

Dreamlike Worlds of the Subconscious in Strindberg's *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*

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Abstract: Modern drama is characterized by the emergence of many revolutionary and avant-garde movements which attempted to resonate the dilemmas of the 'Modern Man'. August Strindberg who is acknowledged to be the father of Expressionism, in his plays; *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata* uses distorted images and disjointed plots in order to project a dreamlike arena in which the images from the realm of subconscious maneuver freely. In this manner he creates worlds in which personages become character types who commentate on the question of human condition. This paper studies these plays in order to shed light on the Expressionist techniques that are employed by the author. It studies the techniques that are employed by the author to make the images that originate from his subconscious accessible to the audience. Moreover, in addition to associating the play's thematic structure to the playwright's personal life, it examines it from a philosophical standpoint, as it questions the paradoxical nature of Man's existence.

Keywords: Expressionism, Subconscious, Fragmentation, Human Condition, Celestial, Terrestrial.

Expressionism; Birth and Development

Expressionism which is one of the most influential and extensive variations of naturalistic drama, was a German originated movement which emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe. Expressionism is a term which is borrowed from the fine arts; it refers to a sort of explosion or in other words the expression of something that is suppressed in the unconscious or psychology of the artist. This term is borrowed from Sigmund Freud's conceptions of the suppressed passions of the individuals; those passions that are held back by any external forces. The German playwrights Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller developed this form into its most effective state through, "short, episodic structure and long monologues of internalized tension, followed by staccato half-sentences of dialogue that left a rhythm of broken order and chaos" (Rollyson, 2003, 2).

The protagonists portrayed in such new types of plays were individuals living in suppressed and regimented societies that believed in stereotypes. They endeavored to challenge the restrictions imposed by the society and to free themselves from the shackles of conformity. This kind of representation was a reaction to the side-effects of modernism and the enormous transformations that developed in the late Victorian age. The Expressionist writers who mainly belonged to the middle class, viewed factors such as the bourgeoisie complacency, industrialization and urbanization of the European communities as issues that needed to be addressed and thus they attempted to raise awareness for them. In other words, these alienated individuals who were disillusioned by the aftermath of modernity tried to reflect their psychological states through their works of art. In order to illustrate their sense of alienation and powerfully emotional states of mind, they used symbols and dreamlike elements in their works to distort the objective features of the world. Painters such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Edvard Munch were some of the pioneers of this movement in art, who used vibrant colors and distorted figures to portray the deepest states of man's psychology and emotional states. These Artists were inspired by the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche, who introduced the concept of the 'New Man'. Nietzsche's theories, which in a sense became the cornerstone of imminent modernist movements, asked for breaking the shackles of conventional briefs and

emphasized on “cultivating individual willpower and transcending conventional notions of reasoning and morality” (Milne., 2009, 253).

Aligned with such upheavals in drama, playwrights such as August Strindberg, Georg Kaiser, Frank Wedekind and Ernst Toller tried to experiment with new methods, hence they employed expressionistic themes and elements in their dramas. These writers tried to convey emotion and meaning instead of reality, i.e., subjective emotions rather than objective reality and in order to convey their subjective moods, they often used techniques such as distortion and exaggeration. Among these writers, Strindberg as one of the forerunners of expressionist drama, attempted to respond to the materialistic age that had resulted in a kind of spiritual crisis in human beings. He was one of the pioneers who resonated the call for the explicit representation of the internal aspects of the characters. His view is well stated in his deservedly well-known preface to *Miss Julie* (1888), where he states,

It seems to me that the psychological process is what interests people most today. Our inquisitive souls are no longer satisfied with seeing a thing happen; we must also know how it happens. We want to see the wires themselves, to watch the machinery, to examine the box with the false bottom, to take hold of the magic ring in order to find the joint, and look at the cards to see how they are marked (Vowles, 1962, 36).

Hence, his symbolic drama became his medium to represent the unknown as well as the very abstract features in mankind within the everchanging world of the twentieth century. In other words, the hegemony of the family as a social institution as well as other religious and political institutions over the individuals was one of the significant aspects that inspired him to portray the innermost worlds within themselves through their works of art. Henceforth, similar to the dramas of the Expressionist writers, his art could be considered as a drama of social protest, i.e., projecting characters who tried to reject some certain mores of their social classes. This characteristic, as Burkhard contends, made Strindberg to fluctuate between extremes such as, a bourgeois, bohemian, monkish, mystic, indulgent and diabolical, yet it didn't affect the very high quality of his “theatrical and exhibitionistic” drama (1933, 165). In order to depict the individual's mental state, the leading personage in an expressionist play often pours out her or his woes in the form of long monologues. These monologues are often framed in an elliptical, concentrated and almost a telegraphic language which explores the character's spiritual malaise, his rebellion against the old generation's system of values. The main character's internal development is often explored through a succession of pictures that are loosely linked, or some stations, during which the protagonist revolts against a traditional set of values and searches for a higher spiritual vision of life. This drama of social and political protest mainly sketches a horrifying image of the urban life and the collapse of civilization as well as the bourgeois values and it sometimes calls for change.

Thematic and Technical Aspects of Expressionistic Drama

One of the major themes of expressionistic drama is regeneration, in a sense that the German writers attempted to forge a new future for the War-Torn Germany. The birth of the New Man (the *Übermensch* they called it), the New Vision and the New Society were some of the major concerns of such writers. Through their writings they tried to portray how man's spirituality is linked to his country's regeneration. Another significant aspect of the Expressionist Drama was the human condition which is defined through characters who passionately tried to "seek meaning in their lives; these characters often discover that the life they have been living is a sham, and through a sign or circumstance, or dint of sheer will, attempt to change their lot" (Milne., 2009, p. 259). Alienation is another aspect of the human beings' life which was tackled by Expressionist writers. Alienation in such an age that caused disintegration which was in turn an outcome of war, society and family, became one of the overarching aspects of Expressionistic Art. Such thematic concerns were mainly presented through a style characterized by abstractions and monologues in order to represent the inner aspects of the characters. Unlike the tradition and customs of former dramatists, Expressionist writers didn't want to present the world from a random perspective that other people, "might see it or apprehend it through any of the senses, but rather as they emotionally and psychologically experience it" (Milne., 2009, p. 260). For this reason, monologues became one of the integral elements of the play through which characters revealed their insights, emotions and psychological states.

In this artistic theory and practice the subjective mood and subconscious emotions and thoughts of the writer, the conflict between the abstract forces, or the hidden realities of life are pictured by various non-naturalistic methods

such as; abstraction, distortion, exaggeration, primitivism, fantasy, and symbolism. Through such a variety of techniques, expressionist writers were mainly concerned with general truths rather than particular situations; hence they explored the predicaments of representative symbolic presentations of characters rather than of fully developed individualized characters. Emphasis in Expressionist Drama is laid not on the outer world, which is merely sketched in and barely defined in place or time, but on the internal, on an individual's mental state. This movement however came to an end due to its intensely personal quality which made it inaccessible for the audience, its highly poetic language and its revolutionary attitude which forced the Nazi regime to label them as a decadent and corrupting movement and consequently resulted in the banishment of all of their activities.

August Strindberg as an Expressionist Dramatist

Johan August Strindberg, the Swedish dramatist, novelist, short story writer and essayist is considered as the father of Expressionistic Drama. This prolific writer was called by Eugene O'Neil " the most modern of moderns, the greatest interpreter in the theatre of the character's spiritual conflicts which constitute the drama- the blood- of Our Lives today" (Cited by Henderson, 1926, pp. 3-72). Strindberg was tormented by many mental illnesses and psychological disorders which were a result of his traumatic childhood and three disastrous marriages that all ended in divorce. In his autobiographical novel *The Son of a Servant*, he describes some of those traumas from his childhood. Hence his plays were employed as a medium for confessing the unexpressed. Arthur Burkhard labels Strindberg as one of the most revelatory writers, who was "mainly interested in portraying his own self, a very protean, ever-changing self" (1933, 165). The psychological problems that he was suffering from resulted in a misogynistic hatred that is reverberated through his writings. He turned into a writer who was not able to think objectively. His dislike of women which turned into hatred and frenzy, as an overarching theme is projected in his works which show the man as superior, trustful and stronger in mind and heart in contrast to the female characters who are portrayed as weak in both body and intellect. In this conflict of the sexes which reverberates through many of his works, women are represented as *feme fatales* who manage to defeat their superior race with their treacherous cunning manner.

Strindberg's writing career can be divided into 3 major stages; the first 10 years which he mainly wrote historical romances (1870-80); the second one in which he wrote the pessimistic naturalistic dramas (1885-90) and the third one which is his expressionistic period (1898-1912). Through these three stages Strindberg went through an evolution as a writer with more creative powers that draws the attention of many critics. Robert Brustein concerning Strindberg's style in dramaturgy contends; "because of his restless romanticism and particularly because he initiated an alternative anti- realistic theatre in opposition to Ibsen's realism, Strindberg has generally been regarded as Ibsen's Anti-mask , the non-conformist bohemian in contrast with the stolid, practical bourgeois"(1964, 87, 134). Strindberg's dramatic style started to evolve and change from the realist and the naturalist period. He was able to surpass his predecessor and at the beginning of his career, at the age of twenty-three, "like young Goethe ... produced a surprisingly mature plays, which impresses us today as the masterpiece of his early period, and which presently made him a leader in the literature of his continent" (Burkhard, 1933, 164). His theatrical initiatives and his artistic potentials enabled him to move and employ a cinematic presentation, i.e., "moving from scene to scene, dealing with personal and universal symbols in great sweeps of ideas, depicting historical and archetypal characters, trying out a fragmented, internalized communication of character, theme, and plot that eventually earned the name expressionism and became the major framework of German drama between the world wars"(enotes.com).

Strindberg's fully developed and advanced plays are *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata* which project the author's attempt to capture the dream in the form of drama. In both plays the writer breaks down the laws of casualty and logic and creates a fluid and subjective sequence of events that are dominated by the hallucinations as well as the visions of a dreamer. Both plays revolve around an allegorical journey and many symbolic encounters which have symbolic meanings and during these allegorical quests many philosophical ideas concerning the Human Condition are revealed.

Dreamlike Images of the Subconscious Portrayed in Strindberg's *A Dream Play*

A Dream Play is a very good example of Expressionist drama where Strindberg builds a montage of various scenes to portray the epical journey of the daughter of Indra who is the Indian God to the Earth. The work is presented

in a dreamlike manner and from the very beginning the writer makes it clear that the whole story might be the projections and the visions of a character that is presented by the name of The Dreamer. Although the journey is presented as a series of vignettes that are loosely connected to each other, the thematic aspects tend to give it unity as a whole.

This play is structured around the disillusionment and disappointment of some people who have dreams and aspirations. Indra sends his daughter Agnes to Earth to determine whether the constant complaints of humans can be justified or not. During this journey she meets different kinds of personalities through the people; an officer, an attorney and the poet serve as central figures of the play who share their experiences with various humans. The officer, who is a high ranking person throughout the course of the story changes from a young and hopeful soldier to a weary and hopeless individual because he hopelessly wastes his time on his dream lover. When he takes the daughter of Indra to the Foul Strand, they witness the everlasting misery of the mankind together.

The second character who is the attorney is presented as a pale and discolored man with an ugly face and bleeding hands which are the result of his dealings with crimes, betrayals and injustice that he has faced throughout his life. He has been denied by the academics and this makes him a Christ-like figure who is rejected by the society because he aided the helpless people. He marries the daughter of Indra and raises her awareness about the torments of living in poverty and the dilemma of family life. The third character is a visionary poet who is presented as someone who takes baths in mud in order to get his body back from the ethereal and the sublime regions of thought to the earthly and dirty matters of the life. He's a person who is both idealistic and cynical (Strindberg, 1964, 192). He complains about the injustice and the hypocrisy of people in the worldly life and as a result reaches out for the help of the gods. When he sees that people around him become hopeless, he realizes that he can redeem himself only through suffering and death. Through this journey, Agnes understands the reasons behind the sorrow of humanity and decides to return to heaven in order to report it all to Indra.

The majority of the techniques that are employed in A Dream Play are all calculated to lead to the final effect that it gives a dream-like quality to the play, i.e., portraying a world where characters and events are fluid, shifting, and unpredictable. In order to give this effect to the play the dramatist removes all dimensions and logical restrictions such as; time, space, life and death as well as reality and myth. Hence, in this work the boundary between life and death is removed and sometimes the living converse with the dead. It is hard to discern the time and setting of the storyline. Through such a fragmentation in terms of structure as well as dialogue, the play reflects the fragmented nature of dreams, as if characters are speaking in overlapping whispers. The play also features distorted reality, with events that are beyond the laws of nature, and a focus on the inner world of the protagonist.

This world that is inspired by the Hindu and Buddhist philosophies tries to convey this idea that man's whole life is a dream and that's why we should not impose rational and logical laws on it. In other words, dreams are illogical with no time and place boundary and incorporating the same structure to the process of the lives of human beings, enabling the author to show that man's life is absurd and has no meaning. The writer tries to depict the condition of human beings and the hallucinatory nature of their conceptions about life and the afterlife.

The 'Dream' that the writer compares to life is always very difficult to be explained or decoded and the characters within the story that represent mankind go through a life of suffering and disillusionment and with no option but waiting. However, in the end when the mystery is resolved they find nothing there. All of mankind even the academics who are represented through characters like the Deans (philosophy, medicine jurisprudence and theology); those who are very proud of their knowledge, have failed to explain the human condition i.e., the nothingness. In one of his speeches the lawyer sees life as a monotonous and meaningless process where all human aspirations and advancements come to an end through death.

THE LAWYER: That's all life is – going through it again and again. – Look at the teacher in there. He got his doctor's degree yesterday, was crowned with the laurel wreath, honored with a ten-gun salute, climbed Parnassus, and got a medal from the king – and today he begins school all over again, asking how much two times two is, and he'll keep on asking until the day he dies...That's that (Strindberg, 1964, 207).

This representational method reminds us of Existentialism that evolved through expressionism and became one of the aftermaths of the Expressionist movement (Vowles, 1962, 37). The difference between Strindberg's philosophy and the latter is that for Strindberg there is no way of giving meaning to the life of man, but some of the Existentialists believe that through an active engagement in social activities people can give meaning to their lives and alleviate that existential burden. In this play the Officer for instance has been waiting for Victoria but all his suffering never

ends and he never enjoys love. Mother never enjoys the everlasting companionship of her children since she raises her children and eventually one day they would leave. There are many other examples of this dualism and paradox in the lives of human beings, where light ends with darkness; love ends with loss; happiness with misery and joy with sorrow. This kind of worldview which is simply the outer product of the mentally disordered writer who believes that human beings deserve sympathy and pity because they have to endure this paradoxical nature of life. One of the final speeches which is delivered by the Poet who is portrayed as the dramatic personae. Through him Strindberg delivers a message that is highly colored by the writer's personal dilemmas;

THE POET: If you knew how much sorrow and misery I caused by discharging the obligations I owed to my calling in life – notice: my calling, which is the most important duty of all- you wouldn't even want to touch me.

THE DAUGHTER. Why? What did you do?

THE POET: My father placed all his hopes in me...., he dreamed about how I would carry on the business he had built up. I ran away from business school and my father never got over it. My mother wanted me to study religion, but I just didn't have the heart for it. So she disowned me. I had a friend who gave me a helping hand when I was really down and out. But my friend wanted to crush all the causes I spoke for and fought for. I had to cut down my best friend and benefactor in order to be true to myself. Since then I've never known any peace. They call me traitor, scum! And a fat lot of good it does me to hear my conscience tell me "You did right," because the next moment it's telling me "You did wrong!" And that's life for you (Strindberg 1964, 230-231).

This quote very meticulously highlights the writer's relationship with her parents as well as the community. His rejection of conventional values of a family which was trying to deprive him from having an independent self is a dominant theme of this part. Her Mother's disowning of the writer, and her careless attitude towards him, is another important aspect of the speech in the sense that it had a prolonged impact on him, as it made him suffer from a destabilized and fragmented identity.

One of the final speeches that is delivered by Agnes summarizes Strindberg's observation of life and the way he perceives the existence of humans. This is presented through all of the characters' aspirations and hopes as well as the disillusionment and the frustration that they face at the end of each period of joy and happiness. The Daughter's final lines recap the whole message of the author, which is spoken in a very shocking and disillusioning manner as she states;

Very well, I shall tell you, ... At the dawn of time before the sun shone, Brahma, the divine primal potency, went forth and let himself be seduced by Maya, the creative mother of the world, in order that he might propagate himself. The divine element thus joined with earthly matter. This was the fall of heaven. Consequently, the world and its inhabitants and life itself are nothing more than phantoms, mirages, images in a dream.-

THE POET: My dream!

THE DAUGHTER: A true-to-life dream. – Now, in order to free them- selves from earthly matter the progeny of Brahma seek deprivation and suffering. – There you have suffering as the redeemer. – But this yearning for suffering comes into conflict with the craving for pleasure. Which is love. – Do you still not understand what love is, offering the most sublime joys along with the most profound suffering, sweetest when it is most bitter? Do you understand now what woman is? Woman, through whom sin and death entered into life?

THE DAUGHTER: Farewell, my friend. Tell your family of men that where I'm going I shall remember them. And that in your name I shall convey their pleas and protests to the throne on high. Farewell! (Strindberg, 1964, 232- 233).

This moment of disillusionment and despair ends with The Daughter's departure, and as she enters the castle, the sound of music in the background is raised. The castle starts burning and projects a wall consisting of despaired human faces that are portrayed as grieving and questioning the reason behind their sorrow. As the castle is caught

in flames the bud of a flower on the roof blooms into a huge chrysanthemum flower. In this way the work's very intricate pattern, i.e., being structured on similar contradictions and conflicts such as; "Body versus Spirit, Fair Haven versus Foul Strand, Winter versus Summer, North versus South, Beauty versus Ugliness, Fortune versus Misfortune, Love versus Hate" is brought to the fore in this stage of the play. (Brustein, 1964, 4). Through the final lines when Agnes makes the decision to return to heaven, she recalls the story of Brahma and the Maya to bring to light the answer to the main riddle of the play. He reminds the audience that human beings were doomed to be created as creatures with two conflicting natures i.e., the physique and the spirit; the flesh and the soul, one belonging to the terrestrial realm and the other belonging to the celestial. Their heavenly part, i.e., their spirit moves them to aspire for the joy of divinity while their body brings them down to earthly torments with the only option which is a stoic perseverance.

Strindberg as a writer always believed in the importance of the dream life, and this play is a work which crystallizes his artistic endeavor to reproduce a dream on the stage through stunning dramatic techniques. In this work we can notice that the Dreamer whose "single consciousness holds away over the split doubled and multiplied the characters," is actually Strindberg himself, whose voice is resonated through characters such as the officer, the poet, the lawyer and possibly even through Indra's daughter (Henderson, 1926, 3-72). As the writer describes The Dreamer at the beginning of the play, "for him there are no secrets, no incongruities, no scruples and no law. He never condemns nor acquits, but only relates and since on the whole, there is more pain than pleasure in the dream, a tone of melancholy, and of compassion for all living things, runs through the swaying narrative" (Henderson, 1926, 3-72). Because there are no secrets in A Dream Play, it is even more confessional and self-exploratory than Strindberg's famous work The Father. Here we can notice that the writer does not see drama merely as an act of revenge or self-revelation, rather he considers it as a medium for expressing compassion for all living things.

Dreamlike Images of the Subconscious Portrayed in Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*

The Ghost Sonata is one of Strindberg's chamber plays, which he wrote for an intimate circle of audiences. It was mainly inspired by chamber music of composers like Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Mozart, and Ludwig Beethoven. With its musical quality this play achieves its effect through repeating a variety of themes rather than developing a plot that is linear and traditional. The play mainly centers revolves around some revelations of the past lives of some of the characters. This play is set in an unreal world which the writer called a mystical dream world or kama-loka, i.e., "the state of flesh, desires, and need" a name that Strindberg gave to the transitional realm that mortals have to wait before reaching the Kingdom of Death (Stockenström, 1992, 112). As it is evident from the title, the characters are part of a nightmare or a dream which gives the audience a prospect of the future and at the same time the ugly events that have occurred before. The world that Strindberg creates in this play is populated by ghosts, vampires and mysterious characters. This play could be considered as the author's own traumatic vision or figments of his tortured imagination. Removing the play from the realistic setting and creating surreal and unreal settings was one of the characteristics which became popular among the German dramatists and Absurdist writers. This play is a grim picture of a fallen world which is based on illusions and deceptions; a place where human beings are bound together by sin and guilt and due to this all are condemned to suffer.

The work shows a group of characters who represent human beings from different social levels living in a house which stands for the realm of the mortals. Being positioned in this realm, these characters are, as Stockenström argues, symbolically waiting for "the process of purification to liberate their souls from all the illusions created by their pretenses and beliefs in the physical/ material world" (1992, 112). The play starts with the Student who tries to drink water from the fountain in front of the apartment. The Student approaches the Milkmaid and tries to communicate with her but the Milkmaid reacts in horror since she is a ghost and was not supposed to be seen by the Student. The Old Man is in the same way astonished because of the young student's strange behavior, however, the Student's special kind of perception is revealed to be due to the fact that he is born on Sunday. After a brief conversation old man discloses a fact that the student is the son of a person who swindled him out of his savings (Strindberg, 1962, 108-109). The Old Man tries to lure the young Student into meeting the daughter of the Colonel, who is actually the Old Man's daughter. He invites the student to attend Richard Wagner's opera Die Walküre (1856; The Valkyrie). Later on the old man confesses that he wants to perpetuate himself and achieve eternity through the student who is young and energetic.

Gradually, the calm and deceptive atmosphere gives way to some revelations about the inhabitants of the house that have been interconnected in sexual and adulterous relationships. The Lady in black for example is the daughter of the Superintendent's wife by a former consul who is dead, and whose body is in one of the rooms upstairs; and this adulterous pact is explained through the Superintendent's new position in the house. In the same way the Lady in Black is now having an affair with the Aristocrat who has asked for divorce from his former wife, and waiting to "inherit a fortune" (Strindberg, 1962, 113-115).

Later on in the story, all the characters gather in the Round Room on the ground floor where the Colonel and his wife the Mummy, are to be served a ghost supper. At this point the Mummy emerges to speak to the Old Man about their daughter who is sitting next door in the Hyacinth Room. In a verbal fight between the Old Man and the Colonel, their adulterous and unethical background gets revealed. In the Hyacinth Room the younger student expresses his love for the Hyacinths, and tries to explain the similarity that he finds between the flower and the universe. When the young student recalls a memory of his father who tried to unveil the falseness and corruption of all of his friends, delivers a longer speech about his perfectionism and asks for a savior. However, this speech, which is a symbol for the bitter reality of the human condition, has an unexpected impact, and like a verbal assault destroys the Young Lady who crumples and dies. The play's final words in fact recall the Daughter of Indra's final words; "Your liberator is coming,... You poor little child! Child of this world of illusion and guilt and suffering and death – this world of eternal change and disappointment and never-ending pain! May the Lord of Heaven have mercy on you as you journey forth..." (Strindberg, 1962, 151-152). The room then disappears and the painting of the Island of the Death by Arnold Böcklin emerges in the background.

Structured in such a dreamlike world, *The Ghost Sonata* explores the themes of death, decay, and the meaning of life. It is set in a mysterious and ghostly world, where reality is distorted, and the boundaries between life and death are blurred. Similar to Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, this work is characterized by a disjointed structure and fragmented dialogues which convey the intense emotions of the characters. In this play from every outset, Strindberg creates a dark and haunting world that is inhabited by ghosts and other supernatural creatures.

The allegorical play which reminds the audience of morality plays such as *Everyman* with a dreamlike quality uses various types of metaphors to create its theatrical effects. The house that represents this life shows people in various social classes and different levels of the building. Some live at the top level, the Colonel who lives in ground level represents the middle class and the Superintendent who stands for the lower class people lives below. In a higher level, as Tornqvist contends, this setting (the house) implies that all houses are one and the same, i.e., "the House of Life". Hence it becomes a "metaphor of the dreamlike, illusory nature of life" (1995, 35). In such a world, the poor people are not given any position in the house as they live outside. All of the characters are linked through a chain of horrible memories of guilt and betrayals. Adulterous relationships relate the Old Man, the Mummy, the Colonel and the Old Man's fiancé to the Consul and the Superintendent's wife. Their daughter who stands for the second generation is connected to the same chain of the sins, since she is having an affair with the Aristocrat. This network of sins in the story shows the corrupt nature of the society from the author's perspective who sees all generations in all social classes being interconnected in a house of sin.

This play can be considered as a metaphoric spiritual journey "of human redemption" (Stockenström, 1992, 100), a journey of self-realization on the part of the young Student, who represents the the innocence of mankind since he's born on Sunday morning and has a prophetic vision to see the dead and the living at the same time (Strindberg, 1962, 113). The steamship bell which announces this metaphoric journey exposes the audience to the light that shines through the student's Dream house. This is a metaphor for the illusory and deceptive nature of the journey of life. The journey takes the younger students from the exterior part of the building deeper into the Round Room and finally into the Hyacinth Room. The play's initiation with the sunlight and the water which stand for life and purity gradually fade into a visionary and dreamy world of the dead. This transition to a transcendental world of the dead is highlighted through the early sunlight beams which come from the outside being replaced by a very strong irradiance that comes from the inside of the house. As the student goes through this journey and he comes up with moments of epiphany, the revelations of the sins make the background dark and dim and the clouds cover the sky. The student who suffers from this dullness tries to invoke light and happiness and sings the "song of the sun" which is a useless attempt (1962, 140).

In the light of the abovementioned, one can notice the affinities between this play and *A Dream Play*. In terms of characterization, similar to the former play, the characters represent personality types standing for Humanity, or certain classes. Similar to the former play, the characters in the *Ghost Sonata* are alienated, lost and despondent. They

suffer from the sins which are the result of the animalistic tendencies that exist within all humans and at the same time aspire for a kind of spiritual fulfillment due to their spiritual essence that is inherited from the divine source. The Young Lady, (hyacinth girl) is the only character who stands for a promising love and hope for a better future. She helps the idealist and romantic Student understand the misery of mankind in a new light. Despite this, she is a complicated character in the sense that she is too weak to have an independent soul and at the same time too ethereal to endure the slow destruction of forces of the routine daily life. In a sense, it is her weakness which is caused by the social forces that are beyond her control. Her enthusiasm for cooking for instance has been taken away from her by the Cook who is presented as a vampire. Presenting herself as a victim is what draws the Student to her. Despite such characteristics, the girl, as Sprinchorn argues, turns out to be similar to Hummel and the Cook, in the sense that "they are parasites who consume without producing [and] it is this that makes her beauty poisonous" (1962, xxii).

Hyacinth which is the flower of her soul, with its fragrance which is as strong as the first winds confuses the student's senses, and he complains; "they deafen me, blind me, drive me out of my mind – impale me with their poisonous arrows that stab my heart and set my head afire! ..." (Strindberg, 1962, 141). This makes a metaphor for the unrequited love, a theme that was an overarching idea in Strindberg's plays, as it resonates his successive moments of despair, unfulfilled love and failures in marriages which resulted in his various phases of mental breakdowns. In a broader sense, the death of the Young Lady in the end stands for the nonsense conditions of the human beings who aspire for love and romantic ideals as a means of giving meaning to their lives. The flower's deceptive beauty which is bathed in a radiant light, in the end is put into a sharp contrast with the vision of the Island of the Dead, to make the audience ponder on the question of human condition.

From a psychoanalytical perspective this play could be linked to the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1905), in which Sigmund Freud studies human's psychology and mind. Freud tried to justify human beings' actions and behaviors as being related to their mental illnesses. The vast unconscious (which is the reservoir of suppressed wishes and unfulfilled desires) exists underneath the surface of our awareness. These subconscious desires as he argues are reflected in the form dreams, which he defines as the "language of the unconscious" (Dobie, 2012, 60). In his works Freud sheds light on the significance of the unconscious mind which is a place where the dreams could be interpreted as a significant factor for understanding the suppressed desires. In the light of the abovementioned, it becomes quite evident that the author's suppressed emotions, his personal dilemmas and his suppressed desires are reflected in this dream like and unreal setting which is the outer product of the author's mind and consciousness. In the same way as Sigmund Freud studied the dreams of the individuals to unveil the suppressed desires, Strindberg created this world of dream to present his study of the nature of mankind and to capture the essence of the human condition and the mysteries of death and the afterlife, questions that were to be tackled by succeeding works of the theatre of the absurd.

Conclusion

Taking all technical and thematic aspects of the both plays into consideration, we can notice that similar to the expressionistic painters, Strindberg tries to employ his powerful and haunting works to portray life from his own perspective as he saw it. His version of life is dramatically changed by his personal emotions and thoughts. He has distorted the reality to show his own version of a dreamy world or an unreal world that is different from the audience expectations. Thus, Strindberg's plays crystallize the thoughts, psyche, emotions and the concerns of the author which in various vignettes of Expressionistic representations are staged to the audience. Strindberg's whole life of illusion sufferings, pain, guilt and disappointment is simply projected through *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata* which are to be remembered as the hallmarks of modernist drama. Through their fragmented structure, distorted reality, intense emotions, and focus on the inner world of the protagonist, Strindberg's plays convey the ideas and themes central to the expressionist movement. These elements also serve to enhance the impact of the plays' themes of death, decay, and the meaning of life. Strindberg's works continue to be widely studied and performed today, and their expressionistic elements remain a defining characteristic of his dramatic style. By exploring the human psyche, the subconscious, and the mysteries of death and the afterlife, Strindberg created powerful and haunting works that continue to captivate audiences today.

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