical writer (“Between Realism
7 and Modernism” 52). An interesting circumstance is that while Strindberg
8 was introducing his autobiographical space in 1883, he had considerably
9 enlarged it by 1889, and his Swedish model reader had consequently a
10 different, wider encyclopedia regarding his private and public life and
11 could cooperate even more to “fill in the blanks” of the text (Eco, *Lector*
12 5–11, 50–85; Eco, *Six Walks* 8–25, 109–16).

13 The thematization of modernity—including its technologies—is present
14 from the very beginning of the poem. In “The First Night” the motion
15 of the train and its effects on the body define the speed and the rhythm
16 imposed by modernity (Briens, *Technique* 40–43, 153–57, 179–80).⁸
17 The “First Night” presents a prosaic, everyday world in which the sub-
18 ject’s quest for meaning must necessarily be situated. Ironically, the spirit
19 separates itself from material reality and begins its flight in the opposite
20 direction. This opening of the poetic sequence also determines the kind
21 of mood which characterizes the first four “Nights”: the serious existen-
22 tial quest coexists with the peculiar sorrow and nostalgia of exile, but
23 also with an expression of self-irony, sardonic comments, and a sense of
24 humor, which seem to have been learned from Heine.

25 As the traveling protagonist falls asleep, his freely soaring spirit moves
26 back to Stockholm to take farewell from his childhood’s faith, represented
27 by the church where he used to go with his family. The confrontation
28 with Christianity is complex, because it includes a triple characteriza-
29 tion of Jesus. He represents the dogmatic, oppressive tradition that the
30 poet, as a skeptical freethinker, wants to get rid of; he also embodies,
31 however, the martyr, the victim of his ideas, who had to be sacrificed (as
32 the protagonist as a young man was sacrificed during confirmation in
33 that church; as the gutted heart, or book of poetry, is exposed in the pro-
34 logue lyric). Christ is finally also a revolutionary leader who has defied
35 authority on earth and taught the value of doubt. The protagonist sym-
36 pathizes with the revolutionary leader and martyr, and they reinforce the
37 exile motif. The interesting aspect is that Strindberg tends to juxtapose
38 historical, social emancipation and metaphysical redemption, a “hori-
39 zontal” and a “vertical” dimension. This interaction, which was already
40 characteristic of Strindberg’s archtypical hero Master Olof, will continue
41 to work throughout his literary and intellectual oeuvre (Carlson 42–48,

83–87, 107–11) in the most contradictory and peculiar ways, to be sure, but until the very end of it.

“The First Night” ends with a paradoxical comparison between two doubters: Jesus and Descartes (reliefs of both of them are placed almost side by side in Adolf Fredrik’s Church, the temple visited by the spirit). They are opposed and akin at the same time, according to what connotation Jesus is given: dogmatic authority or critical spirit.

Strindberg, as often in his literary works, juxtaposes the rural and the urban in order to examine the contemporary moment. In the “Second Night,” the characterization of the rural environment in Grez indirectly conveys the political theme of the poem. Moving to France to enjoy more freedom of expression had become almost a necessity for many Scandinavian oppositional intellectuals and anti-academic writers and artists (Söderström 82–95).⁹ The joy of being together and sharing life in a less conventional manner, freed from the compelling social roles and closer to nature, is stressed in the opening of this section. This understanding of nature’s creative or even utopian potential—entertained by many of the European artists who left cities to paint or write about nature in rural surroundings at the end of the nineteenth century—frames the representation of an existential quest in the second section of the poem.

In the “Second Night,” the relentlessly questioning protagonist addresses a series of problems. First, he reflects on the complex relationship between nature and culture. Second, he is concerned with an understanding of the process of mimesis in connection with his doubts about the usefulness of art. The poetic speaker asks: Is the nature seen in the orchard really “natural”? Isn’t it created and constricted by human culture? Aren’t the artists who, in the plein air environment of Grez, have fled Paris, still conditioned, especially in their urge to produce art, by the nearby big city? Isn’t art just artificial, a useless urban privilege? Isn’t it the imitation of an appearance (the divine creation)? And what is this human desire to imitate? These stances reveal Strindberg’s dialogue with the negative conceptions of art expressed by Plato in *The Republic* (79–102, 344–62), and by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, especially in *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* and *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (*Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 1750, and *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*, 1754) (Poulenard 17–21, 75–85). At the same time, however, Strindberg’s political motivation in the mid-1880s is never straightforward. In these years he also tries to convince himself that it is necessary to write non-artistically, in a kind of pure, “useful” social prose that has to serve the cause of justice, but at the same time he cannot help writing literature.

1 The visit of the poet's spirit to the art museum in "The Second Night"
 2 parallels his previous flight to the church. As a new temple, a place loaded
 3 with sacred social value, the museum becomes the target of the spirit's
 4 mocking criticism. Art—as the Canon of Beauty—proves to be something
 5 void of meaning for the searching spirit now. The spirit encounters mainly
 6 statues from classical antiquity, probably because sculptures are, figura-
 7 tively speaking, easier to demolish for the iconoclast. An epiphany occurs,
 8 however, when he sees the statue of the Knife-Grinder: it is the revelation
 9 of art from the streets representing low reality, in contrast with the idea
 10 of art as leisure activity for the upper, ruling classes; and it is, again, an
 11 anticipation of the political theme of the poem, the need for social eman-
 12 cipation and democracy. The apparition of the Knife-Grinder is related to
 13 Strindberg's naturalistic program in his first collection of poems, *Dikter*
 14 of 1883, by which truth must of necessity be ugly, as long as beauty is
 15 false appearance (*Poems*; see *Samlade Verk*, vol. 15:23–24). This program
 16 is in its turn linked to the modern, urban motif in *Sleepwalking Nights*,
 17 to the reality of the streets we find especially in the prologue lyric, "The
 18 Third Night" and "The Fifth Night." The juxtaposition of high culture
 19 and perspective from the streets is one of the strategies that marks the
 20 proto-modernism of *Sleepwalking Nights*.

21 The concluding part of "The Second Night" returns to the Swedish
 22 writer in Grez, who ironically, in complete (and conscious) contradiction
 23 with his thoughts about the uselessness of art—and in competition with
 24 his fellow artists—writes poetry. He can't help it, driven as he is by the
 25 utmost pleasure and his holy fire:

27 Då går författarn på ett avsides rum
 28 Och vid sitt skrivbord sätter sig krum.
 29 Han gör poesi, om ock ej så poetisk,
 30 Och skriver om konst, som vanligt, frenetisk.
 31 Det kan ju kallas helt enkelt en sofism—
 32 Inkonsekvens är kanske det rätta—
 33 Jag tror att Darwin kallar det atavism!—
 34 Och att utvecklas jämt är icke det lätta.
 35 Nå, fabula docet: gör som jag lär
 36 Och ej som jag lever! Har man hört på maken!
 37 Ja visst, det din egen lära ju är:
 38 Giv fan personen, men tänk på saken! (189)

40 Then goes the author to a room not too near,
 41 seats himself at his desk, bent over,

there concocts poetry, though not so poetic,
 writes about art—in a frenzy as usual
 (it might be labelled as simple sophistry,
 though the right word may be irrelevancy;
 I think Darwin has christened it atavism!).
 To be ever at one's best is not so easy. . . .
 Well, *fabula docet*: do as I teach
 and not as I live! Have you heard such inanity!
 I certainly have—I taught it myself:
 To hell with the person—it's the subject that matters!
 (*Sleepwalking Nights* 36)

Strindberg's poem presents a meta-poetic *mise en abyme*, the "signature" of the poem within the poem, and therefore also of the autobiographical contract with the reader, as the protagonist coincides with the author of the written text and with his narrator in the first, second, and third person (all three persons being summed up in this passage).¹⁰ It appears moreover as the proud affirmation of the protagonist's existence, an adaptation of the Cartesian ego's motto—I write, therefore I am.

Strindberg's statements can also be seen as an apology of poetry and imagination against his own doubts and against Plato's authority. Strindberg draws on a dialogic function of another threshold of the text (Genette, *Seuils* 134–49): an epigraph taken from the beginning of chapter 4 in Aristotle's *Poetics* (34), where the philosopher argues that the origin of poetry is in humankind's tendency to imitate nature, as we, from childhood onwards, understand through mimesis and find instinctive pleasure in it. "The Second Night" proves in fact to be a piece of fiction, as only few of the sculptures the spirit encounters are really at the National Museum in Stockholm. As Aristotle writes in chapter 9 of *Poetics*, "the poet's task is to speak not of events which have occurred, but of the kind of events which *could* occur, and are possible by the standards of probability and necessity" (40).

The dialogue with the Aristotelian concept of mimesis should finally be related to another important question in *Sleepwalking Nights*. Strindberg's biblical and Christian roots are not only a religious and cultural matter, but also a matter of style. In *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach famously explains how the Jewish and Christian heritage, especially the Gospels, changed the concept of representation of reality in Western literature, since the earthly experience of God's son represents the highest and most sublime questions of our life in a humble and "low" style, in contrast with the classical principle of the division of styles, by which serious things need "high" style and low things can only make us laugh (in

particular 5–52). Jesus’s story also shows how the problem of redemption is entangled in history and society, interwoven with the problems of emancipation and social justice. In this respect, even Auerbach’s analysis of nineteenth-century naturalism is relevant (460–87), although his study does not include Strindberg and his poetics of “ugliness.”¹¹

“The Third Night” and “The “Fourth Night,” the two longest sections in the poem, display the interaction between Paris and Stockholm anticipated in the prologue lyric. These are also the most explicitly political sections, which engage with Strindberg’s modernity critique. In Paris, the protagonist appears as a hectic version of the flaneur of mid-century Paris, either reporter or poet (Köhn 42–62). He walks and observes, and although he is disturbed by the traffic, the crowd, and the artificiality of social behavior, his gaze is participating. Moreover, he cannot but feel a strange kind of admiration against all odds for the spectacular, ceaseless phantasmagoria of modernity, the dreamlike (or nightmarish) quality of its reality.

“The Third Night” opens with a description of the street, with its dirt, noise, and movement:

Ute på strövtåg hela dagen
I det dimmiga höst-Paris;
Häpen väl, men icke betagen,
Och beundrar på eget vis.

Genom tunnlar av kalk och tegel
Mänkor knuffa sig rastlöst fram;
Våta gatan som söndrig spegel
Ligger solkig av dy och slam;
Speglar ännu av himlen flikar,
Ger en vrångbild dunkel och svag
Av den fallna människans drag. (190)

Strolling about in the town all day
in the haze of autumn-Paris. . . .
full of wonder, but not enthralled,
yet I like it in a way.

Inside tunnels of mortar and brick
people restlessly jostle their way;
rain-dampened street, like shattered mirror,
now lies begrimed by slush and sludge,
still reflecting patches of heaven,

with a distortion, dark and dim,
of the fallible human's features.
(*Sleepwalking Nights* 37)

Only fragments of the sky can be reflected on the wet street; humanity has fallen, as if it had lost its origin. This metaphysical dimension is suggested in the middle of a frenetic horizontal movement:

Lastad kärra dundrar och skräller,
Kuskens piska som bössan smäller,
Tramwaysklockan varnande gnäller,
Omnibussen blåser trumpet. . . .
(190)

Loaded cart rumbles ricketing by,
the driver's whip cracks loud like gunshot,
the street-car tinkles its warning shrilly,
the bus now trumpets a blaring sound. . . .
(*Sleepwalking Nights* 37)

What Marshal Berman has written about Baudelaire's "loss of halo" in his seminal book about the experience of modernity implies choices of poetics and style, but also a fundamental ethical question concerning the responsibility of the writer. It can be applied to Strindberg's stance in *Sleepwalking Nights*, with its poetics of "ugliness":

The new force that the boulevards have brought into being, the force that sweeps the hero's halo away and drives him into a new state of mind, is modern *traffic*. . . . The archetypal modern man, as we see him here, is a pedestrian thrown into the maelstrom of modern city traffic, a man alone contending against an agglomeration of mass and energy that is heavy, fast and lethal. . . . One of the paradoxes of modernity, as Baudelaire sees it here, is that its poets will become more deeply and authentically poetic by becoming more like ordinary men. If he throws himself into the moving chaos of everyday life in the modern world—a life of which the new traffic is a primary symbol—he can appropriate this life for art. The "bad poet" in this world is the poet who hopes to keep his purity intact by keeping off the streets, free from the risks of traffic. (158–60)

Echoes of Rousseau are heard in Strindberg's lines, when they refer to miserable and hungry people, and a crying child. The poet's gaze notices

1 that the indifferent city is a place of injustice, where wealth and poverty
2 may be side by side, but are in fact at the greatest distance from each
3 other.

4 A spiritual need—or at least a need to step out of the infernal rhythm—
5 manifests itself when the protagonist sees, in the labyrinth of streets, a
6 Gothic church. Its spires suggest again an upward movement; its statues
7 of saints and martyrs remind the poet of his condition as exile. His enter-
8 ing a church creates a parallel with “The First Night,” but this time, he
9 assures, he does not want to pray, but simply recover from the city shock.

10 The former church of St. Martin des Champs, in central Paris, was
11 transformed into a museum of technology and science after the French
12 Revolution, the Musée des Arts et Métiers. During the second half of the
13 nineteenth century, in the heydays of positivism and the great world exhibi-
14 tions, it became a symbol of modern progress. A spectacular hall, with
15 machines in function and motion, was created in the nave. It operated
16 between 1882 and 1885 and is the one Strindberg refers to in *Sleepwalk-*
17 *ing Nights*.

18 The mimetic quality of Strindberg’s language undoubtedly reveals the
19 ambivalent fascination of machines on his modern spirit (compare Kär-
20 nell 52–66; Kylhammar 28–46). The point of this description is a polemic
21 confrontation with the idea of utilitarianism, also as an idea nourished
22 by the protagonist who, in his development, takes leave from the illu-
23 sion of art to look for a more useful and practical kind of knowledge
24 that can contribute to the advancement of mankind. The way in which
25 progress is unmasked as the great illusion of modernity contributes to
26 the near-Nietzschean energy that Perrelli (40–41) and Bellquist (101–2)
27 have observed in *Sleepwalking Nights*. In the nave of St. Martin, progress
28 seems to have become a deity in its own right, modernity’s own god; and
29 its ceaseless noise, its materialism, have conquered the altar. But is mater-
30 ial progress real development? Besides, the advancement of science and
31 technology has mainly served the capital and not the causes of general
32 welfare. Another temple has thus been entered, another authority ques-
33 tioned and found faulty. The industrialization of space has proved to be
34 ubiquitous, and no peace can be obtained in that church. On the contrary,
35 the rhythmic noise of machines determines our quest; modern speed is a
36 permanent existential condition, here as much as on the boulevards.

37 The spirit’s flight to the library in Stockholm proposes, at this point,
38 a confrontation with another “temple.” The inadequacy of books is ren-
39 dered with an irreverent and hasty examination of religion, philosophy,
40 history, and law. The idea of getting rid of books as a useless burden, with
41 which “The Third Night” ends, does sometimes appear in Strindberg’s

works; the question is, however, whether the inadequate solutions given by the humanities throughout the centuries to the fundamental questions of existence should not be read, here, as a way of creating a contrast with the complacent show of progress in St. Martin des Champs, so as to reinforce the criticism against it. Not only does the spirit's survey mention, especially in the field of philosophy, some of the authors who play an important role in Strindberg's oeuvre, and in *Sleepwalking Nights* in particular, but the recurring situation of the iconoclast in different "temples" can be read as the way in which the modernist writer paradoxically saves the past against a materialistic present time without memory. George Steiner has precisely described this condition:

The sense of a persistent authority of the classical and Hebraic precedent has been one of the principal forces—perhaps the principal force—during some two millennia of Western sensibility. It has largely determined the Western image of reason and of form. The new design, the new utterance, are tested within and against the exemplary legacy. We move forward from quotation, explicit or not, of the classic formula. . . . We know now that the modernist movement which dominated art, music, letters during the first half of the century was, at critical points, a strategy of conservation, of custodianship. . . . In twentieth-century literature, the elements of reprise have been obsessive, and they have organized precisely those texts which at first seemed most revolutionary. "The Waste Land," *Ulysses*, Pound's *Cantos* are deliberate assemblages, in-gatherings of a cultural past felt to be in danger of dissolution. . . . The apparent iconoclasts have turned out to be more or less anguished custodians racing through the museum of civilization, seeking order and sanctuary for its treasures, before closing time. (488–90)

"The Fourth Night" completes the criticism of our model of progress. The city park, Bois de Boulogne, is presented as a form of amputated and falsified nature, an extension of the urbanized room as stage and artificiality. Moreover, the protagonist's gaze at the Jardin Zoologique d'Acclimatation emphasizes how our rationality has ended up manipulating and exploiting the natural resources. The standpoints echo more directly Rousseau, but the setting is that of the industrial society. The spirit's following flight to the Academy of Science in Stockholm coincides with an attack against the authority of the natural sciences and the whole cultural hegemony of positivism. They give an illusion of exact answers but do not answer the fundamental questions about the meaning of life; they can measure the material world but cannot consider our spiritual

1 need; last but not least, their advancement does not operate for the com-
2 mon good but is most often allied with the interests of capital and of the
3 few who hold power.

4 By moving to the near hill of the observatory, the spirit takes on a
5 viewpoint which allows him, as it happened during the flight in “The
6 First Night,” a panoramic gaze on the city of Stockholm. Anna Wester-
7 ståhl Stenport has pointed out the role and recurrence of this overview
8 position in Strindberg’s urban prose (29–47). In *Sleepwalking Nights* it
9 also seems connected to the function of the public long poem (Dickie
10 1–17), as the writer, through his spirit, addresses the citizens of the sleep-
11 ing polis from above, trying to awaken their conscience. In this part of
12 “The Fourth Night” the writer makes an apology of his necessary role as
13 uneasy conscience of Swedish society; by stressing his bond with Stock-
14 holm and his nostalgia, he also reminds the reader of his condition as an
15 exile—an indirect act of accusation throughout the poem.

16 Watching the moon in the sky, the spirit has a series of fanciful visions
17 in which his concern for a global unsustainable development and his
18 pleading for social justice merge. Utopian tones follow the apocalypse,
19 as the catastrophe on earth, a new ice age, will one day give a chance
20 of rebirth. When Sweden, then, gets rid of all the privileged and their
21 oppressive structures, it will learn the virtues of a simple, natural, and
22 equal life.

23 The political function of this long poem proves finally to be the
24 unmaking of old Sweden and the making of a new, fairer one. We must
25 not forget that it was written in a time when the outcome of the conflict
26 between the conservative ruling powers and those who fought for formal
27 and substantial democratic rights was not at all decided. In order to cope
28 with this struggle, the protagonist must first stop doubting, because even
29 though doubt is a fundamental critical tool, it can become paralyzing.
30 At the end of “The Fourth Night,” what we can consider the provisional
31 ending of the poem, the writer encourages himself to feel as an active part
32 of the collective force that is already changing Sweden. Against all odds,
33 he needs a “heroic” faith in progress.

34 Considered from the point of view of cultural history and with this
35 conclusion, the poet wants to be faithful to the program, launched by the
36 Danish critic Georg Brandes, of a literature that has a socially reforming
37 potential and is able to “discuss the problems.” The stance was reinforced
38 in Strindberg by his meeting, in Paris during the autumn and winter of
39 1883–84, with the Norwegian fellow writers Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and
40 Jonas Lie, to whom *Sleepwalking Nights* is also dedicated, a further, sig-
41 nificant threshold of the text (Genette, *Seuils* 117–27). In the perspective

of today, the author of *Sleepwalking Nights* appears as the committed writer advocated by Edward Said in *Representations of the Intellectual*: the one who does not flee complexity and contradiction, but still dares to tell power the truth and interpret humanism as a struggle for democracy. Only by this stance can the protagonist of *Sleepwalking Nights*, in the end, defeat the doubt “that your work is merely writ in water” (67/223), which is the second reminder of the act of writing in the poem.

Hjalmar Branting—Strindberg’s friend, journalist and literary critic, radical intellectual, eventual founder and leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, and, as such, a founding father of modern Sweden—reviewed *Sleepwalking Nights* in 1884. His article is an important response, because Branting does not hesitate to consider the author an evident member of the Swedish progressive movement, but at the same time he cannot help emphasizing that his hatred of industrialism and modernity is an obstacle and a problem: in that respect Strindberg seems to move against the current of history.

The doubt whether this Western progress of ours is any good is, as a matter of fact, particularly shaking for a writer who claims a progressive role and works for social emancipation, and seems to form the most complex of the Gordian knots tied in *Sleepwalking Nights*, as well as in the other socially committed works written by Strindberg between 1883 and 1887. Yet, it can be argued whether the writer’s preoccupations with the dilemmas and shortcomings of an absolute faith in civilization, sharply expressed in *Sleepwalking Nights*, are only a sign of conservative views or, rather, partake in a long Western intellectual tradition of criticism and questioning of the idea of historical progress.¹²

“The Fifth Night” functions as a section on its own, as well as the new epilogue of the whole cycle. The perspective is altered here: it turns gloomier, resigned. The gap of the six-year-long ellipsis (Genette, *Figures III* 139–41) is first filled with an internal analepsis—a quick, almost cinematic summary of the protagonist’s experiences abroad—but more space of this section is dedicated to external analepses, which—as the protagonist is walking in Stockholm and coming across places connected to his married life—recall the time of great expectation before 1883, even his wedding. The personal and political themes are interwoven; the protagonist is confronted with a feeling of a “big chill” in his hometown: his old friends have vanished; the radical front has lost its battle; political repression dominates the atmosphere; the protagonist suspects that he is now considered a “heretic,” and he is not even physically recognized as the one he is and was: the most talented writer of that group.

1 By making the reader wonder what has happened in the meantime,
2 the text activates an implicit encyclopedia concerned with Strindberg's
3 complicated paths, which include, between 1884 and 1889, political
4 essays such as "On the General Discontent, Its Causes and Cures" ("Om
5 det Allmänna Missnöjet, Dess Orsaker och Botemedel," 1884); the short
6 stories of *Getting Married I–II* (*Giftas I–II*, 1884, 1886); the trial for
7 blasphemy and, at the same time, the rupture between the writer and
8 his political comrades owing to his (truly heretical) position concerning
9 women, sexual roles, and marriage; the need to show that he could still
10 direct his writing towards social and political themes and be an even
11 more advanced radical writer, for example in *Utopias in Reality* (*Uto-*
12 *pier i verkligheten*, 1885) and *Among French Peasants* (*Bland franska*
13 *bönder*, 1886); a growing distance from democratic ideals in the auto-
14 biography *The Son of a Servant*; an even more outspoken orientation
15 toward "aristocratic radicalism" in the short novel *Tschandala* (1889);
16 the complications in the marriage between Strindberg and Siri von Essen
17 and the coming divorce.

18 Back in Stockholm, the protagonist admires the city from above, again
19 from a panoramic viewpoint on a hill. The city appears at first surpris-
20 ingly beautiful and modern; it has changed and acquired even more
21 evident signs of material progress and modernity that make it look like
22 a "Paris of the North" (Stenport 1). The interaction between these two
23 cities is both part of Strindberg's experience—as life experience as well
24 as textual strategy—and of the architectural history of the last decades
25 of the nineteenth century, when Baron Haussmann's conception of the
26 city plan is exported all over Europe. However, the unifying overview is
27 eventually contradicted when the protagonist actually walks in the city,
28 at street level, and a new reality is revealed behind the fascinating façade.
29 The splendid buildings (which quite clearly refer to the new parade bou-
30 levard Strandvägen) become a sign of the victory of the big capital over
31 all hopes of change. This vision also implies an indirect, denying reference
32 to Strindberg's own poem "The Boulevard System" ("Esplanadsystemet,"
33 1883), in which the making of the new boulevards rather appeared as the
34 symbol of the young forces of history and of the necessary progress of
35 society (*Samlade Verk*, vol. 15:37–38).

36 The interpretation of the ideological dimensions of "The Fifth Night"
37 is particularly difficult, because Strindberg seemed by 1889 to have
38 moved away from his democratic standpoint and found support in
39 Nietzsche's ideas. *Tschandala* had already been published in Danish and
40 the novel *By the Open Sea* (*I havsbandet*, 1890) was being composed.
41 In a letter to Georg Brandes, written in April 1890, only a few months

after the composition of “The Fifth Night,” Strindberg dated back his detachment from deism and democratic principles to 1885, adding that even his socialism was an experiment he had gone through (Strindberg, *Brev* 8:26). Still, in a speech he gave in Stockholm on March 15, 1890, he could point out that he was not a renegade with respect to the radical fights of the 1880s (Söderström, 138–40). Was Strindberg mystifying when he represented his alter ego in “The Fifth Night” as the homecoming radical, the last survivor, the unrecognized heretic? Or do we rather have to accept—here as much as elsewhere—his different voices and moods on the same subject? Was Strindberg finally objectifying, as an autobiographer, a critical turn and a past stage of his life? As Elena Balzamo has argued, an ideological crisis compels Strindberg to relocate the previous elements of his *Weltanschauung* in a new order (223, 302–3), which implies an inclusion with modifications, more than a rejection, of his past stages within an increasingly complex *system* of contradictions.

The disillusioned radical writer also observes that one of his former comrades is now sitting in jail. It is true that Branting was in prison for some months in 1889 (Spens, “Kommentarer” 557, 560), and in a certain sense the paths of Branting and Strindberg part here: one is the pragmatic, political man who successfully starts the Social Democratic movement that will “make” modern Sweden (the progress of history was beginning just then, one could argue from this point of view); the other one is the tormented intellectual, whose political commitment has proved unpractical and unusable, also because the integrity of the artist, with all his contradictions, is the dearest thing to him. In 1889, when the victorious history of the Swedish workers’ movement is beginning, Strindberg pessimistically turns his back on “progress” and, similarly to Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History, sees it only, retrospectively, as a landscape of failures and ruins at all levels (“Über den Begriff der Geschichte” 697–98). His life’s investments—marriage, family, and mission as socially committed writer—have collapsed.

The writer’s sorrow is devastating in the end. The act of writing is evoked, for the third time in the poem, in a nightmarish vision of his younger self sitting and writing in what once used to be his working room:

Bläcket lämnar ej spår på raden
 Pennan löper synbart på lek
 Nej han skriver, han tror sig skriva,
 Se nu lyfter han handen opp
 Liksom ville han tankar giva

1 Ordets levande luftiga kropp,
 2 I sitt bläckhorn han ivrigt doppar—
 3 Se nu—vänder han ansiktet till—
 4 Dödmans ögon stora som koppar
 5 Stirra mörkt som en enda pupill,
 6 Och mot namnen bekant han nickar
 7 Pekar tankfull på verket sitt;
 8 Och ur halsens kotor han hickar:
 9 “Ser du jag börjar att skriva vitt!”
 10 (232)

12 Not a trace of ink is seen on the page;
 13 the man seems merely to toy with the pen.
 14 No—now he is writing—thinks he is writing;
 15 look, now he raises his hand as if he
 16 would shape his thoughts with meaning and substance,
 17 a living, airy form of the word.
 18 Dipping fervidly in his inkwell
 19 he turns his countenance toward me now—
 20 the eyes of a dead man, large as cups,
 21 staring darkly, like a single pupil,
 22 as he familiarly nods to the names
 23 and pensively points to his work;
 24 then from the depths of his entrails he hiccups:
 25 “Look—you see I am starting to write white!”
 26 (*Sleepwalking Nights* 75)

28 The image is annihilating. The integrity of the subject, guaranteed by his
 29 writing (Robinson, *Strindberg and Autobiography* 47–83), is denied and
 30 dissolved. The narrator (and writing author) is doubled, mirrored, and
 31 confronted with his narrated (and also writing) younger self. The writer’s
 32 progress seems to have left only burnt ground behind, and the “unfair”
 33 conclusion is that what he has accomplished as a writer is worthless. As
 34 Lotta Löfgren Casteen observes, “The Fifth Night” is written “only a few
 35 years away from the Inferno crisis” (180) and its author “teeters on the
 36 brink of Inferno” (187).

37 Readers of *Sleepwalking Nights* are confronted with the difficulties
 38 and fascination of a fundamentally political poem, which claims a pub-
 39 lic role for the writer, but at the same time uses autobiography to admit
 40 uncertainty, fragmentation, anxiety, the need to dissect the different layers
 41 of the poet’s personality, his contrasting viewpoints and the innumerable

impulses coming from an enormous encyclopedia. *Sleepwalking Nights* has in this respect a tentative and prismatic quality that makes it rather unique in Strindberg's oeuvre (Lamm 115).

The compelling autobiographical elements in Strindberg's work are a resource and a problem. They do not allow his readers much freedom to interpret his texts while ignoring his life. An important effort has been made in the last decades to read Strindberg's autobiographical urge in terms of fictional and textual strategies, so as to avoid the fallacies of the previous and more traditional biographical readings, whereby Strindberg's life appeared immediately reflected in his literary texts, and the literary texts were used as evidence of the writer's life and as psychological documents of his personality.¹³ On the other hand, the necessary results of the postmodern critical approach should not prevent us from seeing the referential function in Strindberg's texts, also because Strindberg used his life and his "destiny" to represent a reality that we still can recognize as ours, something more universal than just his life.

Strindberg's ability to describe the existential reality of the modern self in *Sleepwalking Nights* can be considered in light of what contemporary sociology has observed in relation to modernity and self-identity in our late modern age. Anthony Giddens identifies in doubt "a pervasive feature of modern critical reason" and a "general existential dimension of the contemporary social world" (3). This basic uncertainty of ours has many reasons. Modernity is a condition that "produces *difference, exclusion and marginalisation*. Holding out the possibility of emancipation, modern institutions at the same time create mechanisms of suppression, rather than actualisation, of self" (6). Giddens furthermore describes our typical apocalyptic attitude, "now that nature . . . has in a certain sense come to an 'end'—as a result of its domination by human beings" and "the risks of ecological catastrophe form an inevitable part of our horizon of day-to-day life" (4). Modernity's extreme dynamism—he continues—makes chronic revision in the light of new information inevitable (16–20). It also affects the way in which we interpret our lives, as "the existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography," and our identity is to be found "in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*" (54). "The reflexive project of the self" becomes, in this sense, "the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (5).

As it always happens in autobiography, silence talks. What is concealed or implied is at least as important as what is revealed. Gedin (290–317) argues that the debates in the wake of *Getting Married I* became the point of rupture between Strindberg and the radical front, and to a large

1 extent determined the general retreat of the radical in the second half
 2 of the 1880s. This gives a relevant context for a proper understanding
 3 of “The Fifth Night,” of the structural gap between 1883 and 1889 in
 4 *Sleepwalking Nights* and on the general “turn” of this long poem, taken
 5 as a coherent whole. *Sleepwalking Nights* proves, in conclusion, to be
 6 intriguing and engaging thanks to the way the personal dilemmas are
 7 interwoven with the public dimension and become political. The pris-
 8 matic quality of the text enables us to read in it many of the issues that
 9 characterize Strindberg’s intellectual and social commitment during the
 10 1870s and 1880s, but also an anticipation of the writer’s later dilem-
 11 mas. The questioning feature of the poem combines a critique against the
 12 conservative Swedish establishment of that time and a critique against
 13 the complacent faith in modernity. This combination becomes problem-
 14 atic in *Sleepwalking Nights*, as one pleads for “progress” while the other
 15 one attacks “progress.” Moreover, the multiplicity and fragmentation
 16 of the text witness a new perception of the ego’s impossible unity and
 17 consistency, but at the same time the conditions of displacement and re-
 18 collection are rendered through a finely tuned structural use of space and
 19 time, whereby the poetic text keeps its formal coherence and does not
 20 dissolve. Strindberg’s original genius has created an experimental poetic
 21 form, by him defined “the modern poem” (Strindberg, *Brev* 9:366–67;
 22 Strindberg *Brev* 10:140–41), in which a penetrating modernity critique
 23 takes place. I argue that it can be interpreted as a proto-modernist form
 24 of long poem.

Notes

25
 26
 27 1. I use the recent critical edition of Strindberg, *Samlade Verk*, vol. 15:161–
 28 234, for citations of *Sleepwalking Nights*. Translations of the title into English
 29 vary. I adopt the (main) title used by Arvid Paulson in Strindberg, *Sleepwalking*
 30 *Nights*, though there is no general agreement regarding the English title of sev-
 31 eral of Strindberg’s works (Robinson, *Cambridge Companion* xxxii). Michael
 32 Robinson proposes *Sleepwalking Nights in Broad Daylight* (*Cambridge Com-*
 33 *panion* xxxiv); Lotta Löfgren Casteen translates the work as *Sleepwalking*
 34 *Nights on Awake Days* (678–870). John Eric Bellquist uses *Sleepwalker Nights*
 35 *on Waking Days* (73). Michael Meyer calls it *Somnambulist Nights* (120). The
 36 first four sections, “Nights,” were published in February 1884 (Stockholm:
 37 Bonniers). Another section, a “Fifth Night,” was eventually added in 1890 and
 38 has been a recognized part of the text since the second edition of its publica-
 39 tion in 1900 (Spens, “Kommentarer” 407).

40 2. This lyric is actually without a title. “Vid avenue de Neuilly” is its first line.

41 3. Another relevant close reading is Spens, “*I Musernas bide*” 71–118,
 although its conclusions are that the plot is too chaotic and tends to disinte-
 grate. See also Löfgren Casteen 150–87.

4. See also Gedin (especially 36–56, 102–19). Although it does not directly deal with *Sleepwalking Nights*, Gedin’s analysis, which is carried out with the help of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of “field,” provides important elements to understand how this literary and aesthetic conflict during the 1880s had social, political, and ideological implications.

5. It must be pointed out that Baudelaire is not among the names and “influences” that define Strindberg’s declared intertextuality. He was introduced late in Sweden, and Strindberg must have known at least some of his works, but surely after the 1880s. One of Strindberg’s friends in later years, the younger writer Emil Kléen, was one of those who introduced Baudelaire in Sweden. See Sjöblad, in particular 130–56.

6. See Ulf Olsson, “I varans inferno”; Ulf Olsson, *Levande död* 25–26; Stenport 45–46.

7. They are named in a letter: Strindberg, *Brev* 3:329.

8. See also Schivelbusch’s classical study on the railway journey and on the general change of perception it provoked.

9. The character of the young painter Osvald Alving in Henrik Ibsen’s play *Ghosts* (*Gengangere*, 1881) is paradigmatic in this respect.

10. To render the subject’s inner debate, Paulson should have translated literally “I certainly have—you taught it yourself.” See also Löfgren Casteen’s version: “Have you heard such nonsense? / Of course, that is your very own teaching” (748).

11. For a similar approach to Strindberg, Harry G. Carlson uses Bakhtin’s concept of “carnevalization” (97–100). On the importance of Auerbach and his *Mimesis* see Said, *Humanism* 85–118.

12. A leitmotif in Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* is the criticism of the late-nineteenth-century bourgeoisie’s illusion of linear and continuous progress (in particular *Das Passagen-Werk* 570–611); see also Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte.” On the crisis of the myth of progress, considered from today’s perspective, see Nordin, especially 107–23; and Wright, especially 7–90.

13. See in particular Robinson, *Strindberg and Autobiography*; Dahlbäck; Ulf Olsson, *Levande död*; Behschnitt; and Stounbjerg, *Uro og urenhed*.

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