ABSTRACT

GUILT MANIGESTATIONS IN THE
HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THREE
PLAYS BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

by Terry Shelton Williams

This study proposes to examine the guilt manifestations in the heterosexual relationships in three plays by August Strindberg. Its purpose is to isolate those guilt feelings present in Strindberg's early life, extending through his first marriage to Siri von Essen as revealed in his autobiographies, and to show how they are expressed and revealed in the dramatic characters he created for the stage.

For the purpose of clarification, guilt has been defined along Suttian lines of psychological analysis with emphasis placed upon explaining Strindberg's dependent relationship with his mother and his first wife. Consequently, it is a contention of this study that Strindberg's dependent relationships with these women is reflected in his treatment of the male-female sexual relationships in the plays selected for this study. The term guilt has been defined as a feeling of resentment that is couched in an unsatisfied demand for love. The term heterosexual relationship has been defined as

the male-female sexual relationship, that implies the element of sexual conflict.

This study presents an analysis of the psychological concept of guilt as it appears in three of Strindberg's more autobiographical plays, The Father, Miss Julie, and Creditors. It is a contention of this study that in order to appreciate fully and understand Strindberg's dramatic works it is necessary to examine his autobiographical writings in order to become familiar with his inner conflicts. These conflicts form the nucleus of his dramatic treatment of subject, character relationships, and theme.

This study is divided into three parts. The first section of Part One consists of an examination of two psychoanalytical approaches to the subject of guilt. The second section of Part One includes an examination of those pertinent experiences and relationships in Strindberg's early life and first marriage that may have influenced the development of feelings of guilt in his adult life as revealed in the plays selected for this study. The Second Part of this study provides the analysis of the plays as they relate to the material presented in Part One. The Third Part of this study includes a summary and discussion of conclusions.

It is contended that Strindberg's feelings of guilt, as revealed in his ambivalent treatment of the

female characters in the plays selected for this study, are reminiscent of his feelings of resentment toward his mother for rejecting his love need as a child. Consequently, with the exception of Jean in Miss Julie, the male characters that are most representative of Strindberg's suffering, such as the Captain in The Father and Adolf in Creditors, are seen to be constantly demanding attention and excessive love from their female partners. Jean, on the other hand, is representative of Strindberg's desire to free himself of female domination and yet he is also dependent in that he is servile. A series of different dependent male relationships develop. All are reflective of Strindberg's great need to re-establish a satisfactory love relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

Approved: Frank Rutledge

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

1966

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer of this thesis wishes to express his appreciation to all those people who helped to make this study possible. His gratitude is extended to Mr. Frank Rutledge, Dr. Sidney Berger, and Mr. Anthony Collins for their helpful criticisms of the subject material included in this thesis. Without their assistance and guidance the realization of this study could not have taken place.

FRONTISQUOTE

We love. Yes, and we hate.
We hate each other, because
we love one another; we hate
each other because we are
linked together; we hate the
link, we hate love; we hate
what is most lovable because
it is also the most bitter,
we hate the very best which
gives us this life.[1]

To Damascus

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[1]Archibald Henderson, European Dramatists (Cincinnati, Ohio: Stewart and Kidd Co., 1913), p. 54.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This study proposes to examine the guilt manifestations in the heterosexual relationships in three plays by August Strindberg. Its purpose is to isolate those guilt feelings present in Strindberg's early life, extending through his first marriage, and to show how they are expressed and revealed in the dramatic characters he created for the stage.

For the purpose of definition, guilt may be defined as a feeling of resentment that is couched in an unsatisfied demand for love. Further explanation of this definition will be presented in Part One of this study. The term heterosexual relationship may be defined as the male-female sexual conflict.

Although several studies have been written on the psychological influence in Strindberg's dramaturgy,[2] the majority of these studies have centered upon the examination of his autobiographical writings rather than upon his plays. This approach seems to indicate a general weakness, rather than a strength of Strindbergian

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[2]See Professor Alrik Gustafson's review of Strindbergian scholarship in A History of Swedish Literature (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), pp. 601-10.

research. Since Strindberg wrote primarily for the stage, this study will present an analysis of the psychological concept of guilt as it appears in three of his most autobiographical plays. A careful analysis of a subject area such as guilt must include an examination of Strindberg's autobiographical writings. This researcher is working on the assumption that in Strindberg's case it is necessary to be familiar with the playwright's inner conflicts, as revealed in the autobiographies, in order to appreciate fully and understand his dramatic works. As far as can be determined, there has been no careful systematic study written on the subject of guilt in the plays selected for this study.

The study is divided into three parts. The first section of Part One consists of an examination of two psychoanalytical approaches to the subject of guilt. The second section of Part One includes an examination of those pertinent experiences and relationships in Strindberg's early life and first marriage that may have influenced the development of feelings of guilt in his adult life as revealed in the plays selected for this study. The second part of this study provides the analysis of the plays as they relate to the material presented in Part One. The third part of this study includes a summary and discussion of conclusions.

The following plays have been selected for this study: The Father, 1887; Miss Julie, 1888; and Creditors, 1888. The dates for the plays are based on the Chronological listings of Elizabeth Sprigge in her biographical study of Strindberg's life.[3] These plays were selected because they are of an autobiographical nature[4] and because they offer ample material on the subject of guilt as it is reflected through the male-female sexual conflict. Because of their availability, the translations of Elizabeth Sprigge are being used.

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[3]Elizabeth Sprigge, The Strange Life of August Strindberg (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1949), p. 234.

[4]Maurice Valency, The Flower and the Castle (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1963), p. 243.

PART I

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF GUILT IN STRINDBERG'S EARLY LIFE AND WRITING

SECTION I
TWO PSYCHOANALYTICAL APPROACHES TO THE SUBJECT OF GUILT

It is the purpose of this section of Part One to examine and analyze two psychoanalytical interpretations of the subject of guilt. It includes an examination of the psychoanalytical theories of Freud concerning the subject of guilt, as well as an examination of the psychoanalytical theories of Ian D. Suttie on the subject. Suttie is representative of the neo-Freudian school of psychology that has developed in the past twenty years.[1] Out of necessity, to limit and justify, emphasis will be placed on further defining the term of guilt from a psychoanalytical viewpoint. The Freudian concept of guilt will be compared to the Suttian approach for the purpose of pointing out their differences in emphasis. Suttie's definition of guilt, because of its more comprehensive analysis of the mother-child relationship as being the source of the child's first love relationship, has been selected as the basis for this study. Because Strindberg's child-

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[1] The term neo-Freudian is being used to describe psychological investigation that has taken place after the highpoint of Freudian investigation during the 1920's. It may or may not imply modification of certain set principles of investigation.

hood experiences and marriages have been interpreted, for the most part, along Freudian lines of investigation in the past, this researcher has decided to include information on the Freudian concept of guilt in order to show that Freud's interpretation of guilt as evolving out of the Oedipal relationship need not be considered the only valid source of information on the subject.

Suttie's definition of guilt--a feeling of resentment that is couched in an unsatisfied demand for love--will be applied to the autobiographical writings of Strindberg in the second section of Part One of this study. Ultimately, the precepts and examples established and cited in Part One will, then, be used to interpret the plays selected for this study. These precepts and examples should provide the opportunity for further speculation in Part Two of this study.

In order to understand Suttie's definition of guilt, it is necessary to review in brief the nature and scope of Freud's influence on psychoanalytical investigation. So much of modern psychological practice and theory can be traced back to Freud's original concepts. It follows, then, that in order to understand Suttie's modifications of Freudian practice, it is necessary to examine Freud's concept of Oedipal guilt.

The theories and principles of psychoanalysis as originally set down by Freud in a series of lectures

delivered at the University of Vienna in two winter sessions, 1915-1917,[2] did much to reshape the system of clinical psychology all over Europe. By 1920 these lectures were brought out for the first time in English,[3] and soon the system, as outlined by Freud, became a known method of psychoanalytical investigation all over the world. As a means of systematic investigation, it was to progress rapidly from the realm of clinical practice to the area of practical knowledge and usage.

> It had more than an ordinary interest for the cultured layman because it dealt fearlessly with those aspects of human behavior which are his common concern. . . . There must have been a special reason why in the years following the war [World War I] its popularity increased at a tremendous rate . . . why it became, in a sense, a plaything of the wealthy, the subject of unending discussions in the cafes, the speakeasies, and the salons. . . . Both the negative and positive advantages of psychoanalysis appealed to the post war generations: it gave them an apparently justifiable means of "scoffing scientifically and wisely" at the old standards, and it furnished an opportunity to search for new bases of human conduct. Freud's work served as a revolutionary document; it pointed away from the past.[4]

In pointing away from the past, psychoanalysis opened the door to future critical investigation of

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[2]Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1965), p. 10.

[3]Ibid., p. 15.

[4]Frederick J. Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), p. 59.

psychological principles. Sometimes when an intellectual idea falls into the hands of the mass public, it becomes distorted and modified in ways to suit the public need. This fate was to befall Freud's theories. As a result of its becoming oriented to the public need, "Popular Freudianism"[5] admitted, therefore, all of the enormities against which Freud had long since warned.

Indeed, many people were shocked by Freud's theories concerning sex, and to this day there are many who refuse to accept his word on the subject as the gospel truth, if indeed Freud intended them to be representative of absolute truth in the first place. It must be admitted, however, that even though his theories are open to dispute, he organized a system of analysis that was unique and original in its scope. If he was damned by some of his critics for the liberties he took, it was damnation not without purpose. It could be said that even though Freud's theories were met with much adverse criticism, his creative genius led the way to a more organized critical investigation of current psychological principles.

In the field of the arts, psychoanalysis was soon to have its effect. According to Hermann Boechenstein in an article appearing in the Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature in 1947 ". . . psychoanalysis

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[5]Ibid., p. 66.

has, ever since its consolidation into theoretical and practical psychology, maintained a close contact with art and literature."[6] Freud did much to inaugurate this spirit when he began to apply his theories to the field of literature and related studies.[7] In the first place, creative writing supplied him with a source of interesting human material upon which he could test his theories, if, indeed, he did not extract some of his principles from observations made by novelists and poets. Literature provided a wealth of subjective material that verified Freud's theory concerning the importance of subconscious motivation in the field of the arts.

> It is not difficult to understand why psychoanalysis should veer so conspiciously toward literary problems. The common meeting ground lay, in a broad sense, in the sphere of irrational and subconscious forces. Creative writers throughout the ages have always contended that their works were, in the final analysis, attributable to the prompting of some irrational urge. Psychoanalysts, on the other hand, were quick to claim that their conception of subconscious life was equally applicable to the explanations of art and literature, taking it for granted of course that artists are not noticeably different from the common run of men. Human nature even in our days still remains conditioned, the argument runs, by a set of childhood instincts, mainly of the erotic type, which invariably cause certain psychic problems and disturbances. Artistic production is directly concerned with the transformation of such infantile wishes into socially

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[6] Hermann Boechenstein, "Psychoanalysis in Modern Literature," Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 651.

[7] Ibid.

acceptable or even enjoyable creations.[8]

It is the contention of this study that the artist, in attempting to create, continually explores his own past for subject material. Often times this subject material comes out of his subconscious life composed of consciously forgotten incidents of childhood. When this happens, the artist comes closest to true subjectivity in his work. In the process of creation, however, the artist often imposes his conscious desires over those inner forces that dictate the strength of the artistic impulse. When this occurs, the conscious motives of creativity impede the free-flow of the subconscious motives to create. The artist, then, moves toward objectivity in his creation. Freud suggests that the irrational urge of the subconscious mind is always the most powerful force of creation.

Freud goes so far as to suggest that there is no such thing as an objective style of writing because the artist's subconscious desires always force him to be subjective in his creation.

> It is only natural for psychoanalytic critics to be convinced that in works of art every detail falls into line with the artist's fundamental psychological constitution, there can be no talk of such a thing as objective style. The old notion, for instance, of objective drama has to be discarded; drama is perhaps the most subjective medium of expression, a perfect external projection of the

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[8] Ibid.

> author's complexes, with more than one member of the dramatis personae appearing as a spokesman of the subconscious drive, or of certain ramifications of this drive, while jointly they may reenact the dramatist's struggle between incestuous desires and social conscience. A play thus reveals itself as a triumph for the forces of social responsibility.[9]

It would seem that because of these subconscious desires, the artist has very little control over what he creates. The techniques of his craft only provide the framework for the presentation of his complexes.

If we disregard the many modifications which Freud's theories have undergone, certain principles may be set forth as the fundamental tenents on which literary criticism of the more orthodox kind of psychoanalysis is based. These theories have been widely used for appraisal of both ancient and modern writers.[10]

In the first place Freudian psychoanalysis places primary emphasis upon erotic experience as the basis of all human behavior.

> . . . since almost every human action represents the results of two opposed forces, of the craving to satisfy our infantile erotic desires and of the more or less keenly felt obligation to suppress, convert, sublimate such instincts, there can be no hard and fast line of demarcation between art and any other cultural activity; they all constitute so many attempts to cope with the curse of our erotic, or, to be quite exact, incestuous nature, leaving in the wake of their efforts a welter of

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[9] Ibid., p. 653.

[10] Boechenstein, p. 651.

sex symbols.[11]

Therefore, the basic instincts of man are of a sexual nature. The term erotic implies that the attachment to the mother or father is not one of biological dependency but primarily one of sexual gratification.

> A child's first erotic object is the mother's breast that feeds him, and love in its beginnings attaches itself to the satisfaction of the need for food. To start with, the child certainly makes no distinction between the breast and his own body; when the breast has to be separated from his body and shifted to the "outside" because he so often finds it absent, it carries with it, now that it is an object, part of the original narcissistic cathexis. This first object subsequently becomes completed into the whole person of the child's mother, who not only feeds him but also looks after him and thus arouses in him many other physical sensations pleasant and unpleasant. By her care of the child's body she becomes his first seducer.[12]

As a result of this sexual attachment various complications may arise. According to Freud, the sexual union between mother and child is the foundation of all incestuous desire. This relationship may lead to the formation of the Oedipus Complex[13] as the child matures and is unable to accept the intrusion of the other parent into the family circle. The formation of the Oedipus Complex and its relationship to the formation of guilt

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[11] Ibid., pp. 651-52.

[12] Nandor Fodor and Frank Gaynor (eds.), Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965), p. 114.

[13] The term Oedipus Complex is generally used to denote both the Oedipus Complex and the Electra Complex.

feelings will be explained in detail in order to outline briefly Freud's view of the mother-child relationship.

As a result of the child's being unable to accept the other parent into the family circle, he begins to develop a resentment toward the father, or maybe toward another child, for stealing the mother's attention from him. The child can easily channel this resentment into a feeling of hatred toward the father figure. This is a hatred caused by jealousy. A cycle of reactions develops. The child first feels frustration, then anxiety, and finally hatred toward the intruding parent. Thus, when the father enters the family picture the balanced state of physical communion between mother and child is disrupted, and unless this balance is restored by the gradual withdrawal of gratification and attention on the part of the mother, the infant's feelings of sexual need toward the mother will become thwarted. Further complications may arise as the child begins to try to adjust to this striated situation.

According to the Freudian theory, the erotic element is innate in the child.

> The element itself is prehuman, dating back to the "id" of the tepid waters of the pelagos untold millions of years in the past. This urge or "libido" manifests itself surprisingly early in the life of the child. Moreover, its entire body, constitutes an erotic agent, but particularly, of course, in this case in the region of the <u>genitalia</u>.

> As the child advances in age, it is still auto-erotic, i.e., still in a stage of narcissism; but sooner or later it seeks unconsciously, to be sure, an object outside itself. For the male child the mother becomes the attraction; the female child turns to the father. Here, then we have the two complexes indicated; the former is the Oedipus Complex; and the later that of Electra.[14]

The instinctual longing for the physical pleasure of the mother figure is a normal instinct common to all male children.

As the child grows up his resentment toward the father is usually repressed ". . . corresponding to the measure in which the child becomes conscious of its surroundings and mechanically accepts the customs, habits and moral restraints of the moral adult."[15] The process of repression is usually a complicated process involving the sublimation[16] of the incestuous wishes into socially acceptable channels. Repression occurs as a result of fear. In this case, fear of the rival parent's displeasure or revenge.

> Undergoing repression next from fear of the rival's displeasure and revenge, these sexual wishes (for the parent of the opposite sex) become goar-inhibited; that is to say become de-sexualized love. Or they may be deflected to the parent of the same

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[14] Axel J. Uppvall, "Strindberg in the Light of Psychoanalysis," Scandinavian Studies, XXI, No. 3 (August, 1949), 133.

[15] Ibid., p. 134.

[16] Sublimation is a process through which the excessive excitations from individual sexual sources are discharged and utilized in other spheres. Ibid., p. 148.

> sex, thereby constituting homo-sexuality, and then sublimated as friendship. The wishes themselves may be altered, distorted or symbolized beyond recognition and this "displacement" from the original biological objective is imagined as the basis of culture-interest in the race and of sublimation in the individual.[17]

This does not mean, however, that the fixation could not re-appear at some later time in the life of the individual. Its emergence depends upon the normal or, as would be the case, abnormal development of the Superego which is the heir to the Oedipus Complex. It is the successor and representative of the ". . . parents (and educators) who superintended the actions of the individual in his first years of life; it perpetuates their functions almost without change."[18]

> It is very important for mental health that the Super-Ego should develop normally--that is, that it should become sufficiently depersonalized. It is precisely this that does not happen in the neurotic, because his Oedipus complex does not undergo the right transformation. His Super-Ego deals with his Ego like a strict father with a child, and his idea of morality displays itself in primitive ways by making the Ego submit to punishment by the Super-Ego.[19]

In essence, the individual first experiences a feeling of guilt as a result of the Oedipal relationship. Freud implies that "We cannot disregard the con-

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[17]Ian D. Suttie, The Origin of Love and Hate (New York: Julian Press, Inc., 1935), p. 17.

[18]Fodor and Gaynor, p. 149.

[19]Ibid.

clusion that man's sense of guilt has its origin in the Oedipus complex and was acquired when the father was killed by the association of the brothers."[20] As the child matures, the repressed wish may re-appear to plague him. When this occurs a sense of guilt may begin to formulate, caused by the recollection of the hatred felt toward the father for intruding. Hatred may also be directed toward the loved object (mother) for rejecting his attentions. The hatred expressed toward the father figure may become manifest in the need to destroy, or at least the wish to destroy him. This sense of guilt may influence the individual's relationship with members of the opposite sex. The individual may seek to find a mate who has many of the same personable qualities as the loved parent. The resentment may still exist, but it will, most likely, be channeled into the desire to substitute the mate for the loved parent.

The individual may have ambivalent feelings of love and hate toward both father and mother. Usually ambivalence manifests itself in the following manner: I loved her (mother), but she rejected me because of him (father). I hate him because he has taken her from me, and I can hate her because she chose him instead of me. I need her love, and I know that I should love him

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[20] Ibid., p. 70.

because he is my father. Thus, in ambivalence there is the state of loving and hating at the same time. The individual is caught between two opposing forces, love and hate, which may cause extreme sexual anxiety. This anxiety may, in turn, cause abnormal behavior. The dividing line between normality and abnormality consists chiefly in the ". . . intensity of repression and the violence with which the repressed wish seeks to re-express itself in the face of the ego's opposition."[21]

Ultimately, in the final analysis, Freud saw his patients bogged down in

> . . . irrational guilt feelings; he saw them sticking in a state of utter inability to break through, to dissipate guilt feelings and make progress in treatment. He saw that these persistent and chronic, tormenting self-accusations (on the score of sexual matters) were reactions to failure to conform to an impossibly strict and harsh moral code. He saw this code emanating from a hypothetical structure which he called the superego, and hypothesized that this superego was addressing itself with blame and censure to the weak ego, or self, or I. He considered that the function of the superego was to regulate drives of the primitive, completely amoral, instinct driven id, or unconscious, in man. Thus, the ego was caught between the superego and the id. Freud regarded severe, irrational guilt feelings and self-punishing tendencies as expressions of a force inimical to well-being, since the ego was unable to escape from or combat them, as evidenced by the bogging down in self-condemnation. He identified this force with a death instinct inherent in all animate matter, including man, which drives a person to destruction under pressures of guilt, or at least blocks the road to recovery and

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[21]Hoffman, p. 10.

well-being.[22]

The tension between the superego (conscience) and the subordinate ego (self) can be called, technically, the sense of guilt; it manifests itself in ". . . the need for punishment."[23]

It was to be expected that Freud's theories would meet with much adverse criticism. For those who violently disagreed with his basic assumption concerning erotic experience, the only channel left open was to make their objections known. By 1935[24] a group of psychologists calling themselves neo-Freudians were beginning to bring forth their research materials disputing or confirming Freud's theories. Probably foremost among the neo-Freudians was the English psychologist Ian D. Suttie. Suttie not only modified Freud's theories concerning the origin of guilt, but he also completely changed the emphasis of his approach from being patriarchal centered to centering around the influence of the mother figure in the family constellation. Suttie's system of psychoanalysis explores in

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[22]Muriel Ivimey, "Neurotic Guilt and Healthy Moral Judgment," American Journal of Psychoanalysis, IX, No. 1 (1949), 10-11.

[23]Fodor and Gaynor, p. 70.

[24]A general date indicating the approximate time for the beginning of published material concerning refutation of Freud's psychological principles. Also the year of publication of Ian D. Suttie's book The Origins of Love and Hate.

depth the mother-child relationship, which he does not interpret as being one of a sexual nature, but a relationship of dependency with love as the basic instinct. Suttie was conceivably one of the first to challenge completely the Freudian school of thought. He was not one of the last.

Diametrically opposed to the Freudian system, especially in placing the erotic instinct as the basis for all human conduct, is the psychoanalytical system of Ian D. Suttie and the neo-Freudians, as outlined in Suttie's book The Origins of Love and Hate. According to Boechenstein, Suttie's theories ". . . may well mark the turning point in modern psychological thought."[25] Whereas Freud's system is primarily a patriarchal psychology revolving around the father figure and his function in rearing the child, Suttie's system is matriarchal and centers around the idea that the infant's basic instinctual desire is the need for love rather than sexual gratification.

> Suttie holds that the instincts of gentleness and friendliness precede all egoistic sex urges, developing his argument with a medical, psychological, and anthropological knowledge which is more than equal to that of any Freudian. This assumption of the primary altruistic emotions over self interest is one which answers the deepest longings of our time and which may lead to a new social philosophy as well as a new school of literary

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[25]Boechenstein, p. 655.

critics.[26]

Since it is a mother centered psychology, the emphasis of rearing the child is shifted from the father to the mother because the mother-child relationship is the basis of the infant's first contact with the world outside the womb. The mother brings the child into this world. She nurses the child, protects it, and provides comfort for it. As the child grows up, she is its companion during the day while the father is at work. Mother is precious to the child; she is love. Father is authority, and mother is the friend who comforts in time of need.

As a result of this emphasis, the mother-child relationship is explored in great detail. Utmost is the infant's need for love and attention. The mother-child relationship emerges as one of biological dependency and not one of sexual gratification.

> We can reject therefore once and for all the notion of the infant mind being a bundle of co-operating or competing instincts, and suppose instead that it is dominated from the beginning to retain the mother-a need which, if thwarted, must produce the utmost extreme of terror and rage, since the loss of the mother is, under natural conditions but the precursor of death itself.

The child depends upon the mother for companionship, nourishment, and ultimately, attention and pro-

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Suttie, pp. 15-16.

tection. The neo-Freudians have, therefore, modified Freud's original promise of referring to ". . . human life as a struggle for pleasure [the pleasure principle], sense gratification, or self-expression"[28] and shifted the emphasis toward viewing the ". . . master motive of humanity as the 'struggle to master anxiety.'"[29] The struggle to master anxiety manifests itself in the dread of separation from the mother.

Since the basic need of the child is of dependency upon the mother because it is unable to manage for itself, all of its motives are directed toward self-preservation. In other words, according to Suttie and the neo-Freudians, ". . . in animals born or hatched in a state of nurtural dependency the whole instinct of self-preservation, including the potential disposition to react with anger and fear, is at first directed towards the mother."[30] Anger is then aimed not at the direct removal of frustration or attainment of the goal of the moment, still less at her (mother) destruction, but toward the demand of regaining her attention and love.[31] Thus, when the child is angered because its

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[28] Ibid., p. 18.

[29] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[30] Ibid., p. 25.

[31] Ibid.

needs have not been fulfilled, it makes the maximal effort to attract attention. As such this must be regarded as the presentation of a protest against unloving conduct rather than aiming at the direct destruction of the mother because she did not supply the need. The destruction principle would have fatal repercussions upon the self.

According to Suttie, the anxiety that the child experiences when it is severed from the attention tie that binds it to its mother is usually caused from someone else demanding her attention at the same time, such as the father, or another child. Like Freud, Suttie indicates that this anxiety may turn to hate, but unlike Freud it is not a destructive hate. It is not--I hate him, therefore, I must destroy him. Hatred is not to be considered a separate emotion from that of love. Hate is an extension of love. It is ". . . just a standing reproach to the hated person, and owes all its meaning to a demand for love."[32] At bottom, hatred is always ambivalent, always self-frustrated. It has no free outlet, and can look for no favorable response from the child. It is difficult to conceive that it (hatred) could be focused so definitely upon a person (mother) who is so significant to the subject's life.

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[32] Ibid.

As the child grows up, it learns to transfer its dependency to other people. Its demand for love and attention grows to include the entire family. It becomes a social being; a member of the family circle. If, however, the child has been severely frustrated during early childhood by some form of rejection, cut off from the response of love, trouble may develop. Frustration may turn to anxiety, and at a later stage it may turn to guilt as the cause of rejection is recalled. The anxiety could possibly turn to hatred if the initial frustration is sufficiently severe.

From the information presented previously, it can be seen that there are conflicting psychoanalytical viewpoints concerning the subject of guilt. The Freudians view guilt as essentially developing out of the Oedipal period that the child must pass through before reaching maturity. Little attention is given to altrustic love. Instead, love in its earliest stages is rooted in the incestuous sexual desire of the infant for the parent of the opposite sex. Guilt develops out of the infant's repression of the incestuous sexual urge when the superego fails to overcome the tensions placed upon it by the subordinate ego. Love, to the Freudian, is of a physical nature and excludes the possibility of its being rooted in tenderness of feeling toward the loved object.

The neo-Freudian view of Suttie spans the whole process of socialization. To Suttie, the basic need of the infant is to satisfy the hunger for love, protection, nourishment, and attention. Love of mother is primal in so far as it is the first formed and directed emotional relationship. Hate is not regarded as a primal independent instinct, but results as a development or intensification of separation-anxiety which in turn is roused by a threat against love. It is the maximal ultimate appeal in the child's power--the most difficult for the adult to ignore. Its purpose is not death-seeking or death-dealing, but the preservation of the self from the isolation which is death, and the restoration of a love relationship. The child's greatest fear is to be left alone.

Because the infant's first contact with the outside world is with the mother, biological gratification must come from her. The child is dependent upon the mother for its every need. She becomes the protector, the supplier of the infant's needs and demands. More than the father, she emerges as the one who is responsible for rearing the child.

Through the process of socialization, as the child matures and becomes a member of the family circle, is introduced to the father figure and the other children in the family, it gradually learns to shift its depen-

dency from the mother to the other members of the family. The child learns to relate to other members of the family. Its need for love and comfort is satisfied by the attention it receives from the family and eventually from other members of its social world.[33] Indeed, this is an explanation of the process of socialization in its ideal form.

If, for some reason, the child is allowed to remain dependent upon the mother for too long, or if the child is suddenly cut off from the mother and receives little attention from the rest of the family, complications may arise. For instance, if the father is indifferent to the child, and if the child senses this indifference, the child will naturally turn to the mother for more love and comfort. If, however, the mother withdraws her attention from the child and neglects its need for love at the same time, the child will suddenly realize that it is alone. The fear of neglect, and the reality of loneliness cannot be indured. If the love need of the child is frustrated in this way, the child may begin to feel guilty because it feels it ought not to have asked for what the mother has refused (love) or offered what she has rejected (love). Frustrated love causes anxiety, which, if severe enough, may

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[33]The process of socialization may be defined as becoming a social being, in the family, at school, etc.

in turn cause hatred which ". . . owes all its meaning to a demand for love."[34] The hatred of a loved object (ambivalence) is intolerable; the love relationship must be preserved as a matter of life and death.

In the final analysis, the Freudian concept of guilt, in terms of the male child, is rooted in the incestuous mother-child relationship during childhood and is directed toward the destruction of the father figure for stealing the attention of the mother from the child. The latter is a neurotic impulse developing out of misdirected repression and sublimation of the incestuous desire. The Suttian system, on the other hand, does not place primary emphasis upon man's sense of guilt as developing out of the Oedipus Complex. Emphasis is not placed upon the development of incestuous relationships between parent and child but upon the violation of relationships of love and trust between parent and child. The resentment principle develops out of an unsatisfied demand for love. The fear of rejection causes anxiety and anxiety leads to hate. The intolerability of hate may cause a sense of guilt to develop. Since guilt demands punishment, the individual will, in order to clear his conscience, seek punishment and release for his guilt feelings. In

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[34] Suttie, p. 23.

punishment there is release from anxiety. The individual cleanses himself when he is punished justly. Fear develops, however, if the punishment is unjust and undeserved.

Suttie's definition seems to apply to Strindberg's relationship with his mother and his first wife Siri von Essen. It is ultimately more fruitful to study Strindberg's relationships with women, and consequently the relationships between the male and female characters in his plays, in the light of Suttian psychoanalysis. The nature of his neurosis concerning his dependent need for love, seems to stem from his dependent relationship with his mother during childhood. This concept will be further elaborated upon in section two of Part One of this study. The love demand is, therefore, to be regarded as social rather than sexual in its biological function, as derived from the self-preservation instincts not the genital appetite, and as seeking any state of responsiveness with others as its goal.

SECTION II
PERTINENT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL ON STRINDBERG'S EARLY LIFE AND FIRST MARRIAGE

Before an examination of Strindberg's plays can be attempted, it is necessary to first apply Suttie's definition of guilt to Strindberg's autobiographies, The Son of a Servant[35] and The Confession of a Fool.[36] These two autobiographies are of primary importance to this study because they contain valuable personal material on those years of Strindberg's life in which he first began to have feelings of guilt about his childhood and first marriage. The plays selected for this study are autobiographical extensions of these periods of his life.

The following section of Part One will present a careful analysis of those experiences in Strindberg's childhood and first marriage that appear to have particular pertinency to the formation of feelings of guilt, as seen in the heterosexual relationships in the plays chosen for this study. Emphasis will be placed on iso-

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[35]August Strindberg, The Son of a Servant, trans. Claude Field (London: William Rider and Son Ltd., 1913).

[36]August Strindberg, The Confession of a Fool, trans. Ellie Schleussner (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1913).

lating those incidents and feelings which best express Strindberg's relationship with his mother, father, and his first wife, Siri von Essen. It is the contention of this study that Strindberg's feelings of guilt, as revealed in his autobiographical writings and plays, stem from feelings of resentment and rejected love between his mother and himself during childhood. In adulthood these feelings of rejection drove Strindberg to search wildly for love and attention through all of his marriages.

The influence of Strindberg upon contemporary dramatic literature and psychological thought cannot be denied. More than any other writer of his time he sought to find out the truth about himself through his writings. In so doing, his dramas and autobiographical writings present a psychological record of his inner torments. Dr. Franklin Klaf, M.D., noted psychologist and author of Strindberg: The Origin of Psychology in Modern Drama, supports this viewpoint when he says:

> Contemporary dramatic literature, with its soul-searching agonies, owes more to the influence of the tormented Swedish playwright August Strindberg than to any other writer. Indeed, anyone interested in realistic drama "written in tears and blood," inevitably becomes fascinated by the plays of Strindberg. Strindberg, in his dramas and autobiographical works shows us not only the tears and blood of the creative process, but the sinews where they were produced. It was through Strindberg's plays and his collaboration with Nietzsche that an interest in psychology became the focal

point of modern drama. . . .[37]

As a result of this soul-searching, Strindberg's dramas are extensions of his own experience, and primarily autobiographical in nature. As Henderson says, "It is characteristic of Strindberg that, in his effort to portray the most vital, most tense form of conflict, he should instinctively find his dramatic theme in the torturing conflicts of his own family life."[38]

Unfortunately the bulk of the available critical material on Strindberg's childhood and early adult life has been focused on the interpretation of his writings from a Freudian point of view. In other words, Freud's analysis of the development of the Oedipus Complex, and guilt derived therein, has been used as a basis on which to judge and interpret Strindberg's relationship with all three of his wives. Klaf very clearly points out that the bulk of Strindbergian psychological research has been geared to explaining all of Strindberg's relationships with women as being influenced by his Oedipal relationship with his mother.

> Psychoanalysts have not yet gotten firm hold of Strindberg, but those with Freudian orientation who have written about him have had a field day traveling down the Oedipal path. Even the initial

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[37]Franklin S. Klaf, M.D., Strindberg: The Origin of Psychology in Modern Drama (New York: The Citadel Press, 1963), p. 17.

[38]Henderson, p. 46.

> battles of Strindberg's stormy marital life were fought on Oedipal territory.[39]

This interpretation is undoubtedly questionable, based on the assumption that Strindberg was sexually in love with his own mother. Only the naive interpreter would explain Strindberg's relationship to his mother on the basis of the Oedipal legend.

> Their relationship went much deeper than that, being more of a relationship of dependency and longing. He [Strindberg] remembers shrieking like a drowning man when informed that his mother was dead. Insensitive though she was to his developing poetic talents, her passing left an emptiness Strindberg was never able to fill.[40]

Klaf further supports this researcher's contention that Suttie's description of the mother-child relationship of dependency, with a basis on the need for love and attention, is a more adequate and applicable analysis of Strindberg's relationship with his mother when he says:

> Strindberg's first autobiographical work is the saga of a son who never felt that he could get enough from his mother. Strindberg blamed and loved his mother in the same breath, a situation now described as ambivalence. Ambivalence is sometimes defined as hatred for someone who is otherwise loved, and this description applies perfectly to Strindberg's relationship to his mother with one important exception--<u>otherwise loved</u>--<u>and desperately needed</u>. (Italics mine.)[41]

In this case, what Suttie describes as ambivalence

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[39] Klaf, p. 52.

[40] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 33-34.

[41] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 27.

(the intolerability of hate) applies to Strindberg, since the desperate need for love is geared to overcome the feeling of hatred.

Referring to the Oedipus Complex again, Klaf implies that Strindberg would have laughed at this apparently naive interpretation of human conduct when he says:

> Modern descriptions of himself as a little Oedipus would have made him smile, for he early penetrated beyond that facile and deceptively complete explanation of human behavior. Strindberg's craving for material care was one of his weaknesses and yet one of his saving graces. It made him suffer and led him to commit sins, but it kept him likeable in spite of his transgressions.[42]

Briefly scanning the great amount of critical literature on Strindberg's life and writing, it is amazing to note how many authors have bluntly accepted and elaborated upon the Oedipal interpretation.[43] It is not, however, the purpose of this study to condemn these writers for taking this viewpoint, nor is it the purpose of this study to refute their arguments. It is not possible to negate their point of attack without going into a detailed examination of all the diverse opinions

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[42] Ibid.

[43] The trend toward interpreting Strindberg from an Oedipal standpoint started with Uppvall's extensive study on the subject. It should not be considered conclusive proof of the condition. For more information on the subject, see Axel J. Uppvall, "Strindberg in the Light of Psychoanalysis," Scandinavian Studies, XXI, No. 3 (August, 1949).

on the subject, and to be truthful, such an examination would probably result in extreme confusion. Therefore, within the limitations of this particular study, a different viewpoint will be discussed that seems to be just as valid in its approach to the subject.

In the final analysis, both interpretations of guilt (Freud and Suttie) are purely hypothetical. So much is based upon assumption, and much more is left to speculation. What must be considered, however, is the importance of trying to judge the ultimate worth of the author's contribution to psychological investigation. Strindberg, it seems, almost beckoned psychological investigation when he laboriously revealed his inner conflicts and struggles in his autobiographies. If Strindberg can be considered a genius, as Klaf points out, and if he can be considered as being mentally disturbed, as Klaf also points out, then the worth of his autobiographies, as documents of his life's struggles, emerges as being all important to the serious student of theatre who seeks to come to an understanding of his plays.

> It is part of the hero's myth for men of genius to portray themselves as being misunderstood and long-suffering in childhood. This excusable failing is shared by Strindberg but his particular brand of personal realism gives his self-revelation an amazing candor, allowing his childhood reminiscences to remain valuable.[44]

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[44]Klaf, p. 27.

Strindberg was highly subjective in his writing. In a sense he was driven by the impulse of some irrational urge to release his emotions and inner conflicts through the medium of the drama. Through the medium of the drama he sought to understand himself more clearly. He was continually searching for an ". . . understanding of the psychotic process."[45] The fact that the majority of his plays are autobiographical extensions of his own life seems to verify his great need to play out his inner conflicts ". . . on a stage larger than his own life."[46]

> Almost all of Strindberg's collected work is autobiographical by his own admission. Seven of his prose volumes are composed of personal narrative meant for publication but not artistic gratification. In creating his greatest plays, he skillfully used fragments of his illness with shattering dramatic effect.[47]

To merely read Strindberg is like living in the same house with him, but only sharing the meals and the room. To <u>understand</u> Strindberg is to learn to know him intimately. Consequently, to understand Strindberg is to read his autobiographies with the intent of finding some clue as to what made him create dramatic characters for the stage who were, by their nature and manner,

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[45] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 18.

[46] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 19.

[47] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 20.

such representative examples of his own suffering. Strindberg's characters are, to a great extent, reflective of his own loves, hates, fears, and frustrations.

> We have come to expect that a writer will project his own experiences, loves, hates, fears, and yearnings into his writing. Some writers will relive and reveal these explicitly. Others will mask and disguise, yet weave them into the fabric of their creation. . . . Strindberg seemed to find relief from his self-doubts and suspicions by revealing his life in a series of confessional works.[48]

August Strindberg was born in the Riddarholm section of Stockholm on January 22, 1849. He was the fourth son of Carl Oscar Strindberg and Ulrika Eleanora Norling. His father, a shipping clerk of good education, had just recently made Ulrika, a tailor's daughter in domestic service, his wife. She had been his mistress for many years. As Elizabeth Sprigge describes, his mother ". . . was sick and troubled and did not welcome this further care."[49] To further complicate matters ". . . he was a seven-month's child; he had been born too soon; he was over-sensitive and incomplete and the world was hostile."[50] Along with this, as if this was not burden enough, he was destined not to be

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[43]Meredith William Dawson, "The Female Characters of August Strindberg, Eugene O'Neill, and Tennessee Williams," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Speech, University of Wisconsin, 1964), p. 5.

[49]Elizabeth Sprigge, The Strange Life of August Strindberg (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1949), p. 2.

[50]Ibid., p. 1.

the favorite son of the family. Being the fourth and middle child of the family, he was forced, at an early age, to compete for attention. He always wanted more attention than it was possible to attain.

Times were hard for the Strindberg family. As Elizabeth Sprigge points out:

> To add to the humiliation of the irregular union, he [Strindberg's father] had gone bankrupt, and August was born when his father's fortune was at its lowest ebb. The family could not hold up its head among the neighbours; the child heard constant talk of debt and disgrace, and came to think of 'creditors' as a race of ogres who might at any time invade people's homes and take everything away. Poverty, however, did not stop the family from its increasing until, although several infants died, there were eight children--three boys before August and three girls and one boy after him--all living at very close quarters with their parents, two servants and various other relatives.[51]

As a result of these cramped living conditions, it is easy to see how Strindberg could have felt stifled as a child.

This was Strindberg's introduction to human life which from the first fascinated and, moreso, frightened him. John Mauritzon, one of Strindberg's biographers, has remarked that:

> Life dealt harshly with Strindberg. Very few men of his genius have had to endure so many privations such poverty and ill treatment since early childhood. The childish impressions had a lasting effect upon his development and crop out again and again in his literary productions. "I grew up in an atmosphere of hate. Hate! An eye for an eye! A blow for a

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[51] Ibid., p. 2.

> blow!--I am an illegitimate child, born at the time the affairs of a bankrupt family were being liquidated and the family was in mourning. . . . There you have the family. What fruit can you expect of such a tree?"[52]

The struggles of early childhood were to haunt Strindberg for the rest of his life. He felt that his mother had cheated him almost from birth. If he was an unwanted child, a fact that only his parents could prove, he still needed love and attention, and sought to attain it in any way possible. His life was a dark saying, indeed.

In his first autobiographical study, The Son of a Servant, the story of his early childhood, he recalls that his first impressions were hunger and fear.

> The child's first impressions were, as he remembered afterward, fear and hunger. He feared the darkness and blows, he feared to fall, to knock himself against something, or to go into the streets. He feared the fists of his brothers, the roughness of the servant-girl, the scoulding of his grandmother, and the rod of his mother, and his father's cane. He was afraid of the general's manservant, who lived on the ground-floor, with his skull-cap and large hedge scissors; he feared the landlord's deputy, when he played in the courtyard with the dust-bin; he feared the landlord, who was a magistrate. Above him loomed a hierarchy of authorities wielding various rights, from the right of seniority of his brothers to the supreme tribunal of his father.[53]

According to Klaf, these phobias during childhood were

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[52]John Mauritzon, "Strindberg's Personality," American Scandinavian Review, X (May, 1922), 293. (The quote within the major quote taken from Mauritzon's article is undoubtedly from Strindberg. Unfortunately, Mauritzon does not cite the source.)

[53]Strindberg, Servant, p. 1-2.

part of a series of paranoic reactions that would culminate in feelings of schizophrenic persecution during the inferno period of Strindberg's adult life. During childhood, however, these fears were merely the product of an oversensitive mind.[54]

Strindberg's relationship with his mother and father is important to this study. The nature of his relationship with his mother was to color his idealized image of what he thought a woman should be. Consequently, his treatment of the female characters in his plays was greatly influenced by his dependent relationship with his mother.

> Twenty years before Freud, Strindberg analyzed the importance of parent-child relationships for future personality development particularly the mother-child interaction. He realized early that a child learns and assimilates the external world largely through the process of identification with his parents. As a child grows, he finds that his parents will no longer satisfy all of his needs. This is a painful experience for him, and it challenges the child to imitate his parents and try to do for himself what his parents formerly did for him. Skills of parents and significant people in the environment are thus made part of the developing child's personality by identification. . . . The child has a craving to imitate his parents because they hold him in high esteem in spite of his imperfections.[55]

From the beginning Strindberg felt that ". . . his mother had cheated him almost from birth."[56] Per-

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[54]Klaf, p. 28.

[55]Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[56]Sprigge, p. 28.

haps he was an unwanted child, but this fact cannot be verified from the autobiographies. At any rate, he idolized his mother and sought her attention at all times. She was his friend, provided him with comfort, and even though his childhood was generally unhappy, his mother helped to make it more bearable.

> Childhood was not a happy time for August; he longed for his mother's love, but she already had a favorite, his eldest brother, and life to the boy seemed to be a constant competition for her attention. He thought of her as being both beautiful and kind; it was his mother who provided both food and love, who offered him comfort when he was hurt. His childhood love for his mother was absolute although she might at times betray him and reveal his mistakes to his father, but the love he offered her was unrequited, and as he grew older this caused within him a confusion of love for her and contempt for her faults.[57]

He was a dependent child. Dependent upon his mother for his every need. When she rejected him for Axel, her supposed favorite of the children, he experienced extreme frustration. He desperately wanted to regain her attention ". . . the struggle to master anxiety manifests itself in the dread of separation from the mother."[58] He began to feel guilty because he felt he ought not to have asked for what the mother had rejected (love) or offered what she had rejected (love). This frustrated love caused anxiety which, in turn, because of Strindberg's sensitivity as a child, and

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[57]Dawson, p. 7.

[58]Suttie, p. 19.

because he couldn't turn to his father for attention, caused ambivalent (intolerable) feelings toward the mother. These ambivalent feelings owed all of their meaning to an unsatisfied demand for love.

> There began to develop within the boy an ambivalence which was to color his relations with all women for the rest of his life. Drawn to the mother by her beauty and seeking her warmth, he found himself rebuffed, partly because she had so many children to look after, and partly due to her preferential treatment of his older brother. While the boy felt an overwhelming love and need for his mother, he also knew that she was not perfect.[59]

She was otherwise loved, but desperately needed.

The basic fear, arising from this rejected love on the part of the mother, was the fear of being left alone. To a sensitive child, loneliness is desperation, a desperation that caused Strindberg to use his fast imaginative powers, even as a child, to ease the pain of loneliness. But even imagination could not stop him from demanding attention ". . . imaginative sons may not have imaginative mothers but they demand much from them just the same, and Strindberg, with an inordinate need for affection never stopped demanding."[60] He learned that his mother was not perfect and that if she was a source of comfort, she was also the source of much of his pain and anguish. She had foresaken him for another.

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[59]Dawson, pp. 7-8.

[60]Klaf, p. 28.

The intolerability of the hatred he felt toward her for rejecting his love, as opposed to his desperate need for her love, caused a feeling of guilt to develop.

Strindberg was only thirteen when his mother died of tuberculosis, and suddenly his feelings of guilt materialized. According to Suttie, the loss of mother is worse than death itself.

> Strindberg's mother died of tuberculosis when he was thirteen, causing a reaction of sickening guilt instead of normal mourning. He was due to inherit one of her gold rings. The materialistic craving that he felt for this gold trinket at his mother's deathbed was to torture him in the sleepless nights of years later, and is reminiscent of similar guilt felt by other spiritual suffers such as Gandhi.[61]

Ultimately, with her death, Strindberg realized that the one object of his affection was gone forever. Now he could only worship her memory. She had been the source of warmth, and the ". . . eternal ideal of protectiveness."[62]

> Strindberg describes his mother as being a preserver, a source of warmth, and the eternal ideal of protectiveness. Every son has magical expectations and wishes centered on his mother. Maternal love has a selflessness and a purity that is eagerly sought after in other women. With most men there is a rude awakening to the bitter truth that no women are as altruistic and protective as Mother seemed during their infancy. When this happens, latent hostility often reaches conscious expression.[63]

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[61] Ibid., p. 33.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

Strindberg was to remember his dependency on his mother, and sought to find, later on in his life, a woman who would be both wife and mother to him. His dependent relationship with his mother was to manifest itself in a great need to undo the wrong he had done his mother when he hated her for rejecting his love.

The dependent relationship between Strindberg and his mother was greatly influenced by the fact that he could never express the feeling of love toward his father. The father was away from home during the day at work in the steam-ship offices. When he came home from work, he was usually tired and wanted to rest. Strindberg's mother, however, always left the punishment of the children to the father. When he arrived home for the evening, he was faced with the responsibility of reprimanding the children for their misbehavior during the day. Consequently, since he was a man of strength and conviction, he became the authority figure of the family. As the dutiful father he played the role of warden. He was responsible for the punishment of the children.

> The father appeared only at meal-times. He was melancholy, weary, strict and serious, but not hard. He seemed severer than he really was, because on his return home he always had to settle a number of things which he could not judge properly. Besides, his name was always used to frighten the children. "I will tell papa that," signified a thrashing. It was not exactly a pleasant role which fell to his share. Towards

> the mother he was always gentle. He kissed her after every meal and thanked her for the food. This accustomed the children, unjustly enough, to regard her as the giver of all that was good, and the father as the dispenser of all that was evil.[64]

A code of strict discipline prevailed in the house; falsehood and disobedience were severely punished. If Strindberg's mother had punished the children immediately after they had misbehaved, rather than leaving the punishment to the father many hours later in the day, there would have been a more direct relation between the misbehavior of the child and the punishment received for it. As it was, the father was resented unjustly, because when he returned home he had to administer punishment for offenses that he could not judge properly. The children, and especially Strindberg, could easily learn to fear unjust punishment; in their minds they had forgotten the offence, and now father was thrashing them for something that he knew nothing about. Strindberg explains his views on the subject of unjust punishment when he says:

> Little children often tell falsehoods because of defective memories. . . . Little children can lie unconsciously, and this fact should be remembered. They also easily lie out of self-defence; they know that a "no" can free them from punishment, and a "yes" bring a thrashing. They can also lie in order to win an advantage. The earliest discovery of an awakening consciousness is that a well-directed "yes or no" is profitable

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[64]Strindberg, Servant, pp. 7-8.

> to it. The ugliest feature of childish untruthfulness is when they accuse one another. They know that a misdeed must be visited by punishing someone or other, and a scapegoat has to be found. This is a great mistake in education. Such punishment is pure revenge, and in such cases is itself a new wrong. The certainty that every misdeed will be punished makes the child afraid of being accused of it, and John [Strindberg] was in a perpetual state of anxiety lest some act should be discovered.[65]

As a result of unjust punishment, Strindberg forced punishment upon himself in severe quantities. As Strindberg says:

> When the children 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 himself and became bitter. His reserve and shyness grew on him. He hid himself if he received a word of praise, and took pleasure in being overlooked. He began to be critical and to take a pleasure in self-torture; he was melancholy and boisterous by turns.[66]

If Strindberg feared his father, there is no indication from examining the autobiographies that he hated him. It would be best to say that a feeling of indifference existed between the two of them. Father was not the source of comfort, and he was to be considered an intruder in the home. If anything, Strindberg in later life ". . . pitied his father for being bound to family life, as if a man with twelve children

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[65] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[66] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

could be an Icarus."[67]

From his father, Strindberg absorbed into his character ". . . aristocratic and fastidious tastes, without his father's plasticity for compromise."[68] Whereas mother was the object of great love, father was the object of respect and fear.

> From his mother came his religious pietism, a search for the spiritual, and a delight in penance and superstition. Nothing affected his life more than his mother's leaving it; although her tenure had been brief, her influence was timeless. Carrying into adult life an idealized image of his mother as what a woman should be, Strindberg found only ersatz replacements in his wives. Then rebelling against his most desperate dependency on women, he came to champion the cause of mysogyny.[69]

Finally, what Strindberg resented most in his childhood was the general lack of understanding in the family. He was not nurtured as the young poetic genius that he thought he was. Instead, he was treated as merely just one of the children. This was true even at school. He was left unchallenged in his work. There was little close harmony in the family, and he was confused as to what his relationship to the family consisted of. Was he just another mouth to feed?

> It is difficult to determine if open discord prevailed in the home, but it is likely that due to the difference in the backgrounds and interests of the

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[67] Klaf, p. 29.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 37.

> parents there was little close harmony; certainly there was little sentiment shown in the family, and the bond between the children was not particularly close. . . . The open conflicts which existed in the home and the contradictory directions given to the boy raised doubts in his mind. Whom was he to follow, whose wishes was he to heed, to whom was he to turn to in time of need, what was his relationship to these loved yet feared people? Love, as he heard and read it was never demonstrated in the home. His mother was beautiful and he loved her, yet she had obvious faults and weaknesses, and she scorned the learning which he sought. His father was present only at mealtimes, a stranger who seemed to exist primarily to mete out justice when it was called for. He recognized that his father was necessary for the support of the family, but Strindberg knew that all animal life fed its young, and for that reason he could not see that his father merited special attention, for providing the necessities of life. In his thinking, he concluded that since he had not asked to be born he owed no one anything. . . . There should have been someone who could have ehlped the boy through his doubts and fears, but no one was available for him. He felt alone, confused and beset with questions for which there appeared to be no happy answers.[70]

More than anything, as he became an adult, Strindberg possessed a sensitivity unique to the creative artist. Feelings and memories that often passed others by always touched him deeply. As Klaf says "It was a gift that enabled him to obtain an emotional understanding of his complex childhood that was fantastic in its depth."[71] His depth of feeling, and acute recall of past events and tortures, allowed him to free his imagination in his confessional works, as well as in

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[70]Dawson, pp. 9-10.

[71]Klaf, p. 37.

his plays, aiding him ". . . to take his place in the twilight zone between fantasy and reality where the creative artist functions."[72]

At the age of eighteen in May of 1867,[73] just four years after his mother's death, Strindberg received his "'. . . white cap' of educational qualification."[74] This award permitted him to go on to the university for advanced study. It was a time for the young Strindberg to look back on the past, to examine his past relationships in the family: his loves, hates, fears, and insurmountable sufferings. At this point in his life he was unsure of his future, unsure of himself, and, above all, unsure of his goals as a creative artist.

> Feeling that "a man's character is his destiny," his characterological analysis is largely concerned with doubts, fears, and weaknesses. Each liability seems to be counterbalanced by an asset. Despairing at this futile attempt to view himself objectively, Strindberg speaks almost in the terms of modern ego psychology. All people really acted parts. "And where was to be found the central 'ego,' the core of his character? The 'ego' was a complex of impulses and desires, some of which were to be restricted and others unfettered."[75]

For the first time in his life, Strindberg began to realize that his deepest feelings about people in

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[72] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[73] Ibid., p. 36.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

general, and about himself, dictated his actions. He began to realize that every emotion, love, fear, anger, etc., was caused by some inner feeling, and to some extent reflective of some hidden impulse. He was beginning to view the future pessimistically. According to Klaf, he began to have the ". . . feeling that he was destined to repeat his childhood behavior patterns."[76] His memories of the past and the constant torments of his early childhood caused him to have the feeling that he was trapped by his experience. He was caged, so to speak, by his own life, and deterministically he could not see an end to this bond. Consequently, ". . . he stepped out into life--in order to develop himself, and still ever to remain as he was."[77]

His feelings of guilt, resulting from the conditions of family life during childhood, and especially feelings of guilt arising out of the unsatisfied love-dependency relationship with his mother, were to plague him for the rest of his life. The real and imagined ". . . oppressions of childhood were over,"[78] and "In the distance were future expectations of artistic creativity."[79] Filled with doubt, Strindberg could only

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

look to the future for some measure of happiness and hope for release from the burdens of his inner suffering.

The next ten years of Strindberg's life, from 1867-1877, may be called "The Impatient Years."[80] These were years of great emotional and intellectual struggle for Strindberg. He would attend Uppsala University, off and on again, for a period of six years from 1867-1872, always living in ". . . dire poverty, and leaving without taking a degree."[81] During his time off from the university he ". . . was by turn tutor, journalist, art critic, actor, and telegraph clerk, and he taught himself enough Chinese to catalogue the Chinese manuscripts in the Royal Library of Stockholm, which improved his social standing."[82] And yet during this period of unrest, just prior to his fateful meeting with Siri von Essen in 1875, he was able to pursue his ambitions to become a writer.[83] This was a period of transition for Strindberg; he was discovering himself, and it was a painful and fruitful experience.

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[80] Ibid., p. 39.

[81] August Strindberg, Twelve Plays by August Strindberg, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1962), p. vii.

[82] Ibid.

[83] In his university days Strindberg had begun to write plays, including The Outlaw, Master Olaf, Herr Bengt's Wife, and Lucky Peter's Journey.

> His reactions both to places and to people were swift. Uppsala was rich in tradition: the kings were crowned in the cathedral, the Archbishop had his seat there, great men had entered the world through these doors--August Strindberg looked at their statues and determined to do even better, but he did not like the place. The landscape was flat with no inspiring panorama of islands, the little town was unimpressive, the sight of so many young men all bent on the same object as himself made him shy and hostile, the dusty atmosphere left by generations of learning oppressed him, and after a while he found his lack of funds a serious handicap.[84]

However bleak the surroundings were at Uppsala, Strindberg learned to ". . . develop a great reverence for Swedish traditions and a fervent longing to work within their boundaries."[85] His experiences at Uppsala helped to develop a pattern in his interpersonal relationships with his fellow students; a pattern that was to remain with him for the rest of his life. He always sought attention and understanding in other people. He had much to say to the world but not yet the skill to convey his thoughts. According to Klaf:

> Like many other geniuses, Strindberg compared the creative process with childbirth. "He felt a kind of peace like that which follows paturation. Something or someone seemed to be there, which, or who was not there before; there had been suffering and crying, and now there was silence and peace."[86]

In turning to the dramatic medium as his choice, Strind-

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[84]Sprigge, pp. 20-21.

[85]Klaf, p. 40.

[86]Ibid., p. 45.

berg ". . . sought a profession rooted in the pursuit of pleasure and imagination, without the usual subservience to reality."[87]

It was during this period of debt and struggle that Strindberg realized that he needed a woman. He had been engaged in several romances that turned out to be unsuccessful intrigues. Each time he had felt rejected by the woman he worshipped. On one occasion, just prior to his meeting with Siri von Essen, and immediately following a period of extensive debt in 1874, Sprigge reports that in order to rid himself of the sick sense of guilt that accompanied his failure, he

> . . . fled to the sea and the arms of a woman, but presently he fell into a fever in which he saw the creditors lying in wait for him and heard their voices demanding that he be given up to them--since he had used their money, they had shares in his body and his soul. He wished he had been put in prison--that might have brought him peace. When the mists cleared, Strindberg found that for the first time in his life he had been seriously ill. He was still shaken with ague, and all his senses were painfully sharpened. The burden of awareness was intolerable, and he gazed at the waves, longing for them to enfold him like a mother's arms and blot out the cruel world. Death, the sea, his mother, and his mistress were mingled in his distraught mind. . . .[88]

Sprigge continues to explain this phenomenon:

> He rushed out into the forest, yelling defiance at the hostile powers, lashing the branches of trees, whipping the striplings to ribbons at his feet.

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[87] Ibid., p. 42.

[88] Sprigge, p. 53.

> He climbed to the top of a hill and, as there was still a pine tree above him, he climbed to the top of this too and challenged the forces of the universe. Strindberg recognized this as one of his attacks, and he knew that anyone witnessing the scene would think him mad, but he reassurred himself with the thought that he was only translating his inner struggle with hostile powers into action--he was "acting a poem of desperation. . . ." Once Strindberg had despaired because he had no vocation; now he was a poet without a song, a lover without love.[89]

Even though, for a time, his world seemed to be shattering and falling around his feet like so much broken glass, he sought to understand his struggle toward more complete emotional expression. He soon realized that, like Kierkegaard, he could find enjoyment in his suffering, especially in the ". . . tortures of unrequited love."[90] He needed more than just female companionship; he needed to be loved, and in turn he sought to find the one woman who would be both wife and mother to him.

> But one thing would not let itself be forgotten, and that was his heart. On the one hand he must have someone to adore, on the other he wanted to revenge himself for the misery women caused him. . . . In spite of women's treachery he worshipped them, and although he was a member of a secret society for the promotion of free love, still more secretly he disapproved of promiscuity, and believed that he would remain only half a person until he found his one true love and complement. His God was distant and obscure; his friends no longer counted--all that he had to worship was nature and woman, woman who was nature and the mother of life. He must worship, and part of the ritual

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[89] Ibid., p. 54.

[90] Klaf, p. 47.

> was to spit upon each idol as she fell and then set up another.[91]

On the threshold of this fateful meeting with Siri von Essen he realized that "Life was a perpetual interchange between pleasure and pain."[92] During his brief periods of near insanity he had experienced almost a complete emotional and physical release from his tormented spirit. He never withdrew into himself completely. But, as Klaf points out, his

> . . . turbulent and uncertain relationships with others during his formative years smoldered on throughout his life. Mixed feelings toward his mother passed into excessive love and hatred toward his wifes; adolescent religious struggles became reverence for God, followed by disbelief. His feelings swung like an eratic pendulum, never functioning smoothly, yet never coming to rest. Thus were both Strindberg's personality and his creative gifts saved from extinction.[93]

In June of 1875 Strindberg met Siri von Essen, a Baroness and wife of Captain Carl Gustaf Wrangel.[94] This meeting changed the pattern of Strindberg's life, for he came to worship Siri as both madonna and mistress, and later made her his wife. Unknown to Strindberg, this meeting was to begin fourteen years of struggle and suffering for him, during which he wrote

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[91]Sprigge, p. 58.

[92]Klaf, p. 47.

[93]Ibid., p. 49.

[94]Sprigge, p. 60.

the three famous autobiographical plays selected for this study: The Father, Miss Julie, and Creditors. He also wrote the most revealing of his autobiographical works, in which he almost damned women for their treachery, and especially Siri, for propagating his downfall.

> The Confession of a Fool covers fourteen years of Strindberg's life, from the moments prior to his fateful meeting with Siri von Essen (1875) to the time of his separation from her (1889). Written in the form of a novel, it moves from the raptures of love to the anguish and suffering caused by the battle against unjust suspicion. We see a curious blending of hatred projected onto others, and the beginning of terrible guilt and self hatred. . . .[95]

From the very beginning Strindberg's relationship with the Wrangels was one of confusion. Just as in childhood, where he never quite understood his relationship in the family--where he only knew that he needed love and attention, and was denied both, so with the Wrangels he only knew that they had extended the hand of friendship to him, and he felt the longing within his breast to accept their offer. To make matters worse, they lived in the house that Strindberg's family had lived in when he was a child. Upon entering the old home, Strindberg immediately remembered his mother ". . . worn out by child-bearing."[96] In her place was Siri, a lovely,

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[95]Klaf, p. 51

[96]Sprigge, p. 61.

childish looking woman with an angelic face surrounded by an abundance of "corn-gold curls."[97] She was a vision of delicate elegance, for "Her wrists and ankles were exquisitely slender, her feet the smallest he had ever seen, and to complete this picture of feminine perfection was her small replica, the three-year-old Sigrid."[98] (Siri's daughter) In Siri, Strindberg saw ". . . the soul of his mother, the very soul of a woman for which all his life he had been seeking."[99] And he thought to himself "She was here' now he could worship, and the hollow in his breast was filled."[100] Gustaf always looked regal in his ". . . blue uniform, picked out with yellow and silver,"[101] and his strong handsome features gave him a dignity of appearance that was really only a surface reality. Strindberg was to soon learn that first appearances are often deceptive. If he had only allowed the reality of what Siri was underneath her mask of graciousness to influence his feelings toward her, then the suffering and longing that was to come as a consequence of their relationship might have been

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[97] Ibid., p. 60.

[98] Ibid., p. 62.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

avoided. But Strindberg was a man of impulse, and his passionate feeling for Siri was to overcome any faults that she had--he followed the dictates of his heart, a fatal mistake in judgment.

> Finally he tired of drifting, a type of life longed for by the dreamy adolescent, but very uncomfortable when it is finally achieved. With the coming of discomfort the revolt against society and the family ceases--the homey virtues once desperately avoided are now vigorously sought after. Strindberg needed a woman. His search was driven by common inartistic motives--dependency and biology. Domesticity might be artistically dull as it was for his father, but it did satisfy sexual and other needs in a quiet, peaceful fashion.[102]

Strindberg spent quite a lot of time with the Wrangels, and over the first year of their friendship he grew to admire Siri more and more. He had used the false pretense of allowing Siri to believe that he was suffering from a broken romance, and even though this was partially true, he essentially used this story to gain the confidence of the lovely Siri. All the time, in his heart, he longed to fall to his knees before his idol, and worship her with a clean and pure spirit. She was to be his salvation. Only she could save him from himself.

> He adored Siri with the same madonna-worship of his childhood. She was now the mistress of the house once guided by his mother, and at first this unusual circumstance precluded any sexual desire for her. He was afraid to pollute her with passion. . . .[103]

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[102]Klaf, p. 52.

[103]Ibid., p. 53.

As Strindberg says in his autobiography, "I was longing to sacrifice myself, to suffer without hope of any other reward but the ecstasies of worship, self-sacrifice and suffering."[104] Above all, Siri became a female goddess, and Strindberg sought her attention and affection in any way possible.

> The instinct of worship, latent in my breast awoke, and with it the desire to proclaim my adoration. . . . God was deposed, but His place was taken by woman, woman who was both virgin and mother. . . . this woman represented to me a soul incarnate, a soul pure and unapproachable, clothed with one of those radiant bodies which, according to the scriptures, clothe the souls of the dead. I worshipped her--I could not help worshipping her.[105]

As with his mother, Strindberg longed to be loved by Siri; he wanted to be dependent upon a woman who would be sexually his wife and, at the same time, smother him with motherly kindness and affection. The feelings of guilt that he had experienced as a child, especially when his mother died, still plagued him.

After two years of struggle and torment, August Strindberg married Siri von Essen on the last day of 1877, ". . . three weeks before his twenty-eighth birthday. . . ."[106] Strindberg has survived the torment of Siri's divorce suit, and he had felt guilty,

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[104] Strindberg, Confession, p. 21.

[105] Ibid., p. 20.

[106] Sprigge, p. 82.

for a time, at being the cause of much unhappiness. Yet his need for Siri was so great that he managed to forget, to some extent, the struggles of the past two years, and he looked hopefully to the future for happiness. He was greatly mistaken in his feelings, for the years ahead were to be filled with the worst kinds of doubt, fear, suspicion, and guilt.

> To understand so much, and to make such a horrible mistake! It is one of man's psychic misfortunes to be impelled to action more by need that my reason. Strindberg longed for family ties; Siri sought to escape from them. They were two people with pygmalion like fantasies. Siri looked on Strindberg as a talented playwright whom she would inspire to further her career. Strindberg with his dependency needs, wanted to make Siri into a German hausfrau, who would be bovine and unquestioning, except when he chose to stimulate her, intellectually and otherwise.[107]

And so from the beginning of their marriage ". . . he recognized that, as with his own mother, there was a hatred beneath his love."[108]

According to Klaf, "Married life is destined for tragedy when both partners need for the same things and search for them in each other."[109] This, perhaps, is one reason why Strindberg and Siri never achieved marital happiness. Neither one of them could supply what the other needed so desperately to make a happy and ful-

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[107]Klaf, p. 59.

[108]Ibid.

[109]Ibid., p. 63.

filled union. Siri could not be both wife and mother to Strindberg because she wanted to be independent of any such marital tie; she wanted to use Strindberg's talents as a playwright to further her own career. Strindberg, on the other hand, so desperately needed a woman who could be both wife and mother to him, that he could never be the dominant male in the marital relationship. Consequently, their union was a failure from the beginning.

> Underlying the passionate marriages of youth there are basic needs that determine the choice of a mate. Often when a passive man marries an agressive, domineering woman, people comment on what a termagant the wife is, but some of them realize the price that she exacts for his support. All men have dependency needs, nurtured in the long mother-son relationship that is unique to the human species. Women respond to these needs, within the limits of their own personalities and requirements. It was one of Strindberg's tragedies that he required more mothering than others, but he was sexually attracted to precisely the opposite type of woman from the one who could satisfy his needs.[110]

Strindberg's marriage to Siri, and the consequences of their mismatched union, colored his view of women and their respective place in society for all time. In short he needed the kind of woman who would cater to his every need and demand little in return. Strindberg, like Freud, strongly felt that the man should be the center of the social structure, and that the woman's place was in the kitchen. Unfortunately, he

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[110] Ibid.

could never assume this position himself because he was so dependent upon women for all of his needs. The problem of Strindberg's relationship with Siri deduces itself to a question of two independent wills, each striving for dominance over the other. Unfortunately, Strindberg's will was the weaker of the two, and "If the man's will is weaker than the woman's she robs him day by day of power as a weasel sucks the blood of a rabbit, until he is ruined."[111]

Strindberg's marriage to Siri lasted all of twelve years; twelve years filled with doubt, suspicion, and guilt. He doubted her faithfulness to him as a wife, and went so far as to accuse her of having homosexual relations with other women. His suspicions grew, and he began to doubt the paternity of his own children.

> What did he really know of his wife? He had fallen in love with a madonna and discovered a wanton; he was sure now that she had lovers of both sexes, before and since her marriage. What if the children were not his? What if he had been cheated of his only earthly happiness and his sole hope of immortality? What proof had he that any one of these three children whom he loved so dearly was his own?[112]

He soon began to understand how alone he really was, "One fear woke another, plunging him back into the terrible helplessness of childhood--the fear of loneli-

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[111]"Anti-Feminine Genius of August Strindberg," Current Literature, L, No. 3 (March, 1911), 316.

[112]Sprigge, p. 110.

ness, of people, of dogs and the dark. . . . His past returned in vivid detail."[113] Sprigge comments:

> He began to understand how great a part his unrequited love for his mother had played in the tragedy of his marriage, how he was doomed to seek his mother in all women, and to hate them because his heart was buried in her tomb. Now too, in the light of experience, he could see the significance of his blank background, his lack of place in the social system.[114]

Ultimately, he realized that his resentment toward women was colored by his dependent need for love. He realized that his feelings of hate toward Siri, and all women, owed all of their meaning to an unsatisfied demand for love. He realized that he was alone, and in his loneliness he sought to punish himself for some secret ". . . crime he could not identify."[115] He feared that he was going mad--and he had to find out the truth. Ironically, his sense of guilt was heightened, and, as Klaf points out, this may have been caused by feelings of persecution that normally accompany schizophrenic illness. Consequently, ". . . this growing guilt provided Strindberg with his sole source of respite."[116] He gained pleasure from self-punishment, and this acted as a blessing, allowing him to release

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Klaf, p. 71

[116] Ibid.

his disturbed feelings through a ". . . safety valve."[117]

> During these years of marital discord Strindberg wrote some of his best and most perceptive works. After the separation he felt isolated and sought others like Nietzsche, who had been wronged by women and might be sympathetic. With varying degrees of subtlety, he continued to pursue his diatribes against women, using his work as a catharsis for his suspicions. Needing a maternal woman, Strindberg had not chosen wisely but he believed that he had learned a lesson as well. Adapting "The Confession of a Fool" for the stage as "The Father," he unmasked woman for what he felt she was, a predatory creature whose sole aim was man's destruction. Strindberg's finest play thus arose phoenix-like from the depths of his illness and the ashes of his first marriage.[118]

Thus, Strindberg, like the Zarathustra of Nietzsche, scornfully asserted his virile and brutal doctrine, "'If thou goest to woman, forget not the whip.'"[119] In the final analysis, he relived his life on the stage and the characters in his plays had to ". . . fight not only their own battles, but also those of their author."[120]

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[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[119] "Anti-Feminine Genius," p. 316.

[120] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

PART II

GUILT MANIFESTATIONS IN THE HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THREE PLAYS BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

SECTION III
ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS SELECTED FOR THIS STUDY

Part Two of this study is devoted to an analysis and examination of the guilt manifestations in the heterosexual relationships in three of Strindberg's most autobiographical plays: The Father, Miss Julie, and Creditors. The male-female conflict, as it exists and is used for dramatic purposes in these three plays, will be interpreted in the light of the psychological information on Strindberg's childhood and adult life, as revealed in his autobiographies as previously discussed in Part One of this study. Emphasis will be placed on showing how the male-female conflict in these plays is reflective of Strindberg's own conflicts with his first wife. These conflicts will be seen as being highly reflective of his feelings of guilt that grew out of the resentment that he felt toward his mother during childhood for rejecting his love.

The first fruits of Strindberg's psychic operations appear in the series of plays which he wrote in the years 1887-1888, notably The Father, Miss Julie, and Creditors. These three plays have been called ". . . the

most perfect examples of the naturalistic aesthetic."[1] Yet underneath the more obvious characteristics of the so-called naturalistic trend of "slice of life drama," they appear to be more than just studies of environmental influence. They are certainly more than just plays of social conflict. According to Valency, ". . . it is the psychological rather than the social conflict that is emphasized, and the narrative consequently focuses on the fundamental question of the enmity of the sexes."[2]

In these plays, Strindberg paints a picture of woman as the female vulture bent on destroying man through trying to become the dominant force in the male-female sexual relationship. Thus, man and woman are at opposite poles of the sexual struggle. The woman wants to master the man, and the man wants to retain his strength and be dominant over the woman. The result of this polar division is sexual conflict. The sexual conflict manifests itself in the struggle for mastery, and power. As Valency says:

> The misogyny which motivated his plays of 1887-1889 was, in any case, not based upon intellectual considerations. It was founded on the same grounds that supported the rest of the neurotic superstructure of his singular mentality. Strindberg was not at any time a woman hater. On the contrary,

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[1]Valency, The Flower and the Castle, p. 254.

[2]Ibid., p. 261.

> women fascinated him, and he found it impossible to resist them. But he evidently found them more interesting as a source of pain than of pleasure, and he infallibly sought out the kind of woman to marry who would go to some lengths to aid him in his desire to suffer.[3]

As has been previously pointed out in Part One of this study, these plays are autobiographical extensions of Strindberg's experiences in his first marriage to Siri von Essen. Above all, these plays are also reflective of his childhood experiences, as well as being highly reflective of his relationship with his mother. As Klaf says:

> Only at rare intervals was Strindberg aware that the emotions of the past must be understood in tune with the realities of the present. Growing difficulties with his first wife were what motivated his search for past understanding, resulting in his series of autobiographical works [and his plays]. Yet Strindberg failed to recognize this connection; instead, he blindly accused his mother of instilling within him a false ideal of womanhood, which resulted in the tragic choice of Siri von Essen as his first wife.[4]

Ultimately, "One who has read Strindberg's works may get into difficulties of interpretation, but he can never question Strindberg's 'fitness as a subject of literary discussion.'"[5] The able critic can only rely upon his writings as possible sources of evidence rep-

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[3] Ibid., p. 253.

[4] Klaf, pp. 27-28.

[5] Carl E. W. L. Dahlstrom, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1930), p. 98.

resentative of his great need to play out his life's struggles on a stage larger than his own life. It is more fitting, at this point, to say that his dramas resemble his life's experiences in terms of theme, conflict, and, to some extent, portrayal of character, but they should not be considered as actual representations of his real life. Moreso, they are abstractions of his experiences and struggles, distorted for the sake of the art-form. As Dahlstrom says, ". . . if one reads Strindberg's works and the letters that are available one will learn not to identify individual features of his artistic work unless one has conclusive evidence."[6] (Italics mine.) Unfortunately, Dahlstrom does not define what he means by "conclusive evidence," and it can only be deduced that he does not agree with those critics who attempt to present a psychological investigation of Strindberg's plays based on evidence abstracted from the autobiographies. This has been, and probably always will be, a moot point among scholars, and there is really no definite answer to the question.

It must be remembered, that the opinion of Dahlstrom is only one viewpoint concerning the subject of psychological investigation. Even Dahlstrom admits that the ". . . dramatist [Strindberg] is not presenting

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[6] Ibid.

other people's souls, but is objectifying what passes through his own soul."[7] Thus, he, to some extent, negates his own theory in admitting that "The unconscious plays a definite role in the scheme of things."[8] The fact remains, however, that the able critic can only assume that Strindberg, in his autobiographies, presents a fairly accurate picture of his experience. There is no way of telling how much he exaggerated in trying to objectify his experience.

The fantastic nature of the torments that Strindberg endured at the hands of the women who loved him is all too clear from his writings, both public and private. In a letter to Axel Lundegard,[9] concerning the production of The Father, he indicates his feelings of guilt over the idea of whether the play is actually representative of his own marital struggle with Siri.

> I don't know if The Father is an invention or if my life has been so, but I feel that at a given moment, not far off, this will be revealed to me, and then I shall crash either into insanity from agony or conscience or into suicide. Through inventing so much my life has become a shadow life--I seem to be no longer walking on earth but swinging without gravity in an atmosphere not of air but of darkness. If light falls into this darkness I collapse crushed.

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[7] Ibid., p. 100.

[8] Ibid., p. 51.

[9] Axel Lundegard was a Swedish author who made the Danish translation of The Father. Strindberg often turned to him for comfort and advice during the stress of the production of the play.

> Queer thing, in a dream often recurring at night, I feel myself flying, without gravity, find it altogether natural; at the same time all sense of right, wrong, true, untrue is lost to me and it seems that everything that happens, however unusual, must happen. . . .[10]

Thus, with all the skill of the born dramatist, ". . . he was able to arrange situations in real life from which he could conclude that he was being drained intellectually and emotionally; that he was betrayed, insulted, robbed, and systematically driven into madness."[11] The neurotic pattern that eventually put an end to his marriage with Siri von Essen was repeated with all the other women he loved. He expected perfection in his women, and when he realized that they were not perfect, he grew to resent them. In turn, this resentment manifested itself in a deep bitterness toward the opposite sex as if he were ". . . determined at all costs to arouse the hostility of the women who attracted him, and he was content only when he had proved conclusively that nobody loved him and that he stood alone."[12]

Through the medium of the drama, he sought universal acknowledgment of his sufferings. Valency says:

> Since it was also necessary for Strindberg to be universally loved and admired, he was compelled to exhibit his grievances in detail, to justify and to rationalize his actions, and, in order to evoke

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[10]Sprigge, p. 116.

[11]Valency, p. 253.

[12]Ibid., pp. 253-54.

> universal sympathy for his sufferings, to call, not merely on the neighbors, but upon all the world to witness the injustices to which he was subjected. Strindberg's sufferings were, no doubt, intense; but they certainly involved some element of showmanship. In order to suffer properly, it was necessary for him to have an audience of thousands, of millions; and even this did not suffice. His pain must be abstracted, generalized, universalized, until by a Christ-like effort he concentrated in himself all the suffering of mankind. Even so, it was not easy for him to reach the ear of God. For this it was necessary that his complaints be transformed into something so poignant and so beautiful that they could not possibly be disregarded.[13]

Strindberg was thirty-eight when he finished The Father in 1887. His marriage to Siri von Essen was almost at an end, and as has been previously pointed out, he was filled with doubt and fear permeated by extreme loneliness.

> At the time of writing The Father, Strindberg was greatly concerned with his own state of mind, and feared that insanity would eventually overtake him; and he also felt that his wife was doing her best to get him out of the way. The quarrel in the Strindberg family centered around the education of the two daughters, the elder of whom was six years of age. Siri von Essen wanted the daughters to be actresses, whereas, Strindberg demanded that the girls be given a practical education. Strindberg was also suspicious that his wife had not been faithful to him, for he was not positive that the son born in 1886 was actually his own child. Situations are the same in Strindberg's own life and in The Father; but the details, of course, are different in each case.[14]

To some extent, the autobiographical material has been

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[13] Ibid., p. 254.

[14] Dahlstrom, pp. 97-98.

distorted for the purpose of the art-form.[15]

Before discussing the plays selected for this study, it is necessary to examine those historical details that may have influenced Strindberg's treatment of theme and subject. Along with the significance of the autobiographical detail, previously discussed in Part One of this study, it is interesting to note that ". . . the prevailing literary mode in France 1880's was misogynistic,"[16] and since Strindberg had been in Paris for some time prior to finishing the script of The Father, it can be surmized that he adopted these mysogynistic ideas and utilized them in his dramas. While in Paris he also became interested in the psychological experiments of Charcot at the Salpetriere and of Bernheim at Nancy.[17] As Valency says:

> Their excursions into mypnotism confirmed what he [Strindberg] had always believed, that every confrontation of individuals implied a psychic struggle, a battle of minds to determine the mastery. The mental struggle for domination paralleled, in his opinion, the physical struggle for survival which Darwin had not long ago described in The Descent of Man.[18]

Valency goes on to say:

The conditions of human existence were, in Strind-

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[15] Ibid., p. 98.

[16] Valency, p. 263.

[17] Ibid., p. 262.

[18] Ibid.

> berg's opinion, constantly adjusted, and re-adjusted through these psychic encounters, which took place mainly through suggestion, and in this manner, the stronger minds, the more highly evolved intelligences, forced the weaker to do their will.[19]

The principle of the "stronger minds" forcing the weaker to do their will is true of Strindberg's plays with one important exception. Strindberg does not show any definite correlation between intelligence and emotional stability. Thus, even the intelligent person who is emotionally sensitive is also subject to persecution. This is certainly true of the Captain in The Father, and of Adolf in Creditors. Superior intelligence, or artistic excellence does not mean that the individual possessing these qualities has also the stronger will.

Thus, the male-female conflict can be interpreted as ". . . an elemental struggle of opposites, male and female, in their ur-status, that has burned itself into the soul of the dramatist and taken a new shape there with new significance."[20] According to the expressionistic theory of Dahlstrom:

> The dramatist has fashioned the play [The Father] not with his eyes on the objective experience, but with his eyes turned within himself, focussed on his own ego. The drama is not therefore "life seen through a temperament," but life flowing

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Dahlstrom, p. 101. (Dahlstrom defines urishness as ". . . an emphasis on the spiritual quality of man . . . as something enduring before and beyond the quirks of written codes and public opinions." Ibid., p. 28.

> through a soul. It is Strindberg's world and Strindberg's ego flowing together in a supersubjective self.[21]

In essence, the facts of Strindberg's life: his unhappy childhood, the unsatisfied love-dependency relationship with his mother, his inability to express any feeling of love for his father, the failure of his marriage to Siri von Essen, and the doubt, fear, and guilt that permeated his whole existence during the 1880's lent an aura of subjective influence to his writing. These factors, along with the historical significance of the misogynistic trend of the time, his violent reaction to Ibsen's feministic play The Doll's House, and the influence of the psychological experiments in hypnosis carried out in France at the time, all helped to provide the necessary interpretative framework that he used to structure his subject material. Thus, Strindberg's plays of the 1880's were not merely naturalistic, but they were also expressionistic because they presented the objective experiences of the author in a distorted manner--transmuting the objective experience, or what actually happened, into inner experience in order to become more ". . . functional in the search for reality."[22]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 53.

THE FATHER

In The Father, Strindberg portrays the ". . . struggle of opposites, male and female. It is the sex war that is conditioned by the anti-poles male and female."[23] The plot is amazingly simple: from the very beginning of the play the Captain and his wife Laura are engaged in a fierce battle over the mastery of their daughters future, ". . . the desire to determine her education and career."[24]

> . . . the immediate question concerns the daughter's future. Bertha is seventeen. Her father is a free-thinker, and he wishes her to have a liberal education in the city. The mother wishes her to stay at home and study art. They differ sharply. The house is full of women. Their interests vary; but regardless of their disparate viewpoints, the women make a common cause, while the men are incapable of standing together.[25]

It is apparent that the struggle for mastery over the fate of the child has been going on since she was born. The Captain is opposed at every turn. As he says in Act I:

> The house is full of women, all trying to mould this child of mine. My mother-in-law wants to turn her into a spiritualist; Laura wants her to be an artist; the governess would have her a Methodist, old Margaret a Baptist, and the servant girls a Salvation Army lass. You can't make a character out of patchwork. Meanwhile I . . . I, who have more right than all the rest to guide her, am

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[23] Ibid., p. 95.

[24] Ibid., p. 96.

[25] Valency, p. 266.

opposed at every turn. So I must send her away.[26]

He is aware of the opposition between man and woman when he says a little later on to the Pastor:

> But to me the worst thing about it is that Bertha's future should be decided in there from motives of sheer hate. They do nothing but talk about men being made to see that women can do this and that. It's men versus woman the whole day long. . . .[27]

Along with the struggle over the daughter's future, the Captain is driven mad by doubts as to the legitimacy of his child. As has been previously cited in Part One of this study, this idea may have been suggested by Strindberg's own experience with Siri.

> The struggle of Strindberg and Siri von Essen is taken out of the individual status and put into the typical. The experiences are indeed Strindberg's, but by the time they have become a part of the soul and have later been objectified in an art-form they have also gone through a process of distortion. The Captain is Strindberg's mouthpiece, but cannot be identified with Strindberg in <u>detail</u>. Laura is <u>not</u> a mouthpiece for Siri von Essen, nor is she Siri von Essen drawn true to life. She is Strindberg's reaction to his wife and becomes thereby a distorted version of Siri von Essen.[28]

As previously cited in Part One of this study, Sprigge amplifies this consideration when she says:

> What did he really know of his wife? He had fallen in love with a madonna and discovered a wanton; he was sure now that she had lovers of both sexes, before and since her marriage. What if the children were not his? What if he had been cheated of his

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[26]August Strindberg, <u>Twelve Plays</u>, p. 12.

[27]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 14.

[28]Dahlstrom, p. 100.

> only earthly happiness and his sole hope of immortality? What proof had he that any one of these three children whom he loved so dearly was his own?[29]

As Dahlstrom says, ". . . behind all this is the urge of the one sex to dominate the other."[30] In Strindberg's scheme of things, even though the Captain is superior to Laura in intellect, and is much more productive and imaginative, he is still the weaker of the two and is ". . . plundered by the parasitic, uncreative sex he labored to support."[31] As Dahlstrom says:

> The Captain fights openly and above board, employing the weapons of the male; Laura, on the other hand, fights with the animal cunning that will use any means whatsoever to gain control of the situation. It is an uneven struggle, for the rules of combat are not the same for both contestants; the Captain is governed by some principles but Laura is motivated only by the desire to win the battle.[32]

> Here we have man and woman filled with all the hate in the universe, and the suspense of the drama is such that we see only one man and only one woman in this world. They are also cast in a struggle that draws them toward each other with a terrific force, for the two are inextricably united in the child. Through the child each struggles for domination over the other, and through the child each is bound to the other. If there is any essential reality born of this struggle of opposites it must be this alone; the inevitable union and equally inevitable and ever-lasting disharmony of the sexes.[33]

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[29]Sprigge, p. 110.

[30]Dahlstrom, p. 100.

[31]Valency, p. 261.

[32]Dahlstrom, p. 96.

[33]Ibid.

The Father describes ". . . a case of psychic homicide, a 'soul-murder.'"[34] According to Borge Madsen in Strindberg's Naturalistic Theatre, the concept of "psychic homicide" can be traced to Strindberg's interest in French psychology. As Madsen says:

> Immediately before he sat down to the writing of The Father, Strindberg had devoted himself to a thorough study of contemporary psychiatric and hypnotic literature, especially French. Towards the end of 1887--after finishing The Father he composed a series of essays, entitled collectively "Vivisections," which reveals his strong interest in contemporary psychological research in France. Because of their points of contact with Strindberg's naturalistic drama, the two most important of the "Vivisections" are "The Battle of the Brains" and "Psychic Murder." Taken together these two titles actually constitute an adumbration of the major theme in The Father, Miss Julie, Creditors, Paraih, The Stronger, and Simoon. In all of these plays a relentless "battle of the brains" is presented on the stage, and in all of them one of the combatants is crushed, to use one of Strindberg's expressions. . . .[35]

As has been previously cited, Valency also supports this viewpoint. He goes so far as to imply that

> The crime is not developed systematically, nor is it malice prepensed. Its horror is augmented by the fact that it is a wholly instinctive reaction. In the beginning the wife, Laura, means only to defeat her husband, not to kill him. It is really he himself who shows her the way by which she can drive him into madness and death. In a sense, therefore, the Captain commits suicide, and his behavior in the circumstances seems odd, unless we assume that the male in this situation is

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[34]Valency, p. 264.

[35]Borge Gedso Madsen, Strindberg's Naturalistic Theatre (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp. 48-49.

always destined to die in some such way as this.[36] In the final analysis, the central point of Strindberg's play is not the character-study of an individual caught in a difficult situation, the Captain, but the opposition of ". . . man and woman in the tragic aspect."[37]

The tragedy of the Captain's character in The Father is focused on his great need for motherly attention, consequently resulting in his inability to be a masterful sexual partner for his wife. He speaks as a resentful child, conscious of his childhood suffering, and especially conscious of the memory of his feelings of guilt concerning his great need to make up for the resentment he felt toward his mother for rejecting his love. To Laura he says near the end of Act II, "Can't you see that I'm helpless as a child? Can't you hear me crying to my mother that I'm hurt?"[38] Laura, who has taken the place of his mother, has ceased to answer his call for help, and as a result of this, he again realizes his need to try to re-establish some form of dependency relationship with his wife. He remembers his past with Larua, and how content he was when she was like a mother to him. As he says near the end of

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[36]Valency, p. 264.

[37]Ibid., p. 265.

[38]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 41.

Act II:

> My father and mother had me abainst their will, and therefore I was born without a will. That is why, when you and I became one, I felt I was completing myself--and that is why you dominated. I--in the army the one to command--became at home the one to obey. I grew up at your side, looked up to you as a superior being and listened to you as if I were your foolish boy.[39]

In turning to Laura for motherly attention, the Captain was trying to find a substitute for the mother who had rejected his love when he was a child. According to Suttie, as previously cited in Part One of this study, if the love need of the child is frustrated through rejection, the child may begin to feel guilty because it feels it ought not to have asked for what the mother has refused (love) or offered what she has rejected (love). Frustrated love causes anxiety, which if severe enough, may in turn cause hatred (intolerable) as in the Captain's situation. This hatred ". . . owes all its meaning to a demand for love."[40] The love relationship must be preserved as a matter of life and death. In order to accomplish this, the Captain, consequently, turns to Laura as a substitute for his mother. It can be surmised that the Captain is highly representative of Strindberg's own feelings of guilt concerning the thwarted love relationship between his mother and

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Suttie, p. 23.

himself.

For Laura it was impossible to be both mother and wife to her husband. As the mother substitute she began to have feelings of guilt about the relationship that resulted in feelings of resentment, permeated by feelings of hatred toward her husband for denying her sexual needs as a woman, and involving her in a symbolic incestuous relationship. As she says in Act II:

> Yes, that's how it was, and I loved you as if you were my little boy. But didn't you see how, when your feelings changed and you came to me as a lover, I was ashamed? The joy I felt in your embraces was followed by such a sense of guilt my very blood seemed tainted. The mother became the mistress--horrible.[41]

It should be pointed out, that the Captain did not understand his feelings, nor did he interpret them as being couched in incestual desire for a mother substitute. As he says, "I saw but I didn't understand. I thought you despised my lack of virility, so I tried to win you as a woman by proving myself as a man."[42] According to Valency, "In this situation, Strindberg saw the root of the sexual conflict."[43] As Valency says:

> In The Father the woman is strong; the man is weak. They are in the relation of mother and son. Yet in order to propagate the race, it is necessary for a time that their roles be reversed--the man must

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[41]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 41.

[42]Ibid., p. 42.

[43]Valency, p. 270.

dominate; the woman, submit.[44]

The conflict is inevitable. As Laura implies in Act II:

> That was your mistake. The mother was your friend, you see, but the woman was your enemy. Sexual love is conflict. And don't imagine I gave myself. I didn't give. I only took what I meant to take. Yet you did dominate me. . . . I felt it and wanted you to feel it.[45]

Whereas, the Captain blamed his troubles on the memory of a bad mother, who rejected his love and taught him to hate by neglecting his love need, Laura saw the real truth behind the problem. In a sense her statement, "The mother was your friend," is full of meaning other than its obvious literal application to the relationship between the Captain and herself. In this way she tells him that his mother was his friend also, but because he demanded too much of her, demanded that she love him and only him, she too could not endure the strain of an over-demanding son.

The Captain, however, cannot accept this view of the situation, and he continues to suffer throughout the play, blaming all of his problems on his mother. In Act III he says:

> I believe all you women are my enemies. My mother did not want me to come into the world because my birth would give her pain. She was my enemy. She robbed my embryo of nourishment, so I was born incomplete. My sister was my enemy when she made

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 42.

> me knuckle under to her. The first woman I took in my arms was my enemy. She gave me ten years of sickness in return for the love I gave her. When my daughter had to choose between you and me, she became my enemy. And you, you, my wife, have been my mortal enemy, for you have not let go your hold until there is no life left in me.[46]

Charles Lyons in "The Archtypal Action of Male Submission in Strindberg's The Father," appearing in Scandinavian Studies, provides the key to understanding the tragic aspects of Strindberg's view of the male-female sexual conflict. According to Lyons:

> The energy released in the submission and emasculation of the Captain is amplified by the fact that the figure who surrenders was once a warrior, or, at least, as close to a warrior as the displacement of the law of mimetic mode allows. The image of the cavalry officer, to whose will large numbers of men are subject, is one of great strength which is supported by the image of the powerful beasts controlled by his physical strength. . . . Reinforcing the image of the warrior-hero is the basic image of the father, the protector and provider, who bears the burden of responsibility for the whole family and whose will directs the entire action of the family.[47]

This is certainly an operational theory, and can be traced to Strindberg's autobiographies, especially The Confession of a Fool. The will of the Captain is weaker than that of his wife, and is reminiscent of Strindberg's dependent relationship with his first wife, Siri von Essen. Lyons goes on to say:

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[46] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

[47] Charles Lyons, "The Archtypal Action of Male Submission in Strindberg's The Father," XXXVI, No. 3, Scandinavian Studies (August, 1964), 220.

> In tension with the image of the father as warrior are the images which support emasculation: the presence of the childhood nurse; the whole household of disorderly females, with the concentration of power held by the wife, the strength of the woman held by the assurance that she is a creative source; the image of the grafted tree; the specific image of the submissive warrior who surrenders his symbols of power to the female; and the recurrent images of the child returning to his mother.[48]

Thus, the play is held together by ". . . a kind of molecular tension of egoes,"[49] and is ". . . characterized as a 'bedlam,' in which the confrontation of opposing wills is essential and incessant. . . ."[50] Therefore, the Captain's scientific efforts to achieve some means of recognition, as a form of escape from the influence of the demonic female, Laura, are wasted and perverted because there is no escape from the reality of his dependent relationship. He remains as a "helpless child,"[51] and like Strindberg ". . . he stepped out into life--in order to develop himself, and still ever to remain as he was."[52]

In the final moments of Act III, the Captain returns to the comfort of his mother's breast symboli-

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[48]Lyons, p. 220.

[49]Ibid., p. 219.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 41.

[52]Klaf, Strindberg: The Origin of Psychology in Modern Drama, p. 36.

cally represented in the character of the Nurse. His feeling of guilt forces the memory of unrequited love during his childhood to the surface, and he becomes conscious of his great need to be comforted and loved as a child. He has cursed women for all time, "Shame on you, woman of Satan, and a curse on all your sex!"[53] An instant later he returns to childhood, and in seeking the comfort of his mother, he says to the Nurse:

> Come and sit beside me on this chair. Yes, like that. Let me put my head on your lap. Ah, that's warmer. Lean over me so I can feel your breast. Oh how sweet it is to sleep upon a woman's breast, be she mother or mistress! But sweetest of all a mother's.[54]

Such is Strindberg's view of the human condition, unchangeable in its wretchedness. Yet out of the wretchedness of the human condition, even in the eyes of the so-called sceptic, some hope comes into view. As Valency says:

> The tragedy of the father has its sacrificial aspect. The Son of Man is endlessly crucified, but in Him, nevertheless, is the hope of mankind. Pain is the essence of being, but our suffering is not in vain--it is the premonition of our divinity.[55]

In his dying moments, the Captain turns to God for comfort. As Valency says, ". . . the father is conscious

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[53]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 56.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Valency, p. 271.

of his Christ-like role . . . ,"[56] for in life he suffered tremendously at the hands of women who rejected his love. As Klaf says concerning the relationship between The Father and Strindberg's feelings of guilt:

> Strindberg not only realized that he was using "The Father" as a catharsis for the murderous impulses of his illness [schizophrenia]; he also knew the way out of the approaching tragedy. . . . A woman could be both savior and tormentor. Had his mother lived and been sympathetic, had he been able to find a woman to gratify his need to remain dependent, he might have been saved much suffering.[57]

He goes on to say:

> "The Father" was, in addition, a plea for understanding. Unlike the more pedestrian Zola, Strindberg knew that sadness and tragedy need no social milieu--they are universal, existing in castles as well as in slums. In all locales woman could be a treacherous seducer, and at the same time the source of redeeming warmth. Certain laws of life it was useless to fight against. Man was always cheated in trying to create children in his own image. He sowed the seeds, but woman raised and controlled the children. Again Strindberg appreciated all aspects of the mother-child relationship. Mothers provided the sustenance and protectiveness necessary for growth, yet selfishly guarded their young as personal property.[58]

Strindberg implies that women can cause pain, but in the midst of the pain that they cause there is beauty; ". . . in the midst of anguish there is truth."[59]

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Klaf, p. 83.

[58] Ibid., p. 84.

[59] Ibid.

Hence, with his poetic insight into the human condition, he distilled both beauty and truth out of his suffering that helped to ease the burden of his tortured soul.

MISS JULIE

In the preface to Miss Julie, Strindberg very clearly points out the importance of psychological investigation of character. According to Klaf:

> This polemic introducing the text became an exposition of the psychological theories introducing the play. . . . With typical daring Strindberg firmly stated that he was creating a new drama, modernizing form and changing content. The content would be life, "which now seems so brutal, so cynical, so heartless." Strindberg says, "I find the joy of life in its violent and cruel struggles, and my pleasure lies in knowing something, and learning something." The only available way to understand life is through "unreliable instruments of thought which we call feelings." Perhaps some day, Strindberg tells us, thoughts will control feelings. Until then, people will be imperfect, but vital.[60]

Strindberg also makes it clear that the fundamental psychological principle of multiple-cause and multiple-effect applies to the study of the psychological motives of the characters in his plays when he says:

> What will offend simple minds is that my plot is not simple, nor its point of view simple. In real life an action--this, by the way, is a somewhat new discovery--is generally caused by a whole series of motives, more or less fundamental, but as a rule the spectator chooses just one of these --the one which his mind can most easily grasp or that does most credit to his intelligence. A suicide is committed. Business troubles, says

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[60]Klaf, p. 85.

> the man of affairs. Unrequited love, says the woman. Sickness, says the invalid. Despair, says the down-and-out. But it is possible that the motive lay in all or none of these directions, or that the dead man concealed his actual motive by revealing quite another, likely to reflect more to his glory.[61]

As previously indicated in Part One of this study, while at Uppsala in 1867, Strindberg first began to realize that his deepest feelings about people, and about himself, dictated his actions. This concept was to greatly influence his treatment of the characters in his dramas. He acknowledged the forces of the unconscious mind as dictating the actions of the conscious mind. Therefore, in Strindberg's view of things surface reality, or what an individual appears to be on the surface, may not be a true picture of his inner reality. He learned that outward appearances are often deceptive. As Klaf points out:

> Strindberg has learned that life has no absolutes, no single cause and effect relationships, no pure passions. Therefore, verisimilitude in the theatre depends on conflicting motivation. He says, "An event in real life--and this discovery is quite recent--springs generally from a whole series of more or less deep lying motives. . . ." People like the valet Jean in "Miss Julie" are of indeterminate character, "oscillating between love of distinction and hatred of those who have already achieved it." Through the character of Mephistopheles in "Faust," Goethe had shown with rare wisdom that what may appear as consumate evil also contains elements of good. From his traumatic marital experience, Strindberg came to realize that even the women who persecuted him had noble qualities.[62]

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[61]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 63.

[62]Klaf, pp. 85-86.

Readers of Strindberg's plays and autobiographies will undoubtedly want to acknowledge the influence of Nietzschean philosophy on the Swedish playwright. It is interesting to note, however, that Strindberg's polemic preface to Miss Julie was composed after the play's completion. As Klaf says, "Strindberg's reverence for Nietzschean ideas developed after 'Miss Julie' was written. Hence, the theme and content of the play were not influenced by Nietzsche."[63]

> . . . it was the later Nietzschean grandiosity that provided Strindberg with support, fortunately it was the early brilliant Nietzschean perceptions that influenced his dramatic theory. They seemed to crystallize out the ideas of his plays, transforming Strindberg from a skilled practioner of naturalistic drama into a prophet of the contemporary theatre.[64]

The influence of Nietzsche cannot be denied, even though no direct correlation can be drawn between Miss Julie and Nietzsche's philosophy. It should be noted, however, that to some extent, when Strindberg contrasted the sex struggle in Miss Julie with the environmental factors that discouraged such a relationship between the valet, Jean, and Miss Julie, he was contrasting the personal sex struggle with a more universal social struggle. This concept of universal struggle is decidedly Nietzschean in its outlook.

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[63] Ibid., p. 85.

[64] Ibid.

> Strindberg tells us that people never ceased to grow by adaption was a discovery of the late nineteenth century. Coming as it did before Darwin, classical drama had no conception of how interaction with the environment could result in change. Nietzsche and Strindberg had both been enthusiasts of the Darwinian revolution. Nietzsche viewed the struggle for existence in cosmic proportions; Strindberg had seen it on a personal level. Nietzsche widened Strindberg's scope, and in the resultant naturalistic drama, individual conflicts were related to universal struggles.[65]

Both Strindberg and Nietzsche were frustrated lovers, and it is therefore not too surprising that their ". . . collaboration contained a preoccupation with female psychology."[66] Strindberg's frustrated experiences with his mother, his consequent dependency upon women who were essentially independent caused him to view women, as previously discussed in connection with The Father, as predatory creatures bent on trying to destroy men through the ". . . appropriation of his power. . . ."[67]

> In the preface to "Miss Julie" Strindberg discusses the woman who strives to compete with men, "selling herself nowadays for power, decorations, distinctions and diplomas." Like Freud, Strindberg felt that this type of woman violated natural law, and he picturesquely described her fate. "Frequently, however, they perish in the end, either from discord in real life, or from the irresistible revolt of their suppressed instincts or from foiled hopes of possessing the man." The tragic women have become all too frequent in our society. Perhaps

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[65] Ibid., p. 86.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., p. 87.

> this is an additional reason for the renaissance of interest in Strindberg and his probing into their archetypes.[68]

Concerning the subject of guilt, it is apparent that Nietzsche and Strindberg ". . . disagreed . . . in one important respect."[69] As Klaf says:

> The idea of guilt had no place in Nietzsche's system; the superman was above eternal law and not liable to punishment. In Zola's novels guilt is expiated by relating sin to environmental cruelty. Strindberg remained obsessed with guilt especially during the recovery from his psychotic illness. He wrote, "The naturalist has wiped out the idea of guilt, but he cannot wipe out the results of an action--punishment, prison, or fear." Later Strindberg said, "There are crimes which are not entered in the law-books, and they are the worst; for them we punish ourselves, and no judge is so severe as we." This sense of guilt gave Strindberg a humility even in the presence of supreme confidence. He finished the preface to "Miss Julie" with the statement, "I have made an attempt. If it proves a failure, there is plenty of time to try over again."[70]

Strindberg realized early in his life that there would be no end to his earthly suffering. He realized that it would go on into infinity because there could be no release, no cleansing of the spirit, no salvation or liberation from feelings of guilt as long as he was bogged down in earthly problems and desires. Ultimately, he believed that man suffered because he was human, because it was human to need to feel pain, and

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., p. 87.

because the pain of suffering made the happiness of life more enjoyable and the depravity of man's existence more bearable.

When Strindberg wrote Miss Julie, as in The Father, he relied on his past experiences for subject material. Though Miss Julie is not obviously autobiographical, nevertheless it is reminiscent of Strindberg's experience with his first wife, Siri von Essen.

Whereas, the subject matter for The Father was taken from the second part of The Confession of a Fool, the subject matter for Miss Julie was taken from the first part of the same autobiographical novel. As Valency says:

> In considerable measure Miss Julie recapitulates the first part of Le Plaidoyer d'un fou, which has to do also with the seduction of a woman of aristocratic birth [Siri] by the son of a servant [Strindberg]. In both cases, the woman takes the aggressive role, and the man asserts himself with reluctance; but later he takes unseemly pride in having mingled his blood with the blood of the nobility.[71]

For all practical purposes, Miss Julie, unlike The Father, is a ". . . beautifully detailed piece of work." According to Valency:

> The characters are carefully individualized, the motives thoughtfully worked out, and the action moves smoothly and inexorably through the phases of a rapidly changing relationship in which the conflict of sexes is convincingly identified with

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[71]Valency, p. 275. (Le Plaidoyer d'un fou is the French title for Strindberg's A Fool's Defense, or The Confession of a Fool.)

the conflict of the classes.[72]

Strindberg's philosophy of life, as it is revealed in Miss Julie, is clearly presented in the preface to the play. As Strindberg says, in so many words, the strong shall survive, and the weak shall perish from the face of the earth. He implies this when he says:

> The fact that my heroine rouses pity is solely due to weakness. (Italics mine.) We cannot resist fear of the same fate over-taking us. The hypersensitive spectator may, it is true, go beyond this kind of pity, while the man with belief in the future may actually demand some suggestion for remedying the evil--in other words some kind of policy. But, to begin with, there is no such thing as absolute evil; the downfall of one family is the good fortune of another, which thereby gets a chance to rise, and, fortune being only comparative, the alternation of rising and falling is one of life's principal charms. Also, to the man of policy, who wants to remedy the painful fact that the bird of prey devours the dove, and like the bird of prey, I should like to put the question: why should it be remedied? Life is not so mathematically idiotic as only to permit the big to eat the small; it happens just as often that the bee kills the lion or at least drives it mad.[73]

The idea of the stronger devouring the weaker symbolically is, of course, the dominant force in Strindberg's dramas. Always open to criticism, Strindberg admitted that the opposite may occur also, but supposedly not as often. As Sprigge says, ". . . Strindberg explained that he himself found the joy of life in

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 62.

the attempt to understand its tense and cruel struggles."[74]

Sprigge goes on to say:

> He did not think that there was anything really new in the subject-matter of Miss Julie--it was simply a study of one aspect of evil and offered no solution. But, while acknowledging his debt to the brothers de Goncourt and other naturalist playwrights, he felt that his method of faithful reproduction was particularly his own. Ever since writing Master Olof [1872-76], in order to be true to life he had given his characters mixed motives, changeable personalities and the irregular speech of thought. There were no tricks in his work--he noticed the interest in psychology of the younger generation and intended the audience 'to see the wires . . . to examine the box with the false bottom, to handle the magic ring and find the joints, to have a look at the cards and see how they are marked.'[75]

In regard to the drawing of his characters in Miss Julie, Strindberg clearly indicates that there is a ". . . combination of causes that forces the issue of the drama, a combination that points to elements far back of the drama as well as circumstances within the dramatic frame."[76] Thus, he says, "My treatment of the theme, moreover is neither exclusively psychological nor physiological."[77] He goes on to say:

> I have not put the blame wholly on the inheritance from her mother, nor on her physical condition at the time, nor on immorality. I have not even preached a moral sermon; in the absence of a priest

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[74]Sprigge, p. 118.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Dahlstrom, p. 102.

[77]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 64.

I leave this to the cook.[78]

> In regard to the drawing of the characters, I have made my people somewhat "characterless" for the following reasons. In the course of time the word character has assumed manifold meanings. It must have originally signified the dominating trait of the soul-complex, and this was confused with temperament. Later it became the middle-class term for the automation, one whose nature had become fixed or who had adapted himself to a particular role in life. In fact a person who had ceased to grow was called a character, while one continuing to develop--the skilful navigator of life's river, sailing not with sheets set fast, but veering before the wind to luff again--was called characterless, in a derogatory sense, of course, because he was hard to catch, classify, and keep track of. This middle-class conception of the immobility of the soul was transferred to the stage where the middle-class has always ruled.[79]

Ultimately, in regard to the characters in Miss Julie, Strindberg says:

> Because they are modern characters, living in a period of transition more feverishly hysterical than its predecessor at least, I have drawn my figures vacillating, disintegrated, a blend of old and new. Nor does it seem to me unlikely that, though newspapers and conversations, modern ideas may have filtered down to the level of the domestic servant. My souls (characters) are conglomerations of past and present stages of civilization, bits from books and newspapers, scraps of humanity, rags and tatters of fine clothing, patched together as is the human soul. And I have added a little evolutionary history by making the weaker steal and repeat the words of the stronger, and by making the characters borrow ideas or "suggestions" from one another.[80]

In Miss Julie, then, new factors of dramatic

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., p. 65.

interpretation can be seen emerging from the complex genius of Strindberg's mind. In creating the simple, and tightly structured one-act form, fused with the use of decidedly naturalistic detail, he was able to create a more forceful and compact drama. Again, as in The Father, his characters are somewhat autobiographical, but the references are vague and the detail of character description cannot be as directly related to his life's experiences. The theme of the play is similar to that of The Father, consisting of a "battle of the brains," or the never-ending battle of the sexes. However, along with this basically similar theme, he has added environmental and social influences of the dying nobility, of the stigma attached to the mixed relationships among the social classes of the time. All of these elements tend to make this drama extremely complex and worthy of critical investigation.

It is possible to examine the play Miss Julie, especially the characters, Jean and Miss Julie, on the basis of their autobiographical representation. As in The Father, they are abstractions of Strindberg's life, Jean being somewhat representative of Strindberg in his early years when he first met Siri von Essen. Of course, the detail is different in the play, but the essence of the character is basically Strindberg. As has been previously pointed out in Part One of this study, Strind-

berg always wanted to be considered a member of the aristocratic class, basically because he felt he had a claim since his father was of aristocratic birth. Hence, as with Jean, in the play version, Strindberg, in making advances to Siri von Essen, because she was of aristocratic birth also, was trying to climb the social ladder. As is also evident in his first autobiography, The Son of a Servant, and according to Sprigge, he always felt resentful of the fact that his mother was not a member of the aristocracy, and that his father had married beneath his class. Essentially, then, the character of Jean, the valet in Miss Julie, is highly representative of Strindberg and his early feelings of social inferiority. Jean is like Strindberg, in that he wants to become a member of the aristocracy, and unlike Strindberg in that he will stop at nothing, even the sacrifice of a young woman, to gain this end.

The character of Miss Julie can be identified with Siri von Essen in that she is a member of the aristocracy, plays the aggressive role, and is seduced by the son of a servant. It should be noted that she is also an abstraction of Siri and cannot be identified in detail with her. Like Laura in The Father she is representative, somewhat, of Strindberg's personal view of his wife.

It can be assumed that this play was written

under the pressures of extreme guilt and frustration. Strindberg felt guilty about stealing his way into the aristocratic class through marrying Siri. To some extent he felt that his somewhat illegal entry into the higher social class was one reason why his marriage was such a miserable failure. On the other hand, he was also blaming his mother for his being born into the common class. She was the essential cause of his distress. Consequently, it can be surmised that he felt guilty about being so dependent upon his wife, and worshipping her as a mother. So, in creating the character Jean he presented a reversal of the dependent, male relationship and made him (Jean) the independent and forceful male in the sexual relationship, and yet still dependent in that he is servile. It is a contention of this study that Strindberg truly wanted to be a Jean, and that his feelings of guilt over his weak dependency upon women for his every need was the motivating force in creating the role of Jean. In The Father, Strindberg presented in the character of the captain what he (Strindberg) was in real life, weak and dependent. The Captain was representative of what he really was, dependent upon his wife for his every need. Jean, however, independent, virile, and strong, was what he (Strindberg) wanted to be: the master of his fate.

It is difficult to say whether Strindberg wished

to destroy his first wife. However, from a psychological viewpoint, it is clear that in The Father he expressed the feeling that his wife (Siri) was trying to destroy him through neglecting his love need. In Miss Julie, however, through Jean, Strindberg may have been expressing an unconscious desire to destroy. Certainly, it cannot be denied that Jean forces Miss Julie to suicide, and that her suicide cannot be interpreted solely on the social level. At any rate, Jean's destruction of Miss Julie may be interpreted as Strindberg's unconscious expression of the death wish. Since his wife was the cause of much of his anguish, it is conceivable that he wanted to destroy her. It cannot be determined whether he felt guilty about this desire, except to say that in the preface to the play he indicates that even though the naturalist has abolished guilt with God, ". . . the consequences of the action--punishment, imprisonment or the fear of it--he cannot abolish, for the simple reason that they remain whether he is acquited or not."[81]

Miss Julie has been acknowledged by many critics as Strindberg's masterpiece because of its conciseness of action and precise development of character. As Valency says:

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[81]Ibid., p. 66.

> Miss Julie involves a single event of crucial character. The play has no intrigue and virtually no complication, and while in the foreword Strindberg acknowledges the influence of the Goncourts, the technique more readily recalls the practice of the Theatre-Libre dramatists, and particularly the short plays of Henrique and Metenier. The Action takes place in a single act interrupted once by an improvised monologue on the part of the cook Kristin, and once by a folk dance. In accordance with naturalist practice, the set is very precisely arranged and described. There are but three speaking parts, but the boots of the absent Count are constantly in sight of the audience, and they have a certain quiet eloquence.[82]

Indeed, the characterization of Miss Julie is complex, and even though her tragedy, as part of the dying class of the aristocracy, is paramount, it is also shared with Jean who has become the grafted branch of the tree of nobility.

> Julie is by turns pathetic, wistful, haughty, and savage, a maelstrom of moods and motives, but even in her utmost degradation she never looses her air of breeding. In the same way, Jean displays all the possibilities of a strong and ambitious nature, with tastes refined and developed through the observation of his masters, the whole limited by the slave mentality which, it is intimated, he will never lose.[83]

Strindberg says concerning Miss Julie's fate:

> I see Miss Julie's tragic fate to be the result of many circumstances: the mother's character, the father's mistaken upbringing of the girl, her own nature, and the influence of her fiance on a weak, degenerate mind. Also, more directly, the festive mood of Midsummer Eve, her father's absence [but who always seems present] her monthly indisposition, her preoccupation with animals, the excitement of

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[82]Valency, pp. 274-75.

[83]Ibid., p. 276.

> dancing, the magic of dusk, the strongly aphrodisiac influence of flowers, and finally that chance that drives the couple into a room alone --to which must be added the urgency of the excited man.[84]

Strindberg shows Jean as an ". . . evolving personality in a period of transition."[85] As previously cited in Part One of this study, Strindberg felt this way when he first met his first wife, Siri von Essen. Consequently, Jean, like Strindberg, dreams of climbing a great tree and being unable to reach the first branch. As Jean says:

> In my dream I'm lying under a great tree in a dark wood. I want to get up, up to the top of it, and look out over the bright landscape where the sun is shining and rob that nest of its golden eggs. And I climb and climb, but the branch is so thick and smooth and it's so far to the first branch. But I know if I can once reach that first branch I'll go to the top just as if I'm on a ladder. I haven't reached it yet, but I shall get there, even if only in my dreams.[86]

Julie, on the other hand, ". . . dreams of throwing herself from the top of a column."[87] She says to Jean:

> For that matter everything is strange. Life, human beings, everything, just scum drifting about on the water until it sinks--down and down. That reminds me of a dream I sometimes have, in which I'm on top of a pillar and can't see any way of getting down. When I look down I'm dizzy; I have to get down but I haven't the courage to jump. I can't stay there

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[84] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 63.

[85] Valency, p. 277.

[86] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 84.

[87] Valency, p. 277.

> and I long to fall, but I don't fall. There's no respite. There can't be any peace at all for me until I'm down, right down on the ground. And if I did get to the ground I'd want to be under ground. . . . Have you ever felt like that?[88]

As Valency says concerning these dreams:

> Nothing could be simpler than the symbolism of these "dreams": the upper class is suicidal, ["And if I did get to the ground I'd want to be under ground"] the lower class, aspiring ["I want to get up, up to the top of it, and look out over the bright landscape. . ."]; and this is the consequence of a destiny which, in Strindberg's opinion, is a biological phenomenon.[89]

As has been pointed out, Jean is the dominant force in the male-female relationship. Miss Julie, though she is part of the aristocracy, and because of her position, should be stronger in character than Jan, is weak and hostile. As in The Father, where the Captain blames all of his problems on a bad mother, Miss Julie blames all of her problems on a ". . . complex of hereditary and environmental factors which betrays her into continual contradiction and uncertainty of mood."[90] As Jean says:

> Miss Julie's too high-and-mighty in some respects, and not enough in others, just like her mother before her. The Countess was more at home in the kitchen and cowsheds than anywhere else, but would she ever go driving with one horse? She went round with her cuffs filthy, but she had to have the coronet on the cuff-links. Our young lady--

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[88]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, pp. 83-84.

[89]Valency, p. 277.

[90]Ibid., p. 276.

> to come back to her--hasn't any proper respect for her position. I mean she isn't refined. . . . when the gentry try to behave like the common people--they become common. . . .[91]

Like the Captain in The Father, and reminiscent of Strindberg's own feelings of guilt about his illegitimate birth, "I grew up in an atmosphere of hate! An eye for an eye! A blow for a blow!--I am an illegitimate child . . . ,"[92] Miss Julie also blames her neurosis on her mother when she says:

> My mother wasn't well-born; she came of quite humble people, and was brought up with all those new ideas of sex-equality and woman's rights and so on. She thought marriage was quite wrong. So when my father proposed to her, she said she would never become his wife . . . but in the end she did. I came into the world, as far as I can make out, against my mother's will, and was left to run wild, but I had to do all the things a boy does--to prove women are as good as men.[93]

She has a great need to be loved, but this need is thwarted by her ". . . innate hostility to men."[94] This hostility can again be traced to the influence of the mother figure. Miss Julie says of her mother:

> My natural sympathies were with my father. Yet I took my mother's side, because I didn't know the facts. I'd learnt from her to hate and distrust men--you know how she loathed the whole male sex. And I swore to her I'd never become the slave of

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[91]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 77.

[92]Mauritzon, "Strindberg's Personality," p. 293.

[93]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 97.

[94]Valency, p. 276.

any man.[95]

The description of Miss Julie's mother is reminiscent of Siri von Essen's hostile feelings about the marriage bond. As has been pointed out in Part One Siri wanted to remain independent, and she resented Strindberg's constant dependent demands upon her. As Sprigge says:

> His wife's dresses and jewels enchanted him; even her untidiness he saw now as a sign of intimacy, and he could keep his own room as he wished, since they had agreed to do away with the old-fashioned practice of sharing a bedroom.[96]

As Klaf points out:

> Their marriage [Strindberg's and Siri's] would be maintained as a pure relationship between two artists. His ideal was a complete union with freedom of both partners. They would sleep in separate bedrooms, meeting for sex by mutual agreement. . . . Strindberg's scheme was not motivated by tradition. It was symbolic of his unrealistic aims, and part of his innate selfishness. Siri must ask no questions, yet must know all the answers. She must awaken his passions, yet be satisfied with solitude.[97]

Conceivably, Strindberg ". . . failed to understand the complexity present in simplicity, and he had learned through bitter experience that there are types of freedom people hate as well as treasure."[98]

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[95]Strindbert, Twelve Plays, p. 99.

[96]Sprigge, p. 83.

[97]Klaf, p. 62.

[98]Ibid.

On a personal level of interpretation, Strindberg felt resentful toward his wife for allowing him to maintain such sterile sexual conditions. In reality he needed exactly the opposite: a compatible, sharing relationship between husband and wife. In creating the character of Miss Julie, he, therefore, tried to rationalize his way out of the situation by showing that Siri's hostility toward the marriage relationship was the cause of the failure of their marriage. If the truth could be known, it was Strindberg's weakness as a sexual partner and his inability to dominate that was the real cause of their marital discord. It is only logical that in trying to escape from the reality of his own failure as a husband he tried to find a way of explaining the situation by shifting the blame to the other party.

The impact of the drama leads up to the seduction of Miss Julie by Jean. From this point on, Jean "Having broken through the social barrier which all his life he has regarded with awe, . . ."[99] begins to dream at once of capitalizing on his conquest, but the ". . . high-born girl cannot stomach his rascality, and they are soon at odds with each other"[100]

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[99]Valency, p. 275.

[100]Ibid.

> Unhappily, this brilliant scene leads Julie into a long, "scientific" discussion of her mother's infirmities, from which her own proceed. In the course of these explanations it becomes increasingly clear to Jean that life with this girl may not be altogether amusing. Once again the two begin to quarrel. Suddenly it occurs to them that among the consequences of their new relationship there may be children, and this thought sobers them so far that they decide to elope without further ado. But when Julie appears in traveling clothes, with her father's money in her pocket, and her bird cage in her hand, Jean refuses to take the bird along, and as Julie says she would rather see it dead than abandon it, he chops off its head on the meat block.[101]

This symbolic gesture of Jean's chopping off the bird's head brings out Miss Julie's innate hostility toward men in full force when she says:

> You think I'm so weak. Oh, how I should like to see your blood and your brains on a chopping-block! I'd like to see the whole of your sex swimming like that in a sea of blood. I think I could drink out of your skull, bathe my feet in your broken breast and eat your heart roasted whole.[102]

Her hysterical tantrum is interrupted ". . . first by Kristin, and then by the bell which summons Jean to attend his newly arrived master."[103] Of course, this could causes panic, and Julie goes into a sort of hypnotic trance. Jean, ". . . in an extremity of terror, . . . puts his razor into her hand, and at her request, orders her into the barn to cut her throat."[104]

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 107.

[103] Valency, p. 275.

[104] Ibid.

Throughout the play, the audience is ever conscious of the Count, Miss Julie's father, by the presence of his boots. The Count, though he is never seen in the play, is certainly representative of an authority figure. The boots serve as a constant reminder to Jean of his position as servant to the master. He looks at them with awe and resentment. It is possible that the boots could be representative of Strindberg's father, in the sense that they do symbolically represent an authority figure. As has been pointed out in Part One of this study, Strindberg always felt resentful of authority, especially of the father figure, because he suffered unjust punishment from his father when he returned home from work. At the same time, however, Strindberg sought to attain authority himself. With authority came prestige and social position. Like Jean, Strindberg wanted to climb out of the muck and mire of poverty into the higher social strata of Swedish society. Valency points out that:

> In the valet's domination of the Count's daughter, and her subsequent destruction at his hands, Strindberg demonstrates the pride of the superior male; at the same time, Miss Julie emphasizes to an astonishing degree the lackey's sense of unworthiness. Jean rises to great heights in the course of the action, but the sound of his master's voice at the end of a speaking tube is sufficient to dwarf him; and when at the girl's insistence, he commands her to kill herself, his act is apparently disastrous to them both, for in ordering her to cut her throat with his razor, he makes himself, as he realizes, criminally responsible

> for her death. . . . Jean presumably puts an end to his own career as well as hers.[105]

Miss Julie is driven to suicide as a means of escape. Jean forces her to take the final step and in a sense is in part responsible for her action. Their guilt does not fall from God, but is representative of their own human failings. In a sense, Miss Julie has become a victim of her own suffering. She cannot escape the influence of heredity through her union with Jean, for he too is corrupt and does not understand her plight. Thus, her suicide is a combination of her own pride and cowardice, both reflecting her weakness.

> One remains on the heights of pride as long as possible, by always having cowardice as an escape. Pride is therefore like the extravagance of a bankrupt man all during the time in which he knows that he will declare himself bankrupt. It is not that pride changes into cowardice on the appearance of suicide, no, pride was all the time bolstered up with the thought of suicide. Pride was cowardice.[106]

Miss Julie is ultimately responsible for her own death, and Strindberg seems to question the idea of salvation when she says to Jean just before her final exit, "Thank you, I am going now--to--rest. But just tell me that even the first can receive the gift of

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[105] Ibid., pp. 277-78.

[106] Soren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard, trans. Alexander Dru (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 390.

grace."[107] To which Jean replies, "The first? No, I can't tell you that."[108] The midsummer night's encounter with Julie disposes of Julie, but it also is a disaster for Jean. Julie, ". . . has achieved her unconscious desire. She has turned to muck, been cut to pieces by the rain. And now there is nothing left for her but to die."[109] As Robert Brustein says concerning her death:

> . . . it is Julie, not Jean, who is finally redeemed. Hitherto convinced of her own damnation because of the biblical injunction that the last shall be first and the first the last, Julie discovers that she has unwittingly attained a place in paradise through her fall. For she learns that "I'm among the last. I <u>am</u> the last"--not only because she is last on the ladder of human degradation, but because she is the last of her doomed and blighted house. As she walks resolutely to her death, and Jean shivers abjectly near the Count's boots, the doubleness of the play is clarified in the conclusion. She has remained an aristocrat and died; Jean has remained a servant and lived; and Strindberg--dramatizing for the first time his own ambiguities about nobility and baseness, spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, purity and dirt--has remained with them both to the very end.[110]

In the final analysis, the sexual conflict and the social question of the war between the classes is reminiscent of Strindberg's feelings of guilt concerning his lack of masculine strength in the male-female

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[107] Strindberg, <u>Twelve Plays</u>, p. 113.

[108] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 114.

[109] Robert Brustein, <u>The Theatre of Revolt</u> (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), p. 118.

[110] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 119.

sexual relationship, his inability to dominate, and his resentment over being so dependent upon the women in his life. Consequently, he

> . . . identifies deeply with Jean in many ways, and is exhilarated by his brutishness, though he is too fastidious to make a complete identification with his ambitious servant. Nevertheless, as his conception of his hero suggests, Strindberg is feeling much more security in his own masculinity at this time. And the play embodies in abundance those qualities which Strindberg associates exclusively with the male: discipline, control, self-sufficiency, cruelty, independence, and strength.[111]

Jean is Strindberg's daydream about himself and what he would have liked to have been in real life had he the courage and strength to break away from his past. Through Jean he experienced a vicarious triumph over his feelings of persecution and guilt.

CREDITORS

The final play selected for analysis in this study is Strindberg's second, compact one-act play entitled Creditors. It was written in 1888, the same year as Miss Julie, the year following The Father, the ". . . first of the so-called naturalist plays."[112] Sprigge describes Creditors as being ". . . one of the most brilliant of Strindberg's short plays."[113] Strindberg also called it one of the best things that he had ever

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[111] Ibid., p. 113.

[112] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 117.

[113] Ibid.

written. "'I read it over and over,'" he wrote his publisher, "'and each time I find new finesses--it is really a modern play, human, amiable, with three sympathetic characters, interesting from end to end.'"[114] Like The Father and Miss Julie, it is a play written in "tears and blood," and is primarily autobiographical in content. As Valency says, "Like Miss Julie, Creditors is based on the story of Le Plaidoyer d'un fou, [The Confession of a Fool]."[115]

> At the time of writing it Strindberg was thirty-nine. His first marriage--to Siri von Essen, whom he had once adored and who had borne him children--had finally crashed. True they were still living under the same roof in Copenhagen, but Strindberg no longer considered her his wife. He thought of her as his housekeeper and former mistress, and if he referred to his marriage at all, it was an affair too ludicrous to be taken seriously. Hypersensitive and deeply wounded by his failure as a husband, Strindberg dreaded ridicule and judged it better to do the laughing himself.[116]

With all the horror of a modern science-fiction movie fraught with the suspense and diabolical force of a psychological thriller, it is a play that is also rooted in Strindberg's feelings of guilt and persecution. The subject matter is reminiscent of his feelings of guilt over stealing another man's wife, Siri von Essen from Carl Gustaf Wrangel. Because of its autobiographi-

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[114] Valency, p. 279.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 117.

cal nature, the characters can be identified with their originals. Adolf can be identified with Strindberg, Gustav with Carl Gustaf Wrangel, and Tekla with Siri von Essen. The characters, with the exception of Tekla, are not vividly drawn. Consequently, "Adolf is wistful; Gustav, diabolic," and "Both have a deliberately abstract quality which contributes to the fantastic nature of the play."[117] As Sprigge says:

> . . . Strindberg recognized his own virulence, he more often saw the softer, even sentimental side there was to his nature. And this side should never be forgotten in the production of any of his plays. Strindberg's heroines were conceived as good, feminine women and his heroes as fine, intellectual men, who have only grown evil through the demoralizing influence of sex warfare.[118]

If anything, Sprigge goes on to say:

> The content is serious, but the tone is ironical and the whole work reflects the cynicism of Strindberg's outlook at this time. The dialogue has sharpened since the earlier plays, possibly owing to Strindberg's growing admiration for the Paris theatre, and there is ample opportunity for satirical production, so long as it is remembered that he pillories people not from cruelty, but from his misery at mankind's wickedness and folly. He caricatures life's tragedy.[119]

Thematically, like The Father, the play deals with the male-female sexual relationship, within marriage, which is ". . . universal and timeless."[120]

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[117] Valency, p. 279.

[118] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 118.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Walter Johnson, "Creditors Reexamined," Modern Drama (December, 1962), p. 282.

Unlike the other plays included in this study, however, it does not present a struggle for domination of one sex over the other, but rather "It is a contest, as Strindberg so diabolically shows . . . of the woman [Tekla] for the right to illicit gratification of her own instincts regardless of honor, fidelity or modesty."[121] (Italics mine.) As the title of the play suggests, emphasis is placed on:

> . . . the give and take within the first and second marriages of one woman. It is a play deliberately conceived and composed within the framework of accounts; consequently, such terms as creditors (and debtor, by implication), bills, payment, first mortgage, accounts, settling, tearing up bills, and dun are basic. The use of terms borrowed from everyday financial transactions, startling as they may be at first glance when applied to an institution as human and complex as marriage, is a device that Strindberg exploits with harrowing effectiveness.[122]

Tekla has already conquered the will of Adolf at the beginning of the play. Like a vampire she has sucked the blood out of her victim, leaving him weak and highly susceptible to the revengeful aspirations of Gustav. Like The Father, it is ". . . a rather dry case of psychic crime, a case of murder--or, at least, mayhem by suggestion."[123] This is a result of Strindberg's con-

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[121]Archibald Henderson, European Dramatist, p. 53.

[122]Johnson, p. 282. (Dun can be defined as asking or beseting, as a debtor, for some form of payment.)

[123]Valency, p. 279.

tinued interest in hypnosis.

The play is meant to be a study in abnormal psychology. Tekla is represented as a woman who is incapable of love. She demands that the men who love her give their all, while she provides little in return for their gifts. Like Miss Julie, Tekla is only capable of that ". . . sort of neurotic impulse which has self-damage for its object,"[124] Adolf is her sacrificial lamb, and Gustav is representative of her past failure to devour the soul of a man who loved her. As Johnson says:

> For the three characters--a brilliant teacher of Greek and Latin (Strindberg says "dead languages"), a highly gifted and extremely sensitive artist, and a beautiful woman with some claims to achievement as a creative writer--are the very sort of people whom the world in general would find interesting and even charming. But what Strindberg does with them is not to present them primarily at their social best but as they are when all pretense and camouflage are stripped away or when pretense and camouflage are used for the attainment of deliberate ends. It becomes almost immediately clear that the play deals with the dissection of souls, as we see Gustav, the first husband, going to work on Adolf, the second husband, who does not know that his new friend is his predecessor; then Adolf attempting to make clear his condition and his Gustav-inspired analysis of his [Adolf's] marriage to Tekla; finally, Gustav's going to work on Tekla.[125]

At the beginning of the play Gustav and Adolf are seen together. Adolf is unsuspecting that Gustav is

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[124] Ibid., p. 278.

[125] Johnson, p. 282.

really Tekla's first husband. Gustav has come for revenge. He has a definite motive for his crime: he desires to be avenged on his former wife and on the man who, seven years before, robbed him of her and thus subjected him to public humiliation. He takes a particular delight in probing, like a scientist, the nature of Adolf's relationship with Tekla. Leaving no stone unturned he manages to force both Adolf and Tekla to ". . . examine themselves and their marriage."[126] Though Adolf is representative of Strindberg and can be definitely identified with his suffering, Gustav is a direct extension of his (Strindberg's) feelings of persecution and guilt concerning the sin he had committed when he had ". . . absconded with another man's wife."[127] As Klaf says concerning this feeling:

> Strindberg's persecutory delusions developed in a fascinating way. In the early stage, while writing "The Father" and "The Confession of a Fool," he felt that his wife was persecuting him and trying to drive him insane. . . . Whom had he injured to be placed in the unique situation of being persecuted? With the religious fervor of his adolescence, Strindberg considered the answer in terms of sin--what sin had he committed? The answer gradually became evident. He had absconded with another man's wife. . . and he sought punishment for his sin.[128]

In a sense, the cuckold returns to conspire with his

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[126] Ibid.

[127] Klaf, p. 111.

[128] Ibid., pp. 111-12.

wife. His former rival has remained a creditor, determined to ". . . avenge himself by driving Strindberg insane."[129] The strange power the persecuting husband possesses is compared to the current of an electric generator--to Strindberg a force of destruction that can be associated with his pending schizophrenic illness. According to Johnson, Gustav is:

> . . . the intellectual, trained and disciplined, usually coldly rational, given to analysis and intellectual dissection of both ideas and people, and arrogantly aware of his intellectual superiority. He is self-confident about his ability to analyze others and their problems and to prescribe for them; he can "translate" what others say and has little or no doubt about the accuracy of his own analysis and rightness of his therapy. He knows how to question, how to lead discussion, how to grope his way toward the truth; he knows how to deal with individuals.[130]

He specializes in dissecting human souls. As he says to Adolf:

> But don't be alarmed later on, when you watch me dissecting a human soul and exposing its entrails on the table. They say it's rather hard for a novice to take, but when you've seen it once it doesn't worry you. . . .[131]

Gustav manages during the first third of the play to become an influential force over Adolf. He manages to direct Adolf's thoughts about his marriage, his art, his wife, and his ideals. He also manages to

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[129] Ibid., p. 112.

[130] Johnson, p. 282.

[131] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 139.

take away Adolf's illusions about his physical state. He wins Adolf's confidence and in the end reduces everything that Adolf has valued to ashes. He made a fatal mistake in assuming that Adolf would react like he did when he found out about Tekla's treachery. His expression of regret at the ending of the play is unconvincingly sincere.

Gustav's attack on Tekla is nicely structured to his conception of her character. After seven long years of waiting he has managed to come back for some form of pseudo-reconciliation. It is evident that Gustav is also susceptible, and has been in the past, to Tekla's charm. With flattery he makes his approach:

> And it has been my secret desire to see if she whom I loved better than my life was in truly good hands. I have certainly heard good accounts of him and I know his work well, but even so I should have liked before I grew old, to take his hand and look into his eyes and beg him to guard the treasure providence has put into his keeping. At the same time I should have liked to put an end to the instinctive hatred there was bound to be between us, and give my soul some peace and humility to live by for the rest of my sorrowful days.[132]

Tekla, too, has been an apt pupil of Gustav. He taught her to think. He was her master, and when she found that she could not master him at all, she sought another man to try to control. As Gustav says:

Yes, I have my own wine again, but it has matured.

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[132] Ibid., p. 154.

> And now that I have a fancy to marry again, I have purposely chosen a young girl, whom I can educate to my own way of thinking. For the woman, you see, is the man's child, and if she is not, he becomes hers, and that makes a topsy-turvy world.[133]

Again, as in The Father there is the never-ending contest between the sexes to be free from domination. Tekla learned all she knows from Gustav. He was her master, and as previously pointed out in Part One of this study, to Strindberg this was the ideal relationship between male and female. However, Tekla, since she was of an independent nature, soon began to feel the pressures of this dominant relationship. She engaged in a contest of wills to see how strong Gustav really was. She made him the laughing stock of his pupils and subjected him to public humiliation. She would stop at nothing to gain her freedom from him. Consequently, "With time and training, she grew impatient of his mastery, and decided she must find someone to master in her turn."[134] She managed to attract the attention of a young artist, Adolf, and she sought to drain him of all of his strength. She was successful because he was so impressionable and because he had such a great need to be loved and nursed as a child. He was so much in love with Tekla that he failed to comprehend that she

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[133] Valency, p. 280.

[134] Ibid.

was doing to him until it was too late.

> Gustav had taught her how to live. Adolf taught her how to transform her life into art; thus she became a successful writer. But the consequent drain on his psychic energy has been such that Adolf is no longer able to work--he is physically crippled. . . . The time has come for Tekla to rid herself of this second creditor just as she rid herself of the first.[135]

As Johnson so aptly points out:

> An abnormally sensitive artist who, although he is highly intelligent, is primarily a man of feelings and emotions, Adolf is an idealist about himself, his art, his marriage, and life. He is in a very real sense a moral man with high standards of conduct; it is he who is conscience-stricken about having "stolen" another man's wife, who believes that marriage should be a union of two people who are genuinely concerned about each other's welfare and who do what they can to promote and protect each other. As the play amply demonstrates, he is the one who has tried to live up to his standards and in the process has been reduced to a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion in which he is no longer able to function efficiently either as an artist or as a human being.[136]

To clarify a statement made at the beginning of this discussion concerning the nature of the male-female sexual relationship within marriage--the idea of one sex being dominant over the other has already been put into effect by Tekla prior to the beginning of the play. Therefore, when Adolf is first introduced he is seen to be already suffering from Tekla's domination. The play, however, is not a direct study of sexual domina-

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Johnson, p. 284.

tion, as was revealed in The Father and Miss Julie, but it is a study of the effect of sexual domination on one man, Adolf, and what this does to the marital relationship. Adolf's world has become "topsy-turvy," to use a Strindbergian phrase, because the man has become the woman's child. Psychologically speaking, Adolf's lack of strength is reminiscent of Strindberg's own failing as a husband, which in turn can be traced back to his childhood dependency relationship with his mother.

Even though Tekla is the central character in the play, because the action seems to revolve around her, for the purpose of this study Adolf is the most important character in terms of analyzing the guilt manifestations of Strindberg as they are revealed in the male characters he created for the stage. It is necessary, therefore, to examine Adolf's feelings about his marriage relationship with Tekla to determine to what extent his guilt feelings are representative of Strindberg's own guilt feelings about his marriage. Ultimately, it is hoped that an analysis of Adolf's feelings of guilt concerning his marriage will prove to be correlative with his great need to establish a dependent relationship with his wife. Further proving that his feelings of guilt extend to his childhood relationship with his mother.

As has been pointed out previously in this dis-

cussion, Adolf has, under the influence and guidance of Gustav, indulged in an analysis of his marriage. That analysis has revealed that Adolf has not previously given much thought about his wife or the nature of his marriage. As Adolf says to Gustav near the beginning of the play, "You live with a woman for years and you never think about her or your relationship with her--and then --suddenly you begin to wonder and the whole thing starts."[137] Adolf has begun to wonder about the legitimacy of his first child, which is reflective of the Captain's suspicions in The Father, and, ultimately, reflective of Strindberg's doubts about the legitimacy of his own first child borne of Siri von Essen. The analysis does reveal that Adolf loved his wife when he married her. Further analysis reveals that his relationship with her is one of dependency and longing. As he says to Gustav, he has become so obsessed with her that he depends on her, longs for her as soon as she is out of his presence, and is afraid he will lose her.

> At times it has seemed to me that it would be--well, a rest to be free. But the moment she leaves me, I am consumed with need for her--as I need my own arms and legs. It is really extraordinary. I sometimes feel she isn't a separate being at all, but an actual part of me . . . an intestine that carries away my will, my will to live. It's as if I'd given into her keeping my very solar plexus that the anatomists talk of.[138]

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[137]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 124.

[138]Ibid., p. 122.

It is evident that Tekla has ". . . managed to usurp the prerogative of the male. . . ."[139] Gustav analyzes Adolf's relationship with Tekla by saying that Tekla was never in love with him, that she only married him because she wanted to use his talents to promote her own. She is an independent woman and not willing to sacrifice her independence for the sake of his dependent demands. Gustav calls her a cannibal and serpent. She has devoured Adolf without really taking anything from him. As Gustav says to Adolf, ". . . a woman loves by taking, by receiving, and if she doesn't take anything from a man, she doesn't love him. She has never loved you."[140]

It is possible to consider the character of Gustav as representative of Strindberg projecting himself into a dominant male role who can control and destroy not only Tekla, but also his own weak hopeless "Adolf-self." Both Gustav and Adolf are, in a sense, also representative of the double image of Strindberg's projection of his own dual self into his characters. On the one side there is the weak artistic male, and on the other side there is the strong scholarly self-sufficient male. Both are battling with the same wife-

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[139] Ibid., p. 126.

[140] Ibid., p. 129.

mother image. Both are seen in the process of seeking self-expression. In Miss Julie where Jean was an example of Strindberg's desire to free himself from female domination, Gustav is also representative of this same kind of wish fantasy. At the end of the play, the strong self-sufficient self of Gustav emerges triumphant over the weaker subordinate self of Adolf. Again, the stronger devours the weaker, the dominant will forces the dependent will to be servile.

Adolf's feeling of guilt about the stealing of another man's wife is vividly pointed out by Gustav when he says:

> Children play at being papa and mamma, but when they are older they play at being brother and sister, in order to hide what must be hidden. . . . But they felt that there was one who could see them in the darkness . . . and they grew frightened, and in their terror the figure of this absent one began to haunt them--to assume gigantic proportions, to be changed, to become a nightmare which disturbed their amorous slumbers, a creditor who knocked at the doors. . . . He did not stop them from possessing one another, but he spoiled their happiness. And when they discovered his invisible power to spoil their happiness, and at last fled--but fled in vain--from the memories that pursued them and the debts they left behind them, and the public opinion they dared not face, they hadn't the strength to carry out their guilt, and so a scapegoat had to be brought in from outside to be sacrificed. They were freethinkers, but they hadn't the courage to go and speak openly to him and say: "We love one another." No, they were cowards, and therefore the tyrant had to be slaughtered.[141]

Strindberg's feeling of persecution caused by some in-

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[141] Ibid., p. 130.

visible power is clearly evident in this speech. In his way of thinking at the time, people could have invisible power over other individuals. To Strindberg, this power was a destructive force aimed at him through his wife, through his wife's former husband, Gustaf, and finally through the memory of his dead mother. He had committed some secret crime, and he must be punished for it.

In the scene following the confrontation between Adolf and Gustav, Strindberg makes it quite clear as to why Adolf's and Tekla's marriage has been such a miserable failure. As Johnson says, "Strindberg pinpoints with precision why Adolf's marriage has been a failure for him--it has not been a creative union of two well-mated human beings."[142] As Adolf admits, "But I must confess that I too have some difficulty in understanding her. It's as if the mechanism of our brains didn't interlock, as if something goes to pieces in my head when I try to understand her."[143] Johnson goes on to say:

> For him it has been a marriage based on idealism looking to emotional, intellectual, and physical compatibility, originating in notions that have blinded him to facts, and ending in what might be called obsession that at its very core is sexual.[144]

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[142]Johnson, p. 286.

[143]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 131.

[144]Johnson, p. 286.

His obsession with Tekla has become fused with the fear that she is trying to get rid of him. As he says to Gustav:

> It's quite extraordinary. I am longing for her to come; yet I am afraid of her. She caresses me; she is tender, but there is something suffocating about her kisses, something weakening and numbing. It's as if I were a circus child being pinched behind the scenes by the clown, so as to look rosey to the audience.[145]

So great has Gustav's influence been on Adolf's thinking that by the end of the second section of the play he very clearly tells Tekla that she has destroyed their marriage through refusing to share on equal terms within the bond of marriage. There has been little give and take on Tekla's part, and ". . . without forethought, for her own egotistic ends, she has taken what has been given, she has, in Strindbergian terms, used 'people and favorable opportunities.'"[146] Adolf says to Tekla:

> Sometimes, it seemed to me, you had a secret longing to be rid of your creditor and witness. . . . Your love begins to take on the character of an overbearing sister's, and for want of a better I have to learn the new part of little brother. Your tenderness remains; it even increases, but it has in it a suggestion of pity that's not far from contempt--and which changes into open scorn when my talent wanes and your sun rises. But somehow your fountain of inspiration seems to dry up when mine can no longer replenish it, or rather when you want to show that you don't draw on mine. And so both

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[145]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 140.

[146]Johnson, p. 289.

of us sink.[147]

This situation is reminiscent of Strindberg's relationship with Siri. It amply demonstrates the principle advocated by Klaf in describing the failure of their marriage. As previously cited in Part One of this study, Klaf says, "Married life is destined for tragedy when both partners need for the same things and search for them in each other."[148] Both Adolf and Tekla need extreme amounts of physical, emotional, and artistic inspiration--and they seek for these things in each other. When one becomes selfish, such as Tekla, the other must suffer. As Adolf says of Tekla:

> . . . you have to have someone to blame. Somebody new. For you are weak and can never shoulder your own guilt. . . . So I became the scapegoat to be sacrificed alive. But when you cut my sinews, you didn't realize you were also crippling yourself, for the years had joined us as twins. You were an offshoot of my tree, but you tried to make your shoot grow before it had any roots. That's why you couldn't develop on your own. And my tree couldn't spare its vital branch--so both of them died.[149]

Adolf's resentment and consequent feelings of guilt toward Tekla, as revealed in the play, are representative of an unfulfilled demand for love. Tekla is incapable of loving deeply. She has forced Adolf to be submissive. Even though their relationship has dis-

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[147]Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 151.

[148]Klaf, p. 63.

[149]Ibid.

integrated to the level of brother and sister, he cannot give her up because he needs her desperately. He has become her child--and he is dependent on her for his every need. When he discovers that Gustav is her first husband and that she consents to meet him that evening, he believes that he has lost her for good. He cannot live. In his sick mind he believes that both Gustav and Tekla have conspired to destroy him. Gustav, being the creditor, has returned for revenge and in the end has succeeded in destroying a marriage. As he says, "I came here to recover what you had stolen, not what you had had as a gift. You stole my honour and I could only regain it by taking yours."[150] Tekla, on the other hand, does not deliberately set out to destroy Adolf. Her part in the crime is unintentional. An amoral creature, ". . . she is not handicapped by ego-restraining concern for others."[151]

> She is instead a highly complex human animal with physical charm, the camouflage of useful but decidedly superficial intellectual behavior and social graces. Fascinating and repulsive to the men who label her cannibal, serpent, phonograph, thief, little devil, and monster, she is, as she herself says, "a terrible egotist," an egotist quite capable of suffocating and smothering the lamb, the idealistic and sensitive artist, and of upsetting the wolf, the self-centered intellectual not too much inclined to emphasize the moral discipline of a young girl that he could

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[150] Ibid., p. 163.

[151] Johnson, p. 289.

mold to suit himself.[152]

Adolf is destroyed by invisible forces of retribution for the sins he committed. As Tekla says, ". . . he who sees his familiar spirit dies."[153] Adolf could live as long as he did not really understand his relationship with Tekla. Knowing the truth in the end, he could no longer live. His sick relationship with Tekla is clarified at the ending of the play, as is evident when Tekla says:

> Adolf! My darling child! (Italics mine.) Are you still alive? Oh speak, speak! Forgive your wicked Tekla! Forgive, forgive, forgive! You must answer me, little brother. Can you hear? . . . No, O my God, he doesn't hear! He is dead. O God in heaven! O God, help us, help us![154]

Thus, as in The Father, the male-female sexual relationship has become one of mother and child, and for the child the loss of mother is worse than death itself. The treatment of the male-female sexual relationship in Creditors is then illustrative of the degeneracy of the sexual union between men and women who are entirely unsuited for each other. As Strindberg aptly illustrates, the male-female sexual relationship degenerates step by step from husband and wife to brother and sister, and finally back to the comfort and solace of the mother-

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Strindberg, Twelve Plays, p. 164.

[154] Ibid.

child dependency relationship.

PART III

CONCLUSIONS

SECTION IV
CONCLUSIONS

Part Three of this study is devoted to a discussion of conclusions. In the light of the material that has been presented in this study, several general truths concerning Strindberg's feelings of guilt, as revealed in his autobiographical writings and in the plays selected for this thesis, are evident.

Strindberg was a genius, not only of the theatre but also in his ability to analyze and present the struggles of his existence on a stage larger than his own life. He was highly subjective in his writing. Almost without fail, the characters, and to some extent the situations and themes of his plays, can be identified with people and experiences in his own life. Of course, in adapting these experiences for the stage, he restructured them to fit the complex art-fort of the drama. Characters, such as the Captain in The Father, Jean in Miss Julie, and Adolf and Gustav in Creditors, can be identified with Strindberg. To each of these characters he has given a part of himself. All can be traced back to material presented in his autobiographical writing The Confession of a Fool.

Some critics would say that this subjectivity

made his work less creative than that of Ibsen, one of his contemporaries. On the contrary, the fascination of the work of Strindberg lies in his ability to present all the subtleties of the complex psychological patterns of the human condition in a convincing manner. He could only achieve this effectively by utilizing the familiar experiences and situations of his own life.

He probed his life's experiences with all the skill of a born analyst because he was a sensitive artist who sought to find out the reasons for his constant feelings of persecution and guilt. Klaf says that this condition was a result of his pending schizophrenic illness.

His plays, then, stand as a record, not only of his dramatic genius, but also of his feelings of persecution and guilt as revealed in the heterosexual relationships of the central characters. For Strindberg, his plays acted as both a psychological release for his inner torments, thus, in a sense cleansing his spirit, and in another sense, as a form of dramatized punishment for the sins that he had committed. Thus, to Strindberg, his plays presented a set of conflicting emotional reactions. On the one hand, he always felt relieved after they were written, as if some heavy burden had been suddenly lifted from his soul, and on the other hand, he felt ashamed for having revealed his

inner torments so vividly to his public. He felt purified and filthy at the same time.

His plays stand as a record also of his psychotic illness and are representative of the various ways that he tried to work himself out of his illness toward a more healthy state of mind and body. Through the medium of the drama he maintained contact with the world outside himself. His plays are representative of his great need to understand himself, to understand his tortured spirit in depth.

As has been pointed out in this study, the standard psychological interpretation of Strindberg's guilt feelings has been decidedly Freudian in its outlook. Thus, for a long time, in English since 1920 with the appearance of Uppvall's study entitled August Strindberg: A Psychoanalytical Study with Special Reference to the Oedipus Complex,[1] the subject of guilt in Strindberg's life and writing has been traced back to the so-called Oedipal relationship that was thought to have existed with his mother during infancy. The Freudians have had a field-day traveling down the Oedipal path, attributing all of his relationships with women in later life, consequently, his great need for motherly atten-

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[1]Axel J. Uppvall, August Strindberg: A Psychoanalytical Study with Special Reference to the Oedipus Complex (Boston: Richard Badger, The Gorham Press, 1920).

tion, and his tendency to persecute himself as revealed in the symbolic castration of the male characters in a great many of his plays, as growing out of an unfulfilled need for sexual gratification from the mother figure.

In order to accept this interpretation as being valid, it is necessary to first agree with Freud's basic premise that all relationships between mother and child during infancy are of an erotic nature. If one does not accept this premise as being a truthful description of the mother-child relationship, then the Oedipal interpretation does not apply.

In the first place, Freud's psychoanalytic terms--Ego, Superego, Id, and Libido--are all intangible concepts invented by Freud to describe the complex psychological structure of the human mind. Generally, they are vague and elusive descriptions of the workings of the mind, and have little meaning in depth for the layman. They have become convenient terms used for shelving human experience. They cannot be proven actually to exist in any way, shape or form. Consequently, to say that Strindberg suffered from Oedipal guilt is to preclude the possibility that there could be another valid description for his behavior. At first glance, his relationship with women is somewhat reflective of this description, but taking a closer look into the situation,

it is apparent that there are other possibilities of interpretation.

There are many conflicting viewpoints as to the nature of Strindberg's relationship with his mother. It is also apparent that the current means of psychological investigation are moving away from the pure form of Freudian analysis of the 1920's toward a more liberal neo-Freudian outlook. It is the contention of this study that the strict confines of the Freudian system of psychology, though useful in that they organized the terminology and theoretical procedures of the field of psychology into a more strict discipline of investigation, are rapidly being replaced by new theories and modes of critical analysis and evaluation.

Fortunately, the Suttian interpretation of the mother-child relationship as being one of dependency and longing based on altruistic love, rather than sexual gratification, is rapidly becoming an accepted view of the syndrome of childhood experience. Certainly, this viewpoint has opened up a whole new area of Strindbergian investigation. Dr. Franklin Klaf has begun to work in this area of investigation, and has provided sound lines of psychological reasoning that are reminiscent of the Suttian approach. This fresh outlook may well shape the mode and manner of future Strindbergian research.

In any psychological study on an individual's life and writing, it should be noted that there can be no absolutes. Especially in dealing with the analysis of Strindberg's dramaturgy and other writings, the researcher who tries to establish absolute judgments concerning the human condition will soon find out that he is facing tremendous odds. Strindberg was an ever-changing personality and almost defied absolute analysis. From play to play--and it is possible to trace his psychological development through his dramas--those characters that can be associated most directly with Strindberg are seen to be in a constant state of flux. Klaf very clearly points out this phenomenon, and seems to be working in accordance with the European interpretation of Strindberg's life and writing, as being a study in the development of schizophrenic illness.

In terms of Strindbergian research, the subject of guilt must then be correlated with Strindberg's feelings of persecution that can be identified with his schizophrenic condition. It can be surmised that he sought to escape from reality through the medium of the drama, a normal reaction of the schizophrenic, but at the same time he also sought to examine more closely the reality of his subconscious mind. The latter is a reaction to his psychotic condition, and can be associated with his genius. Thus, in his escape from the

reality of the world outside his soul, he sought to find a more clearly defined sense of reality within his own soul. Like Gustav in Creditors, he sought to dissect his own soul in order to reveal its inner-most secrets to himself and to his public.

Strindberg's feelings of guilt, in relation to the heterosexual, or male-female conflicts in his plays can definitely be traced back to his childhood experiences with his mother. His feelings of guilt, as revealed in his ambivalent treatment of the female characters in the plays selected for this study, are reminiscent of his feelings of resentment toward his mother for rejecting his love need as a child. Consequently, with the exception of Jean in Miss Julie, the male characters that are most representative of Strindberg's suffering, such as the Captain in The Father and Adolf in Creditors, are seen to be constantly demanding attention, and excessive love from their female partners. Jean, on the other hand, is representative of Strindberg's desire to free himself of female domination, the reverse of the same coin.

His treatment of the female characters in the plays selected for this thesis is reminiscent of his ambivalent feelings of love and hatred as expressed toward his mother during childhood. According to Suttian psychology, the ambivalent feeling is intoler-

able and represents an overwhelming desire to re-establish the love-relationship. Ambivalence, then, is merely the result of confusion within the mind of the child that is caused by any rejection of its love need. Consequently, the child feels frustration because it cannot make up its mind whether to love or hate the individual who rejected its love need. The child begins to feel guilty because it feels it ought not to have offered what the mother, in Strindberg's case, has rejected (love) or asked for what she has refused (love).

Strindberg never hated women because he needed them so desperately. He was dependent upon the women in his life for almost his every need. He felt guilty because of his desperate need, and consequently sought at all times to find a woman who would be both wife and mother to him. At the same time, however, he felt guilty about being so dependent because he knew that it was the role of the male in society to be the more dominant member of the male-female sexual relationship.

It can be assumed that he never was able to identify strongly with his father and that he resented his father for being so dominant in the family circle. At the same time, he resented his mother for not selecting him as her favorite of all the children. He was cut off from the response of love and affection, and because he was such a sensitive child, he withdrew, to some

extent, from reality. In his adult life, no longer able to endure the pain of his longing, he sought to make up for this neglected love need. Unfortunately he sought women who were too independent to cater to his dependent love need. He again felt the pain of rejection. Consequently, in his dramas he never created the ideal woman because all of his female characters were drawn from his own experiences with women, and in life he never found a woman who could replace his mother. He always felt guilty about loving too much, and demanding too much from the women that he loved.

In studying Strindberg's life and plays, and especially in reference to the subject of guilt, it is apparent that there is no definite way to explain absolutely the psychology of his character. Like the characters in his plays, he is ever-changing, always in a period of transition. Examining his life as revealed in his autobiographies is like looking through a kaleidoscope. You view him from one angle and the pieces of colored glass form a definite pattern; but behold, you view him from another angle and the pieces of colored glass have assumed a new shape. No matter how hard you try, you can never get the pieces of glass to form the same pattern time and time again. Sprigge provides one clue to reading, studying, and analyzing Strindberg, when she says:

> Not a single one of Strindberg's plays is a period piece; neither subject, situation, nor language is dated. He wrote of all times for all times, and was always struggling to break through into further knowledge and new ways of expression. Strindberg should therefore never be imprisoned between the dates of his birth and his death, but given every advantage of modern and experimental theatre.[2]

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[2]Sprigge, The Strange Life of August Strindberg, p. 227.

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