

# Self-Translation and Transnational Strategy: The Case of Strindberg's French Poem *Battant les rues toute la journée...*

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## Abstract

Between autumn 1883 and the first days of 1884 August Strindberg, at the beginning of his first long stay abroad (1883-89), wrote the long poem *Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar* (Sleepwalking Nights in Broad Daylight), published in 1884. The poem is based on a structural interaction between 'real' French and Parisian spaces, where the protagonist and narrator is located at present, and 'imagined' Stockholm places loaded with memories, controversies and nostalgia. Later in 1884 the writer would also publish his first texts directly written in French, with the intention of establishing himself as a European, transnational writer, thus gaining symbolic capital he could use in the Nordic and Swedish literary field. My article focuses on a hitherto unpublished fragment of a poem written in French by Strindberg, proposes a diplomatic transcription of it, and considers it within the above-mentioned context. Through a comparison with the Swedish text, the French fragment is assessed as a self-translation of the beginning of the third sequence of *Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar*, and it is seen as a part of Strindberg's wider transnational project through French, which involved three different strategies in the years to come: writing original works directly in French; having Swedish original works translated by others; and – as in the case discussed in this article – providing self-translations.

## Keywords

August Strindberg, *Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar*, self-translation, translational rewriting, transnational literature, Paris, modernity

## 1. The Manuscript and its Connections with *Sömngångarnätter*

August Strindberg's manuscript *Höststämning i Paris. Dikt på franska* (Autumn Atmosphere in Paris. Poem in French, 1883), preserved at Örebro University Library in Sweden, has never been published in its entirety.<sup>1</sup> The aims of this article are to give a transcription of the poem; analyse it as a French version – probably a self-translation – of a short portion of *Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar* (Sleepwalking Nights in Broad Daylight),<sup>2</sup> the poem written by Strindberg in Paris in the final months of 1883 and published in Stockholm in February 1884; and discuss it in the context of the author's first attempts to achieve status as a European writer through the use of French in 1883-84.

- 1 Battant les rues toute la journée  
De ce nebuleux Paris automnal,  
Ébahi, c'est vrai, mais point ensorcelé  
Il se borne à trouver le tout 'pas trop mal'[]
- 5 À travers des tunnels de tuile et de chaux  
Des hommes, sans relâche, se coudoient, se bousculent;  
La rue humide, comme un brisé trumeau  
Encore réflète du ciel des gris lambeaux  
Et des traits humains qui avancent et reculent;
- 10 Des bottes crottées, des jupons en soie  
Le luxe et la misère, s'y trouvent au choix.
- Le camion chargé cahotte et craque  
Le fouet du cocher comme le revolver claque  
La sonnette du Tramway tinte et sonne
- 15 La coque de l'Omnibus comme tonnerre tonne  
Le cornet du conducteur, les dia, les hue  
[L]es cris des vendeurs, des vitriers, des fontainiers,  
[L]es marchands de coco, de poires, de choux-fleurs,  
L'aboïement d'un chien foulé aux pieds
- 20 [Tou]t fait, ensemble, un endiablé de chœur.

Mais chut, un enfant qui s'écrit en pleurs –  
Langue maternelle! comme tu te ressemble!  
Toujours la même chez Français, Bérabère,  
Perce les oreilles, que le cœur se tremble,  
25 Te fait comprendre sans parleur ni grammaire!  
Pourquoi pleurs-tu, petit inconnu?  
La grande ville te fait il peur de sa cohue  
Elle qui a tant amorcé sur son glu.  
Interroge, interrog-ateur! La réponse se noie  
30 Dans une ruelle à l'odeur de relent  
Où la vie au vice est en proie  
Et de ton enquête intempestive tu te repent.

Or, il claque, il tonne, il hollà!  
Il tinte, il braille, il siffle, il crie  
35 Il pleure, il rit, il craque[,] il scie  
Et toi, tu t'arrête, foudroyé du fracas,  
Curieux de savoir si tu sois confiné  
Dans un hopital au milieu des aliénés.  
Où que [...]³

Gunnar Brandell (1983: 19), Gunnel Engwall (1995: 46-47) and Sylvain Briens (2010: 83-84) have mentioned this text and, to a certain extent, discussed it; they even quote some parts of it, taking it as an independent poem in French, and failing to notice its semantic and formal connections with the first part of *Tredje Natten* (The Third Night), one of the sections in *Sömngångarnätter* (thus abbreviated). In their assumption that this is a self-contained poem in French, these scholars might have been misled by the library record. By contrast, in his commentary to the critical edition *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk*, volume 15, which includes the writer's first two collections of poetry from 1883 and 1884, the editor James Spens mentions the text as Strindberg's self-translation of this part of *Tredje Natten* (Strindberg 1995: 404-05). The connection between the poem in French and *Sömngångarnätter* is also material. *Battant les rues...* (thus named) is on the *verso* of a loose title page indicating: 'A. Strindbergs manuskript

till *Sömngångarnätter*'.<sup>4</sup> The draft manuscript of the poem is also kept at the university library in Örebro (Strindberg 1897).

Spens does not publish the French version or comment on it, but promises its publication in the supplementary parts of textual criticism, which are being issued as web sources at *litteraturbanken.se*. To date, the document referring to volume 15 of Strindberg's complete works, i.e., *Textkritisk kommentar till August Strindbergs Samlade Verk del 15. Dikter på vers och prosa. Sömngångarnätter på vakna dagar och strödda tidiga dikter* (TK 15), has not appeared.

## 2. Displacement, Rêverie and Critique of Civilisation

When compared to the whole poem *Sömngångarnätter*, the *Poem in French* is a part of it or, more exactly, a fragment. The thirty-eight complete lines of the French text correspond to the first thirty-nine lines of *Tredje Natten* (Strindberg 1995: 190-91), while *Sömngångarnätter*, including the section *Femte Natten* (The Fifth Night) added in 1889, consists of almost two thousand lines (Strindberg 1995: 161-234). The French text ends with a thirty-ninth incomplete line, which does not give us any clues as to the meaning, but indicates that Strindberg abandoned the composition for some reason.

*Battant les rues...* and the corresponding part in *Tredje Natten* depict the protagonist's first encounter with a chaotic boulevard in Paris and his reaction of bewilderment and shock. In the autumn of 1883 Strindberg left Stockholm for France and began his first long period of life abroad (1883-89). Read in terms of autobiographical narrative, *Sömngångarnätter* describes the protagonist's physical journey southwards, accompanied by critical reflections upon what he sees, but also by his recollections, daydreams, 'flights' northwards, back home, in a mood that is both polemical and nostalgic. The poem – with its prologue lyric and five sequences – is based on a state of displacement and on an interaction between places visited in France and places in Stockholm loaded with personal memories (Ciaravolo 2012a and 2012b).

While writing *Sömngångarnätter* at the beginning of his stay in Paris,

Strindberg felt that he was indulging in playful poetry, whereas his serious duty as a committed writer should have been to write essays on social issues (Strindberg 1952: 346, 357, 361, 378). At the same time, thanks to the poetics of daydreaming – ‘la poétique de la rêverie’ (Bachelard [1960] 1974) – he became more aware of the problems connected with the experience of modernity, which he also wanted to address in his essays (Berman [1982] 1988, Ciaravolo 2012c: 274-75, 281-83).<sup>5</sup>

In *Tredje Natten* and *Fjärde Natten* (The Fourth Night), which constitute almost half the length of the long poem, Paris becomes crucial. At this point of the narrative, the protagonist tries to escape the boulevard and find alternative places. Nevertheless, there are no such alternatives in the city, since St. Martin des Champs, the church where he tries to find refuge in the continuation of *Tredje Natten*, proves to have become a museum of technology and science, which simply prolongs the ceaseless movement from the environment outside (Mercier 1992: 51-55, and 1994). Similarly, the Bois de Boulogne, which he visits in *Fjärde Natten*, gives the protagonist the impression of a mutilated and falsified nature.

From a critic’s point of view, it is interesting that a French variant of the beginning of *Tredje Natten* exists. According to his letters, Strindberg felt ill at ease during the months he spent in Paris in the autumn of 1883, and his deep dissatisfaction seems to act as a spur to the composition of the new poem. On 5 November he writes: ‘jag har behof af att röra mig i fantasien nu, ty min hjerna är inflammerad af detta stadsbuller och denna verldsstadsflärd som retar mig med sina anspråk’ (Strindberg 1952: 346) (I feel the need to move within my imagination now, as my brain is inflamed with this city noise and the vanity of this metropolis which vexes me with its pretentiousness).<sup>6</sup> The sceptical scrutiny of big city life, with its blind faith in material progress, science and technology, is a relevant topic in *Sömngångarnätter*, and has its starting point in the protagonist’s impressions of the wet boulevard in autumnal Paris. Strindberg considers himself a disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Sömngångarnätter* (1995: 200), a poem which, in its turn, foreshadows Walter Benjamin’s critical view on progress as catastrophe, while displaying a similar fascination with the

urban phenomena of nineteenth-century Paris (Briens 2010: 137, 217-21; Ciaravolo 2012b: 178-85; Olsson 2012: 255-59).

### 3. A French or Swedish Original?

We lack the information needed to determine the precise time when *Battant les rues...* was composed, one reason being that the French poem is not mentioned in Strindberg's published letters. Therefore, as far as we know, this poem may be either a French original, which Strindberg eventually translated into Swedish and included in the composition of *Sömngångarnätter* as the opening part of *Tredje Natten*, or a later French self-translation of the Swedish original. From Strindberg's letters we know that a new Swedish poem, initially called *Afsked* (Farewell or Farewells), was being written on 17 October 1883 (Strindberg 1952: 329); that by 23 October, a week later, the writer had decided to enlarge the scope, making it into a long poem and including 'utländska ramar' in it ('foreign settings', i.e., French settings; Strindberg 1952: 334); and that the long poem, eventually entitled *Sömngångarnätter* and consisting of four sequences, from *Första Natten* (The First Night) to *Fjärde Natten*, was completed by 23 December and sent to the publisher (Strindberg 1952: 381). If *Battant les rues...* is an original, it must thus have been composed in October or November 1883.

It seems more likely, however, that *Battant les rues...* is a later French self-translation of the Swedish original. First of all, the long poem – which certainly began as a Swedish composition, as we have seen – is formally and stylistically very consistent, being composed in rhymed *knittel* lines from beginning to end. The French version, as we shall see, seems to adapt to the Swedish formal rules, rather than determine them. Furthermore, only on rare occasions did Strindberg translate his own original French texts into Swedish. This was the case with a couple of articles, first published in Parisian journals of occultism and alchemy in 1896 and 1897, and then translated for possible publication in Sweden in order to reach a broader reading public (Strindberg 2003: 69-71, 103-104, 155-62, 322-31, 452-55, 496-97). Nor can the case of *Battant les rues...* be compared to that of the fragment *Jacob lutte*

/ *Jakob brottas* (Jacob Wrestles), started in French in late 1897 as a sequel to the novels *Inferno* and *Légendes / Legender* (Legends), both written in French. At a certain point in the manuscript, the author changes language and continues in Swedish (Strindberg 2001: 126-27, 272, 275-76, 312-18). In the case of *Battant les rues...*, as we have seen, the French manuscript page is not interrupted in order to be *continued* in another language; in fact we have the whole Swedish manuscript of *Sömngångarnätter* written by Strindberg. Finally, *Battant les rues...* is more comprehensible if related to Strindberg's efforts to improve his French during the first half of 1884, and to his growing confidence that he would soon become a writer in French.

Strindberg's intention to write in French is underscored in his letters of April and May 1884. He seems more and more convinced that he will succeed, thanks to his improving skills, in becoming a European author. On 22 April he writes to his friend the painter Carl Larsson: 'om ett år skrifer jag sjelf på Franska!' (1954: 127) (In one year I will be writing in French!). This is also seen as revenge against Sweden's conservative cultural establishment, which contributed to Strindberg's decision to leave Sweden. Strindberg's investment in the French language seems also related to an earlier debut in French, not as a poet or a writer but as a scholar. His essay *Notice sur les Relations de la Suède avec la Chine et les pays Tartares depuis le milieu du XVIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours* (Strindberg 2009a: 245-69) was already written in French in 1878, but was first published in the first issue of *Revue de l'Extrême-Orient* in 1883 and again the following year as an offprint. In 1884 Strindberg became aware of the publication, and the circumstance boosted his self-confidence as a budding 'French' author (Strindberg 2009a: 336-56).

A parallel strategy is that Strindberg wanted to have his own works translated into French, too. On 1 April 1884, less than two months after the publication of *Sömngångarnätter*, Strindberg proposed to the publisher Claës Looström that Jules Henri Kramer should translate *Sömngångarnätter*, a work that in Strindberg's view was well-suited to introduce him to the French reading public (Strindberg 1954: 92). On 9 July 1884, he revealed to the publisher Karl Otto Bonnier that Kramer was translating *Sömngångarnätter* and proposed, among other things,

that Bonnier, in Stockholm, publish a French version of the long poem (Strindberg 1954: 252-53). Strindberg was encouraged by a positive review of the poem written by Léouzon Le Duc, a French translator of Swedish literature, published in *Le Monde poétique* in July (1884a),<sup>7</sup> and republished in Swedish in *Tiden* on 5 August (1884b). However, Bonnier rejected the writer's proposal; furthermore, no translation of *Sömngångarnätter* by Kramer is known,<sup>8</sup> and unfortunately the letter exchange between Strindberg and Kramer is lost.

Spens suggests that the writer translated part of the Swedish poem himself because he was not confident that Kramer would carry out the work (Strindberg 1995: 404-05). This would imply that *Battant les rues...* was composed in June or July 1884. However, earlier dates of composition are possible. The French poem may also have been written shortly after the publication of *Sömngångarnätter*, when Strindberg was in Switzerland and was studying French intensively (Ahlström 1956: 40). The request to Kramer in early April 1884 could indicate that Strindberg had tried to translate the poem for publication, but had given up and was asking for help. Previously, we have observed the material connection between *Battant les rues...* and the draft manuscript of *Sömngångarnätter*. If Strindberg wrote the French fragment while working on the Swedish poem in the final months of 1883, or shortly thereafter, *Battant les rues...* may have served as an attempt at self-translation, a way to develop his self-confidence.

Other questions follow. If the French poem is indeed a translation, as I have argued, did Strindberg intend to translate the whole long poem (but why, then, start from the middle of it?), or did he rather wish to create a shorter narrative poem by simply translating the Parisian section of *Tredje Natten* (from the boulevard to the negative epiphany in St. Martin des Champs), which could indeed become a self-contained poem about modernity?

#### 4. Patterns of Translational Rewriting

My following analysis is based on the assumption that *Battant les rues...* is a self-translation of the Swedish original. It is my hope that the following comparison of the two versions will make clear why this



hypothesis, which I share with Spens, is more likely.

According to Michaël Oustinoff, authors who translate their own texts can take advantage of their bilingual skills for creative purposes; the translated version may express things differently, undergo transformations and even become ‘translational rewriting’. In this respect, neither of an author’s versions, whether it be the translated or the original one, is in fact more ‘original’ than the other; both versions of the work can be mutually illuminating (Oustinoff 2001: 9-25, and [2003] 2007: 84-88; cf. D’Amico 2010: 126-27, 137). These observations apply to Strindberg as a self-translating author, even in the case of this unpublished and fairly unknown poetic fragment. While the writer tries to keep to his Swedish text, a creative rewriting occurs in *Battant les rues...* by means of addition, reduction, cutting or substitution.

The beginning shows a general adherence to the Swedish version, but presents one case of substitution:

Ute på strövtåg hela dagen  
I det dimmiga höst-Paris;  
Häpen väl, men icke betagen,  
**Och beundrar på eget vis.**  
(Strindberg 1995: 190)<sup>9</sup>

Battant les rues toute la journée  
De ce nebuleux Paris automnal,  
Ébahi, c’est vrai, mais point ensorcelé  
**Il se borne à trouver le tout ‘pas trop mal’[.]** (ll. 1-4)

The two versions differ in the way they express their questioning of indisputable truths, in this case, the grandeur of Paris. The protagonist reacts in both cases as a Strindbergian fault-finder (Ciaravolo 2012c: 287-94), though different accents are used. In Swedish, he ‘admires in his own way’, while in the French version he ‘limits himself to finding the whole thing “not too bad”’ – a more critical standpoint. The intriguing rhyme between ‘automnal’ and ‘pas trop mal’ may have contributed to the semantic choice, and to the longer fourth line; in

fact, the rhyme scheme ABAB in the French version faithfully translates from the Swedish; and this rhyme pattern, alternated with couplets, is recurrent throughout Strindberg's long poem in *knittel* metre.

Translational rewriting can also make additions. *Battant les rues...* amplifies the impressions from the boulevard, with its traffic, crowd and market:

Lastad kärra dundrar och skräller,  
 Kuskens piska som bössan smäller,  
 Tramwaysklockan varnande gnäller,  
 Omnibussen blåser trumpet;  
 Trampad hundvalp tjuter och skäller,  
**Utförsäljare och gesäller,**  
**Skråla sin sång med röst så galler**  
 (Strindberg 1995: 190)

Le camion chargé cahotte et craque  
 Le fouet du cocher comme le revolver claque  
 La sonnette du Tramway tinte et sonne  
 La coque de l'Omnibus comme tonnerre tonne  
**Le cornet du conducteur, les dia, les hue**  
**Les cris des vendeurs, des vitriers, des fontainiers,**  
**Les marchands de coco, de poires, de choux-fleurs,**  
 L'aboïement d'un chien foulé aux pieds  
**Tout fait, ensemble, un endiablé de chœur.** (ll. 12-20)

We find both addition and modification in the French passage above. The cursory mention of the sellers crying their wares in the Swedish text becomes, in the French one, a more detailed description of the market and the wares being sold. The peddlers' chants and shrill cries, too, become part of 'a devilish choir'.

Words and lines connected with the religious sphere are otherwise cut in the French fragment. The Bible, the foremost intertext in *Sömngångarnätter* (Spens 2000: 78), disappears:

Våta gatan som söndrig spegel

**Ligger solkig av dy och slam;**  
Speglar ännu av himlen flikar,  
**Ger en vrångbild dunkel och svag**  
**Av den fallna människans drag.**  
**Hungrigt öga på svultna likar**  
**Efter födan med avund fikar:**  
Lyx åt nöden ger dåligt stöd,  
**Gatans stenar ge torftigt bröd.**  
(Strindberg 1995: 190)

La rue humide, comme un brisé trumeau  
Encore réflète du ciel des gris lambeaux  
**Et des traits humains qui avancent et reculent;**  
**Des bottes crottées, des jupons en soie**  
Le luxe et la misère, s'y trouvent au choix. (ll. 7-11)

A comparison of the two excerpts above shows how elimination, addition and substitution operate together in translational rewriting. The Swedish version conveys associations with the creation of the world and the Fall of Man (Strindberg 1995: 536). Man, by God formed of the dust (Genesis 2:7), is split from his divine origin after his Fall (Genesis 3). Humanity on the boulevard, feebly reflected in the puddles of the muddy streets, has also fallen, according to *Sömngångarnätter*. Furthermore, both versions display the contrasting proximity of luxury to poverty, typical of big cities, but the Swedish version emphasises the contrast to show that the big city is a place of injustice; in doing so, it adapts a reference to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew (7:9)<sup>10</sup> to the urban context. On the other hand, the French version offers a more detailed description of the walking crowd; the gaze is directed downwards at the muddy boots and silk petticoats.

A further case of deleted religious references is found at the end, where the French version adds some details, but cuts 'torment of hell' as a characterisation of the noisy boulevard:<sup>11</sup>

Och du står där försagd och undrar,  
Om du är på ett hospital

**Eller nederst i avgrundens kval.**

(Strindberg 1995: 191)

Et toi, tu t'arrête, foudroyé du fracas,  
Curieux de savoir si tu sois confiné  
Dans un hopital au milieu des aliénés. (ll. 36-38)

It seems that Strindberg, in the process of adaptation, consciously drops the metaphysical dimension, a distinct trait in *Sömngångarnätter*, used to reinforce his view about the illusion of material progress. We know that this stance marked his distance from the atheistic and positivistic standpoint of the group of radical writers and intellectuals of Unga Sverige (Young Sweden), to whom he was still linked in 1883-84 (Strindberg 1995: 440-43; Spens 2000: 107-08, 115-16; Gedin 2004: 322). In *Sömngångarnätter* the poet makes biting comments on religion as being dogma and authority, but needs to reaffirm his faith in God, as he cannot conceive of a universe without a creator (Strindberg 1995: 213).

The view of Parisian modernity remains rather critical in French, but it is more horizontal in spatial terms (impressions from the boulevard, moving to and fro), less vertical than in the corresponding Swedish text (muddy street, heaven above, hell beneath). Why is this spatial and metaphysical element dropped in the French fragment? The strategy of turning down foreign elements is defined as domestication by Lawrence Venuti in his critical scrutiny of ethnocentric practice in translation (1995: 1-42). Even so, Venuti sees domestication and assimilation as inevitable when translating into a different language and culture ([1998] 1999: 5-6, 11, 67, 80-82). As Giuliano D'Amico has shown in his close-reading of Strindberg's self-translation of *Fadren* (The Father) into French (*Père*), the Swedish writer wants to make the text less obscure and philosophical for the French public in connection with his transnational agenda (2010: 129-31, 135). Similar domesticating strategies in the semantic area of Christian religion occur, as observed by Gunnar Ollén, in *Rêverie*, Strindberg's self-translation of *Ett drömspel* (A Dreamplay; Strindberg 1988: 153). *Fadren* and *Ett drömspel* are Strindberg's most important works to be

provided with the author's own French translation, and it is interesting to detect similar strategies of domestication in the earlier and fairly unknown poem *Battant les rues...* as well.

Another case of semantic substitution illustrates different yet related intimations of the big cities' power of attraction, a damaging power, as shown by the appearance of a crying child amidst the turmoil:

Varför grät du, okända lilla?  
**Gör den stora staden dig illa,  
Som så många har lycklig gjort?**  
(Strindberg 1995: 191)

Pourquoi pleurs-tu, petit inconnu?  
**La grande ville te fait il peur de sa cohue  
Elle qui a tant amorcé sur son glu.** (ll. 26-28)

While the poet's voice ironically asks the child 'Are you hurt by the big city, that has made so many people happy?', in the Swedish version, the French one translates explicitly: 'Are you scared by the crowd of the big city, which has caught so many in its glue?'

As a translation of forms, *Battant les rues...* has to render a Germanic metre, namely the *knittel*, into French. The *knittel* came from Germany to Sweden during the Middle Ages and was already used in important verse narratives in Old Swedish. It is a rather free verse form, consisting of four stressed syllables with a varying number of unstressed ones for each line, and a varying numbers of lines for each stanza (Ciaravolo 2012b: 169-70). We have also observed Strindberg's fairly free use of rhyme patterns in his poem.

Even though the rhythm conveyed by the *knittel* is hardly preserved in French, as words have more syllables in Romance languages and the lines tend to expand, an effort is made to adapt the rhythm and the rhyme scheme of the poem in *knittel* to the French version. The Swedish beating rhythm slows down in the French lines, which are longer and more articulate. Sometimes, however, this rhythm is rendered successfully; for instance, when a cascade of onomatopoeic verbs (one of Strindberg's special skills, already displayed in the poem

*Esplanadsystemet*, The Boulevard System; Strindberg 1995: 37-38) conveys the city's dynamism and cacophony:

Och nu smäller det åter och bullrar,  
Ringer, tjuter, hamrar och mullrar,  
Gråtes, skrattas, visslas och dundrar,  
(Strindberg 1995: 191)

Or, il claque, il tonne, il hollà!  
Il tinte, il braille, il siffle, il crie  
Il pleure, il rit, il craque[,] il scie (ll. 33-35)

## 5. Writing in French as a Transnational Strategy

These examples show Strindberg's fine skills in written French when he wrote *Battant les rues...* His vocabulary was rich, expressive and creative. During his first year abroad Strindberg lived in Paris and, in January 1884, had already moved to Lac Léman, a French-speaking area of Switzerland. During these months, as evidenced by his letters, especially from April and May 1884, he made an effort to improve his French so as to develop his first transnational strategy as an author (Strindberg 1954: 116-178 *passim*; Brandell 1983: 12-23). After breaking free from conservative Sweden, Strindberg wanted to 'conquer Paris' and Europe (Ahlström 1956: 31-52), but after all, he could not afford to abandon Swedish literature, nor did he want to. Through his time in Paris and through using the French language, he intended to receive the literary consecration bestowed by a main centre of European literature (Casanova 1999), a symbolic capital that he could spend in the national literary field (Bourdieu 1992: 73-245; Gedin 2004: 9-73; Briens 2010: 43-108). In the early 1880's Strindberg wanted to be seen, especially in Scandinavia, as a radical avant-garde of European proportions, and not simply as the most talented (and, in his view, neglected) Swedish writer.

While this first, intense French campaign was developing, Strindberg became more and more aware that translation was vital to the creation of world literature (Casanova 1999: 21-40; Damrosch 2003:

1-36). From that point on, problems connected with translation and publication in other languages became part of his daily routine as a professional writer, and his bilingual skills were of course involved in this process (Meidal and Nilsson 1995). Such a process is well-known in Strindberg's case, but more often referred to later 'French campaigns': for example when he wrote his autobiographical novel *Le Plaidoyer d'un fou / En dåres försvarstal* (The Defence of a Madman) directly in French; when he endeavoured to have his naturalistic plays performed in Paris, also through self-translation; when he abandoned drama and fiction and devoted himself to occultism and alchemy, again in order to be recognised as an authority in Paris; or when he wrote the autobiographical novels about his Inferno experience in Paris, again directly in French. However, it is important to bear in mind that such strategies were tested by Strindberg before, during a very intense period of his life from autumn 1883 to autumn 1884.

His French texts were produced, from that decisive point on, in three different ways. They were written directly in French and eventually translated into Swedish by others; they were originally written in Swedish and then translated into French by others; alternatively, Strindberg translated his own Swedish texts into French. The third strategy was rarer, because the writer, who normally worked on several projects simultaneously, could not find the time to stop, as it were, and do translation work. The evidence that these intertwined strategies had already been defined and tested during the French campaign of 1883-84 contradicts Casanova's assumption, according to which Strindberg first tried to have some of his plays and prose works translated into French; then resorted to self-translation with Père; later went on to write directly in French (*Le Plaidoyer d'un fou* and *Inferno*); and finally, after being consecrated as a 'French' writer, could return to his native language and have his works translated (Casanova 1999: 193-95).

An early example of the first strategy is the literary and political essay *Björnstjerne Björnson* (Strindberg 2009b: 108-16), about his fellow Scandinavian writer from Norway. It was written in French and published in June 1884 in the first issue of the Parisian magazine *Le Monde poétique. Revue de poésie universelle*, edited by Léon Roger-Milès; one month later it appeared in the new Swedish radical

newspaper *Tiden*, founded by Hjalmar Branting (Strindberg 2009b: 405-09). Strindberg was proud of this achievement. He had managed to write and publish a literary essay in French and could gain additional prestige in Sweden through a translation done by the editors.

The short story *Samvetskval* (Pangs of Conscience; Strindberg 1990b: 141-79), a literary and political text well suited to launch Strindberg as an international writer and a pacifist, is an example of the second strategy. It was written in Swedish in 1884 and published in European magazines and in newspapers in Denmark, Sweden, France and Germany between the summer of 1884 and the summer of 1885 (Strindberg 1990b: 184-87). The French version was written by the previously mentioned Jules Henri Kramer, a Swiss who lived in Stockholm, taught French and played an important role as a translator for Strindberg in those years.

As to the third strategy, it is known that Strindberg translated his own dramatic masterpieces *Fadren*, *Fordringsägare* (Creditors) and *Ett drömspel* (Engwall 1995; D'Amico 2010). *Battant les rues...*, although unfinished and unpublished, seems to constitute evidence that he was already practising self-translation in 1883-84.

## 6. Conclusions

The case of *Battant les rues...* is worth considering in several respects. First, the poem displays patterns of domestication that resemble the ones adopted by Strindberg in his later, better-known French self-translations. Furthermore, it shows how the writer's different strategies through the use of French (either original French composition, or translation into French by others, or self-translation) were already well-defined at an early stage; similar strategies will characterise Strindberg's subsequent and more thorough – as well as successful – attempts to 'conquer Paris' and become a European writer. Mickaëlle Cedergren (2013) observes, quite correctly, Strindberg's 'double identity' as to the way he lets his own national and international perspectives interact with each other in order to promote his authorship in the 1890s; but again, this *habitus* has its roots in an earlier practice. Finally, *Battant les rues...* confirms that Paris acted as a crucial source of inspiration



for *Sömngångarnätter*, showing how the experience of big-city life could be bilingual for Strindberg already in 1883-84 (cf. Oustinoff 2001: 26). The descriptions of Paris, both in *Battant les rues...* and in *Sömngångarnätter*, illustrate Casanova's definition of 'ville-littérature', a place that bestows consecration when writers come from abroad to publish their works there, but also when they try to depict their encounter with it as a myth of modernity, developing an already well-established tradition in French literature, oscillating between attraction and repulsion (1999: 41-55).

As did his master, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Strindberg had a strongly ambivalent attitude towards Paris; he needed to conquer and demolish, admire and unmask her all at once. This ambivalence, a main theme during his 1883-84 French campaign, runs through his oeuvre. In this respect *Sömngångarnätter* predates later definitions and descriptions of Paris, given in works such as *Tjänstekvinnans son* (The Son of a Servant; Strindberg 1996: 151-52), *Bland franska bönder* (Among French Peasants; Strindberg 1985: 9-20), *Inferno* (Strindberg 1994) and *Jakob brottas* (Strindberg 2001: 95-150).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Strindberg's manuscript is undated and untitled and the time of composition is uncertain, either 1883 or 1884, as I will argue in this article. 1883 is the year proposed in the library record and used here in the references (Strindberg 1883). *Höststämning i Paris* has been handwritten by the librarian Jeremias i Tröstlösa (Levi Rickson) as part of the record. I would like to thank Hans Nerelius and Tove Kjellander at the University of Örebro for their precious help.

<sup>2</sup> I use the English titles of Strindberg's works consistently according to Robinson 2009 and these are indicated un-italicised and in brackets. As this article concerns self-translation and analysis of the poem entails comparison of the Swedish and French texts, English back-translations of the versions of the poem are not provided, as these would create interference with the Swedish-French comparisons.

<sup>3</sup> Line numbers are mine. Square brackets are also added and indicate missing punctuation or missing text. The bracketed letters (ll. 17, 18 and 20) are reconstructed, since those parts of the manuscript paper are torn. Strindberg's mistakes concern spelling, accents, verb inflection and the gender of nouns. The correct forms are: *nébuleux* (2); *reflète* (8); *cahote* (12); *s'écrite* (21); *ressembles* (22); *Français*, *Berbère* (23); *fait-elle* (27); *sa glu* (28); *repens* (32); *t'arrêtes* (36); *es* (37); *hôpital* (38). A couple of peculiar linguistic uses are *interrog-ateur* (29) and *il holla* (33).

<sup>4</sup> This circumstance is mentioned in a caption under two pictures included in Engwall's essay (1995: 37), but the author does not see the textual relation between *Battant les rues...* and *Sömngångarnätter*.

<sup>5</sup> There is, however, a difference. According to Bachelard *rêverie* is connected to a primordial state of freedom, contemplation and peace, and becomes the origin of imagination, intuition and poetic activity. The feminine *rêverie* is different from either the masculine *rêve* (the ghosts of the unconscious taking shape during sleep) or conscious thoughts and ideas. Daydreaming in *Sömngångarnätter* combines, by contrast, imagination and conceptual thinking; unreality is not opposed to reality but is intertwined with it.

<sup>6</sup> All translations are mine.

<sup>7</sup> In his review, Léouzon Le Duc quotes some lines of the poem in his own French translation. It is the poet's ironic greeting to the statue of Denis Papin, who built the first steam machine, in St. Martin des Champs – the culmination of Strindberg's attack against the modern sanctification of science and technology (Strindberg 1995: 194-95, 538).

<sup>8</sup> The existing French translation is *Nuits de somnambule par jours éveillés* (Strindberg 1990a).

<sup>9</sup> All bolding in the passages quoted is mine.

<sup>10</sup> 'Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?' (cf. Strindberg 1995: 523, 536; Spens 2000: 93-94). Biblical quotations are taken from the Authorised King James version.

<sup>11</sup> The devilish choir ('un endiablé de chœur') has conveyed this idea at a previous point of the poem.

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