CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century theatre describes a wide range of movements in the theatrical culture of Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century. In the west they included romanticism, melodrama, the well–made plays of Scribe and Sardau, the farces of Feydoau, the problem plays of Naturalism and Realism, Gilbert and Sullivan’s plays and operas, Wilde’s drawing room comedies, symbolism and expressionism in the late works of August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen. Beginning in France during the French revolution, melodrama became the most popular theatrical form. Although monopolies and subsidies were reinstated under Napoleon, it continued to be extremely popular and brought in larger audiences than the state sponsored drama and operas. Although melodrama can be traced back classical Greece. August von Kotzebue’s *Misanthropy and Repentance* (1789) is often considered the first melodramatic play. The plays of Kotzebue established melodrama as the dominant dramatic form of the early nineteenth century. In Paris the nineteenth century saw a flourishing of melodrama in the many theatres that were located on the popular Boulevard du Crime especially in Gaite’. By the end of the 19th century, the term melodrama had nearly exclusively narrowed down to a specific genre of salon entertainment, more or less rhythmically spoken words, often poetry, not sung, sometimes more or less enacted, at least with some dramatic structure or plot, synchronized to an accompaniment of music. It was looked down on as a genre for authors and composers of lesser stature. In Germany there was a trend toward historic accuracy in costumes and settings, a revolution in theatre architecture, and the introduction of the theatrical form of German Romanticism. The plays of Gotthold
Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang von Goeth, Friedrich Schiller inspired a growing faith in feeling and instincts as guides to moral behaviour. Romantics borrowed from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant to formulate the theoretical basis of “Romantic” art. Later drama entered a state of decline from which it did not recover until the 1890s. The major playwrights of the period were Otto Ludwig and Gudwig Freytag. The most important theatrical force in the later 19th century Germany was that of George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen and his Meiningen Ensemble, under the direction of Ludwig Chronegk. The Ensemble’s productions are often considered the most historically accurate of the 19th century. Another playwright Richard Wagner had rejected the contemporary trend toward realism and argued that the dramatist should be a myth maker who portrays an ideal world through the expression of inner impulses and aspirations of the people. Wagner used music to defeat performer’s personal whims. The melody and tempo of music allowed him to have greater personal control over performance than he would with spoken drama. Oscar G.Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy in their book History of the Theatre remarked, “Wagner believed that the author-composer should supervise every aspect of production to unify all the elements into a ‘master art work’.” (378) In France romanticism was adapted after a time with the plays of Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas, Alfred de Musset and George Sand. By the 1840’s, however the enthusiasm of Romantic Drama had started to decline and a new “Theatre of Common Sense” had replaced it. In Britain, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron were the most important dramatists of their time. In France, the well made play of Eugene Scribe became popular with playwrights Alexander Dumas, Emile Augier and Victorien Sardau. Sardou was one of the world’s most popular playwrights between 1860 and 1900. He adapted the well-made play to every dramatic type, from comedies to historical spectacles. George Bernard
Shaw thought that Sardou’s plays epitomized the decadence and mindlessness into which the late 19th century theatre had descended a state that he labeled “Sardoodledom”. In Russia, Aleksander Gribojedov, Alexander Pushkin, and Nikolai Polevoy were the most accomplished playwrights. As elsewhere Russia was dominated by melodrama and musical theatre. More realistic drama began to emerge with the plays of Nikolai Gogol and the acting of Mikhail Shchepkin. Realism began in the early 19th century Russia than elsewhere in Europe. The plays began with Ivan Turgnev who used domestic detail to reveal inner turmoil, Aleksander Ostrovsky who was Russia’s first professional playwright and Leo Tolstoy who was one of the most famous naturalistic playwrights. Naturalism, a theatrical movement born out of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) and contemporary and political conditions, found its main proponent in Emile Zola. The work of Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero initiated a new direction on the English stage. While their work paved the way, the development of more significant drama owes itself most to the playwright Henrik Ibsen.

The term ‘Victorian’ is used as a term of reproach of contempt during the nineties. The Religious faith had started to decline, there was a progress in the science which had changed the external environment of life and had provided the facilities for freedom of movement and activity. The closing years of the century witnessed a striking change in the entire pattern of domestic life and family relationships; the stability of the Victorian household was threatened by internal and external influences. As the century drew to its close, family discipline showed alarming symptoms of disintegration. The generation of the nineties drifted to levity and anarchism of behavior and belief, there was a complete disparity between the right and the wrong. Hedonism was the natural reaction to a rigid code. The
leaders of the ‘fin de siecle’ eager to taste the fruits “of all trees in the gardens of the world”, sought for novel sensations and forbidden pleasures. A new spirit of pleasure had come abroad and a philosophy known as ‘carpe diam’ fascinated the age that had lost its faith.

The literature of the modern age was governed more by realism than by romance. The modern age is essentially the age of realism and the modern writers. This realism was further accentuated by the growing upsurge of the scientific discoveries. The new inventions and discoveries have brought a transformation in the old romantic values of life and have given a materialistic twist to whatever is considered sacred and valuable in life. Because of rapid growth of science and materialism and this modern age is rightly branded as the commercial age. Many writers felt disgusted with the growing cult of materialism and their works are marked with a note of revolt against this advancing tide of modern times. Butler and Huxley were the prominent writers of the modern age. The age of machinery had brought not only a feeling of revolt among the writers of our times but had also created a feeling of pessimism and frustration in them. Being disgusted with the humdrum existence of modern life many authors had chosen to retire to the countryside where they can find refuge from the rattle and bustle of the modern critics. John Masefield has given expression to the dirtiness of the modern trade and commerce in his famous poem Cargoes. The growing tide of materialism had brought about the disintegration of family relationships and authority. In modern times literature has been employed for social purpose, particularly for reforming the festering sores and maladies of contemporary society. Novel and drama have both created a spur in the modern literature. Drama in the hands of Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw, Barker and T.S Eliot made a rapid progress in the twentieth century. New experiments were tried in all branches of literature. The traditional forms had been thrown out and in their place new
literary experiments had been made in the field of poetry, drama and novel. The twentieth century English literature was under the influence of foreign artists in the field of drama, poetry and novel. The influence of Ibsen on modern drama had been profound in the sphere of form, matter and stage craft.

As mentioned above drama has also been a popular genre for writers to express their thinking and ideas. A great deal of craftsmanship is required to write a drama. Modern drama has created an epoch in the field of literature. Modern dramatists combined various elements in their works like psychology, expressionism and other new elements of the literary forms in their works. In the earlier years of the twentieth century English drama was under the influence of Ibsen, Shaw, Galworthy and it was too realistic and too involved in contemporary social problem. Other dramatists of this age were Stephen Phillips, John Mansfield, and John Drinkwater. A clear reaction against the naturalist drama of the earlier years as Alaydra Nicoll has remarked in British Drama, “a renaissance of the imagination” had taken place. ‘Angry Young Men’ is a loose term to dramatists and novelists who protest against the social mores and the institutions. It is epitomized by John Osborne. There were Non Radical social protests which comprised of John Arden, Arnold Wesker. They had a leftist leaning and showed influences of Bertolt Brecht, they abided by naturalism and their drama was almost purposive. Then there were the radicals, revolutionaries and anarchists who violate censor laws. They comprised of Joe Orton, Edward Bond David Edgar and David Hare. The Irish movement had contributed a lot to the theatre, both prose and verse, the leader of the Irish movement is W.B Yeats (1865 – 1939) and Synge. Finally we have technical innovators like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter who had fought influences to bear on the English drama the Theatre of the Absurd in the 1950’s. It was a mirror of the
chaos and the incomprehensibility of the existence. It stood as a complete revolution. It was for new content and new form that had brought a complete change, its content is derived from Camus and Sartre which was called Absurdism and Existensialism. It had discarded all the notions of plot, characterization, dialogues, setting etc. Meanwhile the influence of Henrik Ibsen had been making itself felt in the English drama. George Bernard Shaw and William Archer had already spread their influence in drama. Shaw’s study of Ibsen, The Quintessence of Ibsenism (1891) has presented the Norwegian dramatist as the exponent of a reforming naturalism with his emphasis on local plays like A Doll’s House and Ghosts. Shaw saw drama as a vehicle for presenting in entertaining and provocative forms his views of the abuses and contradictions of the social orders and his suggestions of the true way in which to view human experience and institutions. David Daiches observes that, “Shaw had learned to question the customary beliefs of society and the accepted basis of public institutions” (1104).

The aesthetic movement known as Realism evolved in Europe in the early eighteenth century with the rise of the novel, which portrayed the socio-cultural experiences of the emerging middle class. Realism gained greater currency in the mid-nineteenth century as a reaction against what was by then thought to be the self indulgent and melodramatic excess of romanticism; it also sought to correct the Classicist tendency to represent life as more homogenous and orderly than it really was. The motive force behind realism was the attempt by creative artists to appropriate the methodologies of the highly respected physical sciences, with their emphasis on the systematic recording and classification of empirical data, accurate observation, and verifiable inference. Naturalism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century Europe as an offshoot of realism, with the intention of completely eliminating the potentially
symbolic dimension of realism in the interests of scientific accuracy. Naturalism is sometimes claimed to give an even more accurate description of life than realism. But naturalism is not only, like realism, a special selection of subject matter and a special way of rendering those materials; it is a mode of fiction that was developed by a school of writers in accordance with a particular philosophical thesis. This thesis, a product of post Darwinian biology in the nineteenth century, held that a human being exists entirely in the order of nature and does not have a soul nor any access to a religious or spiritual world beyond the natural world; and therefore, that such a being is merely a higher-order animal whose character and behaviour are merely determined by two kinds of forces: hereditary and environment. In 1859 Charles Darwin had published his theory. In *The Origin of the Species*, a book that revolutionized scientific thought on the subjects of evolution and environmental adaptation, Darwin identified a process which he called ‘the natural selection.’ Darwin’s ideas were completely controversial at that time. Previously people believed that God had created each species individually human. Further Darwin’s theories believed that they had evolved from the lower primates, such as apes. The theory is based on the fact that the living species should compete with each other for their survival. The weaker species will tend to die out while the stronger species survive and reproduce. The logical extension of this concept is that over time strong species will adapt to their environment in order to survive. According to the definition of Martin Gray in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* naturalism expresses a post Darwinian view of life in which man is seen as fundamentally no more than a specialized animal, affected by natural forces, such as hereditary and environment. Each person inherits compulsive instincts – especially hunger, the drive to accumulate possessions and sexuality – and is then subjected to the social and economic forces in the family, the class, and the milieu.
into which that person is born. The French novelist Emile Zola, beginning in the 1870’s, did much to develop this theory in what he called “le roman experimental” (that is a novel organized in the mode of a scientific experiment on the behaviour, under given conditions, of the character it depicts). Zola and later naturalistic writers, such as the American Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, and the Theodore Dreiser, try to present their subjects with scientific objectivity and with elaborate documentation, sometimes including an almost medical frankness about activities and bodily functions usually unmentioned in earlier literature. They tend to choose characters who exhibit strong animal drives such as greed and sexual drive, and who are helpless victims both of glandular secretions within and of sociological pressures without. The protagonist of the naturalistic plot, a pawn to multiple compulsions, usually disintegrates, or is wiped out.

The aim of our present study is to make a comparative study of women characters in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and August Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* from a naturalistic point of view. Henrik Ibsen is known to be one of the most eminent playwrights of his time. He is often called the ‘father of the modern drama’ because he had helped to popularize realism. Practically his whole life is devoted to the theatre. His spare hours were spent in the preparation for entrance to the Christiania University, where about at the age of twenty, he formed a friendship with Bjornson. During the winter of 1848 he wrote his first play *Cateline*. In about 1851 he was given the position of the ‘theatre poet’. In 1857 he had become the director of the Norwegian theatre in Christiania. While there he published another work *The Vikings at Hedgeland* and married Suzannah in 1858. In 1860, he was under the attack of the press for the lack of productivity although he had published a few poems. The Christinia University went bankrupt in 1862. During this period he completed
The Pretenders (1863) and a dramatic epic poem Brand (1866) which soon achieved critical voice and this was followed by Peer Gynt (1867). The first of Ibsen’s prose dramas were The League of the Youth, published in 1869, followed by Emperor and the Galilean (1873), his first work to be translated into English, and then The Pillars of the Society (1877), A Doll’s House (1879), Ghosts (1881), and An Enemy of the People (1882) are among the plays that contribute to realism. His next phase of works included a shift from social concerns to the isolation of the individual. The MasterBuilder (1892), Little Eyolf (1894), John Gabriel Borkman (1896), and When We Dead Awaken (1899), all treat the conflicts that arise between art and life, between creativity and expectations, and between personal contentment and self deception.

The element of naturalism prevailed in his personal life. Ibsen himself was subjected to poverty as a result of his father’s bankruptcy. Elizabeth Hardwick believed that, “his mother had suffered many hardships and had served as a model for the female characters” (43). In his early works Ibsen has used poetry with mythological themes but then switches to a realistic style with the play The Pillars of the Society. This realistic style is a break from the fanciful operas and the stock characters and Ibsen became a detailed observer of true human life.

In 1888 women were finally given right of control over their money. In 1879 a wife was not legally permitted to borrow money without her husband’s consent. This issue was already popular in Norway where Ibsen lived. Norway was a newly liberated country, having been freed from the Danish control. Norwegian law had passed laws regarding the protection of women and their employment. By the middle of the nineteenth century women had been provided the same laws of protection as to the male children. Women were permitted
inheritance rights, though the employment wages they received were quite low. Although divorce was legal but it was only enacted if both the partners agreed. Such issues have been taken by Henrik Ibsen with great insight. In the book Performing Women: Female Characters, Male Playwrights and Modern Stage, Gay Gibson Cima says that, “Ibsen’s work treats real life issues in an almost journalistic manner” (229).

A Doll’s House was published on December 4, 1879 and was first performed in Copenhagen on December 21. This work was considered a publishing event and it sold around 8000 copies. However, it created a controversy that Ibsen had to disappointingly change its ending, he was forced to write a second ending for the play that he called as, “a barbaric outrage” Ibsen believes that women were best suited to be mothers and wives, but at the same time, he had an eye for injustice and although he was embraced by feminists, Ibsen was no champion of human rights; he had only dealt with the problem of women’s right as a facet of the realism within his play. Ibsen broke away from the romantic tradition with his realistic portrayals of individual characters and his focus on psychological concerns as he sought to portray the real world, especially the position of women in society. Ibsen had elevated theatre from mere entertainment to a forum for exposing social problems. Sheri Metzger in her essay discusses Ibsen’s contribution to drama as a forum for exposing social problems remarked, “with A Doll’s House, Ibsen turned drama into a respectable genre for the examination of social issues” (25).

Like exposing the flaws of Helmer and Nora’s marriage, he made the private into the public and, “provided an advocacy for women”. A Doll’s House belongs to the second phase of Ibsen’s career. It is during this phase he transformed from mythical and historical dramas to the social dramas. It is the first in the series investigating tensions in the family. Written
August Strindberg was a Swedish playwright, novelist and short story writer. He combined psychology, naturalism and later elements of literary forms. Having going through an unhappy childhood Strindberg had started writing at a very young age when his mother died when he was very young. His father remarried, it is believed that his stepmother did not treat him well. Circumstances made him a naturalistic writer. With his mother’s background he wrote an autobiographical work *The Son of a Servant*. Strindberg was enrolled in the University of Uppsalla, where he had failed to pass the preliminary examination in chemistry. He had worked for a little while in the Royal Dramatic Theatre, where he wrote three plays which were rejected. After various experiments, he resumed his studies in the University of Uppsalla. Back in Stockholm he worked as a journalist and wrote a historical drama known as *Master Olof* (1872) when he was only twenty three years old. It is considered as Sweden’s first drama. In 1874 he became an assistant librarian in the Royal Library, serving till he resigned in 1882. His first published novel was *The Red Room* in 1882. It was his first work which was realistic, a robust satire on just anything Strindberg had observed all around. This work described the literary and artistic lives. The “red room” was a meeting place where all the journalists met; it was a small café in Stockholm. During all these years Strindberg led a bohemian life and earned his living as a private tutor, insurance agent and a journalist. In spite of *Master Olof* he was still unknown among his people. His collection of stories *Married* (1884) had reflected the bold treatment of sex, the second edition has illustrated the harsher treatment. However what outraged the public was the
hatred for women, feminist movement and the emancipated women. Strindberg stood among the Scandinavian authors. A man who had three failed marriages insisted that a women’s place is at home. His own environment was responsible for his hatred for women.

Strindberg’s relationships with women were quite troubled and have often been interpreted as misogynistic by contemporaries and modern readers. However it is believed that he has an uncommon insight into the hypocrisy and society’s gender roles and sexual morality. Marriage and families were being stressed in Strindberg’s lifetime as Sweden industrialized and urbanized at a rapid pace. Problems of prostitution and poverty were debated among writers, critics and politicians. Strindberg contributed to drama two things: expressionism and naturalism. His naturalistic works include *The Father* (1887), *Miss Julie* (1888) and *Creditors* (1889). For six years Strindberg struggled with madness. He wrote no plays but an account of his madness led to the basis of his major work *Inferno* (1897). After his recovery, his intellectual interests turned to magic, Occult, Buddhism and Hinduism. He wrote more than thirty plays in all the coming years of his life. Strindberg one of the famous American writer Eugene O’Neill calls him the, “precursor of all the modernity in the present theatre.”

From the day of its publication *Miss Julie* has been source of critical controversy and debate. Written around 1888, the play was banned and censored throughout Europe as it dealt with situations and attitudes morally and socially offensive, the daughter of a count has an affair with a valet, who in turn coerces her to commit suicide. *Miss Julie* was symptomatic of all that was dangerous and corrupt at that time. The play was partly based on his relationship with his first wife Siri, who left her baron husband to marry Strindberg, the son of a servant. The play was set on a Midsummer’s eve during the 1880’s. Jean and Julie are both protagonists. As the social and sexual struggle develops between them, Julie must face the
fact that Jean, a servant, is a stronger person. Trapped and unable to arrive at any reasonable plan, she orders Jean to hypnotize her into committing suicide. Initially banned in Sweden, time had allowed Strindberg’s play to mellow from a bewildering attempt to look at the social issues of woman’s place in the changing social order, into a modern tragedy. Miss Julie probably began as a two or three act play, but in order to capture the required intensity of emotion and opposition to conventional modes, Strindberg reduced Miss Julie to a ninety minute act. The build up to the climax, Jean and Julie having sex, and the resulting catastrophe are only broken by a dance and pantomimes, which allow the spectator to rest but not to escape from the influence of the author hypnotist. The play reveals that Miss Julie has no control over her sexual instincts from the beginning. Forty percent of the rising action of Miss Julie is leading to the climax and peripety that is the role reversal creating a two part structure of the play. Once Jean and Julie have seduced each other, their lives are suddenly changed, or what we may call it interchanged. The aristocrat in the social sphere becomes the slave of the valet and the valet becomes the aristocrat in the sexual sphere as Julie lowers herself beyond redemption.

The stress on the multiple motivation of the action, random illogical dialogue and departure from the conventional depictions of the character makes Miss Julie an excellent example of the naturalistic movement, that is, the characters are seen as helpless products of hereditary and environment who interact with their minds and bodies as they would in real life. Strindberg’s naturalistic techniques also extended to the aspects of stage décor, lighting and make up, and where to have strong repercussions in modern theatre. He used a realistic setting for the action believing that it was only way the audience could be completely involved in the play, but in order to capture the spirit of the finale, Strindberg needed the
reality to fade. He called for the lights to replicate the slanting sun and fall on Jean alone so that the audience would be aware of nothing but a black undefined figure and Julie’s voice leading the audience to be as hypnotized as Julie. *Miss Julie* demonstrates both the effectiveness and limitations of stage realism for while it allows the audience to participate fully it inhibits expressions of the spirit. *Miss Julie* with its realistic basis lifts to a very symbolic conclusion of great power when Strindberg stage directions are followed. The play seems to foreshadow the turn Strindberg’s writing style would take.

Strindberg’s play is actually written as a response to Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House*. Ibsen, an early nineteenth century supporter of women’s emancipation, wrote his play advocating women’s rights, though he denied it and Strindberg had a contrary view. It was the aim of the play to discredit any form of intelligence in a woman. The objective of this study is to discuss the representation of the women by playwrights from a naturalistic point of view.
WORKS CITED


