Part Seven. Historical Drama and Historical Fiction: The Example of Strindberg

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In attempting to place the refraction point of these generic terms in as precise a way as possible, one finds there is only one canonical critical text to consider, the second chapter of György Lukács's *The Historical Novel*, first published in Russian in 1937, entitled 'Historical Novel and Historical Drama.' There he gives consideration to the particular circumstances, delineated in the first chapter, which led to the emergence of the historical novel of romanticism, notably his prime example and paradigm, the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and notices that these circumstances are in no way relevant to the historical drama, which already at the time had a long and venerable history:

Even quite apart from French classicism and the bulk of Spanish drama, it is obvious that both Shakespeare and a number of his contemporaries produced real and important historical dramas e.g. Marlowe's *Edward II*, Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* etc. In addition there comes, at the end of the eighteenth century, the second great flowering of historical drama in the early work and the Weimar period of Goethe and Schiller. All these dramas are not only of an incomparably higher artistic order than the so-called precursors of the classical historical novel, but are also historical in quite a different, deep and genuine sense. (Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 89)

This difference would come as a surprise to no one even moderately well acquainted with the history of the drama in modern times. What
is new and refreshing is Lukács’s conception of historical drama as a genre, a conception engendered by his dialectical method: he sees it exclusively in its relationship to the historical novel, which is, after all, the subject of his investigation. As he is describing and defining a new genre, the novel set in the more or less distant past, he feels, quite rightly, no obligation to describe a genre that has existed for more than two-thousand years—however one chooses to interpret the elements of historicity in Greek tragedy. What he is obliged to do is to establish demarcation lines between genres of contrasting natures, and, as he is a Marxist, to explain them in terms of dialectical materialism, that is, as a reflection, or Widerspiegung, of historical conflicts between social classes.

Lukács explains those conflicts for the historical novel in a way that has become a model of its kind for dialectical literary analysis at its most successful. In his first chapter, he outlines the emergence of the historical novel of romanticism and establishes a pivotal role for this kind of novel as practiced by Walter Scott: a broad-canvas painting of an age riddled by conflicts of historical importance, the portrayal of colorful historical characters as set pieces of the novel, not presented in depth or in the process of development, but seen entirely through the eyes of a ‘mediating’ hero who is himself distanced from the conflict in question, either by origin or circumstances, while nevertheless profiting from the experience in individual terms. Waverley (1814) established the mold for this type of novel, for a long time to come and in an exemplary and authoritative way, not only, as Lukács adumbrates for the ‘classical’ historical novel of the nineteenth century, by Cooper, Stendhal, and Balzac, even Tolstoy, but also for the exotic ‘adventure’ novel of later times, by Melville, Conrad, even Graham Greene.

The ‘form’ of this novel, if one invokes a slightly earlier formulation from Lukács’s pre-Marxist period, is utterly different from the ‘form’ of the historical drama, with its much longer and more prestigious pedigree,
and can be encapsulated in neat oppositions, which I here rather freely summarize:

(1) The historical novel is slow-moving and accommodating to detailed observation—the historical drama instead concentrates on ‘dramatic’ momentous events.

(2) The hero of the historical novel is ‘unheroic’ and ‘middling’; a mediator—the hero of historical drama is trigical/heroic.

(3) The historical novel represents the life and viewpoints of the Common Man: it is democratic; historical drama represents the life and viewpoints of monarchs and political leaders: it is aristocratic.

(4) As the novel continues to develop during the romantic age, we can notice a certain tendency toward conflation of the two genres, a progressive ‘dramatization’ of the novel and a similar ‘novelization’ of the drama. Lukács (125) is more perceptive and more insistent on the latter—which he brilliantly exemplifies with Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm* (1886)—than on the former.

It is a great pity that Lukács never comments on Strindberg’s historical plays—or Ibsen’s for that matter—in this long and teeminly rich chapter, but, as Strindberg never wrote a major historical novel and the historical novel after all is the main concern of Lukács’s investigation, it is perhaps not altogether surprising. The almost scientific rigor of Lukács’s theory—a very rare thing in aesthetic theorizing—is, however, highlighted by the fact that we can, in applying the contrastive formula of Lukács’s observations to Strindberg’s historical fiction and drama, satisfactorily predict their contrasting natures.

I assume the general observations of György Lukács’s study of historical drama and historical fiction to be accepted by almost everybody as simple truths. In a way, this acceptance seems to have precluded further investigation of the subject. Historical fiction, which has seen an unprecedented period of flowering on many levels in the period since the first publication of Lukács’s book, has inspired in the same period very few major critical studies (one of the worthy exceptions being a book on the American historical novel [Henderson]) as compared to other subgenres of the novel, like the novel of fantasy and science fiction or the novel of manners, while drama criticism has moved away—again with some honorable exceptions (Lindenberger)—from a concern with a temporal
theme. There are reasons, however, for pleading for a reopening of the case: we can, while acknowledging the insights of Lukács’s pioneering work, explore inroads into the subject matter that might have been closed to Lukács because of his adherence to a simple Widerspieglungs-theory and an orthodox diamat methodology. Such an explanation could be made with the help of the unorthodoxy of a Walter Benjamin or a Peter Szondi (in this particular case following closely in Benjamin’s footsteps) and with the observations of the origin of the novel by the maverick Soviet critic/philosopher M. M. Bakhtin, whose original, if somewhat loosely organized, work has become generally available to us only in the last decade.¹²

2

Strindberg never wrote a major historical novel, as I remarked before, but his life-long interest in Balzac (which has elicited a great deal of discussion) and in Walter Scott (which was shared by many of his contemporaries, not least, Gustaf Fröding) is well attested.¹³

On the other hand, Strindberg left a monumental legacy in the twelve major plays on Swedish history—if we follow Walter Johnson’s masterly study Strindberg and the Historical Drama (1963), establishing the canon or measuring rod—which may be the only matching sequence to Shakespeare’s ten canonical plays on English history that any Western country has to show. In addition, he wrote plays with themes from Swedish history, most notably Mäster Olof, in (at least) two versions (1872, 1875–76) and the attempted series of dramas on world history of which only four plays were ever completed. More importantly still, he created the series of short fiction collected in Svenska öden och äventyr (1882–91; Swedish Destinies and Adventures), which is probably without counterpart in any national literature and represents one of the most convincing and startling innovations of a literary form that Strindberg ever produced and which he, furthermore, followed with two volumes in the new century—one,
Historiska miniaturer (1905; Historical Miniatures), containing short stories on subjects from world history, the other, Hövdingaminne (1906; Chieftain Memories), with Swedish settings. To this work can be added non-fictional accounts of a wide variety of historical topics, studies of world history (‘Världshistoriens mystik,’ 1903; ‘The Mysticism of World History’), his histories of the Swedish people and of Stockholm, painstakingly detailed studies on orientalism, etc. The range and import of Strindberg’s historical interests are indeed awe-inspiring.

If for the time being we limit ourselves to the drama and fiction, we shall find ourselves able to confirm Lukács’s observations on the two forms as valid, at least as regards the ‘canonical’ series on Swedish history. The short stories of Svenska öden are detailed in their observations and fairly slow-moving (as in point 1); their heroes are of the people: there are very few, if any, characters drawn from textbook history (point 2); and the viewpoint is aggressively and unabashedly populist (point 3). While, on the other hand, the major dramas of Swedish kings are ‘dramatically’ concentrated to momentous historical events (point 1), they have larger-than-life heroes of the tragic mold at their centers (point 2) and are thus unhindered in expressing the viewpoints of the leaders of the people. There are some apparent exceptions to this; the stories of Svenska öden gradually change character during the years of publication, and late tales like ‘Tschandala’ or ‘The Man of Straw’ can perhaps be regarded as quite conventional and weak examples of short historical novels in the traditional mold. In Hövdingaminne we have, as the title indicates and as already John Landquist pointed out, an open concern with the leaders of men.14

In the dramas, owing to the traditional requirement of the form, we also find occasional expressions of the viewpoint of the common man, but it can be regarded as inherited from the very structure of classical drama in which the chorus is invited to mouth a commonsense view of tragic incidents.

The later historical tales, however, do not at all conform to the quoted requirements but are quite blatantly written with a different and more varied conception of the historical narrative in mind. On the whole, there is in Strindberg’s work a striking confirmation of Lukács’s observation of certain structural necessities in the distinction between the two traditional forms. There is no mystery in this, no prescience claimed: Strindberg is

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14. Hövdingaminne was the intended title of the book, but the publisher convinced Strindberg that Nya svenska öden (‘New Swedish Destinies’) would invoke the popular success of the earlier books. Landquist reinstated the original title.
aware of the traditional requirements of the two ‘forms,’ which had been shaped by a poetics of the novel emerging in German romanticism and finding expression in the theories of Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel, and Hegel, the same theories that surely had helped to form Lukács’s intellectual development. Hegel insists on the priority of action and conflict in tragedy in contrast to the passive subjectivity in prose and lyric poetry. Schlegel regarded the modern novel, the emerging novel of romanticism, as constituting a unique genre (eine Gattung für sich) to be further subdivided into differentiated genres according to historical contingencies (Szondi, ‘Friedrich Schlegel’). But Goethe, in the long discussion between Serlo and Wilhelm in the fifth book, seventh chapter of the Lehrjahre (1795–96), manages, even before the modern novel has come of age, to state the salient distinctions (Lukács never quotes this celebrated passage in his second chapter):

In the novel, as in the drama, we see human nature and action. The difference between these genres does not lie simply in their outward form... In the novel, opinions and occurrences are above all to be presented: in the drama, characters and actions. The novel must move slowly, and the views of the main character must, in one way or another, obstruct the unravelling of the whole.

The drama must speed, and the character of the hero must drive on towards the issue, and only meet obstructions. The hero of the novel must be passive, or at least not highly effectual; we demand of the dramatic hero impact and deeds. Grandison, Clarissa, Pamela, the Vicar of Wakefield, even Tom Jones, if not passive yet retarding characters [retardierende Personen], and all occurrences are in a sense molded upon their dispositions. In the drama, the hero moulds nothing upon himself, everything resists him, and he clears and shifts hindrances out of his way, or else succumbs to them. (Goethe 28; trans. Pascal 22)

Retardierende Personen: it is certainly a striking description, imbued with almost literal significance, of Strindberg’s ‘heroes’ in the historical short fiction: Sten Ulvfot from ‘Odlad frukt’ (1882; ‘Cultivated Fruit’), the Öland peasants in ‘Nya vapen’ (1883; ‘New Weapons’), Kristian in ‘En ovälkommen’ (1882; ‘An Unwelcome’): if they are apt to reculer, it is not so much pour mieux sauter as in order to opt out of their former existence, or even of life itself. The new weapons acquired by the oppressed Öland peasants, in the wonderfully sardonic story of that name, are called flykt (‘running away’), as the peasants remind the justice of the peace when faced with a Russian invasion.

But is the reverse proposition as obviously true of Strindberg’s historical drama, are the dramatic heroes to be seen as per se prominent and prone to
action? They are so by virtue of their offices as kings (or Queen) of Sweden in turbulent times, but hardly always in other ways. We need to look at the problem from another angle and invoke other authorities, in order to give more weight to the question.

As far as historical fiction goes, there is another distinction to be considered, namely, that between historical novel and historical tale or short story—a distinction in which formal criteria break down and disappear. It is the received wisdom of the practitioners of the art,\(^\text{15}\) that the short story as a separate genre did not break off from the novel or the cyclical collection of tales, until the mid-nineteenth century and that it was, as a popular genre, reinforced by various discursive modes, not least the ethnographical or investigative essay (Beachcroft, ch. 7), that it achieved its character and independence from amorphous mass of legends, fairy tales, anecdotal histories, ghost stories, and so forth that flooded the popular literature in earlier times.

As an early theorist of the short story, Edgar Allan Poe can be said to have attempted a rapprochement of the historical tale to something we can term anecdotal history. The young Henry James, whose suspicions of the historical romance were considerable, attempted to do the oppositeDz in a review article for The Nation (15 Aug. 1867) on some indifferent historical romances, he makes some worthwhile comments on the incompatibilities of the historical and the literary imagination. He is, however, willing to make an exception of Balzac, whom he calls ‘a historical novelist inasmuch as he was the historian of contemporary manners.’ In adumbrating Lukács’s distinction between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ historical figures, he is led to a further dissociation of historical fact from literary imagination and adduces as example: ‘George Eliot’s ‘Romola’… [a] very beautiful story, but… [one] quite worthless, to our mind, as a picture of life in the fifteenth century.’

Much the same could perhaps be said for at least a certain number of Strindberg’s historical tales in Svenska öden och äventyr, in which the veneer of historical detail sometimes wears very thin, as Fredrik Böök and many more have pointed out. The prime example is possibly ‘En häxa’ (‘A Witch’) from 1891, which was transposed from the first half of his contemporary novella ‘Schleichwege’ (or ‘Genvägar’), with very few changes, just adding

\(^{15}\) It is striking how much the theory of the short story has been directed by practicing short-story writers; in addition to Poe and James, one can note studies by H. E. Bates (1941) and Sean O’Faolain (1948), both entitled The Short Story, and Frank O’Connor, The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story (1964).
a few touches of local and temporal color, but nonetheless with quite convincing results, in spite of considerable occurrences of what James would call ‘moral anachronisms.’ Towards the turn of the century, in the expert hands of Strindberg and others, this type of tale becomes a bravura showpiece, which in Scandinavian literature was to culminate in Johannes V. Jensen’s intensely atmospheric historical novel Kongens fald (1900–01; The Fall of the King) and early short stories. It is what the Russian Formalists might call sjuzhet without the fabula: it will ultimately resemble, as I think Poe and James could foresee from their mutually opposed standpoints, a certain type of popular history much more than it resembles the traditional historical drama.

3

So far, we have approached the problem of historical drama vs. historical novel in an entirely conventional way, that is, through genre distinctions, which are themselves historical and transitory. The organic models, which have determined our thinking of genre development and genre change, since romanticism, no doubt, but most emphatically since Brunetière, have encouraged modes of describing these phenomena in terms of growth, branching out, withering and dying. In fact, genre changes seem to develop in many different ways, not least in reviving dead genres or in conflating adjacent genres or collapsing differentiated, but cognate, genres.

The question is whether these genre distinctions are as fundamental and immutable as distinctions between media? A television screen can be used for written texts, as indeed it is today by most of us in the shape of the word processor, but it does not become a book, as little as the ‘speaking books’ (in Swedish, talböcker) for blind people are books. New media may engender new genres, but they are still bound by the modes of representation—oral, written or acted. There are no printed dumb-shows, no radio mimes, no oral calligraphy.

Clearly, much of the distinctiveness of these modes has to do with basic relations of time and space. The oral representations is sequential in time, the written is not. The acted representation is both sequential in time and bound to a particular observable locus in space. Technological innovations, like video recording, may affect boundary changes a little, through repeating and scanning devices, but some fundamental distinctions are certain to remain. A film is still bound to have, in spite of all cutting or
scrambling devices available, ‘a beginning, a middle, and an end,’ although, as the now quite truistic witticism goes, ‘not necessarily in that order.’

The unity of time and space, the *chronotope*—to use Bakhtin’s term (*The Dialogic Imagination* 84–248), in an essay that I have found helpful, but perhaps less sharply focused than most of his other work—is not a discovery of our time. Shakespeare knew it well and uses it for showing up its incompatibility with real time and space, not least in historical drama, as in *Henry V*, where he has the Prologue address his audience with the question,

> can this cockpit hold  
> The vasty fields of France? or may we cram  
> Within this wooden O the very casques  
> That did affright the air at Agincourt? (lines 11–13)

and prompt them to ‘make imaginary puissance’ just in order to affect ‘turning the accomplishments of many years/ into an Hour-glass.’ (lines 25, 30–31)

That the cockpit—or, variously, the Wooden O of the Shakespearean stage—cannot be identified with the world will not come as a great surprise to most, except to the rough prospectors of Dawson City, or wherever, who with the help of their sixguns tried to dissuade Othello from strangling his wife. The spatial disparity is unique for acted representation, but both narrative and drama share the temporal disparity. It can be described and labeled in various ways: *Erzählzeit versus erzählte zeit* (Günther Müller); *temps de l’enoncé and temps de l’enonciation* (Benveniste, Gerard Genette); and *Aktzeit* versus *Textzeit* (Harald Weinrich). These various proposals in all their intricacies have been judiciously presented by Paul Ricoeur in the second volume of his truly monumental investigation *Temps et récit* (passim, 121 n.1). Inexorably, the discussion leads back, as does indeed the discussion of the origin of genre distinctions, to Plato’s and Aristotle’s interwoven interpretations of *mimesis*, or imitation, and *diegesis*, or ‘pure’ narration (which I have commented on in a different context; see Printz-Pählson, ‘Det Episka’). This seems to be the only way to make sense of Bakhtin’s chronotope and the seemingly arbitrary definitions he introduces.

But let us return to the fourth set of distinctions, culled from Lukács’s observations on the historical novel and historical drama: the dramatization of the novel and the novelization of the drama, which can be observed towards the end of the nineteenth century. There is no mystery about the first: it is well attested in the practice of important novelists like Henry James, Conrad, and Joyce, who deliberately curb authorial comment in the direction of the dramatic; it was elevated into critical dogma by the New
Critics. The second point is more controversial and also more difficult to unravel. The tendency towards what is known as ‘epic’ theatre can hardly be called novelistic in any stricter sense.

Still, it is hardly controversial to say that all drama contains a modicum of narrative, or, if you want, pure narration or diegesis. This element is what, ever since Aristotle, we are used to calling ‘plot’ (mythos). It means that the drama can be translated into a narrative. Strindberg did exactly that with ‘Herr Bengts Hustru’ (‘Sir Bengt’s Wife’), the play that he ‘translated’ into a short story.

Now we are ready to see what constitutes the unique character of the historical drama qua history: it is the underlying narrative or Mythos already exists. The author of the historical drama is allowed a certain freedom in selecting his material, but in the case of the canonical plays on actual historical characters he has to face the preconceptions of his audience or his readers. He might challenge such preconceptions, but he cannot disregard them. He cannot write about Gustavus Adolphus and suppress all references to the Thirty Years’ War. He cannot have Queen Christina marry her cousin Charles and live happily ever after.

Or, again let us look at the problem from another angle. The acted representation is, in spite of its tangible presence, an ascetic art: it spurns the sources of information over and above the plot, which is fundamentally unraveled by means of dialogue. Consequently, normal, everyday drama is one of the most demanding of genres, in the sense that it requires an immense effort on part of the spectator, who is faced with a handful of strangers who go about their business in complete disregard of him. Neither is he allowed to put questions to them about their background, intentions, and so on; nor can he, as the reader of a novel, skip a chapter, leaf through to the ending of the book, or go back to the beginning. The spectator is lost unless he is a trained theatre-goer: he is forced to remember very intricate things about people he has never heard of and does not care tuppence about. This is a frightening experience: no wonder a prospector from Dawson City would reach for his gun when he saw the big black feller throttle his little bride.

Here the historical drama of the canonical type is a godsend, and we, in our sophistication, can easily forget the most important single fact about it. It is presumably as the Greek tragedy might have been to the Athenians—about people we know. And every Swedish child knows his Charles XII: he has seen the portrait of him as King of Spades on the most popular deck of painted cards in Sweden (cf. Staffan Björck’s brilliant comments on the social content of playing cards: 174–80), or on the once immensely widespread Kungatavlan
(‘The Pictorial Succession of Kings’), which used to adorn every other privy in Sweden. There is every reason to take Strindberg’s idea of the theatre, in the preface to ‘Miss Julie,’ as a Biblia Pauperum in dead earnest.

4

If you, as a playwright, want to impart background information in your play, there are principally two different ways you can go about it:

(1) You can add information over and above the dialogue, in stage directions, program notes, prefaces, and so forth. This is the Nebentext, which Egil Törnquist has studied in some Strindberg plays (‘Strindbergs bitext’ 102) with fascinating results.

(2) You can impart background information to the audience through the dialogue itself, which tends to strain the bounds of probability in many cases of contemporary drama. This is the exposé that Strindberg sometimes castigates in his Öppna brev till Intima teatern (1909; Open Letter to the Intimate Theater). But it is obvious that this is much more acceptable in historical drama of the canonical type, as the monarchs, politicians, and leaders of men, who make up the central characters, are quite likely to express themselves in long-winded discourses on the obvious, the most splendid example is the long ekphrasis, or interpretation of the portraits of the whole Folkung family, which King Magnus addresses to Queen Blanche at the beginning of Act V of Folkungasagan (1899; The Saga of the Folkungs). The tone is here indistinguishable from the tone of Strindberg’s essay ‘Världshistoriens mystik’ and clearly emanates from the notorious Green Sack. (Printz-Pählson, ‘Allegories’)

Strindberg is in this way also able to add to the characterization of Magnus, ingenuous and voluble as he is. The garrulous Magnus can be allowed to offer this piece of self-analysis (or rather analysis of the drama he happens to be part of: he ends his monologue with, ‘Detta är folkungasagan’ (‘This is The Saga of the Folkungs’), which would have been utterly inappropriate in the taciturn Charles XII. But the exposé goes much further than Magnus can possibly know: it establishes the mode or mechanism governing the whole sequence of plays on Swedish history.
It is, I believe, this mode, which has often been called panoramic, since its wide-lens perspective seems to embrace so much more than the individual fates and characters. It may be that Birgitta Steene uses the word in a more technical sense when she denies the panoramic character of the later history plays in an early and pioneering study: ‘Thus Strindberg’s historical cycle broke into fragments—although in one sense he had already completed its pattern in The Saga of the Folkungs and his individual historical plays gradually lost their panoramic perspective.’ (Steene, Strindberg: A Collection 136)

It seems to me that, insofar as a certain kind of continuity is established—and Strindberg was willing to go to great length to fill in the gaps in his narrative fabula, at least up to Carl XII, which establishes the kатаstrofē or peripeteia—that the panoramic perspective is retained or even intensified in the later plays, that is, if the whole cycle is read diachronically and not synchronically.16 This perspective is perhaps most obvious in Carl XII, with its silent protagonist, its constant proleptic hints of things to come (in the truculent characters of Gyllenborg and Horn, for example), and the final withdrawal of judgment on the king’s character. It is the Swedish nation, the Swedish people, who are the agonists of this tragedy, not the king. The master narrative, which runs through the whole series of plays, is here exposed as being the destiny of a nation. And this master narrative is as much in evidence in the later short fiction, hence the shifting character of the stories in Hövdingaminnen, even if they only occasionally touch upon the same subject matter as the plays.

5

History in modern times has been given many names, most of them abusive. ‘History is bunk,’ said Henry Ford. ‘History is a nightmare from which I am

16. In emphasizing the predominantly and uniquely psychological nature of Strindberg’s history plays, Herbert Lindenberger also denies the panoramic aspect: there is no ‘larger, controlling myth,’ as in Shakespeare, for instance (Lindenberger 122). He is quite correct in seeing the plays of the Damascus cycle as Strindberg’s only completed ‘panoramic’ dramatic sequence, in that they ‘transfer the historical vision of most earlier panoramic plays to a wholly psychological realm while at the same time retaining their vastness and their imaginative grandeur.’ (88) I have tried to suggest a link in my analysis of Damascus III. (Printz-Pålson, ‘Allegories’ 228–31) The explanation must surely reside in the Hegelian framework of Verletzung and Kollision, which Lindenberger himself points to in a footnote (171, n. 68). As Strindberg is busy with the Aufhebung of the national myth—with, as we might say today, deconstructing it—he is the more likely to let the historical pageant take on a deliberately theatrical, or unreal, character.
trying to awake,’ is the neat summary of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* (1922). In ‘Little Gidding’ (1943), one of the major meditations on history in our time, T. S. Eliot seems to want it both ways: ‘History may be servitude,/ History may be freedom.’ (III, 13–14)

Strindberg’s view of history, or in this case Swedish manifest destiny, is equally reductive. In *Carl XII*, it is hammered in metaphorically, in images of disease and bankruptcy and of death (as it had been already in the short story sharing its chronotope, ‘Vid likvakan i tistedalen’ (‘At the Wake in Tistedalen’), from *Svenska Öden*.

There is, however, a reversed exposure of the Swedish national myth embedded in the history plays, one that uses a chronotype of a very different nature. This reversed exposure occurs in the short satirical folktale ‘Gullhjälmarne i Ålleberg,’ (‘The Gold Helmets of Ålleberg’), which is included in *Sagor* (1903; *Tales* 102–10). It is one of the most delightful and witty of Strindberg’s late tales, to be set next to his early satire on Swedish history, ‘De lycksaliges ö’ (1890; ‘The Island of the Blessed’) which used to be included in school anthologies and must have bemused countless generations of Swedish schoolchildren.

The story resolutely identifies its chronotope as folkloristic, and its time as adventure time. The soldier Anders Kask from Västergötland, who is on temporary duty in Stockholm, is trying to gate-crash at ‘Skansen,’ at the time at its very height of nationalist grandeur. Trying to find an entrance from the rear, he is approached by several talking animals—a squirrel, a snake and a hedgehog—that offer their help. At last, with the help of a pixie, he finds the entrance to the mountain and is introduced to the giant, who presents himself as Giant Svensk. After having passed some traditional tests, he is taken to see the Gold Helmets, who have been moved from their original habitat, near his birthplace in Västergötland. They turn out to be, not surprisingly, the past kings of Sweden, asleep in the mountain, waiting to be called to the rescue when Sweden is in danger. So far, Strindberg has been using a number of well-known folktale and legendary motifs and struck a whimsical parodic note that is pleasantly obscure. The rest is pure satire: the Giant Svensk is to give account to the Gold Helmets on the present state of Sweden, which is far from encouraging, as one might expect. The folkloristic models are numerous. The idea of the ancient king returning to the country in its hour of greatest

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17. The expression is Bakhtin’s (*Dialogic Imagination* 81), but it could also be identified with his ‘folkloric chronotope.’ I have had to disregard his fine distinctions.
need is extremely widespread—Arthur in Avalon or Frederick Barbarossa in the mountain. The animal helpers can be easily recognized as a favorite folktale motif—Propp’s celebrated category F\(^1\) (Propp 57)—and the knights in the mountain are known from various regions of Sweden. At least two more specific sources need to be identified: the story of the giant Gjelle, which was collected by Nicolovius in his famous work on folk life (109 ff.), and the most widespread and influential of Swedish eighteenth-century political ballads, that of Sinclair (\textit{Sinclairvisan}), written by Anders Odel (Hörnström). The wayward Scanian giant Gjelle, who asks mundane questions about his native Gislöf, and the Swedish martyr Major Malcolm Sinclair, who rouses the sleeping twelve kings in the mountain, provide the ideal subtexts for Strindberg’s satire. Swedish history, heroic/tragic as it is to Strindberg, is also encapsulated in the spurious and factitious nationalism of Skansen. And, as if the verbal send-up were not enough, the soldier Kask, like the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt, is sent up, literally, in the modern turbolift to Skansen, from where he can witness Gustaf Vasa entering with his Dalecarlia following; whether it is the customary midsummer pageant or the real happening is not stated. But the inference to be drawn may be that there is hardly any difference. In adventure time the imaginary puissances are as great as the real ones, for as Eliot reminded us in the hour of a modern Agincourt (1942):\(^{10}\) ‘history is a pattern/ of timeless moments.’ (V, 21–22) But, whereas Eliot’s etiolated vision finally succumbs to bland pieties of the moment, the jaunty irreverence of Strindberg’s soldier seems ready to join the carnivalesque pageantry of Shakespeare’s company: ‘Admit me Chorus to this history;/Who prologue-like your humble patience pray.’ (\textit{King Henry the Fifth}, Prologue, lines 32–33)

\section*{Works Cited}


\footnote{18. As to the Shakespearean element in British wartime propaganda in those years, see the exemplary article by Graham Holdemess, in which he attacks the ideological foundations of the traditional interpretation, exemplified in Tillyard.}


