

Stormy Weather: The Pre- and Post- History of Television

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This article examines Ingmar Bergman's first (and only) television adaptations of dramatist August Strindberg: *The Storm* (1960) and *A Dream Play* (1963). Both were broadcast live and favorably received by contemporary critics. A recurrent reaction was that television finally "did justice" to these plays from the early 20th century; implying, as did Raymond Williams in his 1974 book on television, that Strindberg's later drama somehow "anticipated" television. This claim is explored in relation to various thematic and formal expressions of temporality in both plays (motifs of enclosed spaces, telephones, clouds, and faces and the dialectics of progress and repetition) and the specificities of television (the "management of liveness," "mobile privatization," monitoring, etc.). The type of historicity involved in the claim that art may anticipate oncoming media technology is related to Walter Benjamin's notion of pre- and post-history.

Keywords: television, liveness, historicity, drama, Ingmar Bergman, August Strindberg

Ingmar Bergman claims to have bought the first TV set he saw, in a shopwindow in the mid-1950s. To readers of the Swedish weekly TV and radio guide, Bergman (1958) declared his love for the early live broadcasts, quiz shows as well as theater: "I find everything to be wonderful and would love to be a part of this game" (p. 22). By then, he had already debuted as a TV director: In April 1957, only months after regular Swedish broadcasting had begun, Bergman's adaption of Hjalmar Bergman's one-act play *Herr Sleeman Is Coming* was transmitted. Bergman's "major breakthrough" (Steene, 2005, p. 408) in television came in the following years, with two Strindberg plays: the chamber play *The Storm* (*Oväder*, 1907) in 1960 and *A Dream Play* (*Ett Drömspel*, 1901) in 1963. Both were broadcast live to Scandinavian countries by Nordvision.

Bergman's early work on television was received favorably by the Swedish press. "This is what real TV theater may look like," wrote *Dagens Nyheter* (Edström, 1958, p. 10). "Ingmar Bergman did magic with distance and close-ups, the viewer never felt trapped," remarked *Svenska Dagbladet* (Zetterström, 1957, p. 11). To *Göteborgsposten* (Perlström, 1960, p. 8), Bergman demonstrated the "intimacy" of

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television, and the "suggestive power of the face." With his "miraculous instinct for images," *Göteborgs Handels-och Sjöfartstidning* concluded, Bergman was "predestined to become our foremost TV artist" (Fale, 1958, p. 7).

As for Bergman's adaption of Strindberg, many critics converged around one point: It was as if these pieces now had been performed *for the very first time*. For Danish *Politiken*, *The Storm* was a "small, electrifying chamber play" which "has really only by now been done full justice, as presented on the television screen" (cited in Törnqvist, 2004, p. 33). *Svenska Dagbladet* found its "scenic 'chambermusic' as written for the medium!" (Falck, 1960, p. 13). For *Göteborgs Handels-och Sjöfartstidning*, "Bergman's TV screening of *A Dream Play* gives us the sense that Strindberg already had, in a prophetic way, this medium in mind" (Bäckström, 1963, p. 10). Bergman agreed, according to a contemporary interview, "This piece adjusts itself to television in an uncanny, self-evident way" (Ryning & Örtengen, 1963, p. 13). An early chronicle of Swedish TV theater confirmed the effect:

No Swedish drama of the highest dignity could be more devoted to the unique possibilities of television. The piece is supposed to flow like a dream, its sceneries changing without one knowing how. One suddenly finds oneself somewhere else. In the middle of a new situation. Ingmar Bergman applied this approach. . . . We were simply there. (Dyfverman & Löfgren, 1964, p. 143)

This mode of "being there," in a past ultimately realized by the present, involves some tricky temporal categories: How could Strindberg anticipate a visual medium beyond those of his own time (like film, photography, the *laterna magica*, and the *skioptikon*)?¹ And how could two plays as different as *The Storm* and *A Dream Play* find fulfillment in a single medium? Which aspects of these texts (the direction, the performance, the reception, the context) would allow the identification of Strindberg as the "prehistory" of television, and television as the "post-history" of Strindberg?² To respond, clarifications are required regarding (a) the specificities of television, (b) the features of *The Storm* and *A Dream Play* that anticipate these, and (c) the type of historicity involved in such an act of anticipation.

Ahead of Time

The idea that artists (in particular) anticipate revolutions of media technology appears in several influential approaches to media history (such as Marshall McLuhan's, Walter Benjamin's, and Raymond Williams'). The idea that Strindberg's drama (specifically) serves as a foretelling of moving images has occurred frequently within research on Strindberg and on film (as in Rokem, 1988). However, the TV critics' reaction to Bergman's Strindberg indexes a more specific distinction, stressed by Bergman (1957) in a televised interview (Bergsten, 1957) before his debut: "Television theatre in no way resembles film or

¹ Strindberg's relation to contemporary visual media is covered by Hockenjos (2007). That such media constitutes a horizon of expectation for television (as much as for cinema) is noted by Uricchio (2004).

² The terms *posthistory* and *prehistory*, deriving from Walter Benjamin, are addressed at the end of this article.

theater." Television was to be approached as uncharted territory: "It is a fantastic situation to have a new medium at your disposal, to only know three things: not film, not radio, not theater. But something entirely new, for which no past experience contains a precedent" (Bergman, 1958, p. 22).

There were, of course, past experiences from which Bergman did learn. In particular, the three-camera system: the classic method for TV production in which several cameras simultaneously record an ongoing event with the director providing "cuts"—the shifting of camera angles—in real time. This system was first developed for television's "management of liveness" (Scannell, 2014): the broadcasting of rituals, sports and entertainment events. Its inherent "live effect" (cf. Derrida & Stiegler, 2002) survived also when events were filmed. As in the situation comedy—in 1956, Bergman is likely to have seen the most influential, the American *I Love Lucy*. The Swedish broadcaster explained its format, so as not to confuse viewers:

The idea itself is about conjuring the illusion of a live broadcast, of exploiting its spontaneity. For this reason filming must take place in front of a live audience (even if they never are shown in the actual recordings). It is thus necessary that the play unfolds precisely as it would at the theater. And this requires in its turn that all shots (full, half and close-ups) be filmed in one and the same moment. (Ehrenborg, 1956, p.38)

According to Lynn Spigel (1992), early television's insistence on authenticity indicated a close affinity with the ontology of theater rather than that of cinema. Live theater was a prominent genre in most national TV networks. Standards were often set high, Bergman was not unique in choosing Strindberg: A decade after television's breakthrough, more than 100 *foreign* TV productions of Strindberg plays had already been produced (Ollén, 1971). More surprising is the fact that *The Storm* and *A Dream Play* remained Bergman's only television adaptations of Strindberg, and the scant attention these have received within the fertile research on Strindberg, Bergman, and television.

Among scholars, Egil Törnqvist (1999, 2004) is the obvious exception. He attributes Strindberg's affinity to television to the author's ideal of an "intimate" theater—first appearing in the naturalist aesthetic of *Miss Julie* (1888) then returning with the staging of Strindberg's chamber plays and the opening of Intima teatern in Stockholm in 1907. To Törnqvist (2004), this ideal privileges a dramatic form and a spectator position that is "suited to," and easily "reappears in," television (p. 7). To illustrate his point, Törnqvist cites Raymond Williams' classic book on television: "This was a drama of the box in the same fundamental sense as the naturalist drama had been the drama of the framed stage" (Williams 1974/1979, p. 56). This, however, was not the analogy that led Williams to associate Strindberg with television. It was, rather, the *break* that Strindberg effectuated with that frame in his dream and chamber plays (i.e., the very plays that Bergman chose to adapt).

It is significant that the most advanced drama in Europe in the 1890s—that of Strindberg moving towards *The Road to Damascus* and the Chamber plays—was employing dramatic means that were beyond the reproduction of an observed and static external reality. Indeed it is one of the most striking instances of the complicated relations between new forms of experience and new kinds of technology that Strindberg

was experimenting with moving dramatic images in the same decade in which, in quite another environment, the pioneers of motion pictures were discovering some of the technical means that would eventually make this kind of dramatic imagery possible and in the end even commonplace. (Williams, 1974/1979, p. 59–60)

Williams' interest here is not directed toward the author's worldview (in terms of biography) nor the material conditions for dramatic presentation (in terms of technological determinism). The focus is on how Strindberg's dramatic method transformed in order to encompass a collectively shared experience or, in Williams' terms, a *structure of feeling*. For decades, Williams used this concept to investigate historical change in the form and content of artworks or in a society's use of communication technologies. As for television, Williams related its success in the 20th century to the linking of "two apparently paradoxical yet deeply connected tendencies of modern urban industrial living":

One the one hand, mobility, on the other hand the more apparently self-sufficient family home. The earlier period of public technology, best exemplified by the railways and city lighting, was being replaced by a kind of technology for which no satisfactory name has yet been found: that which served an at-once mobile and home-centred way of living: a form of *mobile privatisation*. Broadcasting in its applied form was a social product of this distinctive tendency. (Williams, 1974/1979, p. 26. Emphasis in original)

Williams had first discussed the concept of structure of feeling in a reading of Strindberg's preface to *Miss Julie* (Williams & Orrom, 1954). There, the playwright had declared the need for new forms to depict "modern characters, living in an age of transition more hectic and hysterical than the one that preceded it" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 27, pp. 104–105).³ The more radical shift would not appear until the dream plays and chamber plays, but Williams argues that their break with realism still served "an affiliation to, even a desire to, represent actual social processes" (Williams, 1989b, p. 66), which would both display and dislocate naturalism's original structure of feeling: "The most powerful physical image created in the period of major naturalist drama is the living room as a trap. People look through the window to see what is happening in the world beyond, which cannot be shown" (Williams, 1979, p. 205).

Strindberg's later plays represent various kinds of (more or less successful) breakouts from such spaces. This effort reminds Williams of television:

There is a direct cultural continuity, it seems to me, from those enclosed rooms, enclosed and lighted framed rooms, to the rooms in which we watch the framed images of television: at home, in our own lives, but needing to watch what is happening, as we say, "out there." (Williams, 1989a, pp. 6–7)

The first plays that Bergman chose to adapt for television certainly engaged with enclosed

³ In the following, Strindberg citations refer to the standard editions of collected works and letters. Translations of *The Storm* and *A Dream Play* follow Walter Johnson (Strindberg, 1973), unless otherwise noted. Other translations by author.

spaces. The leading characters of *Herr Sleeman Is Coming*, *The Storm*, *A Dream Play* are all speaking about their existence as imprisoned. *Herr Sleeman* is set in a bourgeois living room; a young girl and her lover flee the stage through a window as an older gentleman is coming to pick her up the next morning for an arranged marriage. In *The Storm*, we encounter a man seeking the “peace of old age” in the solitude of his apartment, preserving the memory of his wife and child, who have abandoned him. He is constantly disturbed by telephone calls, visitors, and ghosts from the past and finally abandons the apartment for an evening stroll around the town’s lit avenues. In *A Dream Play*, the daughter of the Verdic God, Indra, descends from eternal heights to explore the fate of humankind. She is shown a series of peculiar settings: Fingal’s Cave; the theater corridor; the strait of water separating Fagervik and Skamsund—places that are thresholds, passages, communicating vessels, staging the dialectic between hope and despair that remain the lot of the collectively earthbound.

This constellation also suggests how the problematic of the enclosed room holds *temporal* dimensions, not discussed by Williams. The flight of the young lovers in *Herr Sleeman* is preceded by them literally stopping an old clock, dominating the room. In *The Storm*, the spatial division between exterior and interior corresponds to different experiences of time: On the street, one talks about the weather, seasons, life and death. Inside, furnishings are preserved as in a time capsule. Yet it is there that the Gentleman encounters the irreversible march of time: as restlessness and ennui to be met with distractions. In *A Dream Play*, Indra’s daughter experiences the entrapment of earthly existence and how progress and development may be unveiled as repetition and waiting: “life in its entirety is only a series of retakes” (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 78).

Staging Time

For Strindberg, *The Storm* and *A Dream Play* were clearly different plays. In correspondence, the latter is described as “a new form that is my invention” (Strindberg, 1948–2001, January 18, 1902), the former as “full (lower) reality, a fine philistine play, which might ‘work’” (March 27, 1907). *The Storm* seems wedded to the “intimate” ideal: two sceneries (inside and outside an apartment), a dozen actors, everyday events unfolding in real time, the spoken word foregrounded. Already in its scale *A Dream Play* differs: More than 50 actors in more than 20 scenes, many of which border on the absurd. To theater historians (cf. Szondi, 1956/1987), *A Dream Play* marks the point where Strindberg’s narrative “turns inwards,” as indicated by the multiple breaks with dramatic conventions. As Strindberg writes in his “Author’s Note”: i

The Author has sought to imitate the disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream. Anything can happen, everything is possible and plausible. Time and space do not exist. Upon an insignificant background of real life events the imagination spins and weaves new patterns: a blend of memories, experiences, pure inventions, absurdities, and improvisations. . . . But one consciousness provides over all: that of the dreamer. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 7)⁴

⁴ Translation by Harry G. Carlsson, in Strindberg (1983).

Notwithstanding these differences, the staging of both plays was beset by severe difficulties. For *The Storm* Strindberg had requested an unusual set for the first and last act: a street exterior against the backdrop of a façade to a fashionable housing bloc, with eight large windows positioned along two stories. The four lower windows belonged to the Gentleman's apartment, opening onto the pavement in front, including a bench and streetlight. The upper windows were partly covered by blinds and lit from within. In the middle act, set inside the apartment, Strindberg stipulated that some doors be open, others closed. Throughout, characters speak through openings and peep through windows. "Failure! Puppet theatre box!" (*Misslyckadt! Kasperskåp!* Strindberg, 1948–2001, August 15, 1908), noted Strindberg, after the premiere at Intima teatern. One may imagine how subtle facial expressions and vocal nuances were lost. Also how the problem could be solved with a mobile three-camera system: Bergman pans across the façade, zooms through windows, discretely follows the characters' movements through rooms, captures their reactions with half and close-up shots. The border between the exterior and the interior—by extension, Strindberg's division into three acts—becomes imperceptible.

In *A Dream Play* we are placed in a mindscape—that of "the dreamer," according to Strindberg, that of the author's consciousness, according to the recurrent interpretation of Bergman's opening sequence (Hockenjos, 1998; Törnqvist, 2004). The text from Strindberg's note is projected onto a photograph of the author. He looks straight into the camera; it gradually zooms in on his eyes while being cross-faded with images of a cloud formation, out of which Indra's daughter emerges, and dramatic events begin. In the final scene, the poet steps into the clouds, out of which the portrait of Strindberg reappears. The narrative seems to originate from, and play out within, the poetic imagination of Strindberg.

This sequence also establishes Bergman's access to the cross-fade, a technical device unavailable for the original staging of *A Dream Play*. This play had not been divided into acts, and Strindberg had given meticulous instructions for the use of lighting and scenography so that transitions would be fluid (such as when a lime tree turns into a clothes hanger in the office, then into a candelabra in the church). After the premiere at Svenska Teatern, the author complained: "The construction work on the stage was a disruption for the actors' concentration, provoking never-ending entre-acts" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 50, p. 289). A contemporary critic agreed:

It is the magic of the dream one should see realized, not the heavy machinery of the stage. What is absent, first and foremost, is a transitory sense of images as they merge into each other, indicative of the way associations are made between ideas, creating the strongest dream impression. (Hedberg, 1907, p.7)

In general, and in apparent contrast to Törnqvist's view, the contention that Strindberg's dream plays were prematurely "cinematic" involves no distinction between film and television. It refers to a number of editing devices available to both, but historically associated with cinema's liberating of narrative from the constraints of space and time. *A Dream Play* exhibits such (latent) effects, as executed on the open stage: Strindberg's scenography of "dissolving views" may be likened to cross-fades, reminders about the past through dialogue or scenography provide "flashbacks," unexpected shifts over time and space function as "montages."

One significant such shift in *A Dream Play* occurs at the strait between Fagervik and Skamsund. These scenes represent the play's dramaturgical "cusp" (*udd*, Strindberg, 1948–2001, March 17, 1898): the point from where the action pivots, Indra's daughter returning to settings in reverse order, the play finally ending where it began. Specifically, this cusp executes an abrupt transportation from one side of the strait to the other:

THE OFFICER. We are to be pitied all of us!

ALL. [Raise their arms toward the sky and utter a cry of anguish, that sounds like a dissonant chord] Oh!

THE DAUGHTER. Eternal God, hear them! Life is evil! Men are to be pitied!

ALL. [As before] Oh!

For a moment the stage is completely darkened, and during that moment everyone withdraws or takes up a new position. When the light is turned on again, Skamsund is seen in the background, lying in deep shadow. The strait is in the middle distance and Fagervik in the foreground, both steeped in light. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 65)

Such a transition does not abide the naturalistic conventions of theater, and scarcely represents the experience of a dream state. The convention to be accepted is, rather, as Freddie Rokem (1988) has noted, that of a camera's eye moving beyond time and space, as in a "cinematic" montage. However, since Strindberg maintains spatial continuity—the foregrounded is later cast into the background—the convention may relate even closer to the three-camera system of television: tracking an ongoing sequence from shifting angles. Interestingly, for this scene, Bergman diverges from Strindberg's directions: The spatial switch from Fagervik to Skamsund is never displayed; the collective scream is replaced by an overdub of atonal music. The lines of the Officer and the Daughter are framed in a one-minute-long sequence of facial close-ups, fused with cross-fades and panning techniques (the director's script [Bergman, 1963] indicates "montage"), during which the characters of the play, mute and passive, stare into the camera.

For several critics, Bergman's Strindberg displayed a medium suited for "intimate close-up realism" (Harrie, 1963, p. 24). Some questioned whether *A Dream Play* belonged: "Much of what is strived for simply may not be achieved on TV" (Linde, 1963, p. 19). Television could not "fit both space and saga inside the narrow box" (Harrie 1963, p. 24), the representation of humanity as crowd, as in Strindberg's heavily populated scenes, was replaced with close-up shots, to get the viewers "acquainted" with "leading roles", repeating the leitmotif ("mankind is to be pitied") like "some refrain." Was this an effective display of collective suffering? Could such devices regenerate the "communal experience" (Törnqvist, 2004, p. 235) of the theater?

The harshest critic was probably Ingmar Bergman himself. In retrospect, he described his first production of *A Dream Play* (he would do three more, for theater) as an "utter and complete failure" (cited in Timm, 1994, pp. 127–128). This was partly due to "technical calamities (it was not even possible to cut tapes in those days)" (Bergman, 1987, p. 45). More importantly, the play's "enigmatic quality" rested on its being performed in theatrical space.

Just think about Fingal's Cave . . . to film it, you must have the water, the stalagmites, the sunken ship, a lifebuoy, the figurehead and . . . well, how the hell do you do that floor . . . everything must be part of some damn construction, if you are not going into an existing cave, but then everything becomes even more strange. (Timm, 1994, pp. 127–128)

"Today," Bergman stated some 40 years after he first stepped into a television studio, "I know that *A Dream Play* should never be made for film or television" (cited in Forslund, 2006, p. 287). By then, serialization had more or less supplanted the live broadcast of "single plays." In 2004, Törnqvist's study of Strindberg as TV dramatist notes that Swedish television had not aired a single Strindberg play since 1988.

When Bergman later recalled his earliest experiences of TV theater, what first came to mind was the primitive pressures of the live broadcast: Everything went "straight out into the air!" (cited in Åhlund, 1998, p. 14). Actors worried about forgetting their lines when faced by an audience larger and closer than that of the theater, yet eerily absent. The director lacked the tools of postproduction; in the TV studio, with the "clinical objectivity" (p. 16) of the electronic screen, every image would appear as both immediate and final. Bergman also noted how the instantly transmissible tended to become the most predetermined: "There was no place for any improvisation, every camera position, every cut, had to be calculated in advance" (p. 15).

Such experiences evoke a more general paradox regarding television's "management of liveness": On the one hand, its intrinsic temporality is understood as antithetical to memory (as when actors forget lines and history is being continually erased). On the other, its never-ending progress invites forms of repetition or reenactment (as with performances of dramatic texts or rule-governed rituals).

In the next section, it is claimed that this dual temporal organization is present, thematically and formally, in both *The Storm* and *A Dream Play*. Further, that what contemporary critics recognize in Bergman's adaptations is not so much the logic of the dream work, the representational techniques of cinema, or the dramatic traditions of naturalism. It is, rather, the experience of tele-technology: of telegraphy, telephony, and broadcast media, wireless and wired communication in real time, independent of spatial distance.

Telephones

Strindberg was an early adapter of telephones, in life and work. *The Storm* contains no less than seven telephone conversations. Some elicit important information about outside events. In one call, the Gentleman engages at length in what apparently is small talk with his mother; the audience is left to eavesdrop on half of the dialogue. During another call, the connection is suddenly interrupted; the Gentleman is reviled by how someone outside has been listening in. To his ears, the incoming signal sounds like a "rattlesnake." He inquires whether his neighbor, the Confectioner, owns a telephone:

CONFECTIONER: Why do you ask?

GENTLEMAN: Well, I just happened to think that . . . one needs a telephone sometimes . . . orders . . . important messages . . .

CONFECTIONER: Perhaps, but sometimes it is good not to get—messages . . .

GENTLEMAN: Right! Right!—Well. My heart always starts pounding when the telephone rings—one never knows what one will get to hear . . . and I want peace, peace, above all. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 58, p. 68)

The telephone perforates the physical frames of a “drama of the box”; the private dialogue is no longer separable from the public. The technology offers a possibility to break out of the enclosed walls, yet presents the Gentleman with a dilemma: Shall I take this call or not? Shall I have a telephone or not?

In *A Dream Play*, Indra’s daughter and the Poet catch a glimpse of a telephone tower in the scene in Fingal’s Cave. Looking out over the sea, they first see a ship in distress:

DAUGHTER. If I could only be sure that it is a ship.

POET. Really, I don’t think it is a ship. It is a two-storied house with trees in front of it and a telephone tower, a tower that reaches up into the skies. It is the modern Tower of Babel, sending wires to the upper regions to communicate with those above.

DAUGHTER. Child, human thought needs no wires to make a way for itself, the prayers of the pious penetrate the universe. . . .

POET. No, it is no house, no telephone tower, don’t you see?

DAUGHTER. What are you seeing?

POET. I see an open space covered with snow, a drill ground. The winter sun is shining from behind a church on a hill, and the tower is casting its long shadow on the snow.

But this sighting, too, is a mirage:

POET: . . . ha-ha! A cloud is rolling across the heath, past the sun, of course . . . now it’s all gone . . . the water in the cloud put out the fire in the sun! The sunlight created the dark image of the tower, but the cloud’s dark image choked the tower’s. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 99)

Strindberg’s model was a 50-meter-high building in central Stockholm; connecting thousands of telephone lines, suspended in midair, over the city that held the highest numbers of users in Europe. This was Stockholm’s “hallmark building,” according to journalist Claës Lundin (1890, p. 445):

A tower different from all other towers, it looks ghost-like in the darkness . . . a spectre it is, and yet it is this least of all. Before all else it is a work of our times, for practical service, some of the most real reality.

The vision in Fingal’s Cave links the telephone tower with two other symbols of communication: the ship and the church tower. According to Michel Foucault (1986), the ship “is the heterotopia *par*

excellence": a place that (in contrast to utopia) is localizable yet "outside of all places"; that is "absolutely real, linked to all surrounding space" yet "absolutely other" (pp. 22–23). Whereas the ship has been symbolically associated with human conditions for transportation and survival (cf. Peters, 2015, chap. 2), the church spire signifies an opening toward another cosmic design, an afterlife. By placing a telephone tower between these two symbols and by personifying the link between higher and lower reality in the shape of a medium of the ether—Indra's daughter, following "the ray of lightning from ethereal heights" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 12)—Strindberg associates the breakout from earthbound existence with the boundless communication of tele-technology. But also with the Tower of Babel: the confusion of languages that God wrought upon humankind. As the daughter will experience, the thread leading up to her father may fray and break:

DAUGHTER: The ether no longer carries the sound from his lips to my ear's shell—the silvery thread has snapped. Woe me, I am earthbound! (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 92)

A Dream Play is, inter alia, a demonstration of communication in states of disruption: Ships sink; humans see or hear poorly; thoughts are bound by the brain's folds of fat; signals do not reach their destination. If *The Storm* stages the dilemmas of mobile privatization (especially in relation to other persons), then *A Dream Play* stages the dilemma surrounding poor connectivity (especially in relation to higher powers).

Clouds

The telephone tower was an ephemeral vision formed by the interplay of sunlight and clouds. Strindberg readily condenses temporal experience by switching light off and on: In *The Storm* the Gentleman lights up and blows out matchsticks as if this would banish boredom from his apartment. In *A Dream Play* the Officer suddenly experiences how the pace of days quickens:

OFFICER. This door here will not leave me any peace . . . what is behind it? . . . [The light on stage now goes out and flares up again, as the rays of a lighthouse come and go] What is this? [Speaking in rhythm with the blinkings of the light] Light and dark; light and dark?

DAUGHTER. [Imitating him] Night and day, night and day! A merciful Providence wants to shorten your wait. Therefore, days are fleeing in pursuit of the nights. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 27)

A cloud may stifle light, as in the vision in Fingal's Cave. It may mediate between higher and lower reality, as when Indra's daughter uses "a cloud as a chariot" (p. 162). The temporality of clouds contrasts with other phenomena in the firmament: The stars, sun, and moon are *constants*, sufficiently so to found ancient techniques for drafting calendars. Clouds represent *variation*, as evident in the constant updating of weather forecasts (cf. Peters, 2015, chaps. 4 & 5). When the Gentleman's ex-wife steps into the apartment/prison she left five years ago, she first checks a drawer for an object left hidden: a thermometer that the couple never hung upon the wall.

GERDA: Yes, it became a symbol! Of impermanence! . . . Do you know what it means?— Well, no one believed our relationship would last. . . . We lived as if on springs . . . ready to take off at the slightest notice—that was the thermometer . . . and here it still lies. Up and down, always changing, just like the weather. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 58, p. 48)

During the spring in which *The Storm* was written and *A Dream Play* premiered, Strindberg photographed cloud formations—“mirrors of the ether”—while taking notes in his *Occult Diary*. Their apparent recurrence called for explanation, since “clouds must change their form and their place.” After months of observation, he claims to have verified that “there is a constant or a consistency in the periodicity in the movement of the clouds” (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 59, June 13, 1907).

Bergman introduces both *A Dream Play* and *The Storm* with images of cloud formations. In the former, Bergman follows Strindberg’s text (Indra’s daughter journeys downward on a cloud); in the latter, the initiative is his own: *The Storm’s* opening titles are projected onto a background of ominous clouds accompanied by ringing church bells. The clouds fade into a photograph of a church tower. Further cross-fades display a series of photographs of residential buildings and empty avenues in Stockholm, concluding with a close-up of the streetlamp outside the Gentleman’s apartment, taken from above. Thereafter the camera sweeps down—like Indra’s daughter on her cloud—to the façade’s windows and doors, behind which the dramatis personae begin to move.

Thus, both of Bergman’s opening sequences emerge out of clouds, like that vision in Fingal’s Cave. On television, one might have expected Bergman to realize that vision: the ship transforming into a telephone tower, a church tower, a mirage. He refrains, and shows only close-ups of the faces of the poet and the daughter, describing what they see.

Faces

For many critics, the insistent use of facial close-ups was the most striking feature of Bergman’s Strindberg adaptations. According to Paul Frosh (2009), the human face—confined to a head shot, from the shoulders upward—was a fundamental part of early television’s visual physiognomy. In *A Dream Play* Bergman employs the type of face audiences had come to expect from newscasters and entertainers alike: filling the frame, looking and talking straight into the camera. Within both cinema and naturalist theater, such faces would break convention. Watching a face on TV also differs from seeing it on a movie screen: It appears at conversational distance, in a size reminiscent of the reflection on a switched-off screen or in a mirror. Foucault’s (1986) first example of “heterotopia” is precisely the mirror—“a place without a place. In the mirror, I see myself where I am not” (p. 24).

One of the (close to pathological) features observed by early research on television was the audience’s inclination to interact with such faces. Although actual responses might have been rare, the medium initiated a “para-social interaction” (Horton & Wohl, 1956) as if viewers were recipients of some distant telephone call. The effect could appear whether this interpellation was live or prerecorded; in either case, the faces on the screen would neither see nor hear the recipient. A premonition of this asymmetry is found in one scene from *The Storm*: On the request of the Gentleman’s brother, his ex-wife,

Gerda, spies into her former home through a window. Inside, the Gentleman puts down the newspaper and stares out of the same window. The interior light dazzles him:

GERDA: He's looking at us!

BROTHER: Stand still!

GERDA: He's staring at me right in the eye.

BROTHER: Stand still! He doesn't see you!

GERDA: He's like a dead man . . .

GENTLEMAN: Karl Fredrik! (by the window) Are you alone? I thought . . . are you really alone? (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 58, p. 35)

Bergman places the camera's eye in the window opening/upon the screen: From there, the spectator cannot be seen but can see the Gentleman and Gerda (and how Gerda sees, but not the Gentleman). During his late-evening strolls, the Gentleman seeks a similar position: someone who may gaze into lit private rooms yet remain invisible.

While faces on television communicate in one direction, they may still indicate ways out of confined space: as emblematic expressions of human sensibility, a secondary witness to a distant world. For Frosh, there is, however, a difference between faces on television and in photographs. On television, a sense of fleetingness will be associated with each face; as every individuated image soon gives way to another, every face is substitutable by another. The prerequisite for augmenting a sense of community on television involves, first, an emblematic *individualization* via the human face and, next, the *serialization* of interchangeable faces into some form of collective. On television, then, it is not self-evident that the zoomed-in face in Bergman's opening to *A Dream Play* denotes the author's consciousness (as assumed by Törnqvist). The face of television might actually be better represented in Bergman's version of the cusp: a series of (interchangeable) faces reaching out to a (invisible) series of individuals on the other side of the screen.

Passing Time

The telephone, the face, and the cloud are motifs that involve a breakout from enclosed space, experiences of tele-technology, temporalities of constants and variables, and, thereby, television's "management of liveness." Their significance may also be born out through Strindberg's organization of dramatic time: after all, the "disconnected" form, to which *A Dream Play's* note referred, was "apparent only" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 158). From *To Damascus* (1897), Strindberg experimented with a form inspired by Kierkegaard's "repetition":

The action unrolls forwards to the Asylum; there it kicks against the pricks and rebounds back through the pilgrimage, the relearning, the eating of one's words, until it begins anew at the same spot where the action stopped, and where it began. . . . Like a snake that bites its own tail. (Strindberg, 1948–2001, March 17, 1898)

This form opens for the dual or paradoxical experience of time, which also characterized early

television: a progress consisting of retakes. When using it, Strindberg readily pronounces his thematic in the scenes at the "cusp" (the Asylum in *To Damascus*). At Fagervik and Skamsund, the amorous couple are hauled into quarantine, the officer must start over at school, and Indra's daughter is briefed about the "worst" in life: "Repetition . . . doing the same thing again and again!" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 46, p. 76).

In *The Storm*, the Gentleman learns an inverted lesson. To synchronize his experience of biological time—"After a certain age, nothing changes, everything stops" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 58, p. 41)—the interior of his apartment has been left untouched (in 10 years, only the palm trees have grown, remarks the Confectioner). But Strindberg has filled this apartment with an arsenal of time-measuring instruments: a defective wall clock (Bergman adds another wall clock, ticking markedly faster); a pocket watch; a water clock (ice dripping, measuring, for the Gentleman, "the long passage of time") as well as the thermometer, registering impermanence. The cusp in *The Storm*—the exact midpoint of the text—occurs when action comes to a halt or, rather, morphs into a pantomimic demonstration of the Gentleman's endeavor to evict time:

GENTLEMAN [alone: moves the chess pieces for a couple of seconds, Then gets up and walks about]. The peace of old age, Yes!

[Sits down at the piano, strikes a couple of chords, gets up, and walks about again].

Louise! Can't you postpone that . . . with the laundry?

LOUISE [in the left door]. It's impossible—the laundress is in a hurry, and she has a husband and children who are waiting for her . . .

GENTLEMAN Huh! [Sits down by the table and taps it with his fingers; tries to read the newspaper but gets tired of that; lights matches and blows them out; looks at the clock. Noise in the hall]. Is that you Karl Fredrik?

MAILMAN [appears]. It's the mailman. Excuse me for coming right in, but the doors were open. (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 58, p. 42)

Neither the company of the Mailman, the Iceman, the housemaid Louise, the Confectioner, the brother, nor the Gentleman's solitary activities will fill time with meaning: "There is no present," he claims on the other side of the cusp, "what's right now is empty nothingness" (Strindberg, 1981–2013, 58, p. 44).

Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey (2002) has drawn attention to the unusual form and setting of *The Storm*. Its three acts display a basic "mirror progression": A-B-A (outside the house, inside the apartment, outside the house). When using it, Strindberg readily indicates the progression of time in scenic-spatial terms so that spectators "travel inwards": what constitutes background in one scene is foreground in the next (as with Fagervik and Skamsund; the future awaits behind the stage, the past vanishes behind the audience). In *The Storm*, Hanes Harvey claims, this movement is interrupted. This is "the only Strindberg drama in which time goes forward while the journey is aborted and we are pushed backwards out of the picture" (p. 37). This movement indicates no distinct "repetition," nor, one might add, any representation of how time progresses: Outside a storm passes; inside time is empty.

What, asks Hanes Harvey, is Strindberg seeking to convey? "Is the author distancing the audience from the action of the play? . . . Is the Gentleman stepping out, refusing to continue? Why a breach in the journey? And why are we driven *backwards*?" (pp. 37–38). She offers no response, but points to the scenery with which *The Storm* begins and ends: a façade with windows and doors opening further frames: "Inside these frames we discover a series of dramas, film pieces, images of life as if seen in a gigantic advent calendar—Strindberg's very own 'puppet theatre'" (Hanes Harvey, 2002, p. 38).

It is as if Strindberg pursues the motif of the scenic frame *in absurdum*, beyond any representation of an intimate theater. But by being "driven backwards," the spectator is also returned to a position occupied by the Gentleman in the first act: sitting with his brother on the bench outside the house (Bergman shows them from behind), detecting movement from behind its windows, speculating on its secrets, recalling the chronicle of the house and their own lives. Also, there is some "progression" between the acts: with twilight/autumn and the first lighting of the streetlamp (Bergman repeats the opening close-up), time has come to close down the apartment and head out on an evening stroll after staying inside all summer. For Törnqvist (2004), this beginning is an ending: the Gentleman has been preparing for death, he now "passes hence" (p. 264) under the artificial light, symbolizing the underworld. In an alternative reading, the Gentleman is ready for mobile privatization, as practiced by the flaneur—or by future TV audiences. For as much as any "advent calendar," the scenery of *The Storm* brings to mind a wall of television screens.

In fact, a fitting description of the (1) temporality, (2) setting, and (3) spectator position explored in *The Storm* is provided by a definition of "the fact of television," by American philosopher Stanley Cavell: "Its successful formats are revelations (acknowledgments) of the conditions of monitoring, and by means of a serial-episode procedure of composition" (1982, p. 86).

For Cavell, television displays a "current of simultaneous event reception" (p. 85), directed toward temporary crises in ongoing states of inactivity (as that storm). Its perceptual modus is a form of "monitoring" (as with the windows in that façade). Its time is composed from a serial procedure involving an "argument between time as repetition and time as transience" (p. 94) (as experienced by the Gentleman, outside and inside his apartment). In *A Dream Play*, the inactivity (and temporary crisis) being "monitored" (by Indra's daughter) is that of human life. The experience of the "argument" may produce human suffering, and a "format" (with Cavell, a "serial-episode procedure of composition") that offers no tangible distinction between live and repeat, progress and delay. If only by engaging with this argument, the two plays do seem to converge and to anticipate the specificity of television.

Mediating Time

The third question initially raised in this article concerns the type of historicity involved in such an act of anticipation. On a broader scale: How are we to understand the relation between media and history? Television seems to offer at least two possible alternatives: as (1) the mediatization of history and (2) the history of mediatization. The former has found expression in the work of historian Pierre Nora (1974), who declared "the return of the event:" the historical status of the moon landing, for example, could appear only within a "perpetual now," monopolized by television's propensity for live broadcasting. A

decade later, Nora (1989) argued that our memories also had become "televisual:" a "prosthetic," ever-expanding storage of the recorded present. During the 1980s, similar thoughts appeared within the analysis of postmodernism: For Fredric Jameson (1991), television/video was the "cultural dominant" of postmodernity and the main agent for "the weakening of historicity"; for Jean Baudrillard (1991), both history and reality had imploded into televisual time.

Such views were based on two commonly held assumptions: (1) Television had a dominating position in the media system, and (2) its specificity consisted in immediate transmission. When switching to the history of mediatization, both of these assumptions now appear historical, as in "out of date." Reputedly, the televisual era is over (cf. Katz & Scannell, 2009; Olsson & Spigel, 2004). Actual live broadcasting no longer dominates TV schedules. Today, historical events may be restarted, from varying points in time and space, within a network of digital apparatuses, all of which transmit, receive, store, load, and connect. Consequently, the kind of "media history" based on identifying successive waves of dominance from single media (print, film, broadcasting, the Internet) may have reached an end: In a landscape of "transmediality" and "remediation," the very concept of media—despite, or thanks to, its ubiquity—suffers from superfluity. Within current media research, there are calls for a "non-media-centric" study (Karjina, Moores, & Morley, 2014). The concept of mediatization (Lundby, 2014) denotes an abstract, historical process (like globalization), the effects of which occur beyond the media themselves. "There are no media" (Horn, 2007) is one shorthand for recent German theory, influenced by Friedrich Kittler.

Thus, while the first approach (the mediatization of history) may weaken our spontaneous understanding of history, the other (the history of mediatization) may weaken our conceptions about media specificity. At this intersection, the relations between media and history become especially difficult to track. Recently, the historian François Hartog (2005) identified "presentism" as our "temporal regime." His descriptions of its essence—"an omnipresent present . . . daily creating the past and the future that, day after day, it needs" (p. 14)—are more or less interchangeable with possibilities and dilemmas that have long been associated with television and its "management of liveness."

How are we to understand such overlaps? Does the posthistory of television denote a state of cultural lag so that we are reading our contemporaneity through obsolete technology (the kind of "rearview mirror" nostalgia that upset Marshall McLuhan)? Or have we passed a point at which the mediatization of history has been consummated so that only what is on television will count as history (Nora, Jameson, and Baudrillard in effect announcing the regime of presentism)? How to differentiate one scenario from the other? And how to write a history of mediatization (or television) if historiography itself has been mediatized?

Throughout, this article has employed the concepts of prehistory and posthistory. These terms can be traced to the writings of Walter Benjamin (1991), first appearing in the prologue to *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* and returning in "Das Passagen-Werk." For Benjamin, history was not progress, but the actualization of the past in the present. For Benjamin, the "origin" of a work of art (or tradition, or technology) was not found in the "context" from which it emerged but in the recognition of a dual rhythm within flows of the present: the springing forth of a coming-to-be and passing away (*dem Werden und*

Vergehen Entspringendes, (Benjamin 1991, p. 226). He described it as a maelstrom—some things float downstream, others are pulled downward. This rhythm may expose a work's pre- and posthistory: something may always be *re*-cognized yet will remain forever unfinished, incomplete. Progress will only become "legible" in retrospect, in the work's accumulated reception: "It is their post-history which illuminates their pre-history as a continuous process of change" (Benjamin & Tarnowski, 1975, p. 28).

This method is not that different from Marshall McLuhan's; another harsh critic of linear historiography (cf. Ericson, 2013). Many of his catchphrases were constructed by the sudden synthesis of pre- and posthistory (in the "global village," for example, oral, premodern culture exists alongside computer networks). Raymond Williams wrote his television book in opposition to McLuhan's theory and was less than sympathetic toward Benjamin's philosophy of history (cf. Ericson, 2004, chaps. 3, 4, 5). Nonetheless, Williams' take on television also reached for that drastic synthesis of "then" and "now": "There is a direct cultural continuity, it seems to me, from those enclosed rooms, enclosed and lighted framed rooms, to the rooms in which we watch the framed rooms of television (Williams, 1989a, pp. 6–7).

Some 60 years ago, TV critics apparently saw Strindberg as representing the prehistory of television and television as representing the posthistory of Strindberg. Today we may discern other continuities: For instance, Williams' "mobile privatization" may link television not only to modernist drama but to our current world of mobile phones, wireless networks, and the Internet. Williams (and Strindberg) would have known very little about such continuities. However, their retrospective *legibility* may be grounded in the indexing of that dual rhythm. If so, it is not coincidental that early television chose to broadcast the drama of Strindberg. Or that Benjamin, McLuhan, and Williams, well after their media landscapes have faded, have preserved actuality in the 21st century. After the merging of the history of mediatization and the mediatization of history, there remains, perhaps, this possibility to discern continuity.

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