DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

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‘NIETZSCHE’S PREGNANT BITCH’
AN EXPLORATION OF WHAT LURKS BENEATH THE MASKS OF PATRIARCHY IN THE WORKS OF AUGUST STRINDBERG

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
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ABSTRACT
This thesis is an investigation into the plays and life of August Strindberg in an attempt to unravel the following curious questions they may provoke in regards to how a die-hard misogynist captured and portrayed with great accuracy the female mind. If he was in fact able to create these characters because he struggled in similar ways psychologically throughout his own life then the line between man and women becomes blurred raising a multitude of issues regarding gender.

Using Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the Feminist response to Freud and in turn Strindberg and his plays; The Father, Miss Julie and Creditors, a thorough assessment of what lurks beneath the masks of patriarchy will be explored. This exploration will include theories ranging from Simone de Beauvoir, Sue-Ellen Case, Judith Butler, Juliet Mitchell, Lisa Appignanesi and Luce Irigaray, to Sigmund Freud, Robert Brustein, Declan Kiberd and Peter Szondi.
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Masks
She had blue skin,
And so did he.
He kept it hid,
And so did she.
They searched for blue
Their whole life through,
Then passed right by –
And never knew.

Shel Silverstein

Figure 1: Dark Beauty SM DESIGNS @ Pinterest.com
INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing issues in the works of Strindberg that will be dealt with throughout this piece is the battle of the sexes. More precisely, the battle of the modern man versus the emancipated woman or third sex which is a branch out from the subjectified maternal image and could be summed up vaguely as a masculine woman. Let’s not confuse the idea of the masculine woman with the same masculinity as men have been predominantly tarred with, credit to patriarchy for this, but a masculinity as opposed to passivity that has been predominantly linked with femininity. This third sex is the epitome of evil for Strindberg, this type of modern woman is a knifing poisonous wretch masquerading as the wife or mother when really they are vampires cunningly plotting the demise of the men in their lives and sucking the life out of them little by little as retribution for the suffering of women in patriarchal society.

As put by Strindberg himself in the Preface to Miss Julie;

Miss Julie is a modern character – not that the half-woman, the man-hater, has not existed in every age, but because, now that she has been discovered, she has stepped forward into the limelight and begun to make a noise. The half-woman is a type that pushes herself to the front, nowadays selling herself for power, honours, decorations and diplomas, as formerly she used to for money. She is synonymous with corruption. They are a poor species, for they do not last, but unfortunately they propagate their like by the wretchedness they cause…

Miss Julie Preface, P.95

Strindberg is said to be the father of psychological drama due to the powerful portrayals of suffering on an internal level shown to us through the subjective lens of his characters. For these characters the glass ceiling of society locks them into a purgatory of reality. As put by Lukács in The Sociology of Modern Drama; the new life ‘lacks a mythology’ therefore the suffering is at the level of the mind. The influence of naturalism brings about a shrinking of the epic, and condenses all issues and conflicts into a tightly wound medley that plays out in the psyche of the individual. Whether you live in high society or the trenches of middle class, Strindberg’s dark depictions of the battle that takes place between what happens on the outside and how we feel on the inside illustrates how none sail through life unscathed. As intriguing as his abilities are to delve deep into the human psyche and display it in such a masterful manner denouncing the status quo of patriarchal society for its unrealistic expectations of the human subjects, man and woman, so too is his tendency to focus on women as the lead characters in many of his most psychological dramas. According to Simone De Beauvoir in The Second Sex, such depictions produced by men are highly suspect;
All that has been written about woman by men should be suspect, for the men are at once judge and party to the lawsuit.

_The Second Sex_ Du Beauvoir

Famously known to be a brazen misogynist, it may seem bizarre that a man as such could come to represent the female mind and women’s struggles with such accuracy and it could be said, sympathy. Play after play we see the fiercely deteriorating relationships between men and women as man versus woman in a world that forces both into set roles with societal expectations attached creating unbearable power struggles for each. In _The Father_ we see Laura, a woman so determined to be in charge she’d sooner have her husband institutionalised than allow him to offer their daughter freedom from the grasps of the maternal power house. In _Miss Julie_, we see the eponymous Julie a young woman in high society who seeks to find happiness in any place, person or thing other than herself. In _Creditors_, we meet Tekla, a sensuous beautiful woman who embraces these qualities and indulges in admiration wreaking havoc in the minds of two men, the current husband and the begrudging exe. All three are depictions of women in widely different circumstances, yet the common denominator in their impending misery involves male counterparts. The conflicts which arise between these potentially destructive and self-destructive women and the men around them does not simply arise from a domestic upheaval or lovers tiff, there are much deeper issues at heart and this is what Strindberg understood and captured so very well. This thesis will explore what lurks beneath the masks of patriarchy in the works of August Strindberg using Freudian psychoanalytic theory and the feminist response.
CHAPTER ONE;

~ The Incest of the Soul ~

Strindberg writes himself, and the Self he continually exposes is that of alienated modern man, crawling between heaven and earth, desperately trying to pluck some absolutes from a forsaken universe.

Robert Brustein Male and Female in August Strindberg

Figure 2: Exceeding © Pierre-Alain D. / 3mmi Design

Strindberg could most accurately be summed up as the father of psychological drama because not only do his plays detail scenarios wherein we are shown the highest level of psychological warfare between man and woman, but because his art was his life and vice versa. In his case, his art imitated his life, he poured himself onto paper and every drop of ink gave fluidity to the thoughts and feelings that consciously or unconsciously proliferated in the darkest recesses of his mind. A man with such pathologies as Strindberg had, would no doubt have incredible ability to amaze and horrify people with his revelations through his artistic outlet because of the sincerity and knowledge he was capable of bringing to our attention minus the artifice and decoration that would have commonly been used to make elaborate and intentionally complex plays. He was incapable of separating himself from his work and so his muse was entirely
drawn from his own life experience yet his inability to be satisfied with numerous self-truths gave way to his expedition to explore the issues he struggled with on a much wider scale; taking his own insecurities about class and gender and dealing with them as societal conflicts as opposed to personal grievances. Theatre along with each and every art form has always held the power to send a political message to an audience and unveil the issues people are reluctant to discuss openly yet recognise; however we have to wonder in Strindberg’s case was that his initial intention? Did he originally hope that these plays would shed light on the psychological turmoil of the power struggle between the sexes? Or, did he need to create these stories for himself more than anyone else? This is key when it comes to understanding in what way his plays are psychological masterpieces, both Strindberg and his characters are portrayals of individuals struggling psychologically as a result of the world they live in. This is a dualism we may not give much thought to initially but taking both into consideration highlights a historical moment of great significance wherein the fragmentation of the world reaches down into the individual subject much like Lukács discusses in The Sociology of Modern Drama. In Strindberg we find the real life individual, and their output, their characterisation, their creations, each offering a personal response. Both Strindberg and his characters are so intricately woven we almost don’t notice it, but Strindberg himself was a living example and his characters, the manifestations of what tortured him most. This is why his choice of female characters is captivating. Plagued early on in life by the polarities of mother and father, love and hatred, aristocracy and commonality, that would eventually paralyse his perception of the relationship between man and woman, he became a man so at odds with his own identity that he would almost become delusional in his pursuits to find something, anything it would seem, to believe in, to follow, to fight against, to revolt, so as to feel in control and disguise the elements of himself he couldn’t bear to face. Yet no matter how much of a shapeshifter he became, woman was an obsession that gripped him from childhood onwards. Emma Goldman in The Social Significance of Modern Drama explains how although Strindberg was very open about his hatred of women, and a brazen misogynist, his love for women was all the while stronger;

Strindberg had split his mother in two – the chaste Madonna and the erotic Belle Dame Sans Merci - … Strindberg was himself aware, in more lucid moments, that his misogyny was only the reverse side of (his) fearful attraction towards the other sex.  

The Social Significance of the Modern Drama

It was his initial love for his mother and the subsequent hatred it developed into that lay at the source of his attitude to the Earth Spirit for him later in life. He loved the mother and despised
the whore and upon reckoning that a third sex had evolved which embodied the emancipated female, his fear led him to feign such loathing, while his heart could never allow him to mean it truly, as Goldman states;

He hated artifice with all the passion of his being; hence his severe criticism of woman. Perhaps it was his tragedy to see her as she really is, and not as she appears in her trance. To love with open eyes is, indeed, a tragedy, and Strindberg loved woman. All his life long he yearned for her love, as mother...as wife...But his longing for, and his need of her, were the crucible of Strindberg as they have been the crucible of every man, even of the mightiest spirit.

*The Social Significance of the Modern Drama*

The torn and twisted mind of Strindberg as prescribed by his childhood was transmitted to the stage directly in his most vicious play *The Father*. It would appear the greatest downfall to man is woman according to Strindberg for the paradox of being unable to live and flourish with or without the opposite sex hinders a man’s power and capability. Which Margaret the nurse-maid captures in essence in the following extract from the play;

> Because all you men, great and small, are woman’s children, every man of you.

*The Father*

Whereas in *The Father* the same is not apparently true of woman. We see this in the way in which the demise of the Captain takes place. From start to finish he is the modern man outnumbered in a stronghold of females which directly or indirectly contribute to conjuring him to madness and bringing him to his knees. As clearly stated in the quote above, every man is a mothers child and the Captain when he regresses to a childlike state in the final act is not only showing man’s weakness but accepting it, it is the cut-throat soul destroying words from Laura his wife that detail exactly what the position is for woman now that the man has become subservient to her;

> You have fulfilled your function as an unfortunately necessary father and breadwinner. You are not needed any longer, and you must go.

*The Father*

What an evil bitch you must be to speak to the father of your child as an unfortunately necessary component who needn’t be concerned with what happens after she decides his role and purpose is no longer required. Given the context, there is nothing Laura can discredit the Captain with that would lend justification to such cruel words. He attempted to throw a lamp at her in anger but that was an individual act, whereas his actions as a father have only being of genuine concern for the wellbeing of his beloved daughter. But when we examine the wider context, Laura is representative of the matriarchy that man feared from inception. It is through the
possession of the child that a woman can exert her power over man and the entanglement of both sexes regarding the spider web of matriarchy is and has always been, something that requires a third element to intervene for the sake of procreation and prohibition of incest. Emma Goldman perfectly outlines the crux of the issue in the following extract;

The mother enslaves with kindness – a bondage harder to bear and more difficult to escape than the brutal fist of the father.

*The Social Significance of the Modern Drama*

At this point it is necessary to address the Freudian psychoanalytic theory of the Oedipus complex as a referential point in understanding why both Strindberg and the Captain fear the Laura’s of the world. We know that the child-mother duality must be split by the introduction of a third party, the father otherwise known as the law. This intervention on the part of the father is necessary because should the child become the desire of the mother there would be cataclysmic results for both. Separation from the mother enables the child to become an individual subject as opposed to believing they are the object of the desire of the mother. Thus they develop a Self, the subjective ‘I’. Here Robert Brustein in *Male and Female in August Strindberg* highlights the relevancy of the oedipal conflict for Strindberg:

Strindberg’s childhood followed an almost classical Oedipal pattern. He adored his mother with a passion he was later to call (with astonishing pre-Freudian frankness) ‘an incest of the soul’, and he hated his father as a powerful and threatening rival.

*Male and Female in August Strindberg* Brustein, P.138

Initially, as is in most cases when someone disturbs the nest, this third party will be met with a resistance and perhaps become the recipient of a hatred or rivalry from the child until they accept the threat of castration and move on in life as a law abiding citizen. Strindberg took issue with this as he disliked authority and authority comes from those who are in a position of laying down the law thus having control. We see evidence of this in the writings of Brustein when he discusses Strindberg’s conflict with God that can be seen earlier in his career;

‘From childhood onwards, (Strindberg writes), I have sought for God and found the Devil’, his revolt against authority is really the reverse of his desire for authority…

*Male and Female in August Strindberg* Inferno Extract, Brustein, P.135

Both Strindberg and the Captain Lack control and it is because of woman and their inability to detach themselves from this deep rooted connection to woman that they fail to be in authority. Yet, considering the notion that a child must accept the law, we can see clearly how throughout life the threat of castration will create adherence to accepting the woman fully so as not to be tempted to give in to the desire despite having the deep rooted want within, in clearer terms,
man can’t live with or without woman and this paradox of oedipal origin is the cause and fault for the turbulent relationship between the sexes. Also Brustein points out that Strindberg, considering himself as a rebel, focuses on the conflicts in the rebels soul, and as has already been established such conflicts of his own soul are what his work illustrates, yet the rebels in his plays he chose to be his female characters so we have to question what it is he identifies with in whom? In the *Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts* Sue-Ellen Case offers extraordinary insight into the theatrical tradition of female representation elaborating extensively on Classic Drag. In Greek tradition woman was absent from the theatre and remained invisible due to the ‘masks of patriarchal production’.

…the notion of the female derived from the male point of view, which remained alien to female experience and reflected the perspective of her gendered opposite.

*Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts* Case, P.321

The roles of women were played by men in drag and created by men also, women were more often than not refused admission to the theatre and so again, it was a male audience which viewed the plays, women were placed in the home and as subjects hidden in the home became the most mysterious of all creatures as the outside world fabricated what it is to be a woman, with no woman present. Theatre and politics are strongly linked and the theatre of the time simply reflects the political setup of the time regarding women, rendering true female representation powerless. Which Case outlines;

These cultural institutions became allied with the suppression of women by creating the new gender role of “Woman” that would privilege the masculine gender and oppress the feminine one. At base, the new cultural categories of gender were constructed as categories of difference and polarity. “Woman” appeared as the opposite of man.

*Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts* Case, P.320

The relevancy of classic drag to Strindberg’s female characters is that he intended to remove the mask of the predetermined Woman showing women as he believed they truly are, as mentioned previously, without ‘artifice’. Yet at the same time he used them as a guise of his own, as a means by which he could express the more feminine side of his nature. By Strindberg using his female characters to express his own weaknesses, he is almost orchestrating classic drag in reverse. In the past, men dressed in drag portrayed women, here however, to a certain extent, the women portray elements of Strindberg. And as he has been affiliated with Darwinism at particular stages of his career relating to survival of the fittest, we can understand why he does this. For a woman to be weak has been long determined as part of her nature, for a man to be weak is unacceptable, when a man is weak, as Strindberg sees it, it is the innate
weakness for woman that will be his ruination as it is inescapable and capable of stripping a
man of his strength. Without strength of will a man could be accused of the passivity seen as
an attribute of femininity thus crossing the border and losing his masculinity. There is evidence
to suggest that at times he over-compensated with the masculine trope and developed intense
interests and shared similar trains of thought with those he believed to be strong men which
actually had a reverse effect when it came to promoting his own masculinity. He admired
German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche with whom he shared the hatred of the emancipated
woman with but clearly Strindberg did not entirely believe himself to be on par with the
masculine heroes he sought after as he presents himself as the passive more feminine of the
two. In the following extract describing what an influence Nietzsche was on him, he quite
blatantly confirms his feminine nature as being fertilised by the philosophical misogyny of
Nietzsche so much so that he identifies him as his husband;

My spirit has received in its uterus a tremendous outpouring of see from Frederick Nietzsche,
so that I feel as full as a pregnant bitch. He was my husband.

Male and Female in August Strindberg Brustein, P.144

Admittedly, Strindberg desired to be more masculine than was his true self and we can see this
not only in the examples given thus far, but in his treatment of his male characters. In all three
plays, the men are unmanned somehow by the women. In The Father the captain is eased into
a straight-jacket by what feels to him to be a mothers warm embrace, in Miss Julie, Jean doesn’t
succeed or come to the end to be any better off than he was in the beginning he only shows
himself to be the coward he always was, and in Creditors Adolf, having already being
emasculated within an inch of his life by Tekla collapses into a fit. None of the above win in
the battle between the modern emancipated women, and nor does Strindberg throughout his
own life, his art does not betray his honesty and it is one of his finest qualities his plays have
to offer. As Brustein sees it;

His Hercules is often robbed of his club and set to do women’s tasks at the distaff.

Male and Female in August Strindberg Brustein, P.145

It is more than theatrical retribution for the lack of the presence of women, because if it were
that simple, the female characters may triumph, yet they do not. It is difficult to decipher who
suffers more in Strindberg’s plays as ultimately, neither are exempt.

When the moment comes for Julie and Jean to make their great escape Julie wants to bring with
her Sérine, a little bird she holds dear to her, which oddly enough makes its one and only
appearance at this point in the play. She tells Jean it is the one thing she is taking from her
home as she cannot part with her because the bird loves her and is faithful to her. The irony here being that the bird is caged, and a caged animal has no choice in the matter when it comes to deciding whom it’s faithful to or where its home is. It is kept by the keeper unless it is set free, but freedom for Julie is a concept she cannot grasp. Julie has the authority to take this little bird with her and command Jean to leave it be, yet she tells him she’d rather he killed it than give her (Sérine) to anyone else, again illustrating how freedom does not enter her mind, there is entrapment or the end and they are the only options.

(Takes the bird out of the cage. She kisses it.) Oh, my poor little Sérine, must your mother lose you – must you die?

Miss Julie P.108

In comparison to Laura who is a die-hard at keeping her chicks in the nest, or even Tekla who treats her current husband more like a sibling or child of her own, Julie is the furthest thing from a mother evident in how, as she hands the bird she apparently loves so much to Jean, she asks it ‘must you die?’ As if the bird has a choice, ‘Must your mother lose you?’ At all times Julie speaks as though the bird, not even Jean, is the one making the cruel decision. This continues right up until her final moments where again she requires it to be someone else’s decision what happens to her even though she is the grim reaper of her own destiny. Jean simply returns to cowardice and a position where even the sight of the Count’s gloves on a chair make him feel inferior. In The Father the sincerity of Laura’s regret at her husband’s death is highly questionable. It’s difficult to determine whether she has any conscience at all for what she has done when the last thing she emphasises upon Bertha’s arrival is ‘My Child! My own child!’ Surely this is the one thing Laura, or any woman, need not question – the legitimacy of one’s child? Yet she exclaims this in the final moments and perhaps her façade of the concerned mother as opposed to the destructive kind is simply continuing for the audience of her company. The sympathy in how The Father concludes is both for the Captain, and his daughter, and on a wider scale, the older generations present. Both the pastor and Margaret bear witness to the ensuing insanity of the Captain and while they are equally as concerned for Bertha’s welfare, they seem to become the fools as neither look beyond what they see in front of them. They do not question the mother’s rights and take pity on the madman turning to religion as the only hope in a dire situation. As mentioned previously Strindberg dealt with his own personal issues through his art not only for his own benefit, but on a wider scale. And, on the broader spectrum, he forecasted attitudes that would continue to exist in the conscience of the household, and only that he experienced similarities in his own life was he able to create these
revelations about marriage, mental health, identity and on the list goes. Marriage and what constitutes a successful one is ripped open once again in *Creditors* and continuing to highlight how neither of the sexes wins out we have Tekla to guide us. Of all three females, she is the more sensual woman, and similar to Helen of Troy, a beautiful woman leading to war among men is nothing we haven’t seen before. As much suffering as a marriage can endure, it’s unclear whether Strindberg would be an advocate of divorce given the path this play takes. It is the scorned exe husband who returns with the intention of both creating unhappiness and undeniably revisiting the wretch he may still have an attraction towards despite whatever happened between them. Strindberg himself was fond of life’s cruelties;

> I myself find the joy of life in its strong and cruel struggles.

*Male and Female in August Strindberg* Brustein, P.144

And just like he divided his mother into two, in *Creditors* it could be said he does the same to himself. Having had enormous difficulty in matters of the heart and numerous marriage’s, part of himself rests in both Adolf, the emasculated man, and Gustav, the teacher, who with credit to Tekla, has a specialised knowledge of heartbreak. When she is faced with the men of her past and her present, it is the weaker of the two that causes her the most pain albeit by the hand of the other. And although Adolf was led unaware by Gustav this play, it could be argued, shows that a weak man will not stand the test of time in terms of marriage. And subsequently, the third sex can and will ruin a man one way or the other. But even Strindberg cannot escape that truth that this is no victory for either.
CHAPTER 2;

~ A Patriarchal Phantasia ~

If the marriage of psychoanalysis and feminism sometimes looked like a Strindbergian dance of death, it was also often fruitful.

Mad, Bad and Sad Appignasi, P.421

Figure 3: ‘Labyrinth 2’ by Marcel Chirnoaga (1930-2008)

Strindberg was undeniably ahead of his time when it comes to his understanding of the psyche as it impinges on the crux of the issue between the sexes for Freud. The very fact that he was able to do so sheds light on the awareness he had of what would later develop into psychoanalytic theory. Freud believed there is a period of latency that banishes our memories of the early childhood experiences relating to the Oedipus complex, but that all that is repressed may return, therefore it could be said that it was Strindberg’s fine-tuned ability to question himself and his thoughts that gave way to his knowledge of these inner conflicts pre-Freudian analysis. The anatomical distinction between the sexes is a necessary biological fact of nature that makes perfect sense in order for our species to procreate and this is something we must
accept. However, what it means to be a man or women in society as a political construct is what raises issues and creates inexhaustible conflict pertaining to gender, the most mind-boggling of all concepts to define. As mentioned previously, Greek history plays a pivotal role in determining why men and women are developed as polarities and in turn create certain expectations of each without any empirical evidence to suggest that either is more powerful or that this is the way it should be for any logical reason. It is a case of lying through omission that caused the misrepresentation of woman to poison future acknowledgement and understanding of the mysterious ‘opposite’ to man. In Freud’s pursuits to define gender and sexuality he too was met with the unknown in the form of the pre-Oedipal mother which Juliet Mitchell examines in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*:

Of course boys and girls share this early period, but the implications of it are different for each sex – altered by the Greek superstructure which obscured it for analysis as it did for history. The Oedipus complex which can almost be said to stand for the structure of patriarchal structure, hid the pre-oedipal phase, as Freud, a male analyst, echoing in his way the ways of the culture, obscured the role of the mother for his women patients. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* Mitchell, P.109

For Freud, working backwards from adult to infancy was what led him to discover where the psychological distinction between the sexes first arises. And, as he uses the phallus as the symbol of power and thus the catalyst for the changes that the infant will be met with, we can see why a great deal of feminists would dismiss these elements of his theory as being yet another outcome of a patriarchal produced mind-set. However, Mitchell underlines the mistaken notions of Freud’s theories by feminists and redeems him for the importance of what he was supplying us with; an analysis of patriarchy from a male point of view. In that sense, both Strindberg and Freud offer us descriptions of male psychological responses to women. Let us first elaborate on what Freud believed to be this imperative moment of change that proved to be a jewel of controversy among many, before delving into what it would mean for our understanding of gender.

The Oedipus complex is the term derived from the Greek mythological story of Oedipus who accidentally fulfilled a prophecy to kill his father and end up marrying his mother bringing disaster to his home and kingdom. Clearly from as early on as Greek tradition, mothers sons who grew to be men understood the depth of the mother-child duality and aimed to banish the possibility of its implications by setting such vivid mythological examples which would no doubt exemplify why men must rule the political spectrum for their own benefit and keep their women tamed. It is the powerful mother-child duality that threatens to consume the subject and
is thus forbidden by the law/father. During the Oedipus complex the child believes they are the object of the desire of the mOther until they are alerted by the intervention of the father, the paternal Other. Upon realisation that the mother desires something outside of them – the imaginary phallus – the child is thus made aware that because the mother desires, she is lacking and whatever it is the Other possesses, the mother does not possess. However when the mother engages with the child they believe she does so because they too must have the allusive ‘it’. At this point for the little boy, he will perceive the father as a threat or rival and so he must accept the threat of castration which is the signal to give up the mother to abide by the prohibition of incest so as he can become a subject with the promise of having a woman of his own down the line. This is the castration complex. When it comes to size, ones power can often be assumed due to that very factor. Taking Freud’s Castration Complex for example, the threat of castration is all too real for the boy as he has something that could be cut off, whereas in the case of the little girl it seems whatever it is he has, she hasn’t got it. It appears to the little girl that she is already castrated and in some way hard-done-by which is why she will replace the mother for the love-object of the father and displace feelings of hatred to the mother. This is unlike the little boy because for her, by identifying with the mother as an already castrated being also, she must seek the phallus elsewhere. In sizeable terms, one has more of something than the other, and in hierarchical terms, the bigger, the stronger, the one with more equates to the more powerful. ‘Penis-envy’ which initially strikes us as a bizarre and blatantly male influenced notion was what Freud proposed as the correlate to the castration complex for the little girl. However what has been easily misunderstood is that both penis-envy and the castration complex are two sides of the same coin and this is one of the many issues Mitchell attempts to clarify. They both inform the child, male and female, to the fact that the phallic power of another – the father – is more substantial than their own and thus it wins over the mother, Appignanesi also sheds light on the common misinterpretation;

This penis which Freud had understood women as ‘envying’, was the phallus of symbolic function, the signifier of sexual difference. Both sexes are marked out by their desire for its power. Both suffer from its lack. Lack (not unlike Freud’s discontent) underpins both sexes relation to civilisation.

Mad, Bad and Sad Appignanesi, P.423

Jouissance is the term given to the enjoyment or pleasure of the body and this is primarily what we must learn to curtail in order to live societally acceptable lives. For the child the pre-Oedipal mother is almost an extension of themselves. The baby seeks pleasure over un-pleasure and does so with the first nurturing love-object, the mother. Lacan believed that the Mirror Stage
is when the child, who up until this point saw the mother as an extension of themselves, comes to identify with their own mirror-image and this object-image will thus develop the Ego, the Imaginary Self. Freud believed throughout our lives we find other love-objects for example in the partners we choose, and because of our initial identification with the mirror image with its development of the Ego therefore forming a narcissistic basis for identity; the love-objects we find later in life, we choose for our own self-interest in an attempt to make up for our lack. This we can see in the relationships that will be examined in Strindberg’s plays; Laura made up for the Captain’s lack of will, Jean filled the desire in Julie to be reunited with her mother in the dirt, and Tekla provided Adolf with the love and nurturing as a mother would.

It is imperative to understand that the development of the Ego is largely constructed in the Imaginary realm, and the acquisition of language and the law which the Name of the Father enforces enables the imaginary to be symbolized. As discussed previously the desire of the mother is the ‘imaginary phallus’ and therefore should the castration complex – the intervention of the father – be successful, the outcome will be the symbolisation of the phallic meaning for the subject. The subject can now move on in life with a psychical representation as opposed to the real of the signified. Much of what the child experiences during this time will be repressed, and repression casts away these infantile memories to the unconscious. The unconscious however has an urge to speak and make conscious what it wishes to be known. The unconscious mechanisms at work such as displacement and condensation provide the subject with clues, but only speak to us in distorted form in dreams, slips of the tongue, and jokes as the Ego works as a defence against the un-pleasurable thoughts. For example, the saying that every man grows up to marry his mother, and every woman, her father, more or less encapsulates the oedipal dilemma as the unconscious recollects it. The traces Freud found in many of his adult patients as stated previously required him to work backwards to find the origin and in doing so found the mother to be the source. And so our world is that of a patriarchal Phantasia wherein by man attempting to be superior to woman, the boy finally gets the mother, and the girl situated under the man, receives the baby.

Of course this still leaves unresolved the explanations of gender as we come to identify with them outside of the realm of biological influence. As has been outlined from the beginning the masculine is perceived as all that is active and the feminine, as passive. And what Freud and Strindberg understood was that elements of both combine within each of us regardless of sex. For Strindberg his reckoning of the emergence of the third sex alongside the emasculated
modern man was his interpretation of what Freud would later define as the duality of the sexes and our bisexuality in mental life as seen below from Mitchell;

> Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of the character-traits belonging to his own and to the opposite sex; and he shows a combination of activity and passivity whether or not these last character-traits tally with his biological ones.

*Psychoanalysis and Feminism* Mitchell, P.47

Again this is another of the wrongs Mitchell attempts to make right as the feminine could be seen to imply weakness and, as it had been predominantly linked to females and ‘woman’, it in turn projects the idea that weakness is a strictly feminine predicament. Just as Freud believed the Oedipus and Castration complex are never truly resolved in the individual, it could be said that where the duality of the sexes is concerned, there is no necessary need for resolve yet the outside world – by creating gender stereotypes – creates conflict for the individual regarding this matter. To say our sexuality makes us different, and then say this duality differs in each individual and doesn’t necessarily make them any more or less of the sex they biologically are, creates great complexity.

Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble feminism and the subversion of Identity* elaborates on the issue incorporating the points of view of feminists such as Mitchell, Simone De Beauvoir, and Luce Irigaray from all angles in regard to the matter of defining gender with specific regard to what it means to be a woman as the subject of feminism. She discusses how according to De Beauvoir one ‘becomes’ a woman as there is a cultural compulsion to become one and clearly such a compulsion doesn’t come from sex. In the opening of the first chapter labelled ‘Destiny – the data of biology’ from De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* the first line states woman is ‘a womb, an ovary; she is female –’clearly this is in an attempt to make a mockery of the notion because it is quite obvious to anyone who isn’t merely a ‘fancier of simple formulas’ that the anatomy of the woman hardly encapsulates the definition of what it is to be one. Butler discusses in reference to De Beauvoir’s stance that the body appears as ‘a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed’, and taking into consideration what has already been examined as passive and active according to Freud, we can see how for De Beauvoir, the ‘womb’ she referred to as woman represents the passive, thus the culture, it could be said represents the active therefore in her opinion the body is the feminine and the political and existential is the masculine. This in turn coincides with the notion of patriarchy as a Phantasia. Appignanesi points out that de Beauvoir commended Freud for at least acknowledging the body is not simply the biologist’s object, that it is the body as lived in and experienced by the subject, the cultural body, that’s significant. Butler poses numerous questions regarding the
biology-is-destiny formulation deciphering that when we take bodies and what she describes as culturally constructed genders and theorize them independent of each other gender then becomes a ‘free-floating artifice’ which entails that the connection made between man and masculinity can just as easily signify a female body as a male one and vice versa. Strindberg who loathed artifice seemed to capture in essence that masculinity and femininity are not terms rigidified to man or woman respectively, something Freud also came to elaborate on;

We are faced here by the great enigma of the biological fact of the duality of the sexes; it is an ultimate fact of our knowledge, it defies every attempt to trace it back to something else. Psychoanalysis has contributed nothing to clearing up this problem, which clearly falls wholly within the province of biology. In mental life we only find reflections of this great antithesis; and their interpretation is made more difficult by the fact, long suspected, that no individual is limited to the modes of reaction of a single sex, atrophied and often useless rudiments of those of the other. For distinguishing between male and female in mental life we make use of what is obviously an inadequate empirical and conventional equation; we call everything that is strong and active male, and everything that is weak and passive female. This fact of psychological bisexuality, too, embarrasses all our inquiries into the subject and makes them harder to describe.

As is clearly depicted in the above extract from Freud himself featured by Mitchell the confusion and frustration in trying to make head nor tail of what a duality as such means for an individual is maze-like in its ability to make you feel lost. If we can come to understand that Freud’s theories offer an analysis of the subjects, man and women, in a patriarchal Phantasia and how they come to be so, then what understanding can we create of this ‘great antithesis’ between the sexes? Freud discusses how initially the concept of bisexuality was that of a sort of infantile unisex which we can understand in the sense that infancy has no preference in terms of the gender of the love-object, however what began as a simple notion developed into one of complexity concerning the ‘imbalance of the person’s mental androgyne.’ Again, we are reminded of the Greek influence underpinning much of what we know and come to elaborate on regarding gender; Mitchell mentions Aristophanes in Plato’s Symposium wherein an original hermaphroditism ‘solves the problem’. However as is the case minus the mythology, it’s the implications that the knowledge of this duality bring to the fore that cause the most conflict for Freud’s critics. In short, Freud deters that it is the masculine position both sexes hope to occupy as opposed to the feminine place in the ‘patriarchal human order.’ What Mitchell proposes is that Freud did not intend this to mean that we all have elements of masculinity and femininity within us yet because men are male and women are female that nature has decided which direction they must go forth and conquer. Instead, she believes that
the ‘great antithesis’ constitutes the difficulty both sexes live out in their mental life of the fact
that there are in fact men and women, and in the pecking order of patriarchal society that means
the biological distinction divides them into two separate categories without that necessarily
reflecting what percentage of masculine or feminine they are as an individual being. Butler, in
discussing the ‘heterosexual matrix’ brings drag into the mix much like Case did in assessing
the Greek tradition of Classic Drag, which poignantly focuses our attention to the elephant in
the room; By acting as women clearly shows they believed it was possible for a man to pretend
to be a woman. And in doing so, they speak for themselves and women in a way the Greeks
mightn’t have realised, ‘I think therefore I am’, which Butler also questioned;

Impersonation of women implicitly suggests that gender is a kind of persistent impersonation
that passes as the real. Is drag the imitation of gender? Or, does it dramatize the signifying
gestures through which gender itself is established? Does being female constitute a ‘natural
fact’ or a ‘cultural performance’? Or is ‘naturalness’ constituted through discursively
constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex?

Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity Butler, Preface IX.

Appignanesi thoroughly investigates the history of women and the ‘mind doctors’ in Mad, Bad,
and Sad, which upon taking considerable notification of a wide range of theoreticians and
psychoanalysts, composes a reflection of the treatment of the female from the 1800’s to the
present regarding psychoanalysis.

…Clothed the old doctrine of separate spheres in the fashionable language of science.

Mad, Bad and Sad Appignanesi, P.419

In the multiple accounts throughout the book we see how analysts, under the impression that
they were proceeding correctly, treated women much the same as they had been treated in
Greek theatre, only instead of making them the world’s best kept secret, they assumed a type
of madness was occurring when a woman resisted conformity or expressed symptoms or
behaviours perceived as troublesome or that of a ‘fighting-spirit’. Appignanesi includes what
Mitchell has to say about the women of the time and their somewhat lack of awareness to their
own rights;

Given that their condition has been made to seem ‘natural’ women’s oppression is hidden from
them, unconscious. Therefore this task of consciousness-raising which bears a distinct
relationship to psychoanalytic practice, is both necessary and a political step.

Mad, Bad and Sad Appignanesi, P.422

Butler too highlights how boundaries of analysis, not only psychoanalytic, suggest the limits
of a ‘discursively conditioned experience’, there is a patriarchal entrapment that can prevent us
from distinguishing between what is and what once was which not even Freud could escape from as discussed previously. For this, French philosopher and feminist, Luce Irigaray, poses one particular view that could shed some further light on why it is woman is so difficult to define and thus misrepresented and misunderstood. According to Irigaray ‘woman’ is a paradox, unrepresentable yet representing the sex that cannot be ‘thought’;

A linguistic absence and opacity…the female sex constitutes the un-constrainable and un-designatable.

*Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* Butler, P.9

Where De Beauvoir believes women are designated as the Other, Irigaray in opposition argues that both the subject and the Other are masculine mud hooks with the sole purpose to exclude the feminine completely in an economy of phallocentrism. When we consider what Freud believed and Lacan elaborated on further, perhaps this ‘closed phallocentric signifying economy’ which aims to achieve the exclusion of the feminine has some weight in it. The entire idea of the Other and the subject occurs on the basis of something imaginary. So who decided this had to be the way it was? If it is not the imaginary phallus the mOther is after then what is it? What other explanation is there for man to comprehend? Here we see the difficulty with man interpreting woman, and equally as mystifying is woman in relation to herself and what it is she does desire if not the classic Oedipal interpretation that’s been spoon-fed to her when she’s hungry for more understanding of why the world is the way it is? If culture and society are the powerful law, the active, the masculine, the Name of the Father, then Freud’s concepts and theories again illustrate for us a male perspective and response which reverberates through the very core of the separate spheres of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ for what they reveal and what they fail to or lack. Perhaps it is these troubling matters of the mind and the repercussions they have on the human being that make the life and works of Strindberg such potent portrayals of the sexes without need for full scale analysis or artifice, an audience will be struck viciously with the truth, because you don’t get more Real than Strindberg.
CHAPTER 3;

~ The Father ~

Wake up, Hercules, before they take your club away from you!

_The Father_ Captain

Having explored and evaluated both the artist and his artistry in relation to the psychological conflicts of man and woman in patriarchal society alongside that of the feminine and masculine within the individual self as examined by Freud, it is now time to allow the works of Strindberg to speak for themselves. Having suffered for the duration of his life with inner demons, it is worth noting that before he produced the works in question he experienced ‘a dark night of the soul lasting five or six years’ during which he wrote nothing according to Brustein. To come out of this dark period and strike while the iron is hot, we can see how _The Father_ is a raw depiction of what wanted to claw and scratch its way out of Strindberg’s psyche and become known. Perhaps this is why of all his plays, _The Father_ is the most vicious. The survival of the fittest is clearly a matter of contention in the play as the man who ought to be perceived as the stronger half of the marriage is in fact the weaker. We can see this presupposed perception as the writing is on the wall in the form of the Captain’s firearms, shotguns, and his army service coat, all belonging to roles women wouldn’t be associated with initially. Not only are they indications of masculinity, but in many ways they suggest preparation for war, yet the fact that they are hung up shows the Captain is not the one with the intention of fighting. By the Captain surrounding himself with masculinity he is compensating for the lack of influence he really has
in his home and we have to wonder whether these displays of rank and power are there to remind the women of the household of his authority, or to reassure himself?

Authority and power between the sexes appears to be the issue concealed under the guise of parental concern from Laura, whereas the captain appears as the sincere and caring father simply fulfilling his role as determined by society for the sake of his daughter’s best interests. From the onset we see the impact the stronghold of women has on him despite it being the fathers right to raise his daughter and rule the roost as he sees fit. There is undeniably something primal to be found in the way in which the Captain is brought to his premature end by the maternal dynamism. He himself describes the house full of women as like ‘going into a cage full of tigers’. The male is surrounded by the females, out-numbered, yet attempting to hold strong by refusing to back down quietly, the females are protecting the young, and the presence of other males that have exactly what it takes to strike down the once pack leader once weakened are lurking nearby. The Captain finds the pastor, his brother-in-law, as a friend initially but as Strindberg found Christianity to be a female religion only fit for ‘women, eunuchs, children, and savages’ as shown by Brustein, we know the pastor, aside from his kinship to Laura, will eventually side with the enemy of man as he is too weak to do otherwise. Even when Laura rouses suspicion regarding the genuineness of her intent resulting in the pastor accusing her of an ‘unconscious crime’, the men in the play succumb to believing her and her manipulation of others illustrates further the tyrannical nature of the third sex upon man. The mind games Laura plays with her husband are horrendous, the extension of these mind games to convincing others of his insanity are disgusting, yet we have to wonder would she have succeeded had it not been for the Captains own initial fragility. Szondi comments that the Captain is the symbol of a masculinity society attempts to invalidate and pass over to this third sex, which further illustrates how even the masculine woman is perceived as being in some way enabled only by patriarchal approval, much like the biblical story of the rib of Adam creating woman.

The catalyst for the madness that ensues is the subject of paternity initially brought to the fore in Nojd’s predicament which, by the Captain handing this insecurity to Laura, plants the seed of doubt in his own mind as discussed by Szondi;

He himself hands over to his wife her most important weapon – the question of paternity

Szondi, P.210
The psychological turmoil for the Captain is that of a man plagued now by the idea that he may not be the father of his child at all, women are taking over, and so he is losing his mind as this is not the natural way of things in a man’s world. More importantly, this is the Captain’s first encounter with a woman that is neither the maternal subject, nor the wife, but the infamous third sex Strindberg feared so much. One of the most perplexing issues to unravel in The father however is the question of whether or not the captain is in fact losing himself to lunacy from the beginning as opposed to when his treacherous wife begins to gnaw away at his esteem. Take the first scene for example; the captain seeks the assistance of another man to advise Nojd in what he describes as a ‘fatherly’ way. Perhaps he already feels he is not fit for the task as his means didn’t bear any fruit the first time. To ask a man of God to step in speaks volumes in terms of where the captain believes he stands. It is how he handles Nojd’s situation that informs us of the possibility that perhaps something was already troubling the Captain as he was susceptible to being consumed by the topic from this point onwards. Initially he approaches the issue from a respectable angle, adding sarcasm when Nojd alludes to the young girl being the culprit;

Is that so? I suppose it was Emma who led you astray?

The Father Act 1, P.8

He is even expectant that the boy has already asked the young girl to marry him taking an honorary gentleman-like stance, however when the notion that perhaps the child is someone else’s raises its ugly head, the Captain changes his position, now it is all the girls fault. From here on out, the emasculated Captain will easily find fault in the home regarding the women thrusting blame on them for intervening in the upbringing of his daughter and sending her down paths he believes are of no benefit to her;

The Captain: This house is full of women – and they all want to bring up my child in their own particular way. My mother-in-law would like to see her a spiritualist; Laura wants her to be an artist; the governess would have her a Methodist; old Margaret would like to see her become a Baptist; and the servant-girls, a salvationist. You can’t patch a soul together that way, least of all when I – who primarily am responsible for the moulding of her character – am constantly being opposed in all that I do. That is why I must take her out of this house.

The Pastor: There are too many women trying to run your house.

The Father Act 1, P.10

Spiralling downwards to the biological root of the issue, it appears the only thing apt to hinder a vital portion of what had originally given man his dominance is that which divides the sexes anatomically. Freud elaborated on the physical distinction as what psychologically
differentiated man and woman and in the play the walking womb can plant one seed of doubt
do patriarchal values can ignore; that being, the legitimacy of a man’s child can always be
questionable. This, however, is one question woman never has to ask, and thus gives Laura the
power to exert over her husband. Where paternity is concerned, it’s as though man must be
superior to woman to save face when it comes to the truth of the matter that the ‘passive’ of
the sexes is the only one with any certainty in the matter of ownership of the child. This gives
woman a power man simply cannot have. And the deterioration of the Captain illustrates how
in that sense any man can be reduced to subservience in the battle of the sexes, yet as Strindberg
sees it, it is only the despicable third sex that would wish to bring a man down in such manner.
However, Laura only implies that the captain may not be Bertha’s legitimate father, it is the
Captain’s own insecurity; that he was born without a will of his own, that prevents him from
taking action and instead leads him to become like Hamlet, pondering, fussing, but not doing
anything until it is too late. We see the Captains weakness in the following extract;

The Captain: Then when you and I became one, I felt myself strengthened by your will, and so
I allowed you to be the master in the house. I – who was used to giving the commands to my
troopers – I now became the one to take orders, and I grew to be a part of you – looked up to
you as a superior intelligence.

Men and Feminism in Modern Literature Kiberd

This extends what has been discussed from the beginning on the topic of the masculine as the
active and strong, and the feminine as passive and weak. Strength of will is believed by
Strindberg to be an essential part of man. If the Captain believes he is lacking, he is therefore
taking the role of the feminine enabling Laura to kick him while he is already down and reverse
the roles. Furthermore, Kiberd endows Strindberg with the title ‘The master of multiple self’
as he has the ability to see the world through the eyes of both male and female characters,
which becomes all the more meaningful when we look at the captain whom hasn’t got a name.
Kiberd believes this is no accidental omission as it reflects the captain as a character with no
fixed identity, as opposed to the women in the play that are given names, not titles. Indicating
the danger to man’s identity now that a new woman has evolved. When the captain’s
masculinity subsides completely, who he identifies as without it leads him right back to a
childlike state rendering him utterly powerless against the emancipated woman. The
implications of the uncertainty for the captain when his position of father comes into question
lead him to redefine who he is minus the attributes he once believed made him a man,
outnumbered by those who cannot detect what the third sex is capable of, the captain is totally
defeated. When the Doctor first discusses the captain’s mental state with Laura he informs her of the following;

The Doctor: You know, madam, the will is the backbone of the mind. When the will is impaired, the mind and soul disintegrate.

_The Father_ Act 1, P.18

Thus it is no wonder that the Captain based on a first impression felt the doctor was not a friend, Laura got to him first. Aside from the obvious war waging on between the captain and Laura, he is clearly conflicted as was discussed in chapter one regarding his relationship to Margaret, involving the relationship between man and the mother figure, a dilemma of oedipal origin. Margaret having attempted to sway the captain into coming to a mutual agreement with Laura resulting in a tantrum-like backlash from the captain, comments that;

Margaret: You ought to be ashamed of yourself! But just the same, old Margaret still loves her great, big boy best of all, and when the weather is stormy he’ll be back again to his Margaret – like a good child.

_The Father_ Act 1, P.22

The conversation is interrupted by the actual child in the play, Bertha, and although the Captain steps into the role of father again, it is in the final act that, just as Margaret had foreseen, he returns to her ‘like a good child’ and in doing so ends up tricked into the straight-jacket. Much like Strindberg and Freud were aware, the mother has the ultimate power hence the need for an intervention, and _The Father_ is a wicked warning for all men to heed.
CHAPTER 3.1;

~ Miss Julie & Creditors ~

Life is not so foolishly and mathematically arranged that the great always devour the small. It happens equally often that a bee kills a lion, or at any rate drives it mad.

Preface to Miss Julie Strindberg

Figure 4: The others @ Smashingapps.com

Considering the females in The Father were compared to that of caged tigers, it is now time to turn to the less obvious of the male-predators in Miss Julie and Creditors. In comparison to Laura, neither Julie nor Tekla are mothers and so the subject of conflict in these plays requires slightly less ferocious antics to resolve. It could be said that the substance of the initial conflict in the father, that of paternity, is one you may expect guns to blaze for, yet in these plays much more emphasis is put on the relation between societal constructs and how they keep individual in a chokehold. Not to mention the fact that obstacles faced by the women in these plays are largely constructed by the men around them, the reverse of the situation in The Father wherein Laura seeks to destroy her husband at every turn. As discussed by Szondi Strindberg’s ‘I
dramaturgy’ gave modern theatre a new subjective lens of a central ‘I’ to gaze through illuminating the internal transformation of the character. Michael Robinson in The Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg describes this perspective which is concerned with the sphere of public consciousness and its relationship to the inner/private life of the individual as creating the following result:

This dramatic situation, which leaves us with a kind of silence that Szondi himself did not appreciate, consists of a recollection whereby a witness presents his or her own testimony to a listener inside the fictional world, or directly to the spectators. Much of modern drama can be seen as such an ongoing negotiation between a witness and the victim about whom the testimony is given.

Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg Robinson, P.165

Therefore it could be said that the subjective lens we approach Miss Julie through, is that of Julie herself, and in Creditors, it is that of the ‘creditors’ in the play that Gustav announces will sooner or later make their appearance, in order to take what was owed to them such as himself. It appears that who Gustav represents in the real, the Count represents in the imaginary and so these plays display a situation of discontent regarding more than just the third sex, but the Oedipal pattern of Freudian analysis as noted by Brustein;

The male figure is reduced to impotency by the convenience, direct or indirect, of an older man who is related to the female antagonist…In a Freudian analysis, this older man would be seen as a father-figure, punishing the son – through a symbolic emasculation – for his incestuous relations with the mother.

Male and Female in August Strindberg Brustein, P.145

As discussed in chapter two, the father bears the threat of castration which has different meanings for the boy and the girl to reach the same aim, separation from the mother. Julie identifies with the masculine position which is not what society permits hence why she is so torn and unable to situate herself in the world alongside that of the aristocracy versus the lower class conflict within her. For Jean to meddle means he too steps out of line and must be reminded by the omnipresence of the father, the Count, of the castration he’ll face should he refuse to abide by the law. Tekla refers to Adolf in the final scene as her own child and multiple times throughout the play as her little brother, which symbolically shows Adolf to be involved in an incestuous type of relationship more so than a marital one hence why in Freudian analysis, Gustav returns in the real to threaten him and create a divide between Adolf and Tekla. Thus through the absence of the Count yet his almost higher-power like presence in the atmosphere, and the absence of a real father yet the symbolic representation of one via Gustav we see how the patriarchal Phantasia is very much in play in both.
The polarities of the feminine and the masculine and the inexorable battle between the sexes deriving from this issue emanates not only on an unconscious level in these plays but in the societal factors also. Robinson discusses the fact that two of Strindberg’s wives were in fact actresses, Siri Von Essen and Harriet Bosse, whom he wrote many plays for, yet we know that it was not merely his intention to produce works for art’s sake. While he may have wrote them for these women and chose specific female leads for them, he was at the same time exposing the intimacies of their relationships under this guise;

He was apparently captivated by the fact that the art of acting is somehow connected with deception and make-believe, and in accordance with traditional misogyny, this was precisely the characteristic he found in them as human beings. Women are perceived as actresses, deceivers and tricksters who expose themselves to the public eye on the social ‘stage’, just as the female characters in his plays do.

Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg Robinson,

The social stage is one of particular concern in Miss Julie and Creditors for class conflict and gender stereotypes are what initially appear to be at the core of the issue in each context. Disgracing the family name by lowering herself into the dirt in the form of the lower class is at stake for Julie which is particularly aggravated by a sexual encounter with Jean. In Creditors it is not so much Tekla who runs the risk of being disgraced than it is Adolf, as Gustav relentlessly tries to convince him that being with such a woman is the ruination of his manhood and a terrible atrocity for the male sex to allow the emancipated women get under their skin. All three plays are riddled with evidence of what has been examined from the start, Strindberg’s tightly knit relationship to both his male, but more fascinatingly so, female characters, and the subsequent psychoanalytic theories that elaborate on the complexities of the issues raised as a consequence of patriarchal society.
CONCLUSION;

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

*Plato*

The very nature of our civilisation is to restrict the naked animal in order to divide us from and keep separate, our primal past as we are psychological beings. Yet trying to unravel what it means to be a body with a psyche seems to be the most mystifying paradox of life. What Strindberg understood and portrayed at a moment in time just prior to the rise of psychoanalysis, was that no answer will suffice, as each subject is the only person who truly knows themselves. Therefore in his work, he told us his story. Yet even as subjective as his art was, any reader or audience are forced to engage and unable to detach from the dark issues he brought to the stage because although we each have our own complexities, we are together victims of the world around us. With the focus of this thesis being the patriarchal Phantasia both sexes are immersed in and what lurks beneath, it seems Nietzsche’s pregnant bitch himself is an expert of the highest order in this department. With the help of other theoreticians we come to understand the anatomy of man and woman are opposites which attract for the purpose of procreation, however unfortunately so too did they evolve to become opposites in societal, political and psychological terms; but this is flawed. The term ‘Mother Nature’ no doubt attaches woman to the Earth, given that we inhabit the earth much like the womb before birth,
it would seem that if there was supposed to be any great divide, the woman would be the most powerful, the very fact that patriarchy exists therefore is nonsensical but shows us how much of a façade of the public sphere it is. We come to understand the flaws when we focus a little more on what it is that does differentiate us from our primal past and straightforward biological influence, the psyche. Individuals such as Strindberg and Freud were unafraid to explore the complex nature of the human being in an attempt to uncover truths about who we truly are and what the source of our suffering is. In doing so, both came to realise that what humankind has used for centuries as a means of determining who is top of the food chain, is to lock away and hide the troubling thoughts behind masks and instead abide by the law enforced via the pre-approved world around us thus creating a perpetual state of unrest between the inside and the outside. With the result that an individual, comprised of both masculine and feminine, feels plagued should there sex and predetermined gender not match up. The constant state of flux in the battle of the sexes is quite possibly due to the fact that this battle wages on internally on an individual level, and is subsequently displaced externally on a societal level. This is not a means to an end, and Strindberg illustrated that through artistic expression of human suffering on the highest psychological level. Strindberg’s plays can sometimes seem like living nightmares, but they are deathly scary not because they are like bad dreams, but because they are very much real and behind the disguises, we know this to be true. Perhaps what unnerves us the most is that we are, each of us with no exception, bodies and minds, passive and active, feminine and masculine, weak and powerful, and just like Strindberg himself as put by Brustein at the very start; crawling between heaven and earth, desperately trying to pluck some absolutes from a forsaken universe.
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**LIVE PERFORMANCE**

Grieg, David *Creditors by August Strindberg* C Company Production; The New Theatre, 43 Essex Street, Dublin 2: 01/2016.
Student Electronic Assignment Cover Sheet

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