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Strindberg and Nietzsche

Shortly after I had begun my research at Cambridge at the end of the 1940s H.J.Chaytor, a renowned medievalist who specialized in Provençal, asked me which authors I was studying. I said "Nietzsche and Strindberg". He replied with characteristic gruffness: "Both very unpleasant people". That retort came back to me when I was planning this paper, not just as a slick, slightly witty dismissive statement but as a useful reminder and a challenge. And I think Nietzsche would have approved of it. Zarathustra on one occasion proclaims: «Wenn ihr das Angenehme verachtet und das weiche Bett, und von den Weichlichen euch nicht weit genug betten könnt: da ist der Ursprung eurer Tugend»[1]. I hope I shall be able to indicate the positive aspect of unpleasantness in Strindberg and Nietzsche.

My consideration of Strindberg and Nietzsche will be along these lines. First I shall outline the nature and extent of the contact between them. Then I shall look at the markings in Strindberg's own copies of two of Nietzsche's works, and try to assess the significance of these markings. This will lead to an examination of two works of Strindberg which are generally regarded as Nietzschean. Finally by a consideration of two representative but unrelated works, one by each author, I shall try to indicate what these two writers mean to us to-day, why we come back to them after well nigh a hundred years, why each in his own particular way is useful, not just unpleasant.

I have elsewhere[2] given a full account of the contact between Strindberg and Nietzsche. In piecing together that story I was greatly assisted

[1] *Nietzsches Werke,* 20 vols, Alfred Kröner Verlag, Leipzig 1910–26, VI, 111–12. All references to *Also sprach Zarathustra* are to volume and page in this edition.

[2] HAROLD H. BORLAND, *Nietzsche's Influence on Swedish Literature, with special reference to Strindberg, Ola Hansson, Heidenstam and Fröding,* Göteborg1956, pp. 21–4.

by Torsten Eklund's admirable appendix, "Nietzscheanismen och övermänniskoidén hos Strindberg", to his doctoral thesis on *Tjänstekvinnans son*[3], and by Walter Berendsohn's presentation and editing of the correspondence between Strindberg and Nietzsche[4] in which he established that Strindberg wrote his letters in French, apart from the final communication in Greek and Latin. I just want here to draw attention to the main points.

The two men never met face to face, but they did send each other some of their works and exchanged a few letters between November 1888 and the beginning of 1889. The contact was made possible by Georg Brandes whose lectures on Nietzsche in Copenhagen in the spring of 1888 popularized the philosopher poet in Scandinavia and beyond. He prompted Strindberg to read Nietzsche in that spring of 1888 and, writing to Nietzsche at about the same time, referred to Strindberg as "das einzige Genie Schwedens", adding: "Wenn Sie über Frauen schreiben, sind Sie ihm sehr ähnlich"[5]. He also provided Nietzsche with Strindberg's address, so that he could send him a copy of *Götzendämmerung*.

From various letters and other statements it is possible, as Eklund has pointed out (pp. 394–5), to establish which works of Nietzsche Strindberg had access to and in what order. He read *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in the spring or summer of 1888, he received *Der Fall Wagner* from Brandes that autumn, *Götzendämmerung* direct from Nietzsche in November 1888, and also direct from Nietzsche *Die Genealogie der Moral* the following month. He read *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* in the spring of 1889. All these works with the exception of *Der Fall Wagner* are mentioned in Strindberg's own statement, "Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche"[6], in which he defends himself against

[3] Torsten Eklund, *Tjänstekvinnans son. En psykologisk Strindbergsstudie,* Stockholm 1948, pp. 369–418.

[4] Walter A. Berendsohn, «Strindberg och Nietzsche», in *Samfundet Örebro Stads – och Länsbiblioteks Vänner,* 16 (1948), pp. 9–37.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gesammelte Briefe,* 5 vols, Berlin and Leipzig 1902–09, III, 296–7. This volume, which includes letters from Georg Brandes to Nietzsche, will subsequently be referred to as *Briefe,* III.

[6] August Strindberg, *Samlade skrifter,* 55 vols, Stockholm 1911–21, edited by John Landquist, LIV, 323–4. All further references to Strindberg's works are to volume and page in this edition.

the accusation of being over-dependent on Nietzsche, and categorically states that he had never read *Also sprach Zarathustra.*

Nietzsche received a copy of the French translation of *Fadren (Père)*, with its preface in the form of a letter from Zola, in November 1888; in the following month Strindberg sent him a copy of the short story *Samvetskval*, presumably also in French (Strindberg refers to it as *Remords* in his letter of 27 December 1888)[7]. Nietzsche reports to Brandes in a letter of 20 November 1888 that he has read «entzückt und wie bei mir zu Hause *Les mariés* von Herrn August Strindberg» (*Briefe*, III, 322).

The range and content of the letters between Strindberg and Nietzsche is somewhat disappointing. The correspondence lasted a bare six weeks. If we do not include the dedication in *Götzendämmerung* and the presumed dedication in *Père*, Nietzsche's last two mad outbursts and Strindberg's classical joke, there are only three letters from each man, and two of them are chiefly concerned with translation plans.

Nevertheless there is a striking immediate emotional response in the opening exchanges. Nietzsche reports how he had read *Fadren (Père)* twice "mit tiefer Bewegung", discovering there his own conception of love – «in ihrem Mittel der Krieg, in ihrem Grunde der Todhaß der Geschlechter» (Berendsohn, p. 18). Strindberg blurts out his admiration and gratitude for *Götzendämmerung*: «Sans aucun doute, Vous avez donné à l'humanité le livre le plus profond qu'elle possède et ce qui n'est pas le moins, Vous avez eu le courage, les rentes peut-être, pour cracher ces mots superbes à la figure de la racaille! et je Vous remercie» (*Brev*, VII, 190). He ends this letter on a note of devotion and reverence.

Nietzsche in a letter to Georg Brandes of 20 October 1888 calls his *Götzendämmerung* «meine Philosophie in nuce» (*Briefe*, III, 318), and in one of his letters to Strindberg written in December 1888 refers to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Götzendämmerung* as «die beiden capitalen Bücher» (Berendsohn, p. 26). I have been able to consult Strindberg's own copies of these two key works in the Birger Mörner

[7] *August Strindbergs brev*, edited by Torsten Eklund, Stockholm 1948, VII, 210. This volume will subsequently be referred to as *Brev*, VII.

collection in the Örebro Town Library[8]; they bear considerable sidelinings, underlinings and the occasional exclamation, which in nearly all cases one can confidently attribute to Strindberg's hand. These markings are of course not an infallible guide to what Strindberg rated most important or most memorable in these books. The final sentence in item 280 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* – «Er geht zurück, wie Jeder, der einen großen Sprung thun will» – which Strindberg adapted and used with reference to himself on at least two occasions,[9] is, as Eklund has reported (p. 394), marked with a "Bravo!" in Strindberg's copy, but the reference to the constellation of Hercules in item 243, which Eklund justifiably relates (p. 402) to Borg's thoughts as he sails out to death at the end of *I havsbandet*, is unmarked. Moreover Nietzsche's writings are often in the form of loosely connected aphorisms and the reader can do little more than make a random selection. Strindberg himself found it difficult to be consistent about what it was he was finding there. In a letter to Georg Brandes on 4 December 1888 (*Brev*, VII, 192), he says that it is odd how Nietzsche has enabled him to find system in his madness of opposing everything; a few days later he writes to Ola Hansson (*Brev*, VII, 197) that what is modern about Nietzsche is precisely that he does not set up a system. This would seem to be a more reasonable reflexion. In point of fact it is idle to look for system in either Nietzsche or Strindberg.

However, with these warnings, I still think it is worth while looking at some of the words and notions which drew response from Strindberg's pencil.

In the opening paragraphs of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* Nietzsche has challenging remarks about the relativity of truth and the prejudice of philosophers. Several of these are marked by Strindberg.

A more violent outburst in the section «Der freie Geist» expressing disgust with the common people and with churches prompts further sidelining: «Wo das Volk ißt und trinkt, selbst wo es verehrt, da pflegt

[8] The editions are: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Leipzig 1886 – Strindberg's copy has pages 259–71 missing – and *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Leipzig 1889. The page references to these works in my text will be to these editions.

[9] In a letter to K.O. Bonnier of 21 August 1888 (*Brev*, VII, 105) and in a letter to Heidenstam of 22 August 1888 (*Brev*, VII, 106).

es zu stinken. Man soll nicht in Kirchen gehn, wenn man reine Luft athmen will» (p. 44).

In the section «Das religiöse Wesen», where the markings are not as numerous as one might perhaps have expected, Nietzsche's pronouncements in the closing paragraph on the debilitating effect of the church on the strong individual provoke sidelining in red from Strindberg; so does the taunt that Christianity has produced men who have «mit ihrem ‹Gleich vor Gott›, bisher über dem Schicksale Europa's gewaltet, bis endlich eine verkleinerte, fast lächerliche Art, ein Heerdenthier, etwas Gutwilliges, Kränkliches und Mittelmäßiges, herangezüchtet ist, der heutige Europäer...» (p. 84). The word "Heerdenthier" towards the end of this passage, or at any rate the first half of the word, is of particular interest, because in the section "Zur Naturgeschichte der Moral" Nietzsche is obsessed with the notion of the nefarious herd and anything connected with it – "Heerdenmensch", "Heerden-Nützlichkeit", "Heerden-Furchtsamkeit", "Heerdenthier-Moral". Strindberg draws attention to these words through his sidelinings or underlinings. The following passage in which Nietzsche voices his contempt for the herd and those who regard it as a norm is clearly one which Strindberg focused on: «*Die hohe unabhängige Geistigkeit,* der *Wille zum Alleinstehn,* die *große Vernunft* schon *werden als Gefahr* empfunden; Alles, was den Einzelnen *über* die *Heerde* hinaushebt und dem Nächsten Furcht macht, heißt von nun an *böse*; die billige, bescheidene, sich einordnende, gleichsetzende Gesinnung, das Mittelmaaß der Begierden kommt zu *moralischen* Namen und Ehren. Endlich, unter sehr friedfertigen Zuständen, fehlt die Gelegenheit und Nöthigung immer mehr, sein Gefühl zur Strenge und Härte zu erziehen» (pp. 125–6). The underlining is as indicated by the italics except that the word "Heerde" is underlined once in blue and three times in red. The later part of the passage is sidelined in red.

As a corrective to these herd values Nietzsche indicates the attributes of nobility in the last prose section of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse,* «Was ist vornehm». Among the reflexions singled out by Strindberg are the following: «Die *vornehme Kaste war im Anfang immer die Barbaren-Kaste*» (p. 228); «Der vornehme Mensch ehrt in sich den Mächtigen, auch Den, welcher Macht über sich selbst hat, der zu reden und zu schweigen versteht, der mit Lust Strenge und Härte gegen sich übt und Ehrerbietung vor allem Strengen und Harten hat» (p. 232);

«Der Glaube an sich selbst, der Stolz auf sich selbst, eine Grundfeindschaft und Ironie gegen ‹Selbstlosigkeit› gehört eben so bestimmt zur vornehmen Moral wie eine leichte Geringschätzung und Vorsicht vor den Mitgefühlen und dem ‹warmen Herzen›» (p. 233). The superior, noble kind of man does not need «sich gutheißen zu lassen, sie urtheilt ‹was mir schädlich ist, das ist an sich schädlich›» (p. 232).

The castigation of the herd mentality and the extolling of the qualities of nobility to counteract it, this is I think what chiefly interested Strindberg in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. These were the values he was to test out in the novels I shall be dealing with shortly, *Tschandala* and *I havsbandet*.

But Strindberg could be relied upon to note most of Nietzsche's observations about women. Many of these occur in the section "Sprüche und Zwischenspiele"; they are well turned but not very profound maxims: «Das Weib lernt hassen, in dem Maaße, in dem es zu bezaubern – verlernt» (p. 89); «Wo nicht Liebe oder Haß mitspielt, spielt das Weib mittelmäßig» (p. 93); «Mann und Weib im Ganzen verglichen, darf man sagen: das Weib hätte nicht das Genie des Putzes, wenn es nicht den Instinkt der zweiten Rolle hätte» (p. 98). They remind me somewhat of the inscriptions on ashtrays on sale in souvenir shops. I remember a French one I once fell for: «Le bourgogne fait du bien aux femmes lorsque les hommes l'ont bu». A sideline is given to a weightier passage in the section "Unsere Tugenden" where Nietzsche warns against the superficial view of the relationship between man and woman, asserting that a man of depth «kann über das Weib immer nur orientalisch denken: er muß das Weib als Besitz, als verschließbares Eigenthum, als etwas zur Dienstbarkeit Vorbestimmtes und in ihr sich Vollendendes fassen» (p. 188). The author of *Giftas* and *En dåres försvarstal* would however probably have found a view of woman closer to his own in a further passage, which is sidelined, towards the end of that same section: «Das, was am Weibe Respekt und oft genug Furcht einflößt, ist seine Natur, die ‹natürlicher› ist als die des Mannes, seine ächte raubthierhafte listige Geschmeidigkeit, seine Tigerkralle unter dem Handschuh, seine Naivetät im Egoismus, seine Unerziehbarkeit und innerliche Wildheit, das Unfassliche, Weite, Schweifende seiner Begierden und Tugenden... Was, bei aller Furcht, für diese gefährliche und schöne Katze ‹Weib› Mitleiden macht, ist, daß es leidender, ver-

letzbarer, liebebedürftiger und zur Enttäuschung verurtheilter erscheint als irgend ein Thier» (p. 191).

Before leaving these markings in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* I must admit to being intrigued and puzzled by the word "Pjes" with exclamation mark, against the sidelining of a passage (p. 28) towards the end of the first section, "Von den Vorurtheilen der Philosophen". Nietzsche is here concerned with the conflicting views on free will and determinism (to be precise what he calls the "Unfreiheit des Willens"), showing how some people will on no account abandon their responsibility for their actions, whilst others, out of a deep-rooted contempt for themselves, want to avoid all responsibility; the latter, he adds, when they write books, tend to interest themselves in criminals, using a kind of socialistic sympathy as a disguise. I wonder which of Strindberg's later plays, if any, can have been inspired by these observations.

When Nietzsche sent a copy of *Götzendämmerung* to Strindberg he wrote the following dedication on the title page: «Herrn August Strindberg. Sollte man das nicht übersetzen? Es ist Dynamit». And he signed it "Der Antichrist". This Berendsohn takes as the opening of the correspondence between the two men.

The markings are somewhat less than in Strindberg's copy of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse.* Certain key words, however, attract attention, notably "Instinkt" and "décadence", which Nietzsche on occasion brings together ingeniously: «Moral, wie sie bisher verstanden worden ist – wie sie zuletzt noch von Schopenhauer formulirt wurde als ‹Verneinung des Willens zum Leben› – ist der décadence-Instinkt selbst, der aus sich einen Imperativ macht: sie sagt: ‹Geh zu Grunde!› – sie ist das Urtheil Verurtheilter...» (p. 34); «Instinktiv das Sich-Schädliche wählen, Gelockt-werden durch ‹uninteressirte› Motive giebt beinahe die Formel ab für décadence» (p. 101).

The view in the item *Anti-Darwin* (pp. 82–3) that the struggle for power does not result in the triumph of the strong, is close to that expressed by Strindberg in his *Vivisektioner,* and is sidelined.

The relatively short section "Die Verbesserer der Menschheit" with its references to the Laws of Manu affecting the low caste Tschandala, and especially the favourable comparison with Christian values, was obviously read carefully and prompted selective sidelining and underlining.

The general impression left after a study of the markings in *Götzen-*

dämmerung is of a hasty reader attracted by slogans; this is not altogether surprising, because in this work Nietzsche professed to be philosophizing with a hammer. Nevertheless one of the noblest and most measured of Nietzsche's utterances did not pass unnoticed: «Die geistigsten Menschen, vorausgesetzt, dass sie die muthigsten sind, erleben auch bei weitem die schmerzhaftesten Tragödien: aber eben deshalb ehren sie das Leben, weil es ihnen seine größte Gegnerschaft entgegenstellt» (p. 84).

When we are looking for the impact of Nietzsche on Strindberg's creative writing, the two works which immediately attract attention are the long short-story *Tschandala* and the novel *I havsbandet.* They are very different but, in our present context, complementary.

Göran Printz-Påhlson, who is both an academic and a poet, told me once that *Tschandala* was the one work of Strindberg he could not stand. I would not reject the work so strongly, but I do find it singularly distasteful. In this tale, set rather unconvincingly at the end of the seventeenth century and drawn in no small measure on Strindberg's personal experience, it seems impossible to focus one's sympathy, let alone one's pleasure, anywhere. Magister Andreas Törner, a tired academic who takes apartments for the summer at a dilapidated chateau in the south of Sweden is, with his pistol and his thorn stick, a neurotic bully. The bogus countess who owns the chateau, and her gypsy associates, are degenerate, depraved and dirty. Törner is fascinated and tyrannized by them and finally brings about the destruction of one of them, the bailiff Jensen, with horrible ingenuity. The garden at this chateau of Bögely is overgrown and matted, the so-called wine is a foul concoction pressed from rotten fruit; manure and muck-heaps are recurrent symbols.

The Nietzschean labels in *Tschandala* are clear. The title itself communicated by Strindberg to his Danish translator Peter Nansen in a letter dated 27 January 1889 is clearly drawn from *Götzendämmerung* (Brev, VII, 232), as are the references to the Laws of Manu quoted in the epitaph on Jensen. The added detail that the wise Manu sought to create an inferior race to be a warming and nutritious manure enabling the Aryan stem to shoot up and flower, may well, as Martin Lamm has

[10] Martin Lamm, *August Strindberg,* second edition (Stockholm 1948), p. 197.

indicated[10], be related to a similar botanical image in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse,* although the particular passage is not marked in Strindberg's copy. I also have indicated in my book (pp. 36–37) certain links between Törner's reasoning and some of Nietzsche's reflexions in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse,* but I attach less importance to these than I once did.

Despite the Nietzschean labels it would, I think, be a mistake to view *Tschandala* as an essentially Nietzschean work. Törner, it is true, destroys Jensen with studied ruthlessness; he softens him up psychologically and then, with a magic lantern, projects terrifying images on a screen of smoke, which lead him in the end to howl like a dog, a signal for the famished hounds in this nightmare chateau to come out and tear him to death. This may have the semblance of a Nietzschean finale, the triumph of the master over the slave. But the argument which Törner has with himself before he reaches his decision, the way he has to convince himself that he is worth far more to society than this harmful animal, this inferior being, the occasional feeling of repulsion at being engaged in something dishonourable, the speculation about conscience – all this is out of tune with Nietzsche's code of confidence, stated most clearly perhaps in that maxim in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* already referred to: «was mir schädlich ist, das ist an sich schädlich».

Ola Hansson, who was an even more ardent follower of Nietzsche than was Strindberg, sees *Tschandala* as «eine Illustration zu dem Nietzsche'schen Text von der Heerde und der großen Persönlichkeit», and says that the greatness and beauty of the tale «liegt darin, daß Strindbergs Dichtergenie den banalen Alltagsconflikt zu einem weiten Symbol für zwei mächtige Zeitströmungen emportrieb, so daß wir unter dem uninteressanten Gezänk zwischen dem Menschen Strindberg und einem gewöhnlichen Schuft in grandioser Perspektive den Kampf erblicken, der durch Jahrhunderte zwischen Aristokrat und Plebejer, Aria und Paria, Hirn und Hand geführt worden ist»[11]. I think Ola Hansson here has been carried away by his rhetoric. There is little of grandiose perspective about *Tschandala.* The book has a distinct fascination in its descriptions of jungle garden, filth and horror; as a study of obsession too – Törner must occupy himself with Jensen until he destroys him – it is of considerable psychiatric interest. But Strindberg did not succeed in embodying much of Nietzsche in this literary

[11] Ola Hansson, «Nietzschianismus in Skandinavien», *Neue Freie Presse,* Vienna, 15 October 1889.

exploitation of his searing personal experiences at Skovslyst. Rather did he show how artistically unfortunate a violent grasping after Nietzschean notions could be.

I havsbandet is a work very different from *Tschandala.* It certainly also studies a power-seeking individual and in it another optical experiment is mounted, but whereas Törner in *Tschandala* triumphs, fishery-inspector Borg perishes and his optical experiment goes hopelessly wrong.

Strindberg in his foreword to *Författaren,* the delayed fourth part of *Tjänstekvinnans son,* gives in retrospect the following characterization of *I havsbandet*: "Nietzsches Filosofi influerar; men Individen går under i strävan till den absoluta Individualismen. Inleder 90-talet: Übermensch" (XIX, 148).

Nietzschean impulses are certainly there; Borg's rejection of altruism, and his consciousness even as a boy of being "en artbildare, som skulle kunnat bryta sig ut ur släktet och liksom den sig differentierande örten ge sig ett eget namn, kanske namnet åt ett nytt släkte" (XXIV, 224). This cultivation of the self is in accord with the Nietzschean biological ethic. Borg shows, at any rate indirectly, strong aversion for the herd. He reports on his father's elitist companions who were not numerous enough "att bilda hjord", and as "starka individualister ej ville gå efter någon skällko" (XXIV, 45). We had occasion to draw attention to Nietzsche's almost obsessive use of "Heerde" in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse;* the German term corresponding to "skällko" –"Leithammel" – also occurs in a passage in that work sidelined by Strindberg (p. 122). With more characteristic directness Strindberg lets Borg reflect about this involvement with the inhabitants of Österskär: «Bara två månaders skrubbning mot andra människor, och han hade genom anpassningslagen förlorat den bästa delen av sitt själv, hade vant sig hålla med för att undgå tvist, övat sig falla undan för att slippa brytning, utvecklat sig till en karaktärslös, smidig sällskapsmänniska» (XXIV, 164).

A concomitant of self assertion is loneliness, the virtue and pangs of which Strindberg and Nietzsche know plenty about. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* Nietzsche after castigating the bogus "freien Geister" exclaims "allesammt Menschen ohne Einsamkeit, ohne eigne Einsamkeit" (p. 58). This is at the beginning of a sidelined passage. The "Ein" of "Einsamkeit" is underlined. Rarely has loneliness been so finely

presented as in Strindberg's late work *Ensam.* And here in *I havsbandet* through Borg, the preposterously intelligent fishery-inspector who is distrusted and disowned by the islanders he aimed at helping, whose relationship with a woman fails hopelessly, and who is driven to despair and destruction on a remote skerry, here Strindberg tells a terrifying tale of isolation.

Borg, like Nietzsche, rejects Christianity. It is said of him: «I stället för att såsom de svage kristne fingera en stödjepunkt utom sig i Gud tog han det förhandenvarande påtagliga i sitt eget själv och sökte skapa sin person till en fullkomlig typ av människa» (XXIV, 55). His aggressive attitude is symbolized starkly by his steering out to death by the star of Hercules, not that of Bethlehem.

The setting, the wild primeval seascape of *I havsbandet* may well seem Nietzschean, a pendant from the Stockholm archipelago to the Alpine setting of *Also sprach Zarathustra.*

The Nietzschean traits are certainly present in *I havsbandet,* but they are by no means decisive for the whole of the work. Strindberg has added his personal stamp in a variety of ways.

Borg, in his vindication of the self, is well in tune with Nietzsche, but, when he looks back over his development and career, he notes in his father, a military engineer with responsibility for planning and building canals and railways, and therefore able to change the face of the country, a warning example against exaggerated egotism: «fadren kunde icke undgå att så småningom angripas av den makten åtföljande benägenheten att överskatta sitt jag» (XXIV, 46). It is too much to sense here an apprehension of what may happen to himself?

It is the symbols used to convey loneliness which are so striking in *I havsbandet,* and these are very much Strindberg's own: the rowan tree on the remote skerry (XXIV, 76), the hated crow among the ducks and gulls (XXIV, 41), the melancholy booming of the buoy (XXIV, 218), the dolls rescued from a wreck which Borg places on his sofa pretending they are children (XXIV, 240f). Strindberg moves from the abstract to the concrete whenever possible. Zarathustra's companions on his lonely pilgrimages, the serpent and the eagle, are heraldic; Strindberg's symbols are keenly personal.

In Borg's attack on Jesus and what he stands for, in that final encounter with the preacher, Strindberg indulges in violent vituperation, but, unlike Nietzsche, he still shows a nostalgia for Christian

practices; earlier in the encounter Borg had asked the preacher to say the Lord's Prayer with him. And much earlier, shortly after taking up his quarters on Österskär, he had listened to a man's voice in the room below spelling out a prayer for a child.

As regards the setting and the mood that goes with it, it may well be, as Eklund has suggested (p. 405), that Strindberg was indirectly influenced by *Zarathustra,* through the reports of Brandes' lectures and Ola Hansson's essay on Nietzsche. But it must also be remembered that Strindberg was out in the archipelago on his own when he started *I havsbandet;* it was natural that he should choose a similar albeit starker setting for his novel. He had shown in *Hemsöborna* how he could convey nature's moods out in the islands, from summer idyll to the nightmare race over the ice in winter. There is also something remarkably Strindbergian in the presentation of the hazards of wave and rock on the journey out to Österskär, and also in the way Borg relates the review of his own life to the history of creation demonstrated by the geological formations he sees around him, when he goes out on his first inspection of the waters round the island. Strindberg like Nietzsche is capable of poetic flights, but he is also fascinated by scientific investigation.

I havsbandet has been a happy hunting ground for influences, as I have indicated in my book (pp. 37–8), and Nietzsche's influence is not the least. But the novel is chiefly memorable because it coincides with the end of one of the stormiest and most productive spells of Strindberg's life. His first marriage was breaking up, he was poor. He was still persisting in his naturalistic writing and was out of tune with the literary fashion of the 1890s. Personal experience and literary impulse are well blended here. *Tschandala* was an unsteady amalgam in which Nietzschean elements had only been partially absorbed. In *I havsbandet* Strindberg has made elements of Nietzsche part of himself, as he did elements of many authors he read. One is reminded of the retort of the Stranger in the much later work, the Third Part of *Till Damaskus:* «Nej! vad jag levat är mitt och ingen annans! Vad jag läst är vordet mitt, emedan jag slog sönder det som glas, smälte om det och ur massan blåste jag nya glas i nya former» (XXIX, 322). *I havsbandet* is a monument to Nietzsche but also a farewell to Nietzsche. There are references to him in later works, but Strindberg as he speeds his defiant alter ego Borg to his death, shows his readiness for other gods.

But my purpose was not just to trace the influence of Nietzsche on Strindberg. I want, by way of conclusion to this paper, to consider briefly these two writers in themselves. The works I have chosen to look at with this in mind are Strindberg's *Till Damaskus* and Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra.* I cannot possibly carry out an adequate comparative study of these two works, even less give an assessment of Nietzsche and Strindberg as thinkers and artists. All I can do is to point to a few things which struck me when I reread these two representative works.

Each is representative of its author in style. Strindberg in *Till Damaskus* pursues that disjointed dream-like dialogue and shifting scene which is the hallmark of his later, remarkably modern plays. Nietzsche's rhythms and rhetoric, which were noticeable in the works we have been looking at, break through confidently in the prose poems of *Zarathustra.* They are both also representative in their subjectivity. In Strindberg's case it is possible to relate many details in his drama to personal experience. In that of Nietzsche prejudice and personal conviction set the tone of *Zarathustra.*

These two works are highly individual and in that sense are unrelated, and yet they have a good deal in common as regards pattern and preoccupations. They are both records of a journey or pilgrimage and, in view of the Stranger's tortured progress and Zarathustra's vehement utterances, each is, to borrow D.H. Lawrence's phrase, "a savage enough pilgrimage".

The Stranger's journey in the First Part of *Till Damaskus* with its humiliations and tribulations, has the firm pattern of repetition; it begins at a street corner and ends there; the turning point is at the convent, that mixture of hospital, monastery and asylum where the Stranger recovers from an accident near his wife's home. He follows his fate step by step, and the Mother reminds him, not unexpectedly, as he sets out on the return journey, of the Road to Damascus and the Stations of the Cross. This is an important trial run which finds its completion in the Second Part and its confirmation in the Third Part. The entry of the Stranger into the monastery at the close of the Second Part is the end of the road. The Lady comments: «Denna olyckliga människa har intet annat övrigt än att lämna världen och begrava sig i klostret» (XXIX, 232). The understanding of the long journey and the reconciliation with it comes with the ceremony at the end of the Third

Part when the Stranger enters on a new life through simulated death. The Stranger takes a contrite farewell of the Lady who has been his companion and antagonist on his pilgrimage: «Har jag då gjort dig ond, så säger jag förlåt, och jag kysser den lilla handen, som smekte och rev... den lilla handen, som ledde mig i mörkret... ledde mig den långa Damaskusresan» (XXIX, 325).

Zarathustra when he was thirty left his home by the water and took to the hills, but he became tired of his wisdom and decided to give of himself and enlighten mankind. That is the opening to Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra,* and the four books that follow tell of how Zarathustra journeys among man to whom he has to go down, just as the sun goes down, how he reacts to them and their antics, and then, with whitened locks, climbs up to the mountain fastness of his cave. It is a journey lit by sun and moon, with mountain views and wide seascapes.

Both these journeys are, in a broad sense, religious, a search for a deeper meaning of life. The Stranger reflects at an early stage that he is beginning to see what life is about: «Livet, som förr var ett stort nonsens, har fått en mening, och jag märker en avsikt, där jag förr endast såg slumpen» (XXIX, 10). Zarathustra comments in mid course: «Ich wandle unter Menschen als den Bruchstücken der Zukunft: jener Zukunft, die ich schaue» (VI, 206). But the findings, what one might call the testaments of these travellers, these pilgrims, are very different.

Warm humanity, a searing sense of guilt with the corresponding need for forgiveness and reconciliation, pride followed by disillusionment, these are aspects of the human lot which emerge as the Stranger struggles along life's dusty highway. If I had to choose the scene from *Till Damaskus* which, on first reading and again recently, made the deepest impression on me, it would be the Banquet Scene from the Second Part when the Stranger, after obtaining recognition as a scientist for producing gold, sees his achievement and renown debased and ridiculed. We soon gather that there is something wrong. It is unclear whether the recognition comes from the government, society or the committee. The orchestra plays a funeral march, the guests slink out; the golden goblets are exchanged for pewter ones and then for crude earthenware mugs. The Stranger is left to pay the bill for this mock ceremony arranged by a drinking club, and lands up in prison because he cannot find the money. This could be taken as just good fun, but it also has the serious-

ness of a puppet show, or even more of a morality play, demonstrating the vanity of ambition and the hollowness of public acclaim. But there is humanity, not just disillusionment, to be found in this play. Not long after the nightmarish banquet the Stranger takes up with a woman, a prostitute, because she was «den mest föraktade men ändock behållit en gnista av mänsklighet» (XXIX, 208–9). She had sympathy with him, when no-one else had, not even he himself. His guilt centres symbolically round the wrong he did to the Doctor as a boy, tearing up a book at school and not admitting the crime; reconciliation is adumbrated at the end of the first journey, but is not confirmed until the Doctor appears as Pater Isidor at the monastery towards the end of the Third Part. Guilt had haunted the Stranger with the relentless rhythm of a mill-wheel. A long road to reconciliation is travelled with the Lady, who for the Stranger is a cross between guardian angel and fury. The Mother, referring to the couple, had put forward the prophetic guess: «Kanske de skola plåga varandra fram till försoningen» (XXIX, 69). And an earnest of that reconciliation is heard in the Lady's plea to the Confessor before the Stranger enters the monastery: «Gör honom icke illa!» (XXIX, 235). The references to compassion, *barmhärtighet, medlidande,* are frequent in *Till Damaskus.*

It is at times difficult to distinguish the Stranger from the madman Caesar and the Beggar. This doubling or diffusing of personality, which Strindberg was to develop so effectively in *Ett drömspel,* here adds to the general validity of the Stranger's thoughts and feelings. He is not just hysterical when he exclaims: «Jag lider som om jag vore hela människosläktet. Jag lider och har icke rätt att klaga.» (XXIX, 226).

There is a good deal of ranting in *Also sprach Zarathustra;* there is also arrogance: «Ich gehöre nicht zu Denen, welche man nach ihrem Warum fragen darf» (VI, 186). Despite the magnificence of most of the language there is not a little meaningless word play, what Max Nordau dubbed «sinnlose Echolalie»[12]. The *Eselsfest* towards the end of the work when the higher men revert to their religious practices, prostrating themselves before the ass, their new deity, is downright repulsive, especially when provided with the final sacramental sting: «Und feiert ihr es abermals, dieses Eselsfest, thut's euch zu Liebe, thut's auch mir

[12] Max Nordau, *Entartung,* second edition, Berlin 1893, II, 368.

zu Liebe! Und zu *meinem* Gedächtniß!» (VI,460). And yet the challenge and courage of Zarathustra remain. The call to re-examine the concepts of the individual, altruism, friend and foe, sympathy and God is clear.

Zarathustra proudly proclaims the rights and powers of the ego – the *Ich*: «Dieses schaffende, wollende, werthende Ich, welches das Maaß und der Werth der Dinge ist. ... Einen neuen Stolz lehrte mich mein Ich, den lehre ich die Menschen: nicht mehr den Kopf in den Sand der himmlischen Dinge zu stecken, sondern frei ihn zu tragen, einen Erden-Kopf, der der Erde Sinn schafft!» (VI,43). But this vindication of the ego is not just self-absorption, it is a joyful realization of self. Zarathustra comments on the preoccupations of a lofty, solemn person he has encountered on his journey: «Erst, wenn er sich von sich selber abwendet, wird er über seinen eignen Schatten springen – und wahrlich! hinein in *seine* Sonne» (VI,171).

In this new creed there is no place for altruism, *Nächstenliebe*. The love of one's neighbour is lack of love for oneself: «Ihr flüchtet zum Nächsten vor euch selber und möchtet euch daraus eine Tugend machen: aber ich durchschaue euer ‹Selbstloses›» (VI,88). Enemies are to be proud of; they are to be hated, not despised, and in one's friend one should have one's best enemy, being closest to him in heart when one struggles with him (VI,68 and 81). Whereas Strindberg's Stranger could not bear to see human beings suffer (XXIX,15), Zarathustra condemns sympathy outright: «Mitleid macht dumpfe Luft allen freien Seelen» (VI,273). It is sympathy which teaches those who live among the so-called good people to lie (VI, 273). And it was sympathy with mankind which, according to the Devil and not denied by the Old Pope, caused the death of God (VI,130 and 377).

Against this illness Zarathustra proposes the drastic cure of courage: «Muth ist der beste Todtschläger: der Muth schlägt auch das Mitleiden todt» (VI,230). This courage he commends is not courage before an audience or in sight of a god; it is the lonely courage on the brink of the precipice, where fear is felt but dominated and where the precipice is viewed with pride (VI,419–20). It is courage which is ready to kill death and exclaim: «War *das* das Leben? Wohlan! Noch Ein Mal!» (VI,230).

Shortly after that brave retort comes the scene which stays in my memory as obsessively as the Banquet Scene in *Till Damaskus*.

Zarathustra finds a young shepherd writhing on the ground with a heavy black snake hanging from his mouth. Zarathustra shouts to him to bite off the head of the snake. This he does, spits it out and leaps exultantly to his feet. «Nicht mehr Hirt, nicht mehr Mensch, – ein Verwandelter, ein Umleuchteter, welcher *lachte!* Niemals noch auf Erden lachte je ein Mensch, wie *er* lachte!» (VI,234). Later Zarathustra gives an interpretation of this tale of the snake, relating it to himself, telling how the monster crept into his gullet and choked him. «Aber ich biß ihm den Kopf ab und spie ihn weg von mir» (VI,318). He then reveals that what was choking him was his weariness and disgust, *Überdruß,* with mankind. It is hard to make sense of this expansion of the metaphor, because once the snake had been spewed out what remained for Zarathustra to do? But the tale as first told seems to have other connotations. It is difficult to read it other than as a remarkably forceful exhortation to courage and to action. Nietzsche's shepherd, prompted by Zarathustra, summoning strength out of weakness and taking drastic action to save himself, contrasts markedly with Strindberg's Stranger, whose solidarity with and compassion for suffering humanity goes hand in hand with an intense and at times irritating self-pity.

And so to summarize briefly the points I have tried to make in this paper. There was a brief but not unimportant correspondence between Strindberg and Nietzsche, and an exchange of books. This both excited and warned Strindberg, and it is perhaps not too extravagant to see *Tschandala* as a record of the excitement and *I havsbandet* as a measure of the warning.

But our analysis of the two late and so to speak testamentary works, *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Till Damaskus,* leads us to see the two authors in opposition: Nietzsche rejecting altruism and mocking the Christian religion, Strindberg preaching compassion, finding room for Christian elements and working towards an ultimately religious reconciliation. And yet this opposition is also a complementation; both are necessary, concern for one's fellows and also the strength and will to work out one's own salvation. Unpleasant though they may have been – and their unpleasantness breaks through in their work – they still have a lot to say to us to-day. They both help us, in their different ways, to tolerate the ordeal of living.