THE LITERARY KINSHIP OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

AND AUGUST STRINDBERG

by

Margery Frances Day
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Approved by:

[Signatures]

Instructor in Charge

Chairman of Department

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PREFATORY NOTE

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(Margery Day.)
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INTRODUCTION

There is really no such thing as a national literature, strictly speaking; for literature, by the very nature of its production, must be international. The tree of literature may put forth a separate blossom in America, of which Americans thenceforth are proud; but the roots of that tree are assuredly grounded in the soil of Egypt, China, Greece, France, and Abyssinia, and the pollen from the blossom is disseminated inevitably to the four corners of the earth. So that necessarily a great deal of the effort of literary critics is expended in tracing influences, receptive, aggressive, and reciprocal of one author on another, of one nation on another nation, of one period on a subsequent period. The Panchatantra with its translation into over a score of languages; The Aeneid, the Roman "national" epic with its Greek epic foundation; Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar with its pastoral ancestry dating back to Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion, and its posterity continuing to James Thomson's Seasons and
Shelley's *Adonais*; Milton's *Paradise Lost* and its undeniable kinship with Vondel's earlier *Lucifer* are all familiar examples of the international relations of literature.

One of the most spectacular examples of literary influence in modern times is that of Edgar Allan Poe — spectacular because of its extent and depth, and the ease with which it is traced. But one must recognize that Poe himself was the product of many influences, and that a study of these influences contributes materially to a clear conception of his genius. He stands at the end of a long line of French, German, and English 1 romanticists. Undoubtedly, he was the descendant of E. T. A. Hoffman and other German gothic romancers. As for style, particularly in *The Assignation*, Mr. 2 Brownell regards Disraeli and Bulwer as sources; Goethe, he makes ultimately responsible for certain more or less transcendental passages in *The Domain of Arnheim*; and Macaulay's influence is strong in Poe's 3 critical essays. Furthermore, Mr. Brownell asserts that Poe's M. Dupin in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* was sired by Voltaire's Zadig, whose paternal ancestor

1. *Scribner's*, 45:69
was an oriental prototype.

Such influences are more or less obvious to the student of Poe's stories, and Poe was guilty of such frequent and glaring plagiarism that other influences are easily discovered. But even so, his extensive reading and the great ease with which he assimilated what he read, make it well nigh impossible to uncover all of the elements of Poe's peculiar genius that were contributed by those who preceded him.

But his influence on others covers as wide an area as the sources of his receptivity. Of this, no doubt, too much has been made, for there has long been a tendency on the part of the chief adherents of the "Poe cult" to overemphasize his influence on modern romancers, a tendency originally fostered, perhaps, by a natural desire to see an unappreciated, even persecuted, individual come into his own. Mr. Brownell finds in the "romantic etymology" in which some members of the cult indulge, the "fanciful of the literal"; and he cautions against the fancifulness of a writer in the London Spectator who "proceeds to derive Jules Verne's stories from Hans Pfall, She from A. Gordon Pym, Treasure Island from The Gold-Bug, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde from William Wilson, Zola's Flaubert's, and even Mr. H. G. Wells' realism from

l. Brownell, American Prose Masters. p. 226
Nevertheless, with severe discounting of such derivations, one must grant Poe a progressively wide cosmopolitan influence. The spreading of influence has been accomplished in two ways: first, directly, by translation of his works into German, Scandinavian, Bohemian, French, Greek, Spanish, and Italian; and secondly, indirectly, by the intense appeal he has made to a small group which has subsequently disseminated the Poe qualities that have so powerfully affected types and theories of literature. That his technique of the short story influenced Maupassant, O'Brien, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sardou, and Conan Doyle, is well known, and, in the main, unquestioned. Likewise, as Mr. Gates has noted, his theory of producing poems "for poem's sake", to use his own phrase in The Poetic Principle, is a forerunner of our modern theory expressed as "art for art's sake".

These are examples, chosen almost at random, of Poe's influence in a literary sense. In addition to these, there is the curious fact of his intense psychological influence on at least two peculiar individuals: Pierre Charles Baudelaire, and August Strindberg. Baudelaire "seems to have believed in a sort of mysterious connection between his own spirit and Poe's. 'I could tell you', he wrote to Armand

2. Gates. p. 119
Fraisse, of something still more strange and incredible. In 1846 or '47 I became acquainted with some fragments of Poe's; they moved me in a singular fashion. I found among them, believe me or not, as you please, poems and stories which I had conceived myself, though in a vague and confused way, ill thought out; and which Poe wrought into perfect works." This discovery affected Baudelaire so deeply that he immediately began to work for the recognition of Poe in France that he felt was due him. "It is entirely due to Baudelaire that Poe has become practically a French author." He unweariedly haunted English cafes to find out from any American or Englishman about Poe, and after four years of such painstaking research, he began his translation, which occupied him over a period of fifteen years. He praises Poe on two scores: "Poe est l'ecrivain des nerfs;" Poe has no lesson to teach; he practices "art for art's sake". There seems to have been some real similarity in the mind, spirit, interests, and methods of the two men. Henry James's judgment seems to make clear this similarity, as well as to indicate their ultimate relative positions: "Poe was much the greater charlatan of the two, as well as the greater genius".

1. Nation. 88:32
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 33
4. Lit. Dig. 44:1257
with Baudelaire's statement concerning his mysterious connection with Poe in mind, it is indeed strange to discover that August Strindberg, Sweden's greatest dramatist, of whom Ibsen said, "Here is one who will be greater than I", expressed still more concretely his sense of having some mystic relationship to Poe. In 1888, Ola Hansson, the Swedish critic, lent Strindberg a volume of Poe's tales. These tales affected Strindberg so deeply that he wrote a letter shortly afterward to Hansson in which he "expressed his belief that Poe, who died the same year Strindberg was born, had moved his soul over into that of Strindberg". This idea took such firm hold on Strindberg's mind that we not only find him subsequently exhibiting distinctly "Poesque" qualities in his dramas, but also attempting to trace in his earlier work the unconscious influence of Poe. "Already in his early drama Gillets hemlighet, he saw Poe's influence; we find it more plainly in Paria and Samum."

Such a fact as this is humanly interesting and invites investigation from many angles. It is eminently worth investigating from the point of view of literature.

1. Lit. Dig. 44:1257
2. Scandinavian Studies. VIII:219
CHAPTE R I

The Life of Strindberg and the Periods of his Work

August Strindberg's work can hardly be considered without a knowledge of his life. To a peculiar degree his work is about himself; not only in a considerable bulk of it frankly labelled autobiography, but in his plays, which ostensibly are not autobiography, he uses, again and again, themes and experiences lifted bodily from his life. "His work", says Archibald Henderson, "is the spiritual biography of the greatest subjectivist of modern times." "It is impossible to dissociate the voluminous work in prose and verse, in fiction and the drama, of Strindberg from the facts of his life. That his experience had much to do with his point of view is beyond question, and that his pessimism was, to a large extent, the residuum left in his mind by what he had passed through is highly probable."

Therefore, a sketch of Strindberg's life with

1. Henderson, European Dramatists, p. 4
2. Outlook, 101:151
consideration of the relation between these events and his periods of writing is germane even to so short a study as this.

John August Strindberg was born in Stockholm on January 22, 1849, the son of a shipping clerk and a servant girl, as has so often been recounted. The facts of his childhood may be briefly noted. We know that he was an unwelcome child; that his father was "monomaniacal" in his anxiety to obtain a secure livelihood for his family; that his mother was "narrowly religious and preoccupied with the growing family". It is also evident that during the varying fortunes of the family, the young children were subjected to an environment of sordidness that was little calculated to induce a happy, serene development from childhood to manhood. These are the external facts of Strindberg's sadly unideal childhood.

For information concerning the spiritual history of the dramatist during his early years, we turn to his autobiographical novel The Son of a Servant, where we find, for example, on the first page, such an enlightening statement as the following: "The child's first impressions were, as he remembered afterwards, fear and hunger". For further light, we have Mr. Björkman's illuminating summary: "Timid and shy, morbidly sensitive, craving love and justice
with equal passion where both seemed denied him, he became from the very start what he has often called himself - one of life's scapegoats." With such an accretion of fear and morbidness and unsatisfied longing revealing itself at so early a date, it is no great wonder that Strindberg found it impossible to rise to mastery of life in his later years.

When he was thirteen, his mother died; so even that meager portion of mother-love which he had received from her - meager indeed in proportion to his desire for it - was now cut off. In less than a year after the death of Mrs. Strindberg, his father married his housekeeper. She and August did not experience the happiest of relationships, and, as a result, he became estranged from his father. All events thus conspired to turn his attention in upon himself and to foster his already noticeable tendency to introspection and religious brooding which later "was to form such a characteristic trait of his art".

The beginning of his career at the University of Upsala, where he matriculated in 1867, was characterized by extreme poverty and a rebellious spirit toward the whole system of education. After the first term he fled in disgust to Stockholm, where he engaged in teaching in the Clara school, in which

1. [Forum], 47:146
2. [Ibid.], p. 147
he had once been a pupil. It was there, in 1869, while he was chafing under the routine of the school, that he discovered, almost by accident, his genius for writing. Within a period of two months, he produced several comedies, a five-act tragedy in verse, Hermione, and a little later, The Outlaw.

The Outlaw was noticed favorably by the king, Charles XV, and secured for Strindberg a stipend which enabled him to return to the University. In his second sojourn there he read widely and intensively. Among other works he came to know Kierkegaard's Either - Or, "which made him forever a champion of the ethical, as juxtaposed to the aesthetical, life conception"; Buckle's History of Civilization in England, "which revealed to him the relativity of truth and the rooting of all ideas in material conditions"; and Eduard von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious, "which introduced him to the gospel of pessimism, the acceptance of life as an inevitable and perhaps meaningless evil". To these three early influences he remained, in spite of temporary wanderings, ever faithful. During this period, he also wrote some, but, in ruthless self-criticism, he destroyed it all.

Upon the death of the king, Strindberg, finding

1. Korum. 47:149
2. Ibid.
no means of support to enable him to go to school or
to continue writing, tried his talent first as an
actor and later as conductor of a trade journal. But
failing in both enterprises, in 1872 he went, in
desperation, to a beautiful little island in an inlet
at Stockholm.

It was on that island that he produced *Master
Olof*, the play in which he attained the height of his
dramatic power during the first, the romantic, period
of his writing, which included the years from 1868 to
1885. An historical play, it nevertheless attacked
unsatisfactory contemporary conditions and appealed
mightily to the youth of Sweden. It stands today as
a "landmark proclaiming the inception of a new era".
Mr. Björkman points out that the hero is a modern
hero because "he lives on to complete his work - in
compromise", and is denounced by Gert who was more
far-seeing, as a renegade. "This is life, of course;
and thus Strindberg may be said to have, for all
time, given the true symbolization of the everlasting
struggle between the genius and the mass on one side,
and between the true and false genius on the other."

The enthusiastic young author experienced a
keen disappointment when *Master Olof* was coldly

1. *Forum*. 47:150
received by the majority of the Swedish nation, and in an effort to forget his sorrow he now turned to a study of the Chinese language and reaped honors in this field; for the Russian Geographical Society awarded him a medal for his monograph on the relation of China and Sweden in the eighteenth century.

In 1875, he started on what proved for him a stormy voyage. He met the Baroness Wrangel, and, subsequent to her divorce from the Baron, married her. For a time, he was happy in his marriage, of which fact we have ample proof in his enormous literary productivity. He wrote, among other things, The Red Room, a novel, which chronicles his wretchedness from the time he left the university until he wrote Master Olof. This novel is extremely important because it is most indicative of what Strindberg was thinking during these early years of his writing. He had translated some of the American humorists, among them Mark Twain, and had taken their humorous judgments of society seriously. He says, in The Red Room, that he considered that "the American's sense for the real had discovered the real import of life in the struggle for existence; purified from all hallucinations, all ideals, and all romanticism, he understood the relative nothingness of life and the absolute nothingness of heaven, and he smiled a broad smile at the whole civilization. Neither rank, nor
greatness, nor talent, nor wealth could fool him into admiration; nothing old, nothing of the past, inspired him with reverence. Napoleon and Washington, Michael Angelo and Beecher Stowe were treated as saloon cronies; revolution and reaction, reformation and renaissance were movements only, whether forward or backward didn't matter; neither the subjugated woman nor the subjugated negro drew tears from anybody; the newspaper press, from which authors had emanated, were treated with the same contempt as any other business; dogmas and art theories, contributions to the lynch laws, were taken all in a lump; no regard for personality existed; the faith in court justice and the love for the common weal were blown away to be replaced by the pocket revolver. It was the portent of that anarchy of thought which was to burst forth later on, it was the balance sheet of the old view of the world, the beginning of the demolition."

So we find that the Strindberg of the works of this early period is Strindberg, the youthful revolter - revolting against the conventional religion and social life, the molds of thinking and the provincialism of the age.

In 1884, the notorious Marriage I appeared and produced its cyclonic effect on all Sweden. The Queen of Sweden, backed by her subjects, brought suit  

1. The Dial. 56:300
against Strindberg's publisher on the ground of an alleged attack on the established religion, although, Mr. Björkman asserts, "everybody knew that this was mere pretext, and that the true grievance against the book lay in its outspoken utterances on questions of sex morality". Strindberg was in Switzerland at the time, but he came home and won in the suit. "Young Sweden" acclaimed him their leader, but the vast majority of his countrymen turned against him with a bitterness that approached hatred.

This was unhappiness enough. But to make a bad situation worse, he was experiencing strained relations with his wife. With such a weight of bitterness and unhappiness on his heart, he fled to Germany, feeling that the hand of the world was against him and that he was an outcast. This flight marked for Strindberg the beginning of the long, heart-breaking period of virtual, if not legal, outlawry and exile that ended only in the last decade of his life. But, in spite of his sorrow and despair, he continued his writing in Germany, and entered into his second great period of literary activity - the naturalistic. In this period, we find the emergence of the theme of Strindberg's plays which is most familiar to American readers: the "woman question". We discover here, also, that the

1. Plays. Vol. 1, p. 9
inevitable "let-down" from the hopefulness of his first revolt - revolting youth is pathetically hopeful - had come, and that he begins to doubt the possibility of human happiness since things are as they are. No doubt this pessimism is the result, in part, of the growing unhappiness of his marriage with the Baroness, and his pre-occupation with the sex question was fostered by the keenness of his feeling concerning his own personal problem. Axel Johan Uppwall finds Strindberg possessed of the Oedipus complex and of a homosexual trend. Whatever the technical name of his difficulty be, it is easily recognized that Strindberg was struggling with no theoretical problem. For, in most of the plays written between 1887, when The Father appeared, and the close of the century, this problem is presented in various aspects, as if Strindberg were consciously groping for a satisfactory way out. In these plays he evaluates his favorite theory - that love between man and woman cannot exist unless one is completely subservient to the other, and that any other relationship is hate rather than love. Strindberg and the Baroness were divorced in 1891.

He produced in rapid succession The Father, Miss Julia, Creditors, Pariah, Simon, and The Stronger, novels and short stories dealing with the life of the people in the skerries, and three of his five
autobiographical novels. Two great formative influences are evident in these works: that of Nietzsche and that of Poe. Economic struggles made Strindberg a Nietzschean and seemingly forced him into a self-reliant atheism. He says, "God, Heaven, and Eternity had to be thrown overboard if the ship was to be kept afloat; and it had to be kept afloat because I was not alone ... I became an atheist as a matter of duty and necessity." He first began his correspondence with Nietzsche in 1888 through Nietzsche's desire to have Ecce Homo, "the burning biography of his soul", translated into and published in four languages at once. Strindberg's comment on the book and on Nietzsche's desire is interesting for the insight it gives into Strindberg's own mind: "There is no doubt that you have bestowed upon humanity the deepest book that it possesses". But he proceeds to caution Nietzsche against his desire to make his work available to everyone. "At all events your greatness will decline from the very moment when you become known and understood, and the dear mob begins to acclaim you as one of its own kidney. It is better that you preserve that aristocratic aloofness, and permit us other ten thousand spirits of finer fire to make pilgrimages to

1. Fortnightly Rev. 97:1123
2. N. A. Rev. 198:198
3. Ibid., p. 199
your holy of holies in order to refresh ourselves to
the full. Let us guard the esoteric truth in order
to keep it pure and whole, and not allow it to
become common property save by means of devoted
disciples."

These "two tempestuous spirits", as Mr.
Scheffauer characterizes them, agreed in their
conception of woman and love, and Nietzsche called
The Father "a masterpiece of hard psychology". The
correspondence ceased when Nietzsche went insane. His
influence on Strindberg is seen in Chandala, Creditors,
Parish, and At the Edge of the Sea. The hero of the
latter, Axel Borg, is a Nietzschean superman "who is
above the rest of humanity, a sort of scientific
Sherlock Holmes. He finally succumbs, because the
delicate machinery of his brain and nerves is unable
to withstand the double pressure of sexual excitement
and intellectual loneliness."

Co-existent with the influence of Nietzsche
through the years from 1889 to 1893 was that of Edgar
Allan Poe, with whose writing Strindberg had become
acquainted through the kindness of Ola Hansson. The
correspondence between Mr. Hansson and Strindberg,
already alluded to, shows that Strindberg had

1. H. A. Rev. 198:200
2. Ibid., p. 205
3. Ibid., p. 201
4. The Dial. 56:312
borrowed a volume of Poe's tales from Mr. Hansson while he was planning Creditors and before he had written Parish. The extent of the influence of Poe on Strindberg will be considered elsewhere in this study.

Facing Death, 1893, was the last of the plays written in the naturalistic period. His symbolistic plays, which he began writing in 1897, represent a complete "about face" in attitude and content, a change from materialism to mysticism, a change strikingly demonstrated by the fact that it was rumored that he had become a Catholic. Strindberg, the atheist turned Catholic! The reason for such a literary metamorphosis we find in Strindberg's Inferno, written in 1897, which chronicles for us the events of the period between 1893 and 1897. During these years he was always nearly on the hardly definable borderline between sanity and insanity—sometimes he was on the tragic side. The marvel of it is that he could write of this experience afterwards. His five year period of "illness and despondency" was a combination of religious and persecution mania" and was probably precipitated by his second marriage to Frieda Uhls in Berlin. This second marriage was not as stormy as the first, but

2. *Fortnightly Rev.* 97:1119
it was stormy enough. In the doubt and despair of this "Inferno", Strindberg sought aid in the exactness of science. But here he was not the complete scientist; for he yielded himself to the fancifulness of alchemy. More than once, however, in the scientific writings which he has left as record of this dark period, he approaches scientific truth to an astonishing degree.

"When the crisis was over, he stood forth not as a confessor of this or that creed but as a member of the mystic brotherhood, whose mission it is to remind man of the omnipresence of the unknowable. A pessimist he remained, even after the dawn of his new faith had set his soul singing once more, but sadness and resignation took the place of bitterness and defiance as the ground notes of his soul's melody." One is much tempted to conclude that Strindberg's attainment to faith after unfaith is not the result of a courageous facing of the facts of life and the synthesis of those facts into a workable faith - a hewing out of a living faith from the dead stone of denial by the strong strokes of a man, who was preeminently master of his environment; rather it seems to be the final surrender of a conquered man, a man who had run away for five years from a terrifying

1. Forum. 47:277
situation in which he did not know what to do, and had come back to the situation bringing with him a mimeographed sheet of instructions given him by conventional religion. But we shall never know. In fairness to Strindberg, his own words must be quoted from Damascus and likewise Mr. Björkman's comment upon them. "You began life by affirming everything. You continued it by denying everything. End it now with a coordination. Therefore cease to be exclusive! Say not, 'either - or', but instead 'both - and!' Here we have Strindberg's onward march through forty years of thinking and working outlined in a couple of sentences - and we cannot fail to recognize its identity with the general course of human progress, which runs from blind belief through arrogant denial to a reasoned balancing of faith and doubt."

The year 1897 marks his reappearance into the realm of the every-day, his return to Sweden, and his entrance into another great period of literary activity. He wrote plays, history, novels, stories, scientific, critical, and political pamphlets - all those highly symbolistic, mystical, Swedenborgian works in prose and verse, which helped to establish Strindberg in the national breast of Sweden after years of exile - a place which he holds indisputably

1. Forum. 47:283
today. Mr. Björkman regards *The Dance of Death* as the climax of Strindberg's work in the symbolistic period. Here is portrayed the dancing of a puppet-like creature to the music of a "Hogarthian fiddler" who brings "pardon and peace, mercy and harmony" when the dance is over. Curt, according to Mr. Björkman, represents the incarnation of "the struggle between reasoned humility and instinctive pride", which epithet we might apply with equal profit to Strindberg himself. This interpretation brings out admirably the symbolic character of the play, and we may take it as typical of the kind of play Strindberg wrote in this last period of his literary activity.

Strindberg's third marriage, to Harriet Hosse, a Swedish actress, occurred in 1901. It was the briefest and least stormy of his marital experiences and was dissolved three years later. About this time Strindberg's pioneering spirit entered upon the enterprise of establishing a theatre at Stockholm, which should stage only his plays. This Intimate Theatre was established in 1907, and he wrote plays for production there, which were eminently successful. He had now returned to his own, and his own were receiving him at last. From this time on till his death, he lived in peace in Sweden. He had five

1. *Forum.* 47:281
children by his three marriages, and his last years were shadowed by sorrow over the separation from his children together with his fear that their mothers were not worthy to care for them.

He died on May 14, 1912, surrounded by his children. The peace of his death contrasts strangely with the turbulence of his life. He was buried in honor, which was shown him by the whole nation, "from the King and the Privy Council to the poorest and most forgotten". A more fitting summary of the character, spirit, and effect of Strindberg cannot be made than that of Mr. Björkman, perhaps the fairest and most sympathetic of Strindberg's critics: "In more than one respect he reminds us of some loud-voiced and sharp-tongued old Hebrew prophet. A Swedish critic has been led to call him the artistic conscience of that country. He might as well be named the spiritual conscience of our whole time."

1. Uddgren, p. 158
2. Forum, 47:288
CHAPTER II

The Spiritual Kinship of Poe and Strindberg

When Strindberg wrote to Cla Hansson enthusiastically divulging his great discovery that the soul of Edgar Allan Poe had passed into his at Poe's death, he did not tell on what facts he based his conclusion. Whether it was on recognition of certain points of likeness between Poe's tales and his own plays, or on a realization that there were certain mental traits that both he and Poe possessed, we do not know. We do know that he proceeded to trace Poe's unconscious influence on him through the plays he had written between 1868 and 1888, and that he found what he considered evidence of it in The Secret of the Guild (1880). For readers, however, the influence of Poe does not become evident until after Strindberg's introduction to Poe. But this much does become plain, as one studies the lives and habits of mind of the two men in juxtaposition: that Strindberg and Poe are very much more alike in mental
make-up and spiritual characteristic than many brothers are, and that, therefore, there is a very real natural basis for Strindberg's receptiveness to Poe's influence; the Poe characteristics were not copied mechanically or artificially in Creditors and Parish and Simoom. The two men, a generation apart, were kindred spirits, were affinities; they were so much alike that it is far better that they did not live as contemporaries, for it is quite probable that, in view of the intense egotism of both, they would have become the bitterest of enemies. The most obvious point of likeness between Poe and Strindberg lies in their mental unbalance and their tendency to periods of actual mania. Both have furnished much interesting controversial material to psychoanalysts, and although the particular mental malady with which each was afflicted is called by a different name by psychiatrists, nevertheless, there are certain traits of mind common to both.

Poe was a dipsomaniac. For years it was the fashion to lay Poe's irresponsibility and peculiar irregularities to his drunkenness. But with the increase of knowledge concerning mental disturbance, it has become evident that Poe inherited a peculiar mental make-up, which is characterized by periodic fits of insanity during which the patient is unusually

susceptible to alcoholic effects. It is said that a glass of alcoholic drink would put Poe in the same state that could be possible for another hardier soul only after a battle full. Poe himself recognized the relationship of drink to his particular dementia for in 1848 he said: "As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink rather than the drink to insanity".

Strindberg's dementia some consider to be paranoia, while others, Freudians, lay his difficulties entirely at the door of sex, and say he had an Oedipus complex and homosexual tendencies. These technical terms are not very descriptive, and, at the first glance, there seems to be little similarity between the dementia of the two men. But there is one trait that they possessed in common, probably the root of their difficulty, certainly a potent factor in all their activities - namely their overwhelming egotism. Poe said on one occasion, "My whole nature utterly revolts at the idea that there is any being in the Universe superior to myself". This sounds strikingly like a statement of Strindberg: "Do not be surprised that I refuse to bring up the rear with the baggage train, I who am accustomed to march in the van".

1. Current Literature. 43:288
2. Brownell. American Prose Writers. p. 266
3. Living Age. 310:80
The following quotation from *The Living Age* for February 20, 1909, is taken from an article on Poe; but it would be very easy to believe that it was said of Strindberg: "He lived in a world happily unconceivable to the great majority of his fellow-creatures. He not only lived in such a world; with unflagging vigilance he watched himself, his every thought and action, during his sojourn there. He dissected every emotion, probed every wound, caged every fantasy. He analyzed his love of beauty, his ideals; and the analysis endangered all ... he is himself, in many thin disguises, the soul living and intelligible character in all his stories ..." Compare with this the comments of Frances Gregg and John Cowper Powys concerning Strindberg's "mad self-infatuation" and his "insane self-preoccupation" as revealed in his voluminous autobiographical work.

Poe and Strindberg were, in psychological parlance, unadjusted. The hand of the world was against them, and they hated it for its seeming cruelties. Brownell says of Poe: "He was from the first in complete disaccord with his environment and lived in a perpetual state of warfare with it ..." "But it is not Poe's gloomy life and its ghastly conclusion, apt extinction of a genius already

1. p. 503
2. Forum. 55:661
3. Ibid. 664
honey-combed with demoralization, that robs his figure of dignity and alloys the awfulness of his fate. In his own character - his own predetermined organization, if one chooses. In spite of his personal charm, his was a baleful spirit. For him the stars of religion and love do not break out in the blue. Spiritually, he lacked ideality. His indignation is not saeva, but fretful, jealous, egotist." Again we find a striking parallel of Mr. Brownell's statement in this concerning Strindberg by Frances Gregg and John Fowys: "His vices, by which we would indicate his petulance, his insane self-preoccupation, his distorted perspective, his morbid irritability are, in a peculiar sense his most effective engines and instruments of research. Hate can be as illuminating as love ... He hated the successful and the prosperous, he hated gay, triumphant people, he desired to be always troubling the waters with some disconcerting and obstinate question, to be a spoil-sport at the dance; all these were elements of the same half-morbid, half-heroic energy, feverish and feeding upon itself." Edmund Gosse thinks he hears a "hiss in every page" of Strindberg, "with occasionally a snarl and an explosion, like the voice of an enraged tom-cat down

1. Brownell, American Prose Masters. p. 207  
2. Forum. 55:664ff
a passage." His is "mainly a message of hatred". Perhaps neither Poe nor Strindberg hated as much as these critics have judged them to have hated. Be that as it may, it is significant that critics have said so nearly the same things concerning the essential spirit of their work.

Closely allied with their basic mental make-up, perhaps the result of it, was the active spirit of revolt which both manifested. Both rebelled against the established order of things. It has already been brought out that *Master Olof*, *The Red Room*, *Marriage*, I, II, III, and others of Strindberg's works were written in revolt against social, political, and religious conventionality. Poe's revolt was in a different field - the literary - but was just as violent as was Strindberg's. Strindberg wrote ruthlessly, as "with a dissecting knife", and dearly he paid for his fearless, though we often feel, not wholly disinterested slashing of society, by sacrificing the good graces of public opinion. Certainly one admires another who willingly dies, socially speaking, for a cause; but one likes to feel that the cause is a noble one and eminently worth dying for. Too often we feel that the cause Strindberg is dying for is only himself. Poe expressed

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1. *Living Age*. 308:556
2. *Bookman*. 47:367
his Byronic tendencies by revolting against the literary conventionalities of his day, particularly against the New England poetic tradition, forcing people, as Sherwin Cody points out, to take sides. But as with Strindberg, when Poe is apparently most courageous in attacking well established custom, one cannot help feeling an uncritic-like passion creeping in, a passion that is unpleasant to the reader and an evidence of exceedingly bad taste on the part of the author.

But heavily discounting the value of the revolt of both Poe and Strindberg because of the personal element that unquestionably is there, the final effect of their rebellion has been most beneficial. Gustav Uddgren, in grateful, and, in the main, unbiassed appreciation affirms: "Without the Strindberg revolution, our nation would still be that invertebrate, lethargic weakling, who considered that he was doing enough for the age by dreaming about the boom of the leather-cannon of the seventeenth century and who admired himself while lying on his back declaiming Tegner's Charles XII". Poe, as truly constructive as Strindberg, anticipated our modern demand for a "pseudo-scientific supernaturalism to replace the mystic, symbolic, or merely romantic

1. Dial. 35:161
2. Strindberg the Man. p. 24
supernaturalism" of Hoffman and his contemporaries. He introduced America to the Parnassian idea of art for art's sake. He suckled into sturdiness America's only child among types of literature, the short story. And it is reasonable to believe, Mr. Cody avows, that Poe's efforts to establish a literary Magazine were not prompted alone by his carnal desire for bread, butter, and molasses, but by a genuine desire to place literature in the hands of the reading public of America. Strindberg and Poe were sincere in their revolt.

Another characteristic which they share, a characteristic which, perhaps, is the result of their own abnormality, is their interest in the abnormal, the unusual. For Poe, if one judge entirely by his stories, has scarcely any interest in the ordinary or commonplace. True, he seems to have been at bottom practical-minded enough. His desire and persistence in looking for a sinecure from the government and the realistic setting of some of his tales - as perhaps that of The Pit and the Pendulum and of The Gold-Bug - would indicate this. But the stories themselves are a far cry from the ordinary affairs of human life; for here "all is vast, abnormal, far-fetched ... the familiarity and homeliness of life he left completely

1. Nation. 88:34
2. Dial. 35:161
unrecorded”. "The esoteric attracted and the ecumenical repelled him. He was fascinated by the false as Hawthorne was by the fanciful." A living-room full of Roderick Ushers, heroes of The Black Cat, Berenice, The Tell-Tale Heart, the avenger of Fortunato, the lover of Eleonora, the dominating figure in The Case of M. Valdemar, would bring terror to the hostess of stoutest heart. A collection of Strindberg's heroes and heroines of his naturalistic period would be no less terrifying: neurotic Julias, diabolical Gustavs and Lauras, despicably grasping Berthas. What an array!

And, although at the first consideration, Strindberg's plays seem to be a "criticism of life" and Poe's tales do not, in the final analysis, if the truth be told, we admit that in the work of both it is the situation that interests and intrigues us primarily, and not the characters, as living, unaccountable human beings. They dance too perfectly to the tune previously chosen by Poe and Strindberg.

Hand in hand with both authors' overwhelming interest in abnormal characters, goes their ability to analyze these characters and their actions in carefully conceived situation. In an article in The Outlook for May 25, 1912, appears the following

2. Scribner's 45:73
comment on this power of Strindberg: "His insight into actions and motives of morbid types of character was more penetrating than Poe's". This seems scarcely credible when one thinks of such stories of Poe's as Berenice where "each blur of the mind in monomania is set in place, each nuance of a horrifying situation exactly adjusted". Witness the graphic clarity in which the mental processes of Egaeus are portrayed: "I fear, indeed, that it is in no manner possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of that nervous intensity of interest with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the contemplation of even the most ordinary objects of the universe.

"To muse for long unwearied hours with my attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin, or in the typography of a book; to become absorbed for the better part of a summer's day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry, or upon the door; to lose myself for an entire night in watching the steady flame of a lamp, or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat monotonously some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition,

1. p. 151
ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence, by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and abstinately persevered in; - such were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not, indeed, altogether unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation."

The following passage from The Son of a Servant exhibits the same searching analysis of states of the mind of the sensitive, egotistical child that Strindberg was: "The child was very sensitive. He wept so often that he received a special nickname for doing so. He felt the least remark keenly, and was in perpetual anxiety lest he should do something wrong. He was very awake to injustice, and while he had a high ideal for himself, he narrowly watched the failings of his brothers. When they were unpunished, he felt deeply injured; when they were undeservedly rewarded, his sense of justice suffered. He was accordingly considered envious. He then complained to his mother. Sometimes she took his part, but generally she told him not to judge so severely. But they judged him severely, and demanded that he should judge himself severely. Therefore, he withdrew into

1. Best Tales of Poe. p. 350
himself and became bitter. His reserve and shyness grew on him. He hid himself if he received a word of praise, and took a pleasure in being overlooked. He began to be critical and to take a pleasure in self-torture; he was melancholy and boisterous by turns."

It is scarcely original to state that Poe was a conscious artist. "Poe, as Sherwin Cody points out, "studied art through the process of conscious analysis. Art is with him a system thought out and perfected by experiment and constant and detailed study." Here again what critics say of Poe is curiously pertinent to characterize Strindberg, for the same knowledge of the tools of his art is attributed to Strindberg by a writer for The Nation: "His ability to plan dramatic situations and to turn them inside out by the play of ingenious reasoning and a very alert fancy we have never questioned". The fact of his spirit of fearless experimentation in the field of literary art which he shared with Poe, is brought out by Barrett H. Clark in The Continental Drama of Today: "Strindberg is master of his art. When he violates the laws of stage-craft and goes counter to the fundamentals of technique - or seems to do so - we may be sure that

1. *Son of a Servant*. pp. 10ff
2. *Best Tales of Poe*. p. XV
he has sufficient reason.

It almost approaches platitude to say that genius is dependent in large measure on intellectual energy. The mere bulk of the work of both Poe and Strindberg testifies to their mental energy. Strindberg's work has been numerically tabulated by Mr. Bjorkman in an article entitled *August Strindberg: His Achievement*: fifty-five plays, six novels, fifteen collections of short stories, nine autobiographical novels, three collections of verse, four volumes of history, five volumes of science; seventeen collections of literary and scientific essays. The immensity of the accomplishment is astounding when we consider the fact that he died at sixty-three.

Poe's work is just as astounding in proportion. Brander Matthews remarks: "With the energy of our race, he had also its abundant productivity; and in the scant seventeen years of his literary labors, he brought forth the ample prose and verse which is now collected in ten solid tomes".

But physical bulk and weight are not the only criteria by which we may judge the intellectual energy of these two men. The variety of subjects in which they were interested, and in almost every case,

1. P. 84
2. *Forum*. 47:274ff
to which they made a definite contribution, if they studied them seriously, is irrefutable evidence of the "insatiable curiosity" that is so often attributed to them by their critics. Strindberg's spirit was affected by everything - "romanticism and naturalism, Darwinism, science of both man and matter, physiology and psychology, history, religion, mysticism, and magic, Ibsen and Kierkegaard, Björnson, Jonas Lie, Zola and Maupassant, Huysmans and Péladan, Charcot, Taine, Renan, Nietzsche, systems, doctrines, temperaments and beings, - everything that comes to light, that breathes and creates, - enter, subjugate, and with their vigor animate this eager mind, which opposes no obstacle to the torrent of its ideas and passions". No one will deny Mr. Maury's statement who has examined the titles of Strindberg's works:

Swedish Events and Adventures, The People at Hemsö, Historical Miniatures, The New Kingdom, The Swedish People, Little Studies of Plants and Animals, Among French Peasants, A Blue Book, which contains a curious mingling of Strindberg's ideas on almost every conceivable subject - Speeches to the Swedish Nation, Religious Renascence, Origins of Our Mother Tongue, Biblical Proper Names. These, together with his plays, constitute, as Mr. Björkman says, "a whole literature". Strindberg's assimilation of Poe and

1. Living Age. 310:78
2. Forum. 47:155
the depth of his feeling about Poe is but an example of how his rapacious mind caught and held fast whatever was at hand.

Poe, in his short life, exhibited this same eagerness and alertness of mind. "His mind was highly speculative, inquiring, even inquisitional. He had a prodigious interest in problems, puzzles, rebuses." He was interested in science, theories of art, poetry, prose, and criticism, in journalism, in cryptography.

Strindberg's discovery of Poe was like discovering a fellow-researcher who was willing and ready to delve as deeply as he into anything that looked in the least degree promising.

When the dark waters of insanity closed in about them, both turned for the authority and support they needed so sorely to science, in which they constantly dabbled more or less earnestly. Björkman tells us that Strindberg studied every modern science from astronomy to sociology. When, in his tortured state of mind he could not write, he turned to science where he felt he was on firm ground and where there was no room for skepticism, of which he was tired. And, strangely enough, although he did lack training in the scientific method and did have a fanciful belief in alchemy, he seems nevertheless to

1. Scribner's. 45:79
have approached actual discovery of truth. "Some day," says Mr. Björling, "the world will know what a treasure-trove of suggestive ideas lies hidden among Strindberg's scientific and philosophical speculations, even when these appear most fantastic... He has always been on the track of some truth still hidden from the patient plodders in the field involved."

The most important of the scientific or pseudo-scientific works Poe has left us is *Eureka*, which has been studied by Frederick Drew Bond. Mr. Bond's article is called *Poe as an Evolutionist* and appears in the *Popular Science Monthly* for September, 1907. He says, "Crude as Poe's philosophical speculations sometimes were, yet foremost among them he entertained, in its broad outlines, that idea of the changes and development of the world which goes, nowadays, by the name of the Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation a mere incident compared with the discoveries which he proposes to set forth in *Eureka*: "I design to speak of the Physical, Metaphysical, and Mathematical - of the material and spiritual universe - of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition, and its Destiny. I shall be so rash, moreover, as to challenge the conclusions, and thus, in effect, to question the sagacity of many of the greatest and most justly

reverenced of men". Poe was really in earnest.

"Eureka sets forth these ideas:

1. The Universe is in perpetual state of flux.
2. It develops from homogeneity to heterogeneity.
3. Our own system developed from nebulae.
4. The earth has, through various stages, produced
   "higher and higher organic life characterized
   by an ascending development of mind, hand in
   hand with an increasing complexity of the physical
   organism."

Mr. Bond may be inclined to take Poe's
scientific theories too seriously. But his interest-
ing conclusion may be taken for what it is worth:
"The statement of Poe in this passage, that 'hetero-
geneousness, brought about directly through condensa-
tion, is proportional with it forever', appears to
contain the germ of Herbert Spencer's developed
formula: 'Evolution is a change from an indefinite,
incoherent, homogeneity to a definite, coherent
heterogeneity through continuous differentiations and
integrations'. Noteworthy, also, is Poe's statement
of the correlation between mental development and
physical organization ... Erroneous, of course, the
details of his conceptions very frequently are; but
this is common to him with the pioneers of every great
idea."

2. Ibid. 274
3. Ibid. 271ff
Lastly, critics have furnished evidence of the kinship of the two men in the variance of their estimates of the two men. This variance is not to be wondered at. For, given two very abnormal, erratic men who write what undeniably is literature, and literature that is almost second to none in their respective nations, and one is sure to have controversy over just how far their writing is to be credited, taking into account their mental irregularities. This is especially true because an abnormal person frequently offends the sensibilities of more or less puritanical people. Then, too, we have an instinctive fear of being led for a time by a person whom we consider great and then of being left stranded high and dry when this person proves to be a charlatan or immoral - not only high and dry but ashamed that we were so easily fooled.

It is impossible to find three critics, who agree perfectly in their estimate of the life and works of August Strindberg, or of Edgar Allan Poe. "It has been the fate of few writers to have been so vehemently discussed as Poe. His life has been a battle-ground for his biographers. There is scarcely a fact in any one of the books that have been written about his career that is not emphatically denied." It is easy to prove the truth of this

1. Current Literature. 43:288
statement when we think of the various questions which have furnished critical bones of contention: Is Poe ethical or not? Did Poe's drunkenness affect his writing? And did he really get drunk very often, after all? Was he mercenary or was he motivated only by a love of literature and of the cause of literature? William C. Brownell says Poe's writing "lacks the elements of real literature". While a German poet, Hanns Heinz Ewers, thinks that the value of Poe's contribution to literature is so inestimable that Poe should be worshipped. He feels sorry for Poe that he was unfortunate enough to have been born among Americans who could not possibly understand him. He says, ecstatically, if a trifle vindictively: "Let them keep the bones in America. We (in Europe) will listen to the Poet's soul, which lives in the nightingale's throats in the Alhambra".

Exactly paralleling these contrasting opinions of Poe are the following expressed concerning Strindberg: "As a repentant sinner, Strindberg remained a picturesque figure to the last, and that added its quota of popularity. As documents of a pathological mind, these works (of Strindberg) will probably always have a certain value. The author is too petty to maintain his position as a curiosity of literature; to

1. Scribners. 310:78
3. Ibid. p. 122
be admired because he was unique." But according to Lucien Maury, Strindberg belongs to the literature of the world because of the "extent of his work" and the "universality of his genius".

Whether we agree with the spirit of the panegyrics on the two men or whether we side with their denunciators, we realize that the fact that a battle rages is proof of their significance as figures in literature; the critics cannot resign them cheerfully to oblivion by saying nothing about them. Critics must express an opinion one way or another. And so the battle rages on.

2. Litt. Age. 310:78
Chapter III
The Period of Poe's Influence on Strindberg

"A personality does not develop from itself, but out of each soul it comes in contact with it sucks a drop, just as the bee gathers its honey from a million flowers, giving it forth eventually as its own." These words of Strindberg's are capable of precise application both to his own career as a dramatist, and to the course of the modern drama itself. We find in the drama of today, the epitome of contemporary thought, combining as it does cosmopolitanism and a balancing, enlightened nationalism, a spirit of service to society, and a faith in the future of society. "The real progenitor of the plays of the modern era is not an individual, but the \textit{zeitgeist}." It is not strange, therefore, that we should find individual authors

\begin{enumerate}
\item Henderson. \textit{European Dramatists}. p. 21
\item Henderson. \textit{Changing Drama}. pp. 19ff
\item \textit{Ibid.} p. 12
\end{enumerate}

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exhibiting all the tendencies and characteristics that go to make up the spirit of the age; that we should discover likenesses between the creative productions of these authors and be able to trace the influence of one writer upon another. But neither is it strange, in view of the tremendous complexity of the action and interaction of these tendencies of the age, that we should find it exceedingly difficult to determine where direct influencing has occurred and to discriminate on the one hand between the expression of a tendency which all share in common, and, on the other, the end-product of a characteristic engendered and fostered in one individual by another. It is easy to be led on in our zeal to determine cause and effect and attribute influence where it is not due.

This danger has been particularly prevalent in the study of the influence of Edgar Allan Poe upon August Strindberg. This has been true for the two following reasons: first, it has become the fashion to attribute to Poe many of the present day tendencies in content and form in literature that we like to dub "modern"; and secondly, Strindberg, by his own words, admits the involved character of his indebtedness to others. The sources of his genius are well-nigh incapable of determination because they are so many and because he has so completely assimilated
and reproduced in transformation the "drops".

An interesting and significant example of the false conclusions one may draw, if one does not continually guard against this tendency to dramatize history, is furnished by Frank Wadleigh Chandler in his *Aspects of Modern Drama*, where he makes such an erroneous statement as the following: "Notwithstanding her defiance, Julie loses her will and yields on the instant to the lackey's hypnotic suggestion. This stress on the power of hypnosis has been ascribed to Strindberg's reading of Poe and his dabblings in pseudo-science." But cumulative evidence points to the conclusion that *Miss Julie* had been completed and produced by the Student Association of Copenhagen University before Strindberg read Poe's tales. Most powerful of all the evidence is that furnished by Strindberg himself; for in his extended preface to *Miss Julie* he mentions not a word about Poe. This appears very significant when we remember the intensity of his feeling for Poe. If he had read him before he wrote *Miss Julie*, it would have been very shortly before. Therefore, it is hardly conceivable that, in his preface in which he sets forth in detail his new theories of the form and characterization of the drama, he would have failed to mention Poe. In addition to this negative evidence, we have the

1. P. 304
positive evidence of Strindberg's letters to Ola Hansson, in which he names specifically the plays which he wrote under Poe's influence. I quote at length concerning the letters from Mr. Björkman's introduction to Pariah. "These show that while Strindberg was still planning Creditors, and before he had begun Pariah, he had borrowed from Hansson a volume of tales by Edgar Allan Poe. It was his first acquaintance with the works of Poe. The impression Poe made on Strindberg was overwhelming. He returns to it in one letter after another. Everything that suits his mood of the moment is 'Poesque' or 'E. P - esque'. The story that seems to have made the deepest impression of all was The Gold Bug, though his thought seems to have distilled more useful material out of certain other stories illustrating Poe's theories about mental suggestion. Under the direct influence of these theories, Strindberg, according to his own statements to Hansson, wrote the powerful one-act play Simoom, and made Gustav in Creditors actually call forth the latent epileptic tendencies in Adolph. And on the same authority we must trace the method of psychological detection practised by Mr. X in Pariah directly to The Gold Bug."

1. Plays. Vol. II. pp. 242ff
It seems safest, therefore, to conclude that Miss Julie was written before Strindberg read Poe. But such a mistake as Mr. Chandler has made is natural, not only because chronologically Miss Julie might appear to have been evolved under the same influence as Creditors, Pariah, and Simoom, if one did not carefully consider sequence of events, but also because the form and method and content of Miss Julie are undoubtedly of close kin to these later works in Strindberg's naturalistic period.

In this fact of the kinship of Miss Julie with the plays immediately succeeding it, lies the answer to the question of why Poe influenced Strindberg so deeply and so strikingly. The ideas and spirit of one individual never strike fire in another individual unless wood is there to be kindled. So we may consider Poe as igniting the fuel of Strindberg's new genius. Or, to speak without metaphor: Certain trends of thought and emphases of interest were dominant in Strindberg's mind at the time he read Poe. He was evolving certain new theories of the drama, — indeed he had become articulate about them in Miss Julie. And then he read Poe. He recognized immediately that here were ideas of which his might be considered the legitimate offspring. Strindberg being Strindberg, fanciful, mystical all the time he was endeavoring to be sternly naturalistic, it is
little wonder that he should conceive the idea that Poe's soul had gone into his when Poe died in October, 1849, and that he should eagerly divulge his discovery to Mr. Hansson. He probably regarded his new ideas as Poe's old ones which heretofore had been latent in himself. Neither is it any wonder that we find in the plays immediately following this, the perfect crystallization of the form and method he had been feeling for in Miss Julie, the transmigration into the drama of the soul of Poe's theory of the short story.

The story of Poe's influence on Strindberg is intimately bound up with the story of the rise of naturalism and the Theatre Libre - one chapter in the account of the experimentation which characterizes the drama of today. Almost simultaneously, largely through the interacting influences of such exponents of the new theory as Émile Zola, Eugene Brieux, Henrik Ibsen, Gerhart Hauptmann, and August Strindberg, in France, Germany, and Sweden, rose the naturalistic drama and the Free Theatre Movement. In this "drama of pure realism ... the subjects are invariably chosen from contemporary life; and, because of the sharp contrasts and new materials afforded, from those phases of life which had hitherto been vigorously excluded from the domain of the drama - the life of the humble and the lowly. The subjects treated were
repulsive to many theater-goers, accustomed to the universal idealization of life in the conventional theater. The ugly, the abnormal, the asymmetric were types enthusiastically studied by the naturalists. Their search was not for beauty, for the ideal, or for the moral; their search was only for the truth in the light of modern social activity. A graphic and faithful projection of a section of human actuality - that, in fine, was the ideal of the Naturalist."

"Naturalism furnished the model of the drama purely static. For there is virtually no room for the dynamic display of volitional activity in a drama without psychological development and lacking in the hero and heroine of the ancient dramatic formula. This naturalistic type of drama lent itself not to long productions in five acts in large theatres, but to plays of a few scenes, sometimes of only a single act - pictures, tableaux, atmospheric in tone with a minimum of action - shown in a theatre of a very limited size."

Obviously, then, theater and drama must develop coincidently to express fully the spirit of the new theory. So, in 1887, we find André Antoine establishing in Paris his Théâtre Libre "where in succession were produced such pieces of revolutionary tendencies as Ibsen's Ghosts, Hauptmann's Before

2. Ibid. p. 130
Sunrise, Strindberg's *The Father* and *Miss Julia*;" two years later came the opening of the Freie Bühne in Berlin; and in 1888 Winthrop Ames in New York promulgating a similar venture. "Indeed one European city after another got its 'Little' or 'Free' or 'Intimate' theatre." Strindberg's own dream for an Intimate Theatre in Stockholm was not realized until the early years of the twentieth century. Strindberg was a leading spirit in the project, and an account of his relationship to the new movement is furnished in "A Memorandum to the Members of the Intimate Theatre from the Stage Director", which Strindberg wrote in 1908: "In the '80's the new time began to extend its demands for reform to the stage also.

Zola declared war against the French comedy, with its Brussels carpets, its patent-leather shoes and patent-leather themes, and its dialogue reminding one of the questions and answers of the catechism. In 1887, Antoine opened his Théâtre Libre at Paris, and Thérèse Raquin, although nothing but an adapted novel, became the dominant model. It was the powerful theme and concentrated form that showed innovation, although the unity of time was not yet observed, and curtain falls were retained. It was then I wrote my dramas: *Miss Julia, The Father, Creditors*.

3. *ibid.*. p. 91
Strindberg expresses thus his new theory of
the one-act play, "a dramatic form which Strindberg
created as distinctively as Maupassant and Poe created the form of the short-story:" "No definite
form should control the dramatist, since the motive alone determines the form. Freedom in treatment is all - conditioned only by unity and the sense of style in conception." In the preface to Miss Julie, he explains his technique: "Turning to the technical side of the composition, I have tried to abolish the division into acts. And I have done so because I have come to fear that our decreasing capacity for illusion might be unfavourably affected by intermissions during which the spectator would have time to reflect and to get away from the suggestive influence of the author - hypnotist." The similarity of this to Poe's own theory of unity of effect is obvious. And supreme artist that he was, it would have been strange indeed if Strindberg had not sensed immediately as kin to his own, the method and spirit in the tales of Poe who expressed his theory of the short story in the famous review of Hawthorne thus: "A skilful artist.. has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents, but having deliberately conceived a certain single effect he wrought, he then combines such events.

1. Henderson. European Dramatists. p. 59
and discusses them in such tone as may best serve him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very first sentence tend not to the out-bringing of this effect, then in his very first step he has committed a blunder. In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the pre-established design."

Strindberg's ideal was "to express his originality with pristine clarity and to achieve the most intensive, concentrated effect through bringing his complex and multiplex ideas to a burning, focal point". In Miss Julie, Strindberg is working toward this concentration, this unity of effect. He says, "The dialogue strays a good deal as, in the opening scenes, it acquires a material that later on is worked over, picked up again, repeated, expounded, and built up like the theme in a musical composition". But in Creditors, Pariah, Sähemo, and The Stronger, we find him realizing his purpose toward which he had started in Miss Julie and achieving a unity—a concentration, that is almost fiendish in its steady march toward an inevitable conclusion. "Each play is nothing but climax though in some cases they are nearly as long as ordinary drama, it is rare that

1. Poe's Best Tales. p. XIII
they have any subsidiary characters. Even the protagonists are too occupied with the urgencies of their own immediate crises, and with the nakedness of their own souls, to have time for either the artificial jewels of the pineroesque epigram or the flying rockets of the Shavian dialectic."

That this statement is entirely justified is illustrated by this selection from Pariah:

"Mr. X. You are a different man from what I took you to be - if stronger or weaker, I cannot tell - if more criminal or less, that's none of my concern - but decidedly more stupid; that much is quite plain. For stupid you were when you wrote another person's name instead of begging - as I have had to do. Stupid you were when you stole things out of my book - could you not guess that I might have read my own books? Stupid you were when you thought yourself cleverer than me, and when you thought that I could be lured into becoming a thief. Stupid you were when you thought balance could be restored by giving the world two thieves instead of one. But most stupid of all you were when you thought I had failed to provide a safe corner-stone for my happiness. Go ahead and write my wife as many anonymous letters as you please about her husband having killed a man - she knew that long before we were married! - Have you had enough now?

Mr. Y. May I go?

Mr. X. Now you have to go! And at once! I'll send your things after you! Get out of here!" 2

Likewise the following passage from Simoom shows Strindberg's ruthless elimination of all extraneous material, his selection of only those

1. Fortnightly Review. 97:1123
details that add to the effectiveness of Biskra's display of Satanic power.

"Guimard. (Rising.) What are you, you devil who are singing with two voices? Are you man or woman? Or both?

Biskra. I am Ali, the guide. You don't recognize me because your senses are confused. But if you want to be saved from the tricks played by sight and thought, you must believe in me - believe what I say and do what I tell you.

Guimard. You don't need to ask me, for I find everything to be as you say it is.

Biskra. There you see, you worshipper of Idols!

Guimard. I, a worshipper of idols?

Biskra. Yes, take out the idol you carry on your breast.

Guimard takes out a locket.

Biskra. Trample on it now, and then call on the only God, the Merciful One, the Compassionate One!

Guimard. (Hesitatingly) Saint Edward - my patron saint.

Biskra. Can he protect you? Can he?

Guimard. No, he cannot! (Walking up) Yes, he can!

Biskra. Let us see!"

Since again in compactness and concentration of Strindberg's plays becomes evident, after Strindberg read Poe, we are justified in crediting the increase to Poe. That Archibald Henderson finds

l. Plays. Vol. III. p. 72
"Strindberg's one-act plays to have a strong cast of Maeterlinck about them" does not change this conclusion. It is not surprising that there should be marked similarity between Strindberg's one-act plays and Maeterlinck's since both derived, in part, their theory of the one-act play from Poe's theory of the short story. We must regard Strindberg's relationship to Maeterlinck during his naturalistic period as that of one stalk to another coming from the same parent root and not as that of a stalk to a root. The best evidence of the justifiability of this conclusion is in Strindberg's own statements, first, that he was influenced by Poe when he wrote the one-act plays of his naturalistic period; and second, that he is indebted to Maeterlinck for the method of his fairy plays that he wrote in his symbolistic period.

Part of the technique by which Strindberg achieves compactness and concentration on a single effect is his use of the analytic method in unfolding his plot, a method characteristic of modern drama. "This type of drama involves the elimination of vivid action, the abandonment of the continuous succession of slight novelties in event, calculated to hold attention and win the throng. Since only the

1. European Dramatists. p. 57
2; Ibid. p. 63
culminant situation is exhibited, a large part of the 'action' must consist in explication - achieved in more or less natural ways through mutual confessions of the characters. Persons, who have not seen each other in a long time, are more or less naturally brought together; and our knowledge of the past is derived through the conversations in which they enlighten each other over the events which have transpired since their last meeting."

Here again, in tracing the development of Strindberg's technique, we must begin with Miss Julie. In this play "Strindberg has achieved a masterpiece in the particular form employed - although here the influence of the past is insufficiently inter-related with the lively action of the present." And again it is in Creditors and Pariah that we find his technique most perfectly developed. In these plays one man in conversation with one or two other people unravels a whole skein of related antecedent events. Mr. X. steadily, ruthlessly, uncovers fact after fact in the life of crime of Mr. Y. with nothing but the very slightest clues for evidence. Gustav in conversation first with Adolph and then with Tekla discovers the whole of the history of their married life. It is easy to recognize in these plays the

2. Ibid. p. 80
influence of Poe's stories of ratiocination, in which one man, by a clever process of detection, traces to their source a chain of events. There are passages in Creditors and Parish that are strikingly like passages in The Murders in the Rue Morgue and The Gold-Bug. Compare these two passages from The Murders in the Rue Morgue and Creditors.

"I now remembered that, in fact, a fruiterer, carrying upon his head a large basket of apples, had nearly thrown me down, by accident, as we passed from the Rue C - into the thoroughfare where we stood; but what this had to do with Chantilly I could not possibly understand ...

"I will explain," he said. ...we had been talking of horses, if I remember aright, just before leaving the Rue C - This was the last subject we discussed. As we crossed into this street, a fruiterer, with a large basket upon his head, brushing quickly past us, thrust you upon a pile of paving-stones collected at a spot where the causeway is undergoing repair. You stepped upon one of the loose fragments, slipped, slightly strained your ankle, appeared vexed or sulky, muttered a few words, turned to look at the pile, and then proceeded in silence. I was not particularly attentive to what you did; but observation has become with me, of late

1. Poe's Best Tales. pp. 195ff
"Adolph. Heaven only knows if I can tell at all! - How did it happen? Well, it didn't come about in one day.

Gustav. Would you like to have me tell you how it did happen?

Adolph. That's more than you can do.

Gustav. Oh, by rising the information about yourself and your wife that you have given me, I think I can reconstruct the whole event. Listen now, and you'll hear. (In a dispassionate tone, almost numerously.) The Husband had gone abroad to study and she was alone. At first her freedom seemed rather pleasant. Then came a sense of vacancy, for I presume she was pretty empty when she had lived by herself for a fortnight. Then he appeared, and by and by the vacancy was filled up. By comparison the absent one seemed to fade out, and for the simple reason that he was at a distance - you know the law about the square of the distance? But when they felt their passions stirring, then came fear - of themselves, of their consciences, of him. For protection they played brother and sister. And the more their feelings smacked of the flesh, the more they tried to make their relationship appear spiritual.

Adolph. Brother and sister? How could you know that?

Gustav. I guessed it ..."

The essential method of Poe - to have one person divulge to another the process by which he has arrived at the solution of a problem - is exhibited in the following passage from The Gold-Bug.

"When, at length, we had concluded our examination, and the intense excitement of the time had, in some measure, subsided, Legrand, who saw that

1. Plays. Vol. II. pp. 195ff
I was dying with impatience for a solution of this most extraordinary riddle, entered into a full detail of all the circumstances connected with it."

Again compare with this passage the following from Pariah:

"Mr. X. The Christians require forgiveness. But I require punishment in order that the balance, or whatever you may call it, be restored. And you, who have served a term, ought to know the difference.

Mr. Y. (Stands motionless and stares at Mr. X first with wild, hateful eyes, then with surprise and admiration.) How - could - you - know - that?

Mr. X. Why, I could see it.

Mr. Y. How? How could you see it?

Mr. X. 0, with a little practice. It is an art, like many others ... This is the fifth time you have refused to write your own name. The first time nothing more serious was involved than the receipt for a registered letter. Then I began to watch you ... And now I hope you see that it's your own stupidity rather than my cleverness which has made everything clear to me." 2

From these passages, which give the key to the plot, method, and spirit of the works from which they are taken, we can easily see that Strindberg has used Poe's familiar method of ratiocination. He has built upon the foundation laid in Miss Julie; and he has used in these subsequent plays the method he employed there: that of revealing antecedent action

1. Poe's Best Tales. p. 276
upon the stage. He has presented a strong-minded man to us and let us see the process by which he discovers the sequence and meaning of a series of events. Monsieur Dupin, LeGrand, Gustav, and Mr. X are counterparts of Sherlock Holmes, the detective.

This interest in the exhibition of the power of the mind of the detective originates in the interest both authors had in pseudo-psychology. However, Poe was interested not only in the normal manifestations of mental power such as ability of observation, good memory, and keen insight; he was interested also in the power one mind might have over another to induce pathological states. He plays with the idea of hypnosis in his tales of mesmerism, and develops it to the limits of its extent in the horrible tale of The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar. In this story a dead man is kept alive because of the rapport with his hypnotist. In both Creditors and Simoom Strindberg treats of the same idea and investigates for himself the power of hypnotism. In Creditors, Gustav suggests several times that Adolph, weak, fearful, is on the verge of epilepsy. In the end, he falls in an attack of epilepsy.

"Gustav, ... Do you know where your husband is? Tekla. I think I know now - he is in the room there! And he has heard everything! And seen everything! And the man who sees his own wraith dies!"
(Adolph appears in the doorway leading to the veranda. His face is white as a sheet, and there is a bleeding scratch on one cheek. His eyes are staring and void of all expression. His lips are covered with froth.)

Gustav. (Shrinking back.) No, there he is! Now you can settle with him and see if he proves as generous as I have been - Good-byel

(He goes toward the left, but stops before he reaches the door.)

Tekla. (Goes to meet Adolph with open arms.) Adolph!

(Adolph leans against the door-jamb and sinks gradually to the floor.)

This is almost as horrible as Poe's story.

But in Simoom Strindberg has produced an effect of diabolic horror that is quite equal to, if not above, Mr. Valdemar. For in Simoom, Biskra, in revenge, kills Guimard by means of hypnotic suggestion, after torturing him by making him believe his child is dead, his wife unfaithful, and that he himself is a victim of hydrophobia.

"Guimard. ... I am dead! (He falls to the ground.)

Biskra. yes, you are dead! - and you don't know that you have been dead a long time.

(She goes to the ossuary and takes from it a human skull.)

Guimard. Have I been dead? (He feels his face with his hands.)

Biskra. Long! Long! - Look at yourself in the mirror here! (She holds up the skull before him.)
Guimard. Ah! That's me!

Biskra. Can't you see your own high cheekbones? Can't you see the eyes that the vultures have picked out? Don't you know that gap on the right side of the jaw where you had a tooth pulled? Can't you see the hollow in the chin where grew the beard that your Elise was fond of stroking? Can't you see where used to be the ear that your George kissed at the breakfast-table? Can't you see the mark of the axe - here in the neck - which the executioner made when he cut off the deserter's head -

Guimard, who has been watching her movements and listening to her words with evident horror, sinks down dead." 

The story, then, of Poe's influence on Strindberg is engrossing. Any account of the action and inter-action of one mind on another is fascinating to the modern reader, interested as he is in scientific developments in the field of psychology. The account of the reaction of Strindberg to Poe is peculiarly interesting because of its intensity. Strindberg possessed a mind that was tenacious and assimilative to a remarkable degree - taking hints as to method, subject matter, and spirit from whatever source offered them. In this fact lies the secret of his reaction to Poe, which was unusually complete, combining as it did an emotional sense of a deep mystical personal relationship with Poe and an intellectual appropriation in his plays of Poe's theory and technique and emphases of interest.

Poe's influence on Strindberg is evident within a narrow range of time; but the plays written in that period are among those best known to English-speaking readers. Strindberg was introduced to Poe at a time of transition. He had just entered upon his naturalistic period of writing and had produced Comrades, The Father, and Miss Julie, all naturalistic in spirit. In Miss Julie, he was attempting to create a form that would best convey the spirit of the new drama; he approached in this play the formulation of the theory of unity of effect that is so indissolubly linked with the name of Poe.

Then he read Poe. He recognized immediately the kinship of the theory he was attempting to evolve for one-act plays with the theory Poe had evolved earlier for the short story. And so, in Creditors, in Parish, Simoom, in The Stronger, we find, under Poe's influence, the flowering of the plant that was germinated in Miss Julie. We find, likewise, evidence of the perfecting of the analytic method of unfolding the plot, copied from Poe's tales of ratiocination, and deepening of interest in psychology, both in its normal and in its pathological aspects.

What kind of plays Strindberg might have continued to produce under Poe's influence, we shall never know. For influence from that source was cut short when Strindberg entered into the "Inferno"
period, from 1893 to 1897. When he emerged from those dark years and began writing plays again he was under the influence of Swedenborg, Maeterlinck, and other mystics, and these plays are symbolistic in character. He probably met Poe's influence in disguise during these later years because of Poe's wide vogue among literary artists in Europe; but direct influence of Poe was at an end in 1893.

Whimsical and fanciful as Strindberg's conception concerning his relations to Poe may appear to the practical minded, to those with mystical tendencies it will never appear as deserving of discredit. And the story of the influence of the greatest literary artist of America on Sweden's greatest dramatist will stand as striking evidence that literature, though the immediate product of an individual mind, is, nevertheless, always the product of an individual mind molded and energized by society and by literary predecessors.
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Strindberg

The following chronological list of the most important of the works of Strindberg is taken from an article by Edwin Björkman entitled August Strindberg: His Achievement, which appeared in The Forum for March, 1912 (Vol. 47, pp. 274ff)

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3. Master Olof. 1872
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5. Sir Bengt's Lady. 1882
6. The Wanderings of Lucky-Per. 1883
7. The Father. 1887
8. The Comrades.
9. Miss Julie. 1888
10. Creditors. 1890
11. Pariah. 1890
12. Simoom. 1890
13. The Stronger. 1890
14. The Keys of Heaven. 1892
15. Debit and Credit. 1893
16. Mother-Love. 1893
17. Facing Death. 1893
18. Playing with Fire. 1897
19. The Link. 1897
20. To Damascus I and II. 1898  
21. There are Crimes and Crimes. 1899  
22. Christmas. 1899  
23. Gustavus Vasa. 1899  
24. Eric XIV. 1899  
25. The Saga of the Folkungs. 1899  
26. Gustavus Adolphus. 1900  
27. The Dance of Death I and II. 1901  
28. Easter. 1901  
29. Midsummer. 1901  
30. Engelsbreckt. 1901  
31. Charles XII. 1901  
32. The Crown Bride. 1902  
33. Swanwhite. 1902  
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35. Gustavus III. 1903  
36. Queen Christina. 1903  
37. The Nightingale of Wittenberg. 1903  
38. To Damascus, III. 1904  
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