

Staging the Stage: the Expressionist Manifestation of Spatial Discourse and Colour in Strindberg's *Ett Dromspel* (A Dream Play)

ABSTRACT

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This study shows the use of different expressionist devices in August Strindberg's play *Ett dromspel* (A Dream Play). To evaluate Strindberg's expressionism this study envisages two phases of Strindberg's art in the play under discussion. In the first phase, there is expressionist spatial discourse where he juxtaposes multiple perspectives, such as pictorial style, abstract spatial and cyclical imagery. He not only accepts cross-fertilization between diverse forms of art and thought but also assists himself to dramatize frequent concerns with cognition, acuity, and reflection. Strindberg signifies that he would have favoured a creation in the pictorial style, in which the non-figurative cyclical image of the play's accomplishment would be foregrounded. In the second phase, this study manifests the expressionist use of colour in the play. Strindberg presents the chromatic style and the expressionist bird-eye view to establish the interaction of colours. His multicoloured idiom breaks with mimetic impressions of time and space and endeavours the recreation of ever-changing "chaos of colour". His strongly painted and cautiously shaped pictures are just as lively for our imagination as the canvases we see in Swedish environment with our own painterly eyes.

When a dramatist presents a play, there may be continuation or discontinuation of actions and events but a play is visualized not simply as a fixed entity produced at some instant, but as a representation of layers of influential imagery; likewise, a theatrical stage is not simply a material setting in space, but a physical appearance of emergent architectural styles and psycho-sociological circumstances, and a performance is not simply an actional translation of a text on the stage, but a collage sprouting cultural and moral processes. In *Ett dromspel* (A Dream Play), August Strindberg envisaged an unconventional loom of expressionist demonstration, one in which the opposing visual conventions of his time - "the metaphoric and the realistic, the abstract and detailed"--- were merged into a unique expression of modern consciousness. Strindberg's uniqueness lies not in great achievements in all these various areas but in his ability to experiment and to break down barriers between genres, views, and fields of experience. His juxtaposition of multiple perspectives, such as pictorial style, abstract spatial and cyclical imagery and colour not only allowed cross-fertilization between various modes of art and thought but also helped him dramatize recurring concerns with cognition, perception, and representation.

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Strindberg indicates that he would have preferred a production in the pictorial style, in which the abstract cyclical image of the play's action would be foregrounded. But he prescribes a simple design with stable wings to represent each location simultaneously, with the castle as a focal point in the background. In the play this design concept would allow a continuous flow of action, without breaks for scene changes, and also would make it possible to represent the cyclical structure of the action in spatial terms. By analyzing the strategies, the designs and the settings followed in staging *A Dream Play*, by tracing, in phenomenological terms, the "formation of presence and absence" in their production-elements of the play that he chooses to emphasize or obscure one can begin to explain the clear use of expressionist techniques. Moreover, Strindberg stirs the associative significance of colour beyond symbolism thus helping to set the stage for expressionistic interplay. His colour oriented language breaks with mimetic notions of time and space and attempts to recreate the ever-changing "chaos of colour". At times, the play's colours (such as red, green, purple, white and black) function to create on stage one of the first truly expressionist landscapes. Strindberg sees in the same way that the painters see. His strongly coloured and sparingly formed pictures are just as alive for our imagination as the canvases we see in Swedish nature with our own painterly eyes. Strindberg once again moves colour into the jurisdiction of perception and away from objective reality. If we observe the move from symbolism to expressionism; not only do the colours of "vision" fail to correspond to those registered by the normal retina, but sometimes they also have a tendency to break away from their objects. From here it is but one step to complete colour autonomy, which is relative, to be sure, since color often recalls the objects where it is originated.

Ett dromspel (*A Dream Play*) consists of fifteen scenes in which Indra's Daughter comes down from heaven and learns about the misery and pain of humankind. In her journey through the world, she achieves two major insights, first, that "mankind is to be pitied," and second, that reality is only an illusionary appearance from which mankind must be liberated. Strindberg visualizes the latter insight by conceiving a mysterious door behind which the characters hope to find the answer to the riddle of the world. However, when opened toward the end of the play, the door reveals nothing behind it. The Daughter's pilgrimage through heaven and earth, exteriors and interiors, and an array of public and private places exemplifies Strindberg's strategy of dissolving clear boundaries between real life and nightmarish dream worlds, between realistic spaces and metaphoric spaces. *A Dream Play* is one of the first modern plays in which the traditional delineation between the reader/perceiver and the world-perceived collapses.

A Dream Play's expressionist discourse consists of a number of distinct visual styles. One thread in this composite spatial discourse is nineteenth century pictorialism¹, a visual style which emphasizes the life-like recreation of authentic

locations and the combination of narratives into series of exciting pictures. A zeal for pictorialist imagery was widespread in the nineteenth century, and found expression in many cultural forms: "in the historical paintings of Hans Makart, Wilhelm von Kaulbach, and Karl von Piloty; in the panoramas of Louis-Jacques Daguerre" (Meisel, 1983) and in the popular passion for "tableaux vivants"² in illustrated books and magazines; in scientific advances such as the new technology of photography; and "the public fascination with archeological discoveries at Pompeii, Troy, and Mycenae in the 1860s and 1870s. Theatrically, the pictorialist tradition is evident in the widespread use of tableaux in nineteenth century melodrama, as well as in the elaborate historical settings for theatrical productions by Charles Kean in London and the Meininger troupe in Germany"(Meisel, 1983). Martin Meisel, observing the nineteenth-century magnetism with genuine life-like images and the widespread use of pictures to illustrate and, sometimes, substitute for verbal narratives, has used the term "serial discontinuity" for this pictorialist dramaturgy, which "de-emphasized the narrative and foregrounded vivid situations represented by visual tableaux"(Booth, 1981).

The influence of the nineteenth-century pictorialist tradition on Strindberg's visual design for *A Dream Play* is most evident in his conception of the play's locations. The play's fifteen scenes take place in twelve different locations (listed here in order): the Growing Castle, the Officer's room in the castle, the Mother's Room, the Theatre Corridor, the Lawyer's Office, the interior of the Church, Fingal's Cave, the Lawyer's Home, the devastated landscape of Foulstrand (an expanse of burnt hills with a quarantine station in the foreground and a beautiful wooded shore in the background), the wintery beach front of Fairhaven, the schoolhouse, and a Mediterranean scene with casino and villas. Each of these spots is defined by authentic, lifelike images drawn from the pictorialist custom. Fingal's Cave and the Mediterranean scenes at Fairhaven and Foulstrand are reminiscent of popular nineteenth century landscapes; the Church, the Theatre Corridor, the Lawyer's Office and the School are identifiable institutional settings with authentic features representative of their social functions. The final image of a bonfire before the Growing Castle echoes "Götterdämmerung" (Twilight of the Gods) another nineteenth century pictorial reflection of how artists responded to the psychological crisis, which arose in the disintegrating society. Strindberg describes these images with the same attention to detail and accuracy that characterize nineteenth century historical painting and naturalistic drama, and he incorporates into his descriptions details of authentic locations he encountered throughout his life.

Another string in the spatial discourse of *A Dream Play* is the inscription of abstract spatial metaphors onto the play structure through the sequencing of scenes, a style paralleling expressionist staging inventions.

Following the outdoor scenes at Fairhaven, Foulstrand, and the Mediterranean, the play then moves backward through some of the same locations (Fingal's Cave and the Theatre Corridor) in reverse order, ending as it began at the Growing Castle. This order of scenes in the play suggests several spatial images. One is the idea of verticality--an idea that was also important to Appia³ and Craig⁴. The dramatic centre of the play--Indra's daughter's despair in marriage--is scene eight, in the Lawyer's House. This scene becomes the axis for a vertical motion of descent and ascent, with its end points, scenes one and fifteen, at the growing castle. As the action moves from heaven to earth and back again, a vertical metaphor for Indra's spiritual descent is marked by the sequencing of scenes: starting at the Growing Castle, the action leads the viewer through the Theatre Corridor, into the cave, and, finally, into the Lawyer's House, which metaphorically represents the depths of suffering in married life. Then the action stirs upward once more, ascending from this dilemma of human suffering back to the high point of the Growing Castle through some of the same locations that marked its crash. An abstract metaphor of verticality is also suggested by Strindberg's indication in the stage directions that the Castle continually grows throughout the play.

Strindberg's concurrence of the Fairhaven and Foulstrand scenes is also an appearance of the most fascinating innovations of *A Dream Play*, the illustration of the modern time concept of simultaneity through the spatial dimension of depth. Strindberg ascertains simultaneity at the beginning of the play, suggesting that the Growing Castle remain in the background for the entire play. He complicates the play's sequential references further by calling for a simultaneous representation of the two outdoor scenes, Fairhaven and Foulstrand in scenes nine and ten. Each landscape--summer and winter--serves as a background and complement of the other. This reversal of perspective expresses a modern consciousness that the two times represented by these locations are complementary parts of the same temporal experience, each representing a different but simultaneously experienced perspective on a single moment. The abstract dimension of temporal depth is also exploited in scenes two and three, in which the movement from the present to the past is represented spatially through the placement of the home of the officer's parents in the back of the stage, with the Officer's room inside the castle in front of it, and in scene eleven, in which Strindberg's stage directions call for lifting a house facade to present a flashback to the Officer's school days. To the extent that Strindberg uses depth in these scenes to reveal the Officer's psyche, it is within a familiar modern tradition established by Ibsen. However, within the context of *A Dream Play*, with its multiple temporal dimensions, Strindberg's "use of depth has a more general function of enlarging reality to unfold both past and present in a single dramatic moment" (Tornqvist, 1982).

In addition to its pictorialist imagery and modern abstract spatial metaphors, *A Dream Play* also exploits the kind of "overcoding of imagery"

which Jean-Francois Lyotard and others have described as typical of postmodern theatre (Lyotard 81). Since the late 1960's, a number of international artists have rediscovered the rich visual language of the early part of the century, and have worked toward a theatre comprised of rich visual imagery in which manifold, and often illogical or contradictory messages converge. This visual theatre of non-representational and multi-referential images has many international representatives. "One thinks of Robert Wilson's attempts to restructure the audience's perception of time and space; Richard Foreman's Ontological Hysterical Theatre, characterized by fast-paced, constant shifts in spatial focus; Heiner Müller's reconfiguration of cultural images; Achim Freyer's experiments with a purely visual language (as for example in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in Vienna, 1987); and Tadeusz Kantor's exploration of the visual language created through memory" (Lyotard, 1984). Much like these contemporary artists, Strindberg seems to have realized the power of richly-coded imagery as a medium of dramatic discourse. Strindberg's attention to detail, as well as his sequencing of key images for *A Dream Play* indicates that he was after more than an authentic pictorial representation. For example, on the pictorial level, the castle is a "detailed representational image, drawn in part from Strindberg's memories of a real-life location" (Weisstein, 1972). But the way Strindberg arranges its details along the vertical dimension--the earthly mud, straw, and hollyhocks at the bottom, the chrysanthemum at the top, and the golden roof of the castle--express both a psychological notion as well as the modern fragmentation of mind and matter. As the site of the beginning and end for the Daughter's journey, and as a location which is constantly present but constantly changing in the background of the action, the rising castle also serves as a reminder of the subjective experience of time. Thus, the castle has the rich multi-referential quality of an expressionist image.

A significant diction, served by colour, is present in the designs staged in the play. Bergson observes that "sounds do not play in our dreams so important a part as colours. Our dreams are by and large visual, and even more visual than we think" (Bergson, 1944). Strindberg strengthens colour's importance in *Ett dromspel* in a letter to the Intima Teater in which he suggested that painted scenery be replaced by "colour effects" (Weisstein, 1972); he also noted that the red lavish curtain could take on diverse shades of colour simply by being lit from various viewpoints. Evert Sprinchorn's comment that Strindberg used the theater in *Ett dromspel* "as painters like Kandinsky and Pollock were later to use canvas" (Tornqvist, 1982) points also toward Strindberg's keen understanding of the significance of arrangement of color to every artwork. The musicality coming from that arrangement to which Strindberg refers in his note to the play also reflects the association between color and resonance: "An artist who sees no goal for himself in the imitation of natural phenomena, even in an artistic one, and who is a creator wanting and having to express his 'inner world' jealously sees how such goals are naturally and easily reached in today's most immaterial art" (Bergson, 1944).

The initial scene of *Ett dromspels* presenting Indra's Daughter's first observation of Earth seen through the clouds is related with chromatic imagery:

I see ... how beautiful it is ... Green woods,
blue waters, white peaks, golden fields (Strindberg, 1986).

She observes the world first and foremost in chromatic terms thus providing a primary quality (in the philosophical sense) for colour. We cannot be fooled, though, by what appears to be usual representations of nature. From a distance the world may emerge as mimetic, with green forests and yellow fields, but Indra's Daughter's descent into the "third world" is an embodiment in a non-naturalistic setting. An underlying irony drives the ensuing imagery: whereas it appears that Indra's Daughter is a spirit taking corporeal form, she actually enters a world in which time and space are often turned on their respective and connected heads. Indra's Daughter's journey will take her (and us) not into a purely material world, but instead into a fourth dimension; the revelation of the world seen through an opening in the clouds is an inverted parallel to the cosmic opening in Strindberg's canvas stage.

The bird's-eye view that Indra and his daughter share in heaven is also a strong expressionist mode. The bird's-eye view constructs a meta-view. It establishes a larger picture than the plain mimetic one. It also highlights the subjective point of view by imposing a "bigger" order on disparate aspects of existence. In "Expressionist Literature and Painting" Paul Hadermann examines that in the bird's eye view relationships are "falsified by the painter or writer in favour of a subjective order. Distances are abolished in a desire for cosmic communion" (Hadermann, 1973). Strindberg's opening scene implies that there is a bigger cosmic vision of existence more genuine than the one with which we are well-known in common time and space-and that vision is coloured. He stresses this concept by saying "time and space do not exist; a minute is as many years".

The backdrop in the play's opening section, dominated by the tall, colorful flowers, further indicates the value of Strindberg's expressionist views. As for many pictorial and linguistic colourists, childhood plays a prevailing role in driving Strindberg's imagery. The Wonderland backdrop of "giant hollyhocks" points to the child's sensitive imagination, a state to which Strindberg's characters struggle to arrive in the surreal shifting of scenes that comprise *Ett dromspel*. The flowers' height also emphasizes the setting's unnatural aspect. The extraordinary feel of Strindberg's towering flowers drives us immediately to the other side of life. Tornqvist notes that the extent of the flowers "indicates their anthropomorphic nature" (Tornqvist, 1982), a subjective humanizing of an innate phenomenon (another move into expressionism).

The hollyhocks are expressed in a variety of colors weighing profoundly on reds, "white, pink, purple, sulphur-yellow, violet".

An alchemical manipulation seems to be operational in Strindberg's choice of colours (while in Paris Strindberg wanted to create a method for making gold). The four colour oriented phases of the ancient alchemical procedure were malanosis (blackening), leucosis (whitening), xanthosis (yellowing), and iosis (reddening). Even Strindberg's use of "sulphur-yellow" hints at the alchemical method of incubation in which sulphur represents the "male" element. If we ignore Strindberg's use of props, we go from the blackness of the unlit scene (the first stage in the alchemical process) to the white, purple, and yellow flowers dominating the original first scene. These colors create the visual effect of pressing against his eyeballs in the dark. He talks about seeing "sheaves of red light" and he continues "as the pressure lessens, the light phenomenon ceases, and a play of colors begins. In the center appears a purple depression, surrounded by a soft sulfur yellow, and resembling a sunspot in design. Is this then the eye's interior, that the astronomer renders in words and pictures.... Where does the self begin, and where does it end" (Tornqvist, 1982).

In similar way, purple and sulphur-yellow emerge through the sketches of both the hollyhocks and the colour patterns in Strindberg's eyes (yellow and purple are also complementary colours, pointing to the many contrasts still to come in the play). If the colors have bearing on their counterparts in *Ett dromspel*, then we may say that we have entered the play where the self begins, in the pictures of the eye's interior (i.e., the mind's eye). Therefore, Strindberg says "and what is light? Something outside of me or inside of me, subjective perceptions?" (Tornqvist, 1982) At one point, Strindberg even quotes Schopenhauer's contention that the world is a "cerebral phenomenon". Strindberg's dependence on the red ending in the play's opening also strengthens red's major function among colours. In early and medieval times red was recurrently considered divine, the very colour of light; even purple's superlative place in ancient Greece owes as much to its redness as to the difficulty in producing that hue. Strindberg's affinity for red and its association with childhood also indicate the colour's relevance for later Scandinavian literary expressionists who frequently employ red to express early consciousness. Later in *Ett dromspel*, when Han speaks his verse paean to Fair Strand, he refers to the bay as the place where "I dreamed my first rosy-dreams". Strindberg presents a variety of reds in the flowers: from firm, influential red to the very pale pink and violet (Newton says about violet as the weakest and darkest of colors). He also inserts two colours connected with pure light, white and yellow. Still, the hollyhocks are earthly: they rest underneath, closer to the ground than the towering blue monkshood (which replaces the golden bud of the first scene)⁵. Colour works as the perfect meeting ground for a naturalist and spiritualist intellect like Strindberg's. "Colour is the subjective perception in our brains of an objective feature of light's specific wavelengths. Each aspect is inseparable from the other" (Meisel, 1983). Discussing the primacy of red, it has always been the primordial colour: "Of all the truths that humankind considers indisputable,

it is this: The colour red stands for vitality, energy, and power" (Meisel, 1983).

The manifestation of green in Strindberg's stage direction indicates his sense not merely of green's powerful association with nature, but also its duality of effect: green can be restful and sylvan or elemental and deadly⁶. The scene revealed once the backdrop of *Ett dromspel* rises consists of an opening onto an alleyway leading out to "a bright green area" (Strindberg, 1986), indicating green's positive, springtime effect (the linden tree with the "pitch-black trunk" also has a few "light-green leaves"⁷). More importantly, this area is not defined nor is any shape or form associated with it. Instead, it consists solely of green light, i.e. colour. Strindberg has come as close as he can to create a pure colour space on stage.

Next to Billposter rests "a dip net with a green handle" which implies a green space. Strindberg sets up these spring-time colours to highlight the contrast that will eventually emerge when the scene shifts to brown, autumnal tones and withered leaves (later in scene 3 and again in scene 5). Here, Strindberg functions more like an expressionist by using colours to convey feelings and to inspire those same feelings among the readers and observers. In the beginning of scene 3, Indra's Daughter and the Billposter discuss the human proclivity for complaining. The Billposter informs her that he has stopped complaining since he got the dip net "and a green fish pot", a childhood dream. The irony does not escape Indra's Daughter, who questions whether fifty years of waiting was worth a dip net and a fish pot and Billposter portrays its significance⁸. The value of his seemingly meaningless youthful dream is captured in the italicized colour green, with all its connotations of regeneration and spring (Tornqvist's contention that the green fish pot represents "worldly values" seems too narrow). Strindberg is well aware of both sides of that element. In the following scene, the linden tree has been stripped bare of its light green leaves, the blue monkshood has withered, and "the green patch seen through the perspective of the alleyway has turned autumn-brown" (Strindberg 664). The turning from green to brown carries traditionally symbolic qualities of aging, of passing from spring to autumn, represented in *Ett dromspel* by the Officer's dead, petal-less roses and his hair and beard, which are now "gray"⁹. For Strindberg, some wisdom accompanies aging.

After the return of Billposter, he discloses that his green net has not been "exactly what I'd imagined". The Officer repeats the Billposter's utterances and admires him: "Perfectly put!" The dissatisfaction of youthful dreams is recaptured by Indra's Daughter's chromatic examination of the Billposter:

DAUGHTER : How had you imagined it would be?

BILLPOSTER : How had ? Well, its hard to say ...

DAUGHTER : Let me say it. You had imagined it different from what it was. It was supposed to be green, but not that green!

(Strindberg, 1986)

We seek the existence of colours in our minds. The thoughts, Strindberg utters through Indra's Daughter, sees and longs for its own colours in life. But they are rarely found. With such subjective proclivity for colour, Strindberg naturally moves colour into the jurisdiction of insight and away from objective reality. As Hadermann observes about the chromatic move from symbolism to expressionism:

Not only do the colours of "vision" fail to correspond to those registered by the normal retina, but sometimes they also have a tendency to break away from their objects.... From here it is but one step to complete color autonomy, which is relative, to be sure, since... color often recalls the objects whence it originated. (Hadermann, 1973)

Through the presentation of elevated spirituality and chaste religious feeling, Strindberg also unites with a long list of pictorial and literary artists who have accepted the extensive power of blue. The blue monkhood that towers over *Ett dromspel* functions as a natural figure of a higher divine state. An unattainable excellence accompanies the blue of Strindberg's monkhood. The colour's retreating eminence has resulted in a long convention, both pictorial and literary, of corresponding to the ethereal, spiritual elevation of existence. Blue functions outside the dimensions incarcerating most colours. Like many artists, Strindberg observes colors as psychological spaces: "Colours always lead to associations with concrete, material, and tangible ideas, while blue, at the very most, recalls sea and sky, which are the most abstract aspects of tangible and visible nature" (Hadermann, 1973).

Strindberg's "colossal blue monkhood", which will flourish, wither, and bloom again, also has connections with childhood memory. As the Officer states:

.....that blue flower out there-that monkhood. I remember it from the time I was a child. Can't be the same one, can it. ... It was at the parsonage, I remember, the minister's house-the garden. I was seven years old.... Fold back the top petals-the pistil and stamen look like two doves (Strindberg, 1986)

Searching for "doves" in the flower of a monkhood is a part of famous Scandinavian folklore. Thus, Strindberg's massive monkhood, emerging as it would to a small child, has more than a spiritual impression about. It also signifies a classically passionate image of childhood's sensitive imagination, the Blakean capacity to "see a world in a grain of sand." The Officer's blue memory is as pensive as the Billposter's green net and fish pot.

The flip-flopping of backdrops, associated with the colour, signifies the beginnings of scenes 8 and 9, as "Fair Haven" and "Foul Strand" exchange places from the reader's/viewer's viewpoint (a rather cinematic play of perspective). Strindberg's account of Foul Strand is unquestionably expressionist, predominantly because of the utilization of red, black, and white: "In the foreground to the right are charred hills covered with the red brush

and black and white tree stumps remaining after a forest fire; also red pigsties and privies" (Strindberg, 1986). Strindberg has once more found a naturalistic object, charred foliage, aided by colour to express a psychological state, a sense of despair and angst. An aura of death also encompasses the narrative. His selection of colour extremes hints at the eventually revealed similitude of the two settings. Both black and white have "striking features" in common. Both are "achromatic and extremes of brightness, and in these respects are interchangeable as symbols, if what has to be symbolized is an extreme state" (Lyotard, 1984). Both black and white can convey the emptiness of death. Either can serve as a negation "of the vital, the growing, the natural". Recalling Indra's Daughter's first observation of earth, the reader and viewer can feel that an effacement of colour (as in the black Foul Strand and the white Fair Haven) implies a deviant state of existence.

The pensive white imagery in *Ett dromspel*, similar to the expressionist green of the Billposter's childhood, holds empty promise on closer inspection. At first Strindberg demonstrates a fairy-tale illustration in the scene introducing Han and Hon (He and She): "Gliding into the straight from the left comes a white boat shaped like a dragon, with a pale blue, silken sail hoist on a golden arm and a rose-colored pennant flying from a golden masthead" (Strindberg, 1986). Though white handkerchiefs call to the dragon boat from the shore of Fair Haven, Medical Inspector waves a yellow flag as the boat is pulled toward Foul Strand. As yellow is persistent, belligerent and the typically earthly colour; any "intermixture of blue" (here, the blue sail of the dragon ship) makes yellow "a sickly colour"¹⁰. He and She would prefer to remain in their white dragon boat heading instead for the unreal white shore of Fair Haven, but they are dragged ashore on Foul Strand. The reader learns that She also puts on a blue dress, uniting her with the monkhood and the dream of an enhanced spiritual life. When the Medical Inspector lights the stove, She concentrates on her dress: "But this blue dress will lose its colour" (Strindberg, 1986)¹¹. This outcome is exactly what the Medical Inspector is after: "And turn white! And those red roses will turn white!" (Strindberg, 1986) In the final scene, he must toss his "black mask", which he says made him act against his will, into the fire.

This white also manifests its value in the opening of scene 9 when Fair Haven moves to the front of the stage¹². Despite the white ships anchored by the pier (including an ironic warship) providing the delusion of "peace and joy at vacation time", the landscape as a whole hints winter, with snow on the ground and on the bare trees. Strindberg, conferring landscape colouring, examines that "no colour is found in the terrain when snow totally devours all light" and that "the eye is disgusted by these colourless wallpapers" (Hadermann, 1973). The white masking of snow reflects its vague interiority. In scene 10, Strindberg experiments with this feature; the "white wall" to the left of the foreground partly covers the "fruit-laden orange trees" on the other side, submitting only a glance of what lies behind the whiteness (the Coal Haulers never reach for the fruit, for they fear the police will come and arrest them).

A troubling play of light and darkness (representing the unrest of mind) appears in the Poet's description of "a plain in snow, a drill field". Curiously, this scene is related to the Poet, not illustrated on stage, forcing the reader and viewer to imagine the scene as it is described. The scene is most negative in the morose feeling that remains after the description. As the scene is dependent on the light from the sun, the Poet bemoans the appearance of a cloud which "put out the sun's fire" (Strindberg, 1986). The shadow of the church tower subsists only because of the sunlight which "created the dark tower". The extended shadow of the church tower is removed by the dark cloud which "smothered" it. Strindberg has articulated death not only in the Poet's claim that "the first one who steps on the weathercock at the top must die" (Strindberg, 1986), but also in his manifestation of black/darkness swallowing white/light to state extinction.

When the Poet and Indra's Daughter (and we) reach the castle in the ending scene, Strindberg skilfully turns the set on its head by moving blue from above to below: "the ground below the footings is covered with flowers (blue monkshood or aconite)" (Strindberg, 1986). A chrysanthemum has uplifted the blue monkshood's hierarchical position, though Strindberg provides no signifier for the flower. The chrysanthemum's multi-petaled involvement with the multitude of faces appearing in the play's final moment, as the castle burns and the flower blooms, recalls the rose and the spiral of souls at the end of Dante's *Paradiso*¹³. The blue of childhood thoughts and spirit has moved to the bottom of the stage just as Indra's Daughter is about to experience death and return to a still higher state ("dill tronen"). In a cinematic turn, we are returning to the play's opening bird's-eye view from a different viewpoint-this time from below, highlighted by the blue field of monkshood now beneath the characters. Colour, following the technique of theatre expressionism, has once again signified Strindberg's depiction of a soul state.

To conclude, we perceive Strindberg's attempt to camouflage the expressionist overlaying, of multiple temporal frames and overcoding of imagery in *A Dream Play* by arguing that the play represents a hierarchy of realms of experience, in which the chaotic and fragmented time and space of dream experience are framed by a unified, stable space and time of reality. In his sketches for a never-realized production he suggests how he himself might have categorized his most innovative work. He specifies a production in the pictorial style, in which the conceptual recurring image of the play's action would be foregrounded. But he stipulates a plain design with constant wings to embody each location concurrently, with the castle as a central point in the milieu. And, in addition, the expressionist use of colour and light creates an environment that puts the audience into illusion as well as makes them conscious about reality. In the shifting scenes, heavily dependent on colour to convey their tone and emotion, the image takes precedence. Strindberg gives colour a primary place in his visual world. What most attracted him was

colour's capacity for immediate illusion, the apparent simplicity that in painting gives expression to a mood. Colour's ability to create illusion also serves as a purpose in *Ett dromspel*. Over all, the manifestation of expressionism in the play is "mere projection" presenting shifting images, dissolving views which demonstrate the state of human life in general.

Notes:

1. Pictorialism was a photographic term used to describe images that emphasized the artistic quality of the photograph rather than the scene it depicted. The movement's primary aim was to bring photography into the fine art realm. Also concerned with aesthetics and impact, Pictorialists sought to produce images that were not solely about the objects in front of the camera. Despite the aim of artistic expression, it also paralleled the expressionistic style. (Encyclopedia Britannica)
2. In the melodramas of the nineteenth century, writers such as Dion Boucicault devised a series of spectacular tableaux which synthesized strong visual effects and dramatic situations.
3. Adolphe Appia (born September 1, 1862 in Geneva; died February 29, 1928 in Nyon) was a Swiss theorist and pioneer of modern stage design. He is most well known for his many scenic designs for operas. Appia rejected painted two dimensional sets for three-dimensional 'living' sets because he believed that shade was as necessary as light to form a connection between the actor and the setting of the performance in time and space. Through the use of control of light intensity, colour and manipulation, Appia created a new perspective of scene design and stage lighting. (wikipedia)
4. Edward Gordon Craig (16 January 1872 - 29 July 1966), sometimes known as Gordon Craig, was a English modernist theatre practitioner; he worked as an actor, producer, director and scenic designer, as well as developing an influential body of theoretical writings. (wikipedia)
5. Tornqvist feels that the bud and monkhood represent "Golden and blue: sun and sky". We may have another contrast here, though: yellow and blue, the colors most identified respectively with light and darkness.
6. This latter quality "serves as a leitmotif among expressionists, with its origins more than likely in the more lurid paintings of van Gogh" (Hadermann 129).

7. Gordon Craig refers to green as "the most restful colour that exists".
8. Even in the final scene at the fire, the Billposter refuses to give up the green fish net: "The posters can go, but the fish net-never!"
9. Much has been written about the Officer representing Strindberg, and these brown, autumnal moments in the play have an autobiographical feel about them, reflecting his then middle-aged perspective.
10. Yellow also represents the color of "madness" (for example, the walls of the yellow-frame house, behind which lie the schoolhouse, where any form of logic has broken down).
11. The remark is physically accurate: in blue light, the blue dress will lose its color.
12. Tornqvist feels that "The true significance of all the scenic transformations and transpositions is that they evoke a feeling in us that we cannot trust our senses" (Tornqvist 161).
13. Paradiso is the third part of Dante Alighieri's (May/June, 1265 - September 13/14, 1321) *La Divina Commedia* or *Commedia* (The Divine Comedy). Here, Indra's daughter can be compared to Beatrice who guides the hero of Dante's epic poem through the Paradiso

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