

Ibsen's ghost: a modern tragedy assignment

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Even when the play was written, people discussed what type of play it actually was. People debated how to categorize the play because it had features of different kinds of drama. For example, certain critics consider it a satire of which it is an indictment of their time of day. However the author himself refused to disclose to his readers his motivation, or even his opinion of the characters. He left it up to the readers' interpretation. A reading of the play reveals many features consistent of Ghosts being a modern tragedy, In his Poetics (325 B.

C.), Aristotle defines tragedy as " incidents arousing pity and fear" (Chapter 9), which is precisely what Ibsen achieves through Ghosts when one analyzes its distinguished characters, Several of the characters in Ghosts inspire fear and evoke pity. In this sense, Ghosts, by Ibsen can be considered a tragedy. Ghosts is the epitome of a tragedy, for the reason that it encompasses the very ideals of one. In Aristotle Poetics he defines tragedy as " an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear.

Such incidents have the very greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvelous in them than if they happened themselves or by mere chance. " (Chapter 9) Ibsen embraced these standards through the development of his characters when he wrote Ghosts. Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders are two such characters that incorporate these ideas by their lives. The play is set on the day before the orphanage is to be dedicated to the memory of the late Lieutenant Alving.

Ten years have passed since the Lieutenant died, and his Widow has decided to build an orphanage in his honor, or so it would appear. The Lieutenant's son Oswald returns from his studies for the occasion. Throughout the course of a day, one by one the characters appear. The play essentially opens with Regine and her supposed father Mr. Alving requesting with her to work for him at the sailor saloon he wishes to open, but she refuses to take part in the matter. Following their dialogue, Pastor Manders enters and has an argument with Oswald in his home. Next the reader is introduced to Mrs. Alving when she and Pastor Manders begin a discussion with each other.

The drama intensifies as the characters begin to reveal their true thoughts and attitudes. Oswald is a young man who has been living in Paris evildoing his artistic abilities and at the same time developing his belief in freedom of expression. At his house, he encounters Pastor Manders, and the two have an argument with each other. Pastor Manders then goes on to rebuke Mrs. Alving for raising such an opinionated and disrespectful boy. This leads into a long discussion between the two in which Mrs.

Alving reveals the true nature of her late husband. She shows him that he was not the righteous man that everyone thought he was, which accounts for the reason as to why Mrs. Alving left him in their marriage. Pastor Manders, being shocked by this revelation, realizes that he had misjudged her ever since he knew her. Also during this day, Oswald and Regine realize that they find love in one another, but are shocked when Mrs. Alving reveals their true connection to one another: they are brother and sister through an affair that Mr. Alving had with a servant girl. Events only worsen hereafter.

Pastor Meanders burns down Mrs. Alving's orphanage, to which he cleverly hides his involvement in the matter, and Oswald tragically plunges through a series of short events that one suspects will lead to his demise. The play concludes with Oswald pleading with his mother to give him pills to help him end his life. The reader is left unsure of what Mrs. Alving will do. Mrs. Alving is a supreme example of a woman who one cannot help but pity when they are presented with her life as one of grim resignation. Her life was based on a sense of duty she had to society's expectations.

She even says, "All my life I'd been taught a great deal about duty- that seemed the all important thing. Everything was reduced to a question of duty" (Act III) When she found herself in a terrible situation involving her drunken and obscene husband, she did all she could to keep society from finding out about it. To protect her son Oswald, she sent him away at a young age to save him the embarrassment of knowing what his father was truly like. She deprived herself of being around her son, and lost all chances for developing a relationship with him. She sacrificed everything but it was to no avail.

Her life was focused on duty, and in the end it was all a waste. One also identifies with pity for Mrs. Alving when she finally comes to the conclusion that she had done the wrong thing her whole life. "I would have never lied about Oswald- but didn't dare do anything else at the time- and it wasn't only for Oswald's sake- it was for my own sake too. What a coward I am. One also finds pity on both Mrs. Alving and Oswald when the truth of Oswald's father's character is disclosed to him, and he responds by frantically yearning for his life to end.

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When considering the events and circumstances of Mrs. Alving's life, one is also overcome with a sense of fear that is present in almost any man's life. It makes one consider how far they would go by submerging their own feelings to fulfill one else's sense of duty. It is tragic and full of fear because her life, which used to be enthusiastic and free spirited, went on to be destroyed by a sense of duty to her peers. Pastor Meanders is another such character in which one inevitably will take pity on. Much like Mrs.

Alving, Pastor Meanders was very concerned with the public opinion of himself, and the duties in which he felt he was obligated to ascertain in the society. He was a self righteous and judgmental man who essentially formed opinions about people that he deemed true, when in reality they were far from reality. He judged and formed false opinions about several of his closest peers, and in the end Alving left with a reflection often and opinions all wasted on falsehoods. One can undeniably identify themselves with the hypercritical distinctiveness of which encompasses Pastor Meanders.

He brings out the fear of forming an opinion about someone without first really getting to know him or her, in which he did with almost every character he encountered in the play. When Meanders discovers the truth about Newsstand and the fact that he is not the father of Regine, as he had pretended he was all of her life, Meanders is furious. Realizing that he has been lied to and that all of his judgments about the man were wrong he exclaims to Newsstand, " And this is how you repay me! You cause me to make erroneous statements in the Church Register, and withhold from me for years the truth which it was your duty to impart to me.

Your conduct has been inexcusable" (II) One can identify with fear through this encounter because one can never know or trust anyone without proof of their statements. Not only did Pastor Meanders form else judgments on Newsstand but also on Mrs.. Laving. He had viewed her as a terrible wife when she left her supposedly respectable and moral husband, when in reality she had every right for doing so. The very title tot the play alludes to tragedy. Ghosts in their very nature evoke a sense of fear, and those who are haunted by them cause one a sense of pity.

However, in Ghosts, it is not supernatural beings in which the title refers to, but rather ghosts in a psychological way, Mrs.. Laving declares herself that she is the one who is haunted by her ghosts by saying, " I live in constant fear and term, cause I can't rid myself of all these ghosts that haunt me," (II) When trying to show Meanders what she means she says, " the longer I live the more convinced I am that we're all haunted in this world- not only by the things eve inherit from our parents- but by the ghosts of innumerable old prejudices and beliefs- half-forgotten cruelties and betrayals- we may not even be aware of them.