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978-0-521-84604-2 - The Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg

Edited by Michael Robinson

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
AUGUST STRINDBERG

August Strindberg is one of the most enduring of nineteenth-century dramatists, and is also an internationally recognized novelist, autobiographer and painter. This *Companion* presents contributions by leading international scholars on different aspects of Strindberg's highly colourful life and work. The essays focus primarily on his most celebrated plays; these include the naturalist dramas, *The Father* and *Miss Julie*; the experimental dramas with which he created a true modernist theatre – *To Damascus* and *A Dream Play*; and the Chamber Plays of 1908 which, like so much of his work, exerted a powerful influence on later twentieth-century drama. His plays are contextualized for what they contribute both to the history of drama and developments in theatre practice, and other essays clarify the enormous importance to these dramas of his other work, most notably the autobiographical novel *Inferno*, and his lifelong interest in science, the occult, sexual politics and the visual arts.

MICHAEL ROBINSON is Professor Emeritus of Drama and Scandinavian Studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. He is the author of *Strindberg and Autobiography* (1986) and *Studies in Strindberg* (1998), and has translated a two-volume selection of Strindberg's letters (1992), a collection of his essays (1996) and five of the plays (1998). He has edited five volumes of essays on Strindberg and Ibsen, and is also the General Editor of the Cambridge Plays in Production series. His three-volume *International Annotated Bibliography of Strindberg Studies* was published by the MHRA in 2008.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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MICHAEL ROBINSON is Professor Emeritus of Drama and Scandinavian Studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. He is the author of *Strindberg and Autobiography* (1986) and *Studies in Strindberg* (1998), and has translated a two-volume selection of Strindberg's letters (1992), a collection of his essays

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GÖRAN STOCKENSTRÖM is Professor in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Minnesota. His books include *Ismael i öknen. Strindberg som mystiker* (1972), *Strindberg's Dramaturgy* (1988) and the critical edition of *The Occult Diary* in Strindberg's *Samlade Verk* (forthcoming).

PER STOUNBJERG is Professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Aarhus. He is the author of some twenty essays on Strindberg, including 'A Modernist Hell: on August Strindberg's *Inferno*', *Scandinavica* (38:1 (1999)), and a post-structuralist study of Strindberg as an autobiographer, *Uro og urenhed. Studier i Strindbergs selvbiografiske prosa* (2005).

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(1982), *Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata* (2000), *Det talade ordet. Om Strindbergs dramadialog* (2001) and *Strindberg som TV-dramatiker* (2004).

MATTHEW H. WIKANDER is Professor of English at the University of Toledo. He is the author of *The Play of State: Historical Drama from Shakespeare to Brecht* (1996), *Princes to Act: Royal Audience and Royal Performance, 1578–1792* (1993) and *Fangs of Malice: Hypocrisy, Sincerity, and Acting* (2002). He has contributed essays to the *Cambridge Companions* to Eugene O'Neill (1998) and Bernard Shaw (1998).

LYNN R. WILKINSON is Associate Professor of Scandinavian, Comparative Literature and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *The Dream of an Absolute Language: Emanuel Swedenborg and French Literary Culture*, as well as articles on a variety of subjects in Scandinavian and European literature and culture, including Strindberg, Ibsen and the late nineteenth-century playwrights Emma Gad and Anne Charlotte Leffler.

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PREFACE

Even by the standards of his own time, Strindberg was unusually prolific. Apart from his fifty-seven plays in numerous genres, he also wrote sixteen novels (nine of them an extended sequence of autobiographical fictions covering his life from 1849 to 1905), a number of collections of short stories and three volumes of poetry, as well as several substantial works of history, numerous essays on scientific topics and some significant political tracts and works of social analysis. To these should be added a voluminous correspondence (his extant letters fill twenty-two volumes and are sometimes considered his finest uniform achievement after the plays), and his painting and photography, both of which have garnered increasing recognition and are now considered an integral part of his project.

Indeed, few major writers have been as diverse in the range of their activities as Strindberg (perhaps only Goethe juggles literature with an active interest in the natural sciences and the practice of the visual arts so extensively), but this volume is devoted primarily to those plays on which his international reputation largely rests; apart from two chapters on his novels and autobiographies, his painting and other writings are only of concern where they contribute to the understanding of his drama. In many respects, one or more of these plays have fostered much of modern drama and few later dramatists, whether expressionist, absurdist or even Brechtian, have escaped their impact while they have been central to the development of a modernist theatre from Lugné-Poe and Max Reinhardt to Ingmar Bergman, Giorgio Strehler and Robert Wilson. These developments are recognized here in three further chapters.

The editor would like to thank Sarah-Lizzie Saks at Sveriges Teatermuseum for help in obtaining several photographs, Sören Vilks for his splendid photograph of Maria Bonnevie and Mikael Persbrandt in *Miss Julie* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm, and Joel Persson for the picture of Keve

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Hjelm and Margaretha Krook in *The Dance of Death*, at the same theatre. He is grateful to Dr Vicki Cooper for commissioning this book, Rebecca Jones for her editorial support, and Hilary Scannell for her mindful and discriminating copy-editing. He would also like to thank the contributors for their patience in the realization of this project.

Michael Robinson

NOTE ON REFERENCES

The following abbreviations denote standard editions of Strindberg's works and letters in both Swedish and English. In the interests of consistency and in order to keep the number of endnotes to a minimum, quotations are generally from these editions and are identified throughout in parentheses within the text of each essay.

- ASB* *August Strindbergs brev*, 22 vols., Utgivna av Torsten Eklund and Björn Meidal, eds. (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1948–2001). The masterful, annotated edition of Strindberg's some 10,000 extant letters.
- Inf* *Inferno* and *From an Occult Diary*, translated with an introduction by Mary Sandbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979).
- LIT* *Open Letters to the Intimate Theater*, translated with an introduction by Walter Johnson (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966).
- MJoP* *Miss Julie and Other Plays*, translated with an introduction and notes by Michael Robinson (Oxford University Press, 1998); includes *Miss Julie*, *The Father*, *The Dance of Death*, *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*.
- SE* *Selected Essays by August Strindberg*, selected, edited and translated by Michael Robinson (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- SgNM* The standard abbreviation for any reference to the sixty-seven box files containing Strindberg's literary remains, generally known as *Gröna säcken* (the Green Bag). Initially deposited in Nordiska Museet, Stockholm, these are now in the Strindberg archive of Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm. An invaluable annotated *Katalog över 'Gröna Säcken'* by Barbro Ståhle Sjönell (Stockholm: Kungl. biblioteket, 1991) details the contents of files 1–9.
- SL* *Strindberg's Letters*, 2 vols., selected, edited and translated by Michael Robinson (London: The Athlone Press; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- SS* *Samlade Skrifter*, 55 vols. (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1912–20). For many years the standard edition of Strindberg's Collected Works, edited by John Landquist.
- SV* *Samlade Verk*, 72 vols. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1981 to date). The ongoing, text-critical edition of Strindberg's Collected Works under

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the general editorship of Lars Dahlbäck. Each volume is accompanied by detailed notes and extensive editorial commentary concerning the genesis and reception of each work.

Translations from *Miss Julie and Other Plays* and the *Selected Letters* are sometimes lightly adapted to fit the context.

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CHRONOLOGY

Few writers have lived such a restless life as Strindberg, with so many changes of residence from childhood onwards, and not all of these are itemized here. Moreover, the events of this often turbulent life were sometimes closely interwoven with the experiences recounted in many of his books to an unusual extent, but in a highly intricate and complex manner. While acknowledging that a change of location often entailed a shift of direction in Strindberg's writing, this chronology therefore resists the temptation to detail any such parallels or to identify in detail the frequently shifting cast of those who were caught up in a life he sometimes regarded as staged, if not scripted, for him. It is also the case that few writers have been as voracious readers in so many fields as Strindberg; but only the most significant examples of his many enthusiasms are noted here, where they particularly coloured his writing in the year, or period, in question. For brevity, 'Dramaten' stands for Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theatre, whether or not it was always known by this popular diminutive at the time. All other theatres are located in Stockholm unless otherwise indicated.

1849 (22 January) Johan August Strindberg born at Riddarholmen in Stockholm, the third of eleven children of Carl Oscar Strindberg (1811–1883), a grocer and shipping agent, and Ulrika Eleonora Norling (1823–1862), a servant-girl and former waitress, of whom seven survive infancy. Portraying his father as 'an aristocrat by birth and upbringing', Strindberg's primary emotional identification was, as the title of his autobiographical fiction *The Son of a Servant* indicates, with his mother, but the conflict between aristocrat and plebeian was one that informed both his life and his work, in *Miss Julie* and elsewhere.

The family moves numerous times within Stockholm during Strindberg's childhood; he emerges with an acute sense of the city's social composition.

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- 1851–61 Attends the puritanical Klara School which seemed ‘a preparation not for life but for hell’, and then, for a year, the more humble Jakob School.
- 1853 Father goes bankrupt, but soon re-establishes himself.
- 1861 Transfers to the Stockholm Lyceum, a more liberal institution from which he eventually matriculates, 25 May 1967.
- 1862 Mother dies.
- 1863 Father marries his housekeeper, Emilia Petersson (1841–1887), much to Strindberg’s displeasure.
- 1862–4 Displays an interest in the natural sciences, particularly botany and chemistry. Also experiences a period of powerful religious feeling, and is inspired by Pietism. His feelings extend to his landlord’s daughter, the thirty-year-old Edla Heijkorn, with whom he discusses morality and religion.
- 1865 Confirmation, an experience revisited in both *Sleepwalking Nights* and ‘The Rewards of Virtue’ in *Getting Married* (both 1884).
- 1866 Twice employed as a tutor on country estates outside Stockholm. On one occasion he delivers the Sunday sermon in Ösmo church. Discovers and is captivated by the landscape of the Stockholm archipelago which becomes a prominent motif and inspiration in his literary works and paintings. Reads the American evangelical, Theodore Parker (1810–1860), with enthusiasm; likewise Byron and Dickens.
- 1867 Spends the autumn at Uppsala University, reading aesthetics and modern languages.
- 1868 Returns to Stockholm. Supports himself by supply teaching at Klara School and elsewhere, and by private tutoring in two doctors’ families.
- 1869 Studies medicine, but fails the first examination in chemistry. Visits Copenhagen in August, then switches to acting, but fails his practical studies at Dramaten, 16 November 1869, although not before appearing in a number of walk-on parts, and ‘finding little joy in the work’. Writes his first plays, the two-act comedy *A Name-Day Gift* (now lost) and *The Freethinker*, published 1870 (stage première 13 March 2003, New Intimate Theatre).

CHRONOLOGY

- 1870 Spends the spring and autumn terms in Uppsala. Reads political science, philology and astronomy, as well as Latin and aesthetics. Forms a literary society whose members take Old Norse names. Writes *Greece in Decline* (revised in five acts as *Hermione*) which receives an honourable mention in competition at the Swedish Academy, and *In Rome*, a one-act drama about the Danish sculptor, Bertel Thorvaldsen (Dramaten, 13 September 1870). Reads Kierkegaard and Georg Brandes, both of whom exert an immediate influence on his writing.
- 1871 Continues his studies in Uppsala. Writes an essay on 'Idealism and Realism' and a drama on Icelandic themes, *The Outlaw* (Dramaten, 16 October 1871). Receives a small grant from King Charles XV's private purse. Spends the first of several summers in the Stockholm archipelago where he commences his first major work, *Master Olof*.
- 1872 Finally abandons his studies in Uppsala, which he generally disliked, and settles in Stockholm. Finds desultory employment as a journalist with *Stockholms Aftonpost* and other newspapers, including *Dagens Nyheter*. (June–August) Starts painting while staying on the island of Kymmendö in the archipelago and completes the earliest version of *Master Olof*. The long delay in its staging is a potent source of Strindberg's increasing disaffection with Sweden.
 Regular member of the circle of artists and intellectuals who meet at the Red Room in Bern's Restaurant. Reads Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, Georg Brandes's *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature* and Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.
 (November) Another failure as an actor, this time in Gothenburg.
- 1873 Works as a journalist, including a spell as editor of the *Swedish Insurance Journal*. Experiences financial problems.
 (October–November) Studies telegraphy on the island of Sandhamn with a view to permanent employment.
 (December–April 1874) Engaged as a reporter on the liberal *Dagens Nyheter*.
- 1874 (December) Secures a position as assistant librarian at the Stockholm Royal Library, where he works intermittently until

CHRONOLOGY

- 31 August 1882, and studies sinology. Develops an interest in cartography and pursues studies in subjects that will inform many of his later literary works as well as the essays in cultural history on which he now embarks and the later historical works, *Old Stockholm* and *The Swedish People*. Produces a revised version of *Master Olof*, again rejected by Dramaten, and some occasional journalism.
- 1875 (Spring) Teaches in a private girls' school and meets Baron Carl Gustaf Wrangel, an officer in the Swedish Life Guards, and his wife, the Finland-Swedish aristocrat, Sigrid (Siri) von Essen (1850–1912). Events surrounding his passionate involvement with the latter, her divorce from Wrangel, career as an actress between 1876 and 1883 and subsequent life with Strindberg inform many of Strindberg's later works, including *He and Her* (the version of their correspondence from 1875–6 that he collected in 1886; first published 1919), *A Madman's Defence* (1887) and *The Bond* (1892), although to read any of these works as a straightforward account of lived experience requires an awareness of the ways in which Strindberg edited and re-edited the material for literary purposes. Nevertheless, the impact of someone he once called 'the most beautiful woman in Sweden' resonates throughout his life and colours many of his works, even after their divorce.
 (October) Experiences a mental crisis during an aborted journey to Paris.
- 1876 (8 January) Definitive break with his father.
 Revises *Master Olof* once again, rewriting it in verse, only to meet with a further rejection (première Dramaten, 15 March 1890).
 (October) First visit to Paris. Sees the work of several French impressionist painters and introduces them to Sweden.
 (Winter 1876–7) Writes the comedy, *Anno '48* (Baden-Baden, 1922).
- 1877 (January) Siri's debut at Dramaten and the death of her daughter by Wrangel.
 (December) Publishes *From Town and Gown*, tales of student life in Uppsala.
 (30 December) Marries Siri von Essen.

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- 1878 (21 January) Birth of a daughter who dies 23 January, after being put out to a wet-nurse. Translates several American humorists, including Bret Harte and Mark Twain.
- 1879 (9 January) Files for bankruptcy.
 (February–March) Writes *The Red Room*, the first modern Swedish novel and his breakthrough as an author. Published 14 November; four editions by early 1880.
 Elected a member of La Société des études japonaises, chinoises, tartares et indo-chinoises in Paris and awarded the silver medal of the Imperial Geographical Society in St Petersburg for his studies in cultural history.
- 1880 (26 February) Birth of daughter, Karin (1880–1973, a writer). Writes *The Secret of the Guild* (Dramaten, 3 May with Siri von Essen as Margaretha), and the cultural history, *Old Stockholm*, co-authored with Claes Lundin. Conducts a correspondence with others among the loose grouping of writers of the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough, including Edvard Brandes and Alexander Kielland, but never with Ibsen.
- 1881 (9 June) Birth of daughter, Greta (1881–1912, an actress). Publishes *Studies in Cultural History* and a controversial two-volume history of *The Swedish People*, with illustrations by Carl Larsson, in which he initiates an acrimonious debate by departing from the perspective adopted by previous Swedish historians and presenting the nation's history from below rather than above.
 (8 October) Carl Gustaf Wrangel marries Siri von Essen's cousin, Sofia In de Betou.
 Expresses an interest in Russian nihilism and an enthusiasm for Rousseau.
 (30 December) Successful première of the prose version of *Master Olof*, Nya teatern.
- 1882 Publishes *The New Kingdom*, a sharply satirical attack on Swedish institutions and several prominent contemporary figures. Begins writing and publishing *Swedish Destinies and Adventures*, a collection of short stories on historical subjects to which he continues to add until 1891. Also writes the fairy-tale play *Lucky Peter's Journey* (Nya teatern, 22 December 1883) and *Herr Bengt's Wife* (Nya teatern, 25 November), in which he

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- responds to Ibsen's *Doll's House* and provides a vehicle for Siri von Essen, who garners praise for her performance in the title role.
- 1883 Publishes his collected lyrical, personal and polemical *Poems in Verse and Prose*. Leaves Sweden for continental 'exile' and remains abroad in France, Switzerland, Bavaria and Denmark until 1889. Stays first in Paris at Passy and Neuilly, where he makes the acquaintance of the Norwegian writers Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Jonas Lie, and at the Scandinavian artist colony of Grez sur Loing, near Fontainebleau.
- 1884 Publishes a sequence of four philosophical poems, *Sleepwalking Nights in Broad Daylight* (adding a fifth in 1889), reads widely in social theory and criticism, finding more to interest him in Max Nordau's *The Conventional Lies of Civilisation*, Nils Herman Quidding's *A Settling of Accounts with the Law of Sweden* and Nikolai Chernishevskii's novel, *What is to be Done?* than in Marx. Writes a series of essays on social issues, including 'On the General Discontent' and *August Strindberg's Little Catechesis for the Underclass*.
Spends January–June in Switzerland at Ouchy, Chexbres and Geneva, visiting Italy (Pegli and Genoa) for two weeks in March.
(3 April) Birth of son, Hans (1884–1917, a bank employee).
(September) Publishes a collection of twelve short stories, *Getting Married*, one of which, 'The Rewards of Virtue', provokes a charge of blasphemy for mockery of God and the sacrament. Strindberg returns reluctantly to Stockholm and stands trial, believing that elements in the Swedish women's movement are behind the affair. Becomes the subject of bitter personal attacks, as does his Jewish publisher, Albert Bonnier.
(17 November) Acquitted, but remains for many years in a state of mutual hostility with Sweden, where he now has difficulty finding a publisher or a theatre to perform his plays. Henceforth experiences considerable penury and suffers from an increased sense of persecution. Depicts recent events in *The Sequestration Journey*.
- 1885 Spends January–March in Switzerland with a brief visit to Venice and Rome in February with the Swedish author, Verner von Heidenstam. Returns to Paris in April and spends July in

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- Normandy before residing again at Grez sur Loing. Also visits the *familistère* at Guise and interviews its founder, J. B. A. Godin. Writes the more openly anti-feminist second volume of *Getting Married*, as well as the four stories in *Utopias in Reality*. Set in Switzerland and France, like much of his writing during this period, they express a sympathy with both Rousseau and the exiled Russian anarchists with whom he was acquainted in Geneva.
- 1886 Partly inspired by the example of Jules Vallès's autobiographical novel, *Jacques Vingtras*, he writes the four-volume, third-person history of his life to date, comprising *The Son of a Servant*, *Time of Ferment*, *In the Red Room* (1887) and *The Author* (unpublished until 1909). Also publishes *Getting Married II* (originally written in French), and writes *Comrades*, his first drama with a contemporary setting (Lustspieltheater, Vienna, 23 October 1905; Sweden 1910). Moves back to Switzerland and stays variously at Argau, Weggis and Gersau, where he produces a sequence of photographic self-portraits designed as a visual pendant to his autobiography.
 Moves to Lindau in Bavaria.
 (30 August) Accompanied by a young sociologist, Gustaf Steffen, he embarks on a journey through the French provinces from Belfort to Dijon to gather material for his agrarian socialist account of rural life, *Among French Peasants* (journey completed 19 September, publication 1889). But he starts to turn away from social issues and now reads more widely in contemporary French and English psychological literature, with a particular interest in self-analysis as well as hypnosis and suggestion. Among the authorities he consults are Henry Maudsley, Théodule Ribot, Hippolyte Bernheim and Jean-Martin Charcot.
- 1887 (February) Writes *The Father* (Casino Theatre, Copenhagen, 14 November) and, during the summer, *The People of Hemsö*, a humorous novel set in the Stockholm archipelago and endowed with pungent local colour. Also becomes a contributor to the *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna, which he visits in April, and writes *Vivisections*, a series of essays and sketches in psychological naturalism in which he explores the notions of 'the battle of the brains' and 'soul murder' that are central motivating concepts in many of his naturalistic plays.

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- (September) Starts writing *A Madman's Defence*, an autobiographical fiction in French related to his marriage with Siri von Essen, which disintegrates further even as he writes. Makes first moves towards obtaining a divorce from Siri and consults specialists in nervous diseases in Denmark about his health. Attacks on Strindberg in Sweden climax with the publication of *Strindbergian Literature and Immorality among Schoolchildren* by John Personne, a future bishop of Linköping.
- (November) Moves to Klampenborg, near Copenhagen.
- 1888 (January-May) Resides at Taarbæk, north of Copenhagen, then spends May–September on a ramshackle estate at Skovlyst, where he enjoys a brief relationship with an under-age girl and a colourful rivalry with her half-brother, the bailiff and apparent lover of the estate's owner, the Countess Frankenau. Depicts these events with licence in the novella 'Tschandala' and writes *Miss Julie*, which is refused by Bonniers, and *Creditors*. *The Father* published in France with a preface by Zola. Finds the Scandinavian Experimental Theatre with Siri as director and advertises for repertoire, although only his own work is ever performed. Publishes *Life in the Skerries*, a collection of short stories on contemporary themes, set in the Stockholm archipelago, and a volume of popular natural history, *Flower Paintings and Animal Sketches*, which was generally far better received in Sweden than *Miss Julie*. Corresponds briefly with Nietzsche before the latter's mental collapse, having been introduced to his works by Georg Brandes. Also displays an enthusiasm for the tales of Edgar Allan Poe.
- 1889 Premières of *Creditors* (9 March), *Miss Julie* (14 March), and the recently written one-act plays, *The Stronger* and *Pariah*, in Copenhagen with Danish casts plus Siri von Essen as Julie and the silent role of Mme X in *The Stronger*. To meet objections from the censor, *Miss Julie* is performed privately at the Society of Students. (It does not receive its professional première in Sweden until 1906.) Also writes the one-act play *Simoon* (Svenska teatern, 25 March 1890).
(20 April) Returns to Sweden and spends the summer in the archipelago at Sandhamn and Runmarö. Completes a dramatization of *The People of Hemsö* and 'Les relations de la

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- France avec la Suède'. *Among French Peasants* finally published in its entirety. Displays an increasing interest in the natural sciences as well as photography.
- 1890 (15 March, Dramaten) Acclaimed première of the verse *Master Olof* (Strindberg called on stage six times). Spends the spring at various locations in the archipelago and makes a fact-finding journey through mid- and southern Sweden for a work on 'Swedish nature'. Publishes his 'Nietzschean' novel *By the Open Sea*.
- 1891 Sued for libel and assault by Marie David, Siri von Essen's Danish friend with whom Strindberg believes Siri has a long-standing lesbian relationship. He experiences considerable penury, but makes a further exploratory journey, this time to northern Sweden, and begins to paint again and to sculpt while living mostly at Djursholm, or Runmarö and Dalarö in the archipelago.
- 1892 Writes the last of his short dramas with contemporary settings, *Debit and Credit*, *The First Warning*, *Facing Death*, *Motherly Love*, *Playing with Fire* and *The Bond*, as well as a fairy-tale play, *The Keys of Heaven* (Swedish première, Uppsala, 21 June 1962), in which he expresses some of his despair at losing his children, following legal separation from Siri on 21 March.
- Meanwhile, other interests, both artistic and scientific, have begun to displace literature and (with his plays largely unperformed) even the theatre as his prime concerns. Increasingly, he turns away from creative writing towards science, the visual arts and alchemy, and writes no further plays for six years. He resides at Djursholm until April and Dalarö until September; experiments with colour photography; and exhibits some of his paintings in Stockholm in July, although none is sold. Observes: 'It seems Sweden will find no peace until I am dead.'
- (19 July) Found guilty of libel and assault against Marie David.
- (21 September) Marriage to Siri formally dissolved.
- (September) Justin Huntly McCarthy publishes the first appreciation of Strindberg in Britain in the *Fortnightly Review*.
- (30 September) Leaves Sweden for Germany, staying initially in Friedrichshagen with the Swedish author, Ola Hansson and his

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wife, Laura Marholm. Soon alienated from them, he moves to Berlin and becomes the centre of an international bohemian circle at the tavern he christens 'The Black Piglet'. Other members include the writers Holger Drachmann, a Dane, the Pole, Stanisław Przybyszewski, the Finland-Swede, Adolf Paul, and the German poet, Richard Dehmel, as well as the Norwegian painters Edvard Munch and Christian Krohg, and Carl Ludwig Schleich, a pioneer of local anaesthesia. The circle also embraced the Norwegian pianist and writer, Dagny Juel, the subject of Munch's painting, *Madonna*, with whom Strindberg enjoyed a brief, guilt-laden relationship.

(December) Visits Weimar.

1893 (16 January) French première of *Miss Julie*, staged by Antoine at the Théâtre Libre.

(22 January) German première of *Creditors* at the Residenztheater, Berlin, in a triple bill with *Facing Death* and *The First Warning*.

(January) Meets the Austrian journalist Frida Uhl (1872–1943) and marries her on Heligoland, 2 May. Takes a turbulent and abruptly terminated honeymoon in London.

Spends July alone on Rügen and in Hamburg and visits his parents-in-law at Mondsee in August. Spends the next months in Berlin and Austria (Dornach), some of the time in landscapes he will redraw in *To Damascus*, *Inferno* and *The Cloister*. Now devotes himself almost exclusively to chemistry and botany, documenting many of his experiments in a series of essays and the scientific treatise, *Antibarbarus*. Exhibits three new paintings in Berlin.

(3 December) World première of *Playing with Fire*, Lessingtheater, Berlin.

1894 Spent principally in Austria (Dornach) and Berlin.

(26 May) Birth of daughter, Kerstin (1894–1956).

(21 June) *Creditors* staged by Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poe and his Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

Antibarbarus, four philosophical essays in natural history on the transformation of matter and its transmutation, published in German. Corresponds with the renowned German natural scientist, Ernst Haeckel, and is charged with immorality for a pirated German edition of *A Madman's Defence* (acquitted 30 October).

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Continues to paint according to the aesthetic outlined in ‘Des arts nouveaux! Ou le hasard dans la production artistique’, one of several new vivisections now written in French. Also experiments with celestographs (photographs of the night sky taken without a camera or lens) and corresponds with the eminent French astronomer, Camille Flammarion.

(July) Responds positively to the new scientific mysticism that he discovers in François Jollivet-Castelot’s *La Vie et l’âme de la matière* and Claude Hemel’s *Les Métamorphoses de la matière*, and leaves for Paris alone in August. Frida soon follows but returns to Austria on 22 October, never to see Strindberg again.

Visits Dieppe in October and spends November in the rue de l’Abbé de l’épée near the Luxembourg Gardens. But he moves frequently within the city and for the next two years has links with a network of alchemists, theosophists, Martinists and occultists of several persuasions, some of whom are connected with the journals *L’Initiation* and *L’Hyperchimie*. Gradually stops painting and is primarily concerned with a series of chemical and alchemical experiments, about which he writes in several French newspapers and journals.

(October–December) writes ‘Deranged Sensations’, a French exercise in the fashionable *détraqué* style, published in *Le Figaro littéraire*. Meets Frank Wedekind and fears he is in mortal danger from a conspiracy embracing the German publisher, Albert Langen, and the Danish confidence trickster, Willy Grétor (see *SE*, pp. 252–4).

13 December. French première of *The Father*, staged by Aurélien Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l’Œuvre.

1895

During the next two years, Strindberg undergoes a series of psychotic attacks, collectively known as his ‘Inferno crisis’, which may have been exacerbated by his frequent handling of toxic substances in the course of his experiments and a taste for absinthe, as well as being linked to profound feelings of guilt and persecution.

(7 January) A translation of his 1888 essay on ‘The Inferiority of Women’ in *La Revue Blanche* causes much controversy in the French press.

(11–31 January) Undergoes treatment for psoriasis in the Hôpital Saint Louis. Is given use of a laboratory at the Sorbonne

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while his experiments and pronouncements are the subject of frequent speculation in the French press.

(February) Lives at 12 rue de la Grande Chaumière. Frequent a circle that includes Paul Gauguin, for whose exhibition of Tahitian paintings at the Hôtel Drouot he writes a catalogue essay, Frederick Delius and Alphonse Mucha. Also becomes reacquainted with Edvard Munch, whom he accuses of trying to poison him. His chronic penury leads the Scandinavian community in Paris to mount a collection on his behalf, an initiative which the impecunious goldmaker finds deeply humiliating.

(12 June–14 July) Visits Ystad in southern Sweden to consult Dr Anders Eliasson about his health.

(8 August) Publishes 'Le Barbare à Paris' in *Gil Blas*.

Publishes several scientific essays in French, including 'Introduction à une chimie unitaire'.

1896

(21 February) Moves to the Hôtel Orfila, the setting for many of the most striking events in *Inferno*, where he continues his experiments in gold making. Begins the *Occult Diary* and, having expressed enthusiasms for various mentors during this period, including Francis Bacon and Linnaeus, he finally discovers Swedenborg, who becomes something of a Virgil to him during his infernal experiences. Reads Balzac's Swedenborgian novel *Séraphita*.

(19 July) Flees Paris in alarm for Ystad in Sweden. Then spends the autumn with his daughter and mother-in-law, Marie Uhl, at Klam in Austria.

(27 November) Moves via Copenhagen and Skurup to Lund.

(15 July) 'Études funèbres' appears in *Revue des Revues* and is later included in the French edition of *Inferno*. Also publishes *Sylva sylvarum*, a volume of speculations in natural history, and *Jardin des plantes* (both in Paris). An augmented collection of the same essays minus the introduction appears in Sweden, as well as two speculative studies in optics, 'On the Action of Light in Photography' and 'A Glance into Space', and several short pieces, including some reflections on Munch's paintings, 'The Synthesis of Gold', and 'The Irradiation and Extension of the Soul'. Makes a first attempt to describe his recent experiences in a sequence of letters to the Gothenburg theosophist, Torsten Hedlund. Plans *Inferno*, in which he aims to become 'the Zola of the Occult', while in Austria.

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- 1897 Organizes his recent experiences in the autobiographical fiction *Inferno*, written in French and published in a Swedish translation by Eugène Fahlstedt. Leaves Lund for Paris in August and writes both *Legends*, also in French but set largely in Lund and published in Swedish in 1898, and *Jacob Wrestles*.
- 1898 (February–March) Rediscovered the ‘grace’ of writing for the theatre and composes part 1 of *To Damascus* (Dramaten, 19 November 1900, with Harriet Bosse as the Lady). Part II, completed 17 July (Munich, 9 June 1916), and in December ‘a mystical fairy-tale tragedy’, *Advent* (Munich, 28 December 1915; Dramaten, 22 January 1922). Also writes an account of his experiences in Berlin, first published in masked form as ‘The Quarantine Master’s Second Story’ (1902) and in its reconstructed entirety as *The Cloister* in 1966. Nevertheless, continues his researches in the natural sciences with ‘Le Télescope désiré’ and ‘Types and Prototypes’ until, in letters dated 1 and 9 December, he takes his leave of alchemy and occultism, and returns definitively to the theatre.
(3 April) Leaves Paris for the last time. Returns to Lund, but visits the monastery of Maredsous in Belgium during August before deciding to return to Sweden, initially to Lund. Responds with enthusiasm to the plays and novels of Maeterlinck and Joséphin Péladan.
- 1899 (20 June) Leaves Lund for Stockholm, where he visits his sister, Anna, at Furusund in the archipelago, and then settles in the city where he lives at a succession of addresses for the remainder of his life.
Writes *Crimes and Crimes* (Dramaten, 26 February 1900) and the history plays *Folkungasagan* (Svenska teatern, 25 January 1901), *Gustav Vasa* (Svenska teatern, 17 October 1899) and *Erik XIV* (Svenska teatern, 30 November 1899).
- 1900 Writes *Gustav Adolf* (Berliner Theater, 4 December 1903; Stockholm, 4 June 1912), *Midsummer* (17 April 1901), *Kasper’s Shrove Tuesday* (16 April 1901), *Easter* (Frankfurt Schauspielhaus, March 1901; Dramaten, 4 April 1901, with Harriet Bosse as Eleonora), and *The Dance of Death I–II* (Altes Stadttheater 1 Köln, 29 and 30 September 1905; Intimate Theatre, 8 September and 1 October 1909).

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- (May) Meets Harriet Bosse (1878–1961), the Norwegian actress who creates several leading roles in his plays and with whom, as she rehearses the part of the Lady for the première of *To Damascus I*, he falls in love. Writes frequently of Harriet and his ‘astral’ relationship with her in the *Occult Diary*.
- 1901 (6 May) Marries Harriet Bosse and spends a belated, and friction-filled, honeymoon in Denmark and Berlin. Writes *The Crown Bride* (Helsinki, 24 April 1906; Stockholm, 14 September 1907), *Swanwhite* (Helsinki, 8 April 1908, with incidental music by Jean Sibelius; Intimate Theatre, 30 October 1908), *Carl XII* (Dramaten, 13 February 1902), *Engelbrekt* (Svenska teatern, 3 December 1901), *Kristina* (Intimate Theatre, 27 March 1908), *To Damascus III* and *A Dream Play* (première with additional material, Svenska teatern, 17 April 1907, with Bosse as Indra’s Daughter).
- 1902 (25 March) Birth of daughter Anne-Marie. Writes *Gustaf III* (New Intimate Theatre, 25 January 1916), *The Flying Dutchman* (a dramatic poem, Lorensbergsteatern, Gothenburg, 5 April 1923) and *Fairhaven and Foulstrand*, a volume of prose fiction and verse.
- 1903 Harriet leaves with Anne-Marie though a relationship of sorts between her and Strindberg continues, as does a rich correspondence. Writes the autobiographical novel *Alone*, a volume of *Fairy Tales* and a theoretical essay on ‘The Mysticism of World History’, as well as the world-historical dramas *The Nightingale of Wittenberg* (Berlin, 5 December 1924; Svenska teatern, 26 January 1917), *Moses* (Hanover, 14 January 1923), *Socrates* (Mannheim, 15 October 1921) and *Christ* (Hanover, 12 April 1922).
- 1904 Formal dissolution of his marriage to Harriet, although they continue occasionally to meet for several years, on Strindberg’s side often on a telepathic plane. Writes the polemical novels and critiques of the age, *Gothic Rooms* and *Black Banners*, although the vituperative, Swiftian, à clef portrayal of several contemporary Swedish cultural personalities in the latter delays its publication until 1907.

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- 1905 Publishes *Word Play and Minor Art*, a collection of poetry from recent years, and *Historical Miniatures*, a new volume of short stories on historical themes.
- 1906 Publishes *The Roofing Feast*, a stream of consciousness novella, and *New Swedish Destinies*, a further collection of historical short stories. Begins *A Blue Book*, the compendious illustrated collection of reflections on personal, religious, literary and scientific topics in four volumes on which he works throughout his last years.
- 1907 Publishes the short Balzacian novel, *The Scapegoat*. Finds the Intimate Theatre at Norra bantorget in Stockholm with the young actor-manager August Falck and writes four Chamber Plays for it: *Thunder in the Air*, *The Burned House*, *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican*, as well as the dramatic fragment, *Toten-Insel*.
(26 November) Opens the Intimate Theatre with *The Pelican* which, like the other Chamber Plays, is greeted with widespread critical derision. The belated publication of his personal reckoning with liberal Sweden in *Black Banners* also draws general opprobrium and vilification.
- 1908 Writes two rarely performed history plays, *The Last Knight* (Dramaten, 22 January 1909) and *The Regent* (Dramaten, 31 January 1911), and a last fairy-tale play, *Abu Casem's Slippers* (Gävle, 28 December 1908). Continues working on *A Blue Book*. Also writes several essays on drama, including Shakespeare and Goethe, acting, production methods, and his own plays in a series of *Open Letters to Members of the Intimate Theatre*.
(24 May) Harriet Bosse marries the actor Gunnar Wingård; Strindberg concludes his telepathic relationship with her 27 May.
(24 June) Suspects the pains he is experiencing are symptoms of stomach cancer.
(11 July) Moves to his final residence at 85 Drottninggatan (called Blå tornet by Strindberg), which today houses the Strindberg Museum, and concludes the *Occult Diary*.
Falls in love with Fanny Falkner (1890–1963), his housekeeper's daughter whom he promotes at the Intimate Theatre as Eleonora in *Easter* and the eponymous heroine of *Swanwhite*.

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- 1909 (22 January) His sixtieth birthday is the subject of widespread public celebration, with performances of several plays in many theatres.
 During his final years in Blå tornet he hosts occasional musical evenings with the 'Beethoven Boys', among them the painter Richard Bergh, composer Tor Aulin, scientist Vilhelm Carlheim Gyllenskiöld and his brother Axel.
 Twice engaged briefly to Fanny Falkner.
 Writes a last history play, *The Earl of Bjälbo* (Svenska teatern, 26 March), a final, more conciliatory, Chamber Play, or lyric fantasy, *The Black Glove* (New Intimate Theatre, 26 December 1911), and his dramatic epilogue in verse, *The Great Highway* (Intimate Theatre, 19 February 1910), a pilgrim drama in which he takes leave of life and declares: 'I suffered most ... from not being able to be the one I longed to be!'
- 1910 Instigates the Strindberg Feud, a national political and literary controversy in which he gives expression to his regained radicalism and opposes the emerging right-wing tendencies of several prominent Swedes, including Verner von Heidenstam and the explorer, Sven Hedin, and criticizes current trends in Sweden's social and military policy. Writes numerous articles in *Afton-Tidningen* and elsewhere, collected in the pamphlets *Speeches to the Swedish Nation*, *The People's State*, *Religious Renaissance* and *The Tsar's Courier* (1912). Also pursues research in linguistics. Publishes *Biblical Proper Names* and *The Origins of Our Mother Tongue*.
 (11 December) The Intimate Theatre closes, having staged twenty-four of Strindberg's plays in three years.
- 1911 The Strindberg Feud continues, dividing the Swedish intelligentsia and much of the nation.
 Signs a contract with Bonniers for the publication of his collected works and finally achieves financial security.
 (April) Exhibition of Strindberg's paintings, manuscripts, letters, portraits and photographs at Hallins konsthandel, Stockholm.
 Publishes *The Roots of the Languages of the World* and *China and Japan*.
 (December) Falls ill with pneumonia.

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- 1912 (22 January) Is honoured on his birthday by a torchlight procession of students and workers and by productions of his plays in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria and the United States (in Chicago) (*Gustav Vasa*). Although gravely ill, he acknowledges the public acclamation by appearing to the crowds below his balcony with Anne-Marie at his side.
- (March) Receives an anti-Nobel prize of 45,000 kronor, collected by private national subscription.
- (21 April) Siri von Essen dies in Helsinki.
- (14 May) Dies, of stomach cancer. His funeral cortège on 19 May is followed to Norra Kyrkogården by an immense crowd. According to his wish, his grave bears the words: 'O crux ave spes unica' (O Cross, Our Only Hope).