

# Faust and The Ghost Sonata

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie**

Band (Jahr): **8 (1979)**

PDF erstellt am: **04.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-858405>

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EGIL TÖRNQVIST

*Faust and The Ghost Sonata*

“Göthe [sic] has written five stupid volumes and three ingenious ones. You can trust me, for I have read all eight.” At the age of 26, in a letter to Siri von Essen and her husband<sup>1</sup>, Strindberg was ready to make this black-and-white statement about the writer who, along with Shakespeare, Swedenborg and one or two more, has probably meant the most to him.

Although many scholars have made passing comment on the Goethe-Strindberg relationship, no one to date seems to have paid extensive attention to it. Walter Berendsohn’s ten-page essay *Goethe och Strindberg* from 1949 still appears to be the only study especially devoted to this subject<sup>2</sup>. In this essay Berendsohn quotes or refers to so much relevant material that he hardly finds time, or space, to analyze it. The essay, in other words, carries the note of a first orientation in the field; as such it is extremely helpful.

Strindberg’s acquaintance with *Faust* dates back to the 1860’s. As a pupil at the Klara school he was then confronted with the original German text (SS L, 274). In 1868, at the age of 19, he seems to have been impressed by the Weltanschauung of the play: “Johan’s thoughts”, we read in *The Son of a Servant*, “now dwelt on Goethe’s *Faust*” (SS XVIII, 303). In *Old Stockholm*, published in 1883, the Faust legend is referred to as “the profoundest poem of the Reformation” (SS VI, 83). And in his essay on “Goethe’s Faust” from 1909, Strindberg bestows highest praise on the drama; he calls it “the greatest poem of mankind” (SS L, 273).

These three references may suffice to indicate that Goethe’s *Faust*,

<sup>1</sup> *Strindbergs Brev*, I, Sthlm 1948, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> The essay is found in *Samlaren* 1949, Uppsala 1950, pp. 118–128. *Faust* is especially discussed on pp. 120–122.

as Berendsohn at some length has demonstrated, fascinated Strindberg throughout his entire life.

Thus, in the 1880's Strindberg actually seems to have played with the idea of writing a drama about Mephistopheles, as well as one about Faust<sup>3</sup>. As a character Faust, of course, appears in *The Nightingale of Wittenberg*. And the curator in *The Black Glove* Strindberg himself regarded as a counterpart of Faust (letter to Aug. Lindberg 24.9.1911).

Explicit references to Faust can be found both in Strindberg's letters and in such belletristic works as *The Red Room*, *Inferno*, *Alone* and *The Gothic Rooms*.

A glance at Strindberg's library, as preserved in Nordiska museet in Stockholm, bears further witness to his interest in *Faust*<sup>4</sup>. Here C. von Loeper's edition of the play (Hempels Klassiker-Ausgaben) can be found, "the best and cheapest edition" according to Strindberg (SS L,274). In the margin of the "Vorbemerkungen des Herausgebers" he has made frequent pencil marks.

From the essay we know that Strindberg was familiar with all the Swedish translations of *Faust* to date: Johan Andersson's, H.M. Melin's and Viktor Rydberg's (which he utterly disliked). Of these translations, Andersson's and Rydberg's can be found in the library; in the latter Strindberg has underlined passages which he found especially poor. In the essay he also mentions Boyesen's commentary to *Faust* (Reclams Universalbibliothek); this is lacking in the library where, on the other hand, E. Kilian's *Goethes Faust auf der Bühne* (München & Leipzig 1907) and S. Szamonovsky's "Faust in Erfurt" (taken from a larger work) can be found. The library also contains the "Volksbuch" *Doctor Faust* in German, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in German translation and Gounod's opera *Faust* in French as well as in Swedish translation.

In view of this situation, it is not surprising that several scholars have assumed an influence from *Faust* on Strindberg's oeuvre. Thus an early sketch for the opening of *Master Olof*, according to Lamm, reveals the

<sup>3</sup> BERENDSOHN, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> For information about the *Faust* literature in Strindberg's library I am indebted to Mr. Stig Appelgren at the Nordiska Museet.

importance of Goethe's drama even for the young Strindberg<sup>5</sup>. Berendsohn believes that *Faust* has helped inspire such plays as *Lucky Peter's Travels*, *The Keys of Heaven*, *To Damascus*, *A Dream Play* and *The Great Highway* – all of them illustrating the vanity of life. Expressed in this very general way, the parallel fails to convince. Much more credible is Berendsohn's assumption that the silver wedding of Romeo and Juliet in *The Keys of Heaven* is inspired by the golden wedding of Oberon and Titania in *Faust I*<sup>6</sup>. Ollén has compared Margaretha in *The Secret of the Guild* to Gretchen<sup>7</sup>. Smedmark points out that the Brownie in *Lucky Peter's Travels*, whose ring opens the door to the land of heart's desire, is intended as a counterpart of the "Erdgeist"<sup>8</sup>. Werin sees the hero of the novel *By the Open Sea* as "a modern Faust, an 'Übermensch', versed in natural science and spiritually cultivated". And since Borg bears an unmistakable kinship with his creator, it is not surprising that Werin finds reason to call Strindberg himself "the Swedish Faust"<sup>9</sup>.

In *The Keys of Heaven* the Smith, after having journeyed through a realm of fantasy, finally finds his problems solved – a course of events which according to Smedmark recalls the situation in *Faust*<sup>10</sup>. That the Unknown in *To Damascus* resembles Faust both Børge and Kabell have observed<sup>11</sup>. Stockenström, although he seems more inclined to point out the differences between Goethe's double-drama and Strindberg's trilogy, nevertheless entitles his central chapters on *To Damascus*: "A 'Faust-Drama' about the Reconciliation of the Unknown"<sup>12</sup>. Resemblances between *Faust* and *The Ghost Sonata*, finally, have been noted by Evert Sprinchorn and myself<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *Strindbergs dramer*, I, Sthlm 1924, p. 90f.

<sup>6</sup> BERENDSOHN, p. 121.

<sup>7</sup> *Strindbergs dramatik*, Sthlm 1961, p. 82

<sup>8</sup> *August Strindbergs dramer*, II, Sthlm 1962, p. 376.

<sup>9</sup> *Den svenske Faust*, Lund 1950, pp. 27, 37.

<sup>10</sup> *August Strindbergs dramer*, IV, Sthlm 1970, p. 150.

<sup>11</sup> VAGN BØRGE, *Strindbergs mystiske Teater*, Khvn 1942, p. 230. AAGE KABELL, Påsk og det mystiske teater, *Edda* 1954, p. 160. In the last chapter of his more recent work *Strindberg, Prometheus des Theaters* (Wien & München 1974) Børge especially stresses the relationship between *Faust II* and the post-Inferno plays.

<sup>12</sup> GÖRAN STOCKENSTRÖM, *Ismael i öknen. Strindberg som mystiker*, Uppsala 1972, p. 311.

<sup>13</sup> *The Chamber Plays by August Strindberg*, N.Y. 1962, pp. xix and 226 (notes 3 and 8).

While various scholars have thus paid passing attention to the relationship between Goethe's *Faust* and Strindberg's work, no one has discussed the matter at any length – or depth. To do so is, however, to choose a subject suitable for a dissertation, not for a lecture. What I here wish to consider is much more modest in scope: the relationship between *Faust* and *The Ghost Sonata*, Strindberg's third chamber play, written early in 1907, published and produced the year after.

*Faust* is, among many other things, a play about an ageing man who regains his youth. *The Ghost Sonata* is, among many other things, a play about the relationship between an old man, Hummel, and a young man, the student Arkenholz. Hummel's interest in the Student corresponds, I would suggest, to Faust's rejuvenation. In the Student Hummel sees himself as a young man; or to put it in another way: the Student incarnates an earlier stage in Hummel's life – while Arkenholz' development in the play suggests that he may turn into another Hummel. Together the Student and Hummel, the young and the old man, give a picture of man, of the fate of man. This situation recalls the one in *Faust*; in Buchwald's words: «Während wir Faust gleich als *Mann* kennenlernen, ist der Schüler ein *Jüngling*, und zwar ein Jüngling, dem wir zutrauen, dass einmal ein Faust aus ihm werden wird»<sup>14</sup>.

When the Schüler first appears in Faust's Studierzimmer, he says:

Ich wünschte recht gelehrt zu werden,  
Und möchte gern, was auf der Erden  
Und in dem Himmel ist, erfassen,  
Die Wissenschaft und die Natur.

This enormous thirst for knowledge has earlier characterized Faust; yet after having engrossed himself in philosophy, law, medicine and theology, he has come to the conclusion that “wir nichts wissen können”, that knowledge does not make man any happier, does not answer to his deepest needs. The function of the Schüler is largely to demonstrate an attitude which Faust has outgrown.

Compare this to *The Ghost Sonata*, where the Student's thirst for

*Bergman och Strindberg. Spöksonaten – drama och iscensättning, Dramaten 1973, Sthlm 1973, p.24.*

<sup>14</sup> R. BUCHWALD, *Führer durch Goethes Faustdichtung*, Stuttgart 1964, p.151.

knowledge and lust for life contrasts with Hummel's disillusioned weariness after his long stay on earth.

«Das ist das beste Mittel, glaub, / Auf achtzig Jahr dich zu verjüngen!», Mephistopheles tells Faust. Is it just accidentally that Hummel is "eben achtzig Jahre"?<sup>15</sup> I think not. Possibly Goethe's age has here played a part. In one of his letters Strindberg notes that he was born exactly 100 years after Goethe<sup>16</sup>. And in one of the *Blue Books*<sup>17</sup> he points out that at the age of 60 he has come to the same conclusion as Goethe when he finished *Faust* at the age of 80, namely that «Alles Vergänglichliches ist nur ein Gleichnis» – a line which could have served as a motto for *The Ghost Sonata*.

But Hummel also carries Mephistophelian traits. Mephistopheles' diabolic nature finds its outward expression in his limping: «Was hinkt der Kerl auf einem Fuss», as one of the characters remarks. At one point (Part II:II) he is actually sitting in a "Rollstuhl" – just as Hummel. Hummel is referred to as "den lilla halta" (lit. the little limping one; "dieser kleine Lahme" in Schering's translation); the manuscript adds the word "fan" (devil) and thereby makes the allusion obvious. Ironically, Mephistopheles has no problems with law and justice. «Ich weiß mich trefflich mit der Polizei (...) abzufinden», he boasts. About Hummel, the criminal, we learn that «er hält sich immer an die Polizei».

Interesting, in this context, is that Mephistopheles refers to himself as ghost ("Gespenst"), since we know that Strindberg rejected the translation spöke = Spuk and wanted his play to be called *Die Gespenstersonate*:

FAUST. Doch warum gehst du nicht durchs Fenster?  
 MEPHIST. 's ist ein Gesetz der Teufel und Gespenster:  
 Wo sie hereingeschlüpft, da müssen sie hinaus.  
 Das erste steht uns frei, beim zweiten sind wir Knechte.

The implication of the last line is that Mephistopheles might just as well have entered through the window as through the door; but since

<sup>15</sup> All quotations from *The Ghost Sonata* are from Emil Schering's translation, "Gespenstersonate", in August Strindberg, *Kammerspiele*, München und Leipzig 1917<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> *Strindbergs Brev*, XI, Sthlm 1969, p.176.

<sup>17</sup> "En ny extra blå bok", *Samlade otryckta skrifter*, II, Sthlm 1919, p.203.

he this time chose to enter in the shape of a poodle the door was the more natural place. We may compare this with Johansson's statement that Hummel «kriecht durchs Fenster hinein, spielt mit Menschenschicksalen». Mephistopheles offers to serve Faust:

Ich bin dein Geselle,  
Und mach ich dirs recht,  
Bin ich dein Diener, bin dein Knecht!

(...)

Ich will mich *hier* zu deinem Dienst verbinden,  
Auf deinen Wink nicht rasten und nicht ruhn;  
Wenn wir uns *drüben* wiederfinden,  
So sollst du mir das Gleiche tun.

Faust agrees and the pact is signed with a drop of his blood; in his essay on *Faust* Strindberg talks about Faust's "paktum" (German: Pakt). Although *The Ghost Sonata* is certainly not a realistic play, Strindberg has not gone so far as to let the Student sign a blood contract with Hummel. What we get is the following: Hummel grips the Student's hand; the Student reacts violently: «Aber lassen Sie meine Hand los! Sie nehmen mir ja meine Kraft; Sie kühlen mich ja aus! Was wollen Sie?» From this we understand that Hummel is a vampire sucking the Student's blood. Instead of *saying*, as Mephistopheles does, that «Blut ist ein ganz besondrer Saft», Hummel shows in action that he feels that way. Unlike Faust, the Student is not at this point inclined to obey the diabolic tempter. Very aptly Strindberg here has Fröken (the Young Lady) appear. The Student immediately falls in love with her. And when Hummel indicates that he can help him to find his way to her, Arkenholz becomes interested:

DER ALTE. Ich kann Türen und Herzen öffnen, finde ich nur einen Arm zu meinem Willen. ... Dienen Sie mir, und Sie sollen herrschen...

DER STUDENT. Ist das etwa ein Pakt? Soll ich meine Seele verkaufen?

The two pacts are certainly not identical. What Mephistopheles says to Faust is: I shall serve you in this world, if you promise to serve me in the next. What Hummel tells the Student is: if you serve me you will be powerful. But since this paradox makes sense especially if we regard Hummel as a spokesman for the Devil, the pact in Strindberg's play also carries metaphysical overtones – particularly since selling one's



soul means selling it to the Devil, the punishment for which is damnation.

In the beginning of *Faust* “Glockenklang und Chorgesang” from a church in the neighbourhood is heard. The angel’s Chorus proclaims that Christ is arisen. It is Easter Sunday. This chiming of bells, this “Glockenklang”, connected with the idea of resurrection from death, should be compared to Faust’s solemn pledge to Mephistopheles:

Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen:  
 Verweile doch! Du bist so schön!  
 Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,  
 Dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn!  
 Dann mag die Totenglocke schallen,  
 Dann bist du deines Dienstes frei,  
 Die Uhr mag stehn, der Zeiger fallen,  
 Es sei die Zeit für mich vorbei!

When Faust finally dies, in Part II:V, Mephistopheles notes: «Die Uhr steht still – (...) Er fällt! es ist vollbracht.»

Let us now turn to *The Ghost Sonata*. In the initial stage directions we read: «Es ist ein klarer Sonntagmorgen. (...) Wenn der Vorhang aufgeht, läuten in der Ferne mehrere Kirchen.» In addition to the church bells, organ music from a nearby church and a steamship bell can be heard.

At the end of Act II Hummel receives his ‘death sentence’ and is forced to hang himself in the closet. The manner in which he is sent to his death is, one might say, a dramatic version of what is stated in Faust’s pledge and Mephistopheles’ comment on his death. «Die Uhr mag stehn» and «die Totenglocke schallen» here correspond to the Mummy’s stopping of the clock and her ringing of the table bell, a sound which brings Hummel’s ‘judge’ Bengtsson on the stage. When Hummel has hung himself, the Mummy echoes Mephistopheles’ biblical quotation; again we hear the words: «Es ist vollbracht!»

At the end of the play the Young Lady dies. She too uses the table bell to call for Bengtsson, who enters with the death screen which he places before her. Clearly, the ringing of the bell at the end corresponds to the ringing of the steamship bell in the beginning of the play. Just as the «leise Musik, angenehm traurige» which is heard from the Island of the Dead, Böcklin’s Toteninsel, at the end corresponds to the church



bells and the organ music in the beginning. Not until the end do we realize that the steamship bell actually belongs to the boat on Böcklin's picture which brings the Young Lady to the Island of the Dead. In other words: the steamship bell and the table bell are both Strindberg's version of Goethe's "Totenglocke".

Actually, this correspondence between beginning and end is not unlike the composition of *Faust*, where the "Chorgesang" in Part I, indicating Christ's resurrection, prepares for the "Chorus mysticus" at the end of Part II, indicating Faust's "Erlösung".

The opening of *The Ghost Sonata*, the meeting between the Student and the Milk Maid, is clearly designed with another meeting in mind: that between Christ and the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. Strindberg may of course have been inspired directly by the original passage in John 4. But is it not just as likely, in view of his interest in *Faust*, that the stanza spoken by "Mulier Samaritana" at the end of Part II of Goethe's drama has made him realize that the situation here described suited his own thematic purposes and was translatable into dramatic and even contemporary terms? The stanza reads:

MULIER SAMARITANA: (*St. Joh. IV*).

Bei dem Bronn, zu dem schon weiland  
Abram ließ die Herde führen,  
Bei dem Eimer, der dem Heiland  
Kühl die Lippe durft berühren;  
Bei der reinen, reichen Quelle,  
Die nun dorthier sich ergießet,  
Überflüssig, ewig helle,  
Rings durch alle Welten fließet –

There can be little doubt, I think, that the Gretchen story – Goethe's own invention – has inspired Strindberg when he drew the portrait of his Young Lady, significantly named Adèle, and of the manner in which the Student becomes acquainted with her.

When Faust first sees Margarete in the street he bursts out:

Beim Himmel, dieses Kind ist schön!  
So etwas hab ich nie gesehn.

When the Student sees the Young Lady in the street he bursts out:  
«noch nie habe ich ein solches Weib gesehen, das von einem Weib

geboren ist...». As soon as he notes Faust's interest in Gretchen, Mephistopheles assures him:

Ich weiß dir so ein Schätzchen auszuspüren,  
Und selig, wer das gute Schicksal hat,  
Als Bräutigam sie heimzuführen!

As Sprinchorn has observed<sup>18</sup>, the last two lines are quoted by Strindberg's Student when he says: "Säll den man som henne föra får till altare och hem!" Schering has apparently not discovered the allusion, for he translates: «Selig der Mann, der Sie zum Altar und in seine Häuslichkeit führen darf!» Goethe's poetry has here been reduced to clumsy prose.

Mephistopheles promises Faust:

Wollen wir keinen Augenblick verlieren,  
Will Euch noch heut in ihr Zimmer führen.

Similarly, Hummel promises the Student: «Heute abend werden Sie dort drinnen im runden Salon sitzen!»

The Young Lady of Strindberg's play is constantly referred to as «fröken» (Fräulein). Like the German "Fräulein" this title has changed its meaning in the course of time, and we must realize that here – as in the more obvious case of "fröken Julie" – we are concerned with a person belonging to the nobility. Or so it seems. As a matter of fact this is an illusion, for Adèle is not the Colonel's but Hummel's daughter. Nevertheless, when he first sees her the Student takes her to be a «fröken». Similarly, when he first sees her Faust mistakes the socially insignificant Gretchen for a «Fräulein»:

FAUST. Mein schönes Fräulein, darf ich wagen,  
Meinen Arm und Geleit Ihr anzutragen?  
MARGARETE. Bin weder Fräulein weder schön,  
Kann ungeleitet nach Hause gehn.

Gretchen knows that she is no "Fräulein" and, honest as she is, she tells Faust immediately. Adèle cannot do this since she is herself unaware of her true status. Strindberg has created a more complex situation.

<sup>18</sup> *The Chamber Plays*, pp. XIX, 116.

Gretchen dwells in “ein kleines, reinliches Zimmer”, Adèle in a beautiful little room which she is anxious to keep clean. Both women are connected with flowers – in Adèle’s case hyacinths – and their windows are filled with flower pots. The connection flower–woman is explicitly stated in both plays but in a very different way. «Du sprichst ja wie Hans Liederlich: / Der begehrt jede liebe Blum für sich», Mephistopheles tells Faust. «Sie spricht mit den Blumen – Ist sie nicht selber der blauen Hyazinthe ähnlich?» Hummel asks the Student.

Although they are poor and cannot afford any help in the household, Gretchen and her mother manage to keep everything neat and proper:

MARGARETE. Ja unsre Wirtschaft ist nur klein,  
Und doch will sie versehen sein.  
Wir haben keine Magd; muß kochen, fegen, stricken  
Und nähn und laufen früh und spat,  
Und meine Mutter ist in allen Stücken  
So akkurat!

She goes on to tell Faust about her little sister for whom she has lovingly cared. Faust concludes that she has known many happy moments in life but Gretchen retorts:

Doch auch gewiss gar manche schwere Stunden.  
Des Kleinen Wiege stand zu Nacht  
An meinem Bett: es durfte kaum sich regen,  
War ich erwacht;  
Bald muß ich tränken, bald es zu mir legen,  
Bald, wenns nicht schwieg, vom Bett aufstehn  
Und tänzelnd in der Kammer auf und nieder gehn,  
Und früh am Tage schon am Waschtrog stehn,  
Dann auf dem Markt und an dem Herde sorgen,  
Und immer fort wie heut zu morgen.  
Da gehts, mein Herr, nicht immer mutig zu;  
Doch schmeckt dafür das Essen, schmeckt die Ruh.

Adèle has no child to look after. And she has both a cook and a housemaid. But instead of helping, these servants paradoxically prove to be a burden in the household:

DAS FRÄULEIN. (...) Sehen Sie den Schreibtisch dort?  
DER STUDENT. Außerordentlich hübsch!  
DAS FRÄULEIN. Aber er hinkt! Ich lege jeden Tag eine Korkscheibe

unter den Fuß, aber das Hausmädchen nimmt sie fort, wenn sie fegt, und ich muß eine neue schneiden. Der Federhalter ist jeden Morgen tintig und das Schreibzeug auch; die muß ich waschen, nachdem sie sie gebraucht hat, jeden Morgen, wenn die Sonne aufgeht. (*Pause.*) Was ist das Schlimmste, das Sie kennen?

DER STUDENT. Wäsche zählen! Huh!

DAS FRÄULEIN. Das ist meine Arbeit! Huh!

DER STUDENT. Und dann?

DAS FRÄULEIN. In seinem Nachtschlaf gestört werden, wenn man aufstehen und den oberen Haken am Fenster einhaken muß, den das Hausmädchen vergessen hat.

DER STUDENT. Und dann?

DAS FRÄULEIN. Auf eine Leiter steigen und die Schnur der Ofenklappe wieder anmachen, die das Hausmädchen abgerissen hat.

DER STUDENT. Und dann?

DAS FRÄULEIN. Hinter ihr kehren, hinter ihr Staub wischen, hinter ihr Feuer im Ofen machen, da sie nur das Holz hinein legt! Die Ofenklappen besorgen, die Gläser abtrocknen, den Tisch umdecken, die Flaschen aufziehen; die Fenster öffnen und lüften, mein Bett noch einmal machen, die Wasserkaraffe spülen, wenn sie von Algen grün wird; Streichhölzer und Seife kaufen, die immer fehlen; den Zylinder abwischen und den Docht beschneiden, damit die Lampen nicht rauchen; und damit die Lampen nicht erlöschen, wenn Besuch da ist, muß ich sie selber füllen...

There is, it seems to me, a certain affinity between these two descriptions. Just as Gretchen informs Faust of her many household tasks, so Adèle tells the Student of hers. Yet the difference is equally striking: while Goethe selects basic, essential tasks for Gretchen, Strindberg selects a number of minor tasks for Adèle; while Gretchen has a helper in her mother, Adèle is reduced to her housemaid's housemaid; while Gretchen has someone else to care for, Adèle has only herself; Gretchen accepts her situation, Adèle does not. Gretchen's description is a testimony to the meaningfulness of her task and to her loving, maternal nature – her true counterpart in *The Ghost Sonata* is actually the little Milk Maid for the death of whom Hummel is responsible (here again the Faust-Gretchen parallel holds true) – while Adèle's description is rather a testimony to the misery and injustice of life.

*Faust I* ends with Gretchen's death, *The Ghost Sonata* with Adèle's. A voice from above tells us that Gretchen, despite her sins, "ist gerettet". Similarly, the Student's final prayer for Adèle combined with the angelic music coming from the Island of the Dead suggests that she too is saved. Left behind in this world are Faust and the Student.

Also with regard to some more peripheral aspects Strindberg may have profited from his reading of *Faust*. A few examples.

In the scene “Am Brunnen” Goethe has Gretchen and Lieschen appear with “Krügen”; the fountain serves as a natural meeting place for the working women. The gossipy Lieschen tells Gretchen that Bärbelchen has been seduced by a man of social standing and that she is now pregnant. It is obvious that Bärbelchen’s fate parallels Gretchen’s. And that Lieschen’s malicious joy serves to increase Gretchen’s feeling of shame.

In the first act of *The Ghost Sonata* Strindberg places a drinking fountain in the street. Near it “der Vornehme”, Baron Skanskorg, and “die Dunkle Dame” meet and exchange a few cryptic speeches, the meaning of which is that the Baron has seduced the Dark Lady, daughter of the Caretaker’s Wife, and made her pregnant. He now suggests that she hide her shame by giving birth to their child elsewhere. Just like Adèle the Dark Lady is an illegitimate child, and the child she is expecting – this is what the scene suggests – will be another illegitimate child. Although Adèle, unlike Gretchen, is not pregnant in the ordinary sense, she is figuratively pregnant with something she wants to hide; she is, in the words of the play, “krank...in der Quelle des Lebens”. Strindberg’s manner of letting a minor figure (the Dark Lady) parallel a major one (Adèle) has much in common with Goethe’s.

In the garden scene Goethe contrasts the young couple Faust-Gretchen with the old, cynical one Mephistopheles-Marthe. Similarly, Strindberg contrasts the youthful love between the Student and Adèle with the old one between Hummel and the Fiancée.

Does Strindberg’s Cook owe anything to Goethe’s Hexe in the Hexenküchen scene? Certainly there is something grotesque, perverse and witchlike about the Cook, whose poisonous soya bottle recalls the poisonous afrodisiac drink the Witch prepares for Faust and which makes him see a Helen in every woman; in *The Ghost Sonata* the smell of the poisonous hyacinths seem to have a corresponding afrodisiac effect. The apes in the Witches’ Kitchen are cooks of “breite Bettelsuppen”; similarly the Cook, Adèle complains, «kocht das Fleisch aus, gibt uns die Fasern und das Wasser, während sie selber die Bouillon austrinkt».

In a magic mirror Faust sees a naked woman, an Eve before the Fall, a counterpart of Gretchen; the relevant stage direction reads:

FAUST, *welcher diese Zeit über vor einem Spiegel gestanden, sich ihm (Mephistopheles) bald genähert, bald sich von ihm entfernt hat.*

Compare this to the following in Act II of *The Ghost Sonata*:

DER ALTE (*besichtigt das Zimmer; bleibt vor der Statue in tiefer Bewunderung stehen*). Amalie!... Das ist sie!... Sie!... (*Er streift im Zimmer umher und nimmt Gegenstände in die Hand; ordnet seine Perücke vor dem Spiegel; kehrt zur Statue zurück.*)

Instead of seeing a naked Eve in the mirror, Hummel sees his own façade. Nevertheless the nude Eve before the Fall is present also here, in the white marble statue representing the Mummy as young and innocent, the woman Hummel once loved.

Mephistopheles' idea that «durch zweier Zeugen Mund / Wird allerwegs die Wahrheit kund» is, as Sprinchorn has observed<sup>19</sup>, echoed in Hummel's conviction that «zwei falsche Zeugen sind voller Beweis, wenn sie einig sind». And the Student's reference to the Cook as "eine Lamia, die Kinder säugt" may be compared to the appearance of the vampiric "Lamien" in Part II:II.

As I have already indicated, the two plays are thematically closely related. Referring to life Faust asks: "Weh! Steck ich in dem Kerker noch?" The Student similarly protests against "das Irrenhaus, Zuchthaus, Leichenhaus Erde". The insistence on the word "hus" (Haus) in this line serves to draw attention to the symbolic house on the stage, the House of Life, the house which collapses at the end of the play. This collapse has been carefully prepared for; we are constantly reminded that houses are doomed to tumble down and that this house is far from stable. Is Strindberg here not embroidering upon an idea found in Part II:II of *Faust*? Consider the following lines by Goethe's Student (Baccalaureus) entering Faust's Gothic chamber:

Diese Mauern, diese Wände  
Neigen, senken sich zum Ende,  
Und wenn wir nicht bald entweichen,  
Wird uns Fall und Sturz erreichen.  
Bin verwegen wie nicht einer;  
Aber weiter bringt mich keiner.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 226, note 8.

In *The Ghost Sonata* the Student, “verwegen wie nicht einer”, enters Hummel’s house only to witness its collapse at the end.

In the “Zueignung” Goethe speaks of “Das Lebens labyrinthisch irren Lauf”. Hummel and the Student agree that life is “furchtbar verwickelt”, and the human relationships in the play are indeed labyrinthine. Actually, Strindberg may well have been inspired to the title *Spöksonaten* by Goethe’s play. Consider Phorkya’s speech to Helena and the Chorus in Part II:III:

Gespenster! – Gleich erstarrten Bildern steht ihr da,  
Geschreckt, vom Tag zu scheiden, der euch nicht gehört.  
Die Menschen, die Gespenster sämtlich gleich wie ihr,  
Entsagen auch nicht willig hehrem Sonnenschein;

Here the fundamental idea underlying Strindberg’s play title – the idea that life and everything that is part of it is unreal, ghostlike – is explicitly formulated. For a spelling out of this fundamental idea in *The Ghost Sonata* we may also, as I have already suggested, turn to the lines of the Chorus mysticus which form the end of Goethe’s double-drama: «Alles Vergängliches / Ist nur ein Gleichnis». This is precisely the idea Strindberg chose to dramatize in his chamber play. When it opens we and the Student are fascinated by the House of Life. But we are deluded. We see what it looks like, not what it is. We mistake Schein for Sein. At the end of the play we realize, with the Student, that life should not be understood literally but metaphorically. As Strindberg puts it in a statement from about this time<sup>20</sup>:

“«Alles Vergängliches ist nur ein Gleichnis». Thus Goethe ends his *Faust* at the age of 80.

After a very varied life, rich in experiences, I begin to take Goethe at his word at the age of 60”.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. note 17.