CHAPTER 3

AUGUST STRINDBERG’S MISS JULIE

Although being a master playwright and it is believed that, “no modern playwright was bolder or more original more complex than Strindberg, still he has been regarded as the strangest figure in the history of literature” (Meyer 94). A Swedish author August Strindberg was born in Stockholm in Sweden. His mother being a housemaid who had a proletarian background and August was her third child. Though his father had a trace of aristocratic blood his family life was disharmonic and he was raised in poverty. His childhood was quite unhappy as he lost his mother when he was only thirteen years old. His father had remarried a very young housekeeper which further added to his strife. His unhappy life is mostly reflected in his works. As a youth he did some very odd jobs, and briefly attended the University of Uppsalla too. He was also an actor, a journalist and a librarian at the Royal Library. His first work is Master Olof (1872) a historical epic, but it did not achieve critical success until the publication of his novel The Red Room in 1879. Strindberg is rather remembered as a chief founder of the modern prose play.

Coming to Miss Julie, it was first published in 1888 and had shocked its early reviewers, although being privately performed in 1889 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The play was banned throughout Europe and was not produced in Sweden, Strindberg’s native country until 1906, Britain’s ban on public performances was lifted in 1939. As it is believed somehow that the notoriety is the best publicity, the play was soon opened throughout Europe and America and soon it was accepted and gained popularity all around the world and by the early twentieth century it has become an important facet of the modern drama. Miss
Julie (1889) was the second series of his bitter realistic plays; the first was The Father (1887), which examined the basic human nature. These plays are similar in many ways, both of them explore the character’s perverse and dependent relationships, socially, sexually and emotionally which ultimately lead to their destruction. Miss Julie, one act play, is a frank portrayal of the most intimate thoughts of man and of the age long antagonism between classes. Brutally frank, because August Strindberg strips both of their glitter, their sham and pretense that we may see that, at “bottom there’s not so much difference between people and people.” (53)

Until the nineteenth century the tragedy is thought to be the neoclassical Greek style on one hand and the Shakespearean style on the other hand. There were questions, especially by the romantics regarding advocating new forms by modern dramatists.

After Strindberg had finished Miss Julie he had mailed it to his publisher. He had presented his publisher the modern contents of psychological drama and defined its form as a tragedy that fulfilled the ideals of the classical tradition:

By this I take the liberty to offer the first naturalistic tragedy in Swedish drama, and ask you not to refuse it rashly so that you may regret it later, for this play will be recorded in the annals. (54)

The play was refused but his prophesy came to be true. Of course the root of contention in the play stemmed from its frank portrayal of sex. Not only does Miss Julie contain a sexual encounter between a lower class servant and an upper class servant, the play clearly describes the sex act as something apart from the concept of love. The idea of intercourse between both the main characters of the play was completely scandalous during the nineteenth century. In his preface Strindberg emphasizes on the characteristics which seem to be important and conveys the feelings with great emotional fervor. He had taken a great pain to explain the
readers his logical feelings, and in order to do it he wanted to encapsulate the character’s feelings and emotions.

Today Miss Julie is regarded as one of the most remarkable plays in the modern era as for the same reasons that it had shocked the critics and the reviewers. Strindberg’s portrayal of sexual desire had also influenced other play writers like Tennessee Williams who is best known for his works like Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. The play had not been recognized all around during the time of Strindberg but it had earned a place in the naturalism. One of the famous American writers Eugene O’ Niell calls Strindberg “the precursor of all the modernity in the present theater” (Hartman 216).

In his preface to Miss Julie August Strindberg stated that, “the half woman is a type coming more into prominence, selling herself nowadays for power, decorations, distinctions, diplomas, as formerly for money, and the type indicates degeneration” (57). It is safe to consider Strindberg a misogynist. According to Webster’s Dictionary New Collegiate (1981) a misogynist is the one who has or shows a hatred for disgust of women. His dislike for women can be traced by his genealogy. He later went through three agonizing marriages in search for the unrequited love for his mother. The idea of woman being somewhat a ‘monster’ is shown through the character of Julie in Miss Julie. Signs of his misogyny and his type of female characters are also included in a number of his plays, especially in the play The Father. His misogyny was central to the many psychotic episodes he suffered throughout the eighteen nineties, episodes that put a stop to his dramatic production altogether. When he took up play writing again, he began to have a more sympathetic view of women. August Strindberg’s influence can be seen in many later authors, especially Eugene O’ Niell, whose life paralleled that of Strindberg. His love for his mother, however, was confused and
contradictory. Since his mother had rejected him in favour of his brother, he sometimes hated her as well; feeling, at times that she was “the dearest creature on earth at other times, that she was depriving him of love, and nourishment” (Brustein 138). His confusion towards his mother determined the shape of his love life and his general attitude towards women. He had “split his mother in two; he vacillated between an intense worship of the female and even more intense misogyny”. The naturalistic element was evident in his real life also due to his circumstances. He vacillated between regarding “women as evil vampires sucking out his manhood” and “virtuous maternal types who gave him the comfort he is solely craved” (Brustein 139). He tried to combine these two types of women into one person. “Strindberg’s first wife, Siri Von Essen was worshipped by Strindberg as a ‘superior being’ prior to their marriage” (Brustein 140). However, once they were married he accused her of careerism, lesbianism, infidelity, uncleanness, having another man’s child, doubting his sanity, and not keeping the accounts. In his next two marriages to Frida Uhl and Harriet Bosse; the pattern repeated itself though, Strindberg gradually realized that his feelings stemmed from his own psychological disorder.

Strindberg’s desire for a mother also reduced him to a weak and passive dependent, leading him to have an obsession with female domination. However, his intellect rebelled against his childlike state. His desire to dominate and be dominated by the same woman made him a “victim of contradictory needs which left him in perpetual turmoil and confusion” (Brustein 141). The struggles in Strindberg’s mind between the father and mother, the aristocrat and servant, spirit and matter, aggressiveness and passivity, were the conflicts which determined the direction of his career, as well as the subject matter of his writing. Many critics acknowledged that he had uncommon insight into the hypocrisy of his
society’s gender roles and sexual morality. Marriage and the family were under stress in Strindberg’s lifetime as Sweden industrialized and urbanized at a rapid pace. His early writing often dealt with the traditional roles of the sexes imposed by the society, which he criticized as unjust.

In Strindberg’s play Miss Julie, he states in the preface that woman is a “stunted form of human being,” inferior to man in strength, sensitivity and initiative. He also explains, as mentioned earlier how the character of Julie represents a “degenerating aristocracy crumbling in the face of a rising middle class” (Templeton 468). Miss Julie is a “modern character, not because the man hating half woman may not have existed in all ages, but because now, after her discovery she has stepped in front and begun to make a noise.” The misogyny of the preface resides in the rather cynical pleasure it takes in Julie’s demise and her misguided desire to live outside her “natural” gender and class stations. Both of the main characters (Jean and Julie) are dismissed as types of representatives of their classes. Although Julie is the aristocrat in class, “sexually Jean is the aristocrat because of the male strength”. Class stereotyping is in conjunction with sex stereotyping. Strindberg’s admiration for the sexual aristocracy of Jean is qualified by his sense of the servant’s inherent vulgarity. “He is polished on the outside and coarse within. He knows already how to wear a frock coat with ease, but the cleanliness of his body cannot be guaranteed”. This signifies that if Jean is the sexual aristocrat, he is the social slave and Julie is the opposite. Jean reaches up and Julie falls down, both meeting on equal grounds only at the “moment of seduction, in the arms of the great democratized sex” (Brustein 157).

In his theoretical writings, Strindberg emphasized the shift from the conventional plot of the well made play towards a new attention to the character and explained that in
Miss Julie, he has concentrated on the passionate relationship between the two main characters, a feminist aristocrat and her father’s valet, rather than any formally structured plot because he believes that:

People of today are most interested in the psychological process. Our inquisitive souls are not satisfied just to see something happen; we want to know how it happened. We want to see the strings, the machinery, examine the double-bottomed box, feel for the seam in the magic ring, look at the cards to see how they are marked. (Meyer 71)

For Strindberg psychological plays were most realistic than those with well formed plots. Strindberg prefigures the struggles with illusionism, represented by the paraphernalia of the magician, which would, in different ways, motivate both the naturalist and the anti-naturalist traditions in modern theatre. Emma Goldman believes that, “the naturalists rejected ‘magic’ because they wanted show life as it really was. Emile Zola had complained that the theatre was ‘the last fortress of conventionality’; the naturalist plays of Strindberg and the realist plays of Ibsen seek to storm this fortress and to create a new, truer theatre” (171). Strindberg made his readers aware of the complexity of the human soul of the past and the present in his play by mixing the old and the new kind of civilization in his modern characters. He expressed the fact there is absolutely no bad person or a completely good person. An individual is certainly influenced by other forces, like psychological forces or series of motives as what happened in Miss Julie. He wanted the audience to see his characters and value whether his characters are good or not. Strindberg stated this in his foreword to Miss Julie:
I don’t believe in simplified dramatic characters and I think that the author’s judgments on people such as: that one is stupid, that one brutal, that one jealous, complex the human psyche is and who know that ‘vice’ has a reverse side that rather closely remembers virtue. My soul characters are conglomerations of past and present civilizations. (Meyer 56)

Strindberg discussed about the special relationship between the classes and the sexes and this has attracted us to analyze the play more closely. In Miss Julie, the major character is Julie. She is an aristocrat’s daughter who lives together with her family and servants. In the society and in her life she has to face many problems since she feels that everybody rejects her. In the end she commits suicide. Julie can be considered as a character who has failed in her life, and there are many factors that cause Julie to end her life. Her father, mother, Jean and the other servants who live around her are indirectly involved in the process of her disappointment and her tragic life. These are the characters which form an important aspect of any play. The characters are used as a tool to direct the readers understanding towards a play. Robert Scholes in the Elements of Drama, states that,” through the characters, the readers can notice the conflict of the story, which leads to the resolution of the story, in examining the action of a character, people have to pay attention to the context, for the characters are likely to behave differently in different situation” (77). Moreover the character in literature is the representation of the author about how a human being reacts to many kinds of conditions and attempts to shape his or her environment. According to Edgar V Robert in Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing states that “to understand a character people need to know a character’s major traits. The technique to study a character trait is by knowing the relationship with the other characters in the play” (54). Julie being the main
character in *Miss Julie* does not understand her place in society as an aristocrat or a woman, her confusion and lack of understanding is the primary focus of the play. Graham Little in *Approach to Literature* says that human relationship is unlimited and there are many kinds of relationships but all of them are the derivation of position and emotion like hate, jealousy, influence and so on. According to John Ward:

> It is tempting to describe Strindberg as an anti-feminist as though his violent attacks on the female sex were the result of his exasperation with the undue advocacy of women’s rights by many of his contemporaries. (18)

He has been denounced, “as a sex maniac and hailed as a superman, rising above and beyond the confines of sex” (Lind 5). Through his works, it is not difficult to find the trace of war between the genders.

Miss Julie is the mistress of the house. Before her appearance on the stage the audience has a certain impression of the lady. From the opening scene of the play, the character of Julie is revealed to the audience when they hear the servant’s gossip and inject an image of Julie. However, the readers find it difficult to depict a proper picture of Julie, we cannot fix a proper persona of her character. Throughout the play Julie is playing various roles, and her personality is always moving; at the beginning of the play she seems to be totally different from herself at the end of the play. At the opening part of the play the image the audience receives about her is an arbitrary lady, who ignores the world’s eyes. In order to reveal the lady’s willful personality, Strindberg via the opening conversation between the valet Jean and the cook Christine, impresses the audience with a strong image of the lady’s crazy and unscrupulous behaviour before she appears on the stage. The proud and willful lady not only humiliates her fiancé with the whip like training a dog, but also disrespects her own class and
image by dragging her servants to dance with her. At the beginning of the play it is conceived very well that Julie has no sense of self respect. According to Jean, while not getting along with her fiancé, treats him like an animal; and she regards herself as the tamer. She decides to lower her status more, when she decides to dance with the servants on the midsummer’s night eve. According to John Ward:

    Julie is a woman of strong sensuality but living in a world with social convention. She is essentially a woman in a feudal setting. Even though living in such a conventional world, she possesses none of the modest ‘virtue’ of her time. (62)

According to John Ward, “She is sensual and considers herself equal of any man and the superior to most” (62). She is proud and arrogant. In the conversation between Jean and Christine at the beginning of the play, Christine discovers what has happened to her mistress and fiancé, Christine, with an unbelievable tone, mentions Julie’s attitude towards her pets, Diana the bitch, and Serena the finch, to be an implication of her present situation and the following doom that would be befalling her.

    Diana, the blue blooded, significantly given the same name as the chaste goddess of hunt is without doubt a product of hereditary as an animal and her environment as the lady’s pet. The gatekeeper’s cur is hardly a suitable mate; however the cur here in the play represents Jean. The whole situation is however similar to Julie’s. Moreover with Jean beheading Serena the finch, it’s easy to figure out that Miss Julie’s finch is the direct implication of her final destiny. Let’s interpret the name first Serena. Serena implies the serenity of the artificially protected captive who expected to sing appropriately for the pleasure of her human keepers. Therefore we might say that Miss Julie is just like her own
finch, Serena, being a captive within a cage less material but just as confining. Serena’s beheading by Jean is certainly the implication of Julie’s death. However, the meaning of their death is quite different. Serena, for having no choice or understanding in her death is beheaded by a brute. Her death means nothing to her but shows the real image of Jean. By contrast Julie’s death results from the voluntary act of a person of honour and refinement. Therefore we can conclude Julie as Serena and Diana. Hence Miss Julie is a product of environment and hereditary. Miss Julie is no doubt a product of Strindbergian characterless character and a thoroughly believed characterization of a highly complex and dynamic woman. Strindberg also uses an implication in the play by the dream she sometimes has:

Julie: . . . in which [my dream] I’m on top of a pillar and
cant see anyway of getting down. When I look
down I’m dizzy, I have to get down but I haven’t
the courage to jump. I can’t stay there and I long
to fall, but I don’t fall. There’s no respite. There
cant be any peace at all for me until I’m down, right
down on the ground. And if I did get to the ground
I’d want to be under the ground. (101)

Strindberg in his preface to the play has used a Japanese term ‘hara-kiri’ to explicate why Julie decides to commit suicide to solve her dilemma after she makes love to a servant. The term ‘hara-kiri’, a privilege of nobility, is a Japanese law of inner conscience that compels one to cut his own stomach open at the insult of another, surviving in modified form in the duel. Due to the fact the nobility cannot live without honour, since being insulted, there is no way except death. It explains why Jean has ability to live on, but Miss Julie doesn’t, for she
cannot live without honour. From the beginning of the play we come across the relationship
between Julie and her mother. Julie is not as close to her mother as a daughter should be
because Julie’s mother never felt the joy of having a daughter. Their cold relationship had
happened since she was in her womb. Julie never got the warmth, love, secure feelings that a
child should get from her mother since her birth was unwanted. She tries to find love from
her ex-fiancé but fails because her ex-fiancé does not approve her behaviour. Because of her
mother’s influence, she was unable to keep her relationships well and ruined every
relationship that she already had by treating her fiancé as though he was not a human being.
Her mother was busy with her own ambition in the gender equality and woman’s rights
activities. It seems that Julie had become the victim of her mother’s ambition against men, as
Julie’s mother hates men. This left a great influence on Julie’s life in which she finally got
confused with the condition that she actually was a woman but had to behave as a man and
this condition further lead to her tragic life. In other words it was she, herself causing her
own doom. She certainly is a hereditary noble. However, being a daughter of a count and a
lady, “Julie is not entirely a product of an aristocratic environment” (Walter 68). Julie’s
father is an aristocrat; her mother was a person of a humble origin. Julie seems at times to
feel that she does not belong wholly to either class. From the conversation of the servants we
get a detail of Julie and Julie’s mother. Julie’s mother is presented as a so called emancipated
woman who desires to rear her daughter according to her belief that women are as equal to
men if not being their superior. Therefore, Julie is not trained as an aristocratic lady, but as a
man:

Julie: I had to all the things a boy does to prove
   women are as good as men. I had to wear
boy’s clothes; I was taught to handle horses
and I wasn’t allowed in the dairy. She made
me groom and harness and go out hunting;
I even had to plough. (91)

Julie is similarly ambivalent about her sexual identity; owing to the strange way in which she
was raised, she does not feel completely feminine. When she was a child, her mother used to
make her dress as a boy and made her do the skills the boys were required to do. While her
father later raised her to have contempt for her own sex. Both have helped her to make her a
half- woman. According to Declan Kiberd’s Strindberg’s villains: The New Woman as
Predator the countess being estranged from her husband, liberates the hidden male in her
daughter in order to console herself for the lack of man in her deepest emotional life. Kiberd
notes:

She [the countess] recreates in her daughter the male companion she cannot
find in her husband; and while she defrauds her husband in business and
betrays him in life, she teaches her daughter to vow eternal enmity to sex. (34)

In the Authors Forward to the play, Strindberg explicates Julie’s tragic fate as a result
of many circumstances. A mother’s role is very important part in raising the children. She
usually gives them love, warmth and affection. Besides, the relationship between the mother
and a child is inseparable because a child has too interact with the mother all the time.
However Julie’s mother is different, she had inherited hatred for men, she was against the
idea of the marriage yet she married Julie’s father. She tried to put her ideas in her daughter.
Julie was a victim of the discord that a mothers ‘crime’ has produced in a family. She was a
victim of the circumstances, of her own defective constitution, or even the Fate or Universal
Law of former days, just as the tragic heroes in the ancient tragedies who are destined since birth. Julie’s birth seemed to be a mistake; a mistake for her mother, for it is her birth that breaks the countess’s belief. According to Julie’s confession towards Jean after their sexual encounter.

Julie: Listen. My mother wasn’t well born; she came of quite humble people and was brought with all these new ideas of sex equality and women’s rights and so on. She thought marriage was quite wrong so when my father proposed her she said she would never become his wife but in the end she did. I came into the world as far I can make out, against my mother’s will. (91)

In this whole scene, Julie’s mother wanted to show that she had her own ideal of gender equality. Julie’s mother got married but she puts the ideas of women’s rights and gender equality into Julie since Julie’s mother was aware that she could not make her dreams come true. Therefore Julie due to her promise to her mother had decided never to become a slave to a man, wants her fiancé to become her slave. Through Jean’s eyes, Strindberg tells how Julie treated her fiancé:

Jean: Miss Julie was putting him through the paces, as she called it – do you know what that meant? She made him leap over the riding whip, the way you teach a dog to jump. He leaped twice, and each time she gave him a cut, but the third
time, he snatched the whip out of her hand and
broke it across his knee. And that was the last we
saw of him. (71)

Therefore we know why the young lawyer, Julie’s fiancé, leaves Julie. Through the passage
Julie seems to be a psychological abnormal. It seems that she hates men so much that she
vents her feelings of hatred on men through whipping. The reason she hates men is the inner
conflict inside Julie’s heart:

Julie: I was sorry for my father, but I took my mother’s
side, because I didn’t know the circumstances I’d
learn from her to distrust and hate men – she hated
men and I swore to her that I would never be a slave
to any man. (92)

To this degree Julie is the victim of her mothers training and education during her childhood.
In The Social and Religious Plays of Strindberg, John Ward points out Rousseau’s doctrine
of educating the offspring. Rousseau like Strindberg would blame Julie’s error of gender
confusion on her childhood education. In Emile the French philosopher offers some advice,
which was very close to Strindberg’s heart, “Love childhood, indulge its sports, its pleasure,
its delightful instincts.” In Miss Julie to point up the truth of Rousseau’s doctrines, Strindberg
has Julie’s mother willfully misinterpret the philosopher’s idea. Instead of bringing up her
daughter in an appropriate state of sex, she provided Julie with the natural environment and
then imposed an unnatural series of relationships on her. Rousseau believes that “a perfect
man and perfect woman should no more be alike in mind than in face and so it follows that
their education must be different” (Ward 60). Julie’s parent’s education on her is the
evidence of Rousseau’s contrary notions:

Julie: It was my mother’s revenge on him, for
taking control of the house out of her.
He was on the verge of shooting himself—the
rumour was that he had done so, but failed to
himself. Well, he lived; and he made
mother pay for what she had done. (92)

Under Ward’s interpretation Julie, from her father has inherited urge towards self
abasement and her lack of emotional control. Her father was regarded as a weakling; Julie
was torn between her mother and her father. John Ward observes that, “Julie, then, is a
psychological hermaphrodite, torn between an urge for power and a need for humiliation,
between passion and caution, love and hate, grossness and refinement, the masculine and
the feminine, tenderness and contempt, ecstasy and irony, erotic desire and chaste modesty”
(70).

Walter Johnson has observed the play that Julie’s thinking is not her own, its just
conglomeration of nothing ranging from romantic notion to the brutal notion about the nature
of the male being. As Strindberg emphasizes in the Author’s Forward, “Julie does not have
any idea that is her own. The things she utters are only echoes of what she has heard, (or
learnt) or read” (58). Therefore we cannot say that she is a “man hater”. She is here trained to
be a man hater.

For Miss Julie, to be the mistress of man is her duty, also is the meaning for her
existence. However what she does is not the proper behaviour as a mistress. She behaves with the drives of her will. Through Jean’s words we see his comment on Julie’s arbitrary self:

Jean: Our young lady hasn’t any proper respect for herself or her position. I mean she isn’t refined. In the barn just now she dragged gamekeeper away from Anna and made him dance with her no waiting to be asked. (72)

Julie not only drags the gamekeeper away from Anna and makes him dance with her; she also drags Jean away from Christine to make him dance with her. Julie while getting along with the servants, wants to be the mistress, on the other hand, her behavior as Jean mentions in the play, doesn’t fit her status. Though being the lady of the house Julie doesn’t act as a lady. Due to her mother’s education and her father’s upbringing she wasn’t brought up as a lady. Therefore, Strindberg in his Forward to the play defines Julie as a ‘half-woman’, though physically being a woman; psychologically she was trained as a man. Also though being a mistress of the family, she does not behave as a mistress. Julie, unlike her father loses her authority.

In her conversation with Jean when she flips Jean’s face with her handkerchief, this action explicates her flirtation, while Jean on the other hand keeps a distance from Julie from the very beginning of the play. Jean still conscious of his class tries to stay away from Julie. Julie on the other hand gives up her status as a mistress:

Julie: Don’t take it as an order. Tonight we’re all just people enjoying a party. There’s no question
of class. (86)

It doesn’t seem possible to erase the class differences so easily. Social class could not be erased especially in the 19th century Europe. Nevertheless as Jean remarks Miss Julie doesn’t know how to respect her status:

Julie: *(feels his biceps)* what muscles you have!

Jean: *(warningly)* Miss Julie!

Julie: Yes, Monsieur Jean?

Jean: Attention. *je ne suit qu’un home.* [I am not your lover] (79)

Through such behaviour of Julie, the author shows human beings under control of sexual desire. Here Jean warns Miss Julie that he is not her lover. It is Julie here who gives up her status before Jean begins to exceed his limits. Slowly Julie offers space to him for crossing the border line between the slave and the master. Even though Julie’s behaviour seems to give up her status of an aristocratic lady, but beneath she never gives up her pride and prestige. Her way of treating her fiancé, certainly reveals her desire of being “the mistress” in their relationship. The reason for the provocation towards the valet is just to satisfy her inside desire of dominating the male. After dropping the social status, Julie though being educated as a man, still is a woman psychologically. In her sexual encounter with Jean she becomes conscious of her falling status and tragedy soon starts to befall her.

Like the hero in the Greek tragedy, taking Oedipus the king as the example who was doomed since his birth and he gradually stepped into the net of the fate, Julie’s life was destined. It is the parent’s education, the growing up environment, or the circumstances etc. According to Strindberg:
The naturalist has abolished guilt with God, but the consequences of the action punishment, imprisonment or the fear of it, he cannot abolish, for the simple reason that they remain whether he is acquitted or not. (Meyer 56)

Julie’s fall is also due to the male character. In this chapter we also intend to have a closer look at the male character Jean, the valet as mentioned in the play. Due to his growing up background, having experienced life in poverty, he on one hand hates people belonging to the upper class, for envying their enjoyment; on the other hand, he looks forward to the life of nobility. The strongest image the audience would get of him is his semi servant, semi noble image. After his sexual encounter in Jean’s room Julie starts trusting him completely. However Jean’s true intentions are not known to the audience. He confesses to Julie:

Jean: You [Julie] were carried away by some kind of madness, and now you’re trying to cover up your mistake by persuading yourself are in love with me. You’re not, although you may find me physically attractive, which means your love’s no better than mine. (90)

The above dialogue shows that Jean disregards Julie’s attention to him. Julie seeks attention and care from Jean of which she is deprived of as a child. On asking Jean whether he loves her or not Julie doesn’t get the answer she expected and instead is insulted. The hatred in Julie’s mind starts to form when Jean beheads Julie’s favourite bird the greenfinch. This makes Julie realize that Jean does not love her. Julie blames Jean for seducing her but Jean does not consider himself responsible for it. In the end Julie is confused and tries to seek Jean’s advice on which Jean suggests her to free herself from all the embarrassment. At the
end of the play she finds her life empty and hence commits suicide. It’s clear that it is the central character Jean who encourages Julie to commit suicide.

Toward the end of the play Julie eventually recognizes her self. Unlike in the beginning Julie disregarded the status as a mistress and does not know her place. Julie kills herself due to the fact that being an aristocrat she cannot destroy her reputation. Like Hedda Gabler, her last actions are noble actions. Her suffering comes from her blood. According to Declan Kiberd’s *Strindberg’s Villains: The New Woman as Predator*, “it is Miss Julie’s tragedy to bear the burden of an overwhelming guilt. Her plight reminds us of that of Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. He is tortured by shame, guilt, precisely because the convicting intelligence is so much stronger than the offending instinct” (34).

Julie finds no definition of her life. In *Strindberg as Dramatist*, Evert Sprinchorn mentions, “Miss Julie’s life lacks definition because there is nothing she can lastingly respect and revere” (23). In other words she does not know how to respect others, nor herself. What she knows is to follow her vow to her mother, or follow her own will. She treats her fiancé like a dog, making him jump with her riding whip. She has no respect but just contempt for him as she wants him to obey her. Nevertheless when he refuses to jump on her command, the contempt takes place in form of hatred for him. In addition, there is no respect in the relationship of Jean and Julie, just her adamant and self willed nature. She ignores Christine though aware of her existence and drags Jean to dance with her. She enjoys Jean’s kissing her shoe and wants him to seduce her. She ignores the respect given to her and her status as the lady of the house.

It is Julie who provokes Jean at first and has intercourse with him, but her sexual impulses and instincts are weak. She does not desire Jean but it is hyperactive mind that
drives her completely. It is her tortured self analysis that disintegrates her own personality into a series of impersonations learnt from other; self contempt acquired from a father who taught her to distrust women; hatred of men imbibed from a fanatical mother; aristocratic pride learned from both; independent principals learned from her fiancé. Such attributes do not coalesce to form a definite personality; as some parts are greater than the others. It seems that the things she utters are only echoes of what she has heard or read. She resembles a ventriloquist’s dummy that is left behind after the master is finished with the act, abandoned on the stage. Therefore in the end she cries out:

Julie: . . . Oh. I’m so tired! I can’t do anything. Can’t
be sorry, can’t run away, can’t stay, can’t live,
can’t die. Help me. Order me, and I’ll obey like a
dog. Do me this service, save my honour, save his
name. (106)

Another character who catches our attention in Miss Julie is Christine. In the play she seems to be ignored by the audience. Different from Jean who despises his class and longs for the upper class always, Christine always has a clear understanding of her position and is content with the situation she stays; being a servant, a cook and Jean’s fiancé as well. In Strindberg’s words, Christine is a complete servant and a devotee in religion, “As for Christine, she is a female slave, full of servility and sluggishness acquired in front of the kitchen fire and stuffed full of morality and religion, which are her cloak and scapegoat” (60). Christine’s servility is obvious and deeply dominates her behaviour and personality; besides she is the character who opens the way to the tragic conclusion. Her name designates a role, she is a complacent Christian with a belief that Christ has suffered and died for his
sins and that only the poor and the downtrodden will see the glory. Christine according to Egil Tornqvist and Barry Jacobs, represents, “a view of Christ as Redeemer to Strindberg even after he returned to a religion of his own devising, ‘Confessional Christianity’, in the late 1890s” (89). She goes to the church as Strindberg mentions in his preface, “to unload her household thefts on to Jesus and taking on a fresh cargo of guiltlessness” (60). In other words, church is a place where people try to cleanse their soul. For Christine church is an excuse to receive God’s grace. Leaving her household thefts she can be considered a loyal servant.

Due to her self conscious status, Christine never disobedys Julie’s orders. At the time of the midsummer’s eve, unwilling to cook the stinking food for Diana (the bitch), she still completes the job. Even when Julie asks for Jean, she does not defy at all.

Julie: . . . you’ll lend me Jean, wont you?

Christine: It’s nothing to do with me. When you’re so condescending, Miss it’s not his place to say no. Go on Jean, and thank Miss Julie for the honour. (73)

The inner servility and self thoughtfulness force her to obey, and her honouring her mistress is the only response she could offer. Christine’s servility is exposed also via her conversation with Jean. Though Jean is not from the upper class, nor is the master of the house hold; still she tires her best to serve him; it is because sexually he is the master. Their sexual relationship demarcates their class differences. It seems that it might be Strindberg’s device to lower woman’s class in sex, for his personal hatred towards women.
“Besides as far as Jean is concerned Christine is a good wife” (Meyer 74). John Ward points out that:

Christine is the perfect mate for the valet. She will be impressed by his smattering of ‘French’, his ‘refined’ tastes and his physical vigour. She will remain a solid supporter who will listen to his stories without leading him into danger. Christine is too stupid to see him clearly, too much of a peasant to tempt him to realize his ambitions but enough of a snob to appreciate his pretensions. (64)

After her knowledge of Jean and Julie’s affair, in her view it is Julie who has debased herself and deserves disdain besides she treats Jean softly and tenderly. Her softness and gentleness are revealed through her actions; her detached actions expose her soft temper; there are no signs of jealousy or anger while her fiancé dances with another woman. Christine, as nothing happened carries on her duties very seriously. Instead after Julie’s mild flirtation with Jean we see Christine folding Julie’s handkerchief patiently. After the completion of her job, she dresses up calmly for the festival. Her soft temperament is further exposed in the following dialogues when she asks Jean whether he would invite her for dance.

Christine: Are you going to dance with me now?

Jean: You’re not angry with me for leaving you like that?

Christine: No, a little thing like that doesn’t bother me.

that. Besides, I know my place. (74)

Christine here reveals her soft nature. Though she longs for a dance, still she is aware of the fact that it is not proper to ask after Jean’s reminding. She calmly faces Julie’s arbitrariness
with the words, “I know my place” (74). Julie’s fall is due to her improper behaviour and, in
the case of Christine, her imperturbation comes due to her understanding of what her
priorities are.

For Christine, Julie is her mistress. Julie for her is a symbol of authority. However, the affair
between Jean and Julie strikes her. The affair breaks Julie’s authority; still Christine
doesn’t know which attitude she should follow for the one who used to be her mistress. In the
beginning though she and the other servants were commenting on Miss Julie’s behaviour,
still she believes her to be the mistress of the house. In her point of view, one should respect
ones employers. She cannot bear the break up of the respect. Through her conversation with
Jean, she conveys to the audience her philosophy of life:

Jean: Why should one respect them (the employers)?

Christine: Yes, you’re so clever, you tell me! But you
don’t want to work for people who lower themselves
by it, that’s my opinion.

Jean: Yes, but it’s a comfort for us to know they aren’t
any better than us. (97)

Since Jean and Julie break the barrier between the master and the servant, Christine
gradually erases her respect towards Julie, especially while when Julie persuades her to flee
away with her and Jean. She is far more controllable and reserved than Julie. Certainly
Christine’s status is of being a servant however compared to Julie who descends her status;
she invisibly upgrades herself higher than Julie. It is Christine who becomes higher and much
more honourable than Julie. Even though she exhibits a slavish mentality, she is far more
decisive and possesses more self character than both Jean and Julie. For instance Julie’s
decision to commit suicide is stimulated less by Jean’s brutality than by Christine’s reverence. According to John Ward, Christine is, “more responsible than Jean for Julie’s death” (64). While Julie desperately appeals to her as another woman to help her against Jean, Christine does not help, but comments:

Christine: Yes I will, and I’ll come home with my sins forgiven and yours too. The blessed Saviour suffered and died on the cross for all our sins, and if we turn to Him with a loyal and humble heart He’ll take all our sins upon Him.

Jean: Including the groceries?

Julie: Do you believe that Christine?

Christine: With all my heart, as surely as I stand here. I learned it as a child, Miss Julie, and I’ve believed it ever since. And where the sin is exceeding great, there His mercy shall overflow.

Julie: Oh, if only I had your faith! Oh, if —?

Christine: Ah, but you can’t have that except by God’s special grace, and that isn’t granted to everyone —

Julie: Who has it, then?

Christine: That’s God’s great secret, Miss Julie. And the Lord’s no respecter of person’s. There shall the last be first . . .

Julie: Then He has respect for the last?

Christine (continues): And it is easier for a camel to pass through the
eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That’s how it is, Miss Julie. Well, I’ll be going and as I pass the stable I’ll tell the groom not to let any of the horses be taken out before his lordship comes home, just in case. Goodbye. (She goes) (104)

As quoted above, Christine signs Julie’s death warrant by suggesting an image of redemption after death without in any way trying to comfort her as a woman. Afterward Christine just turns back to her daily schedule; going to the church as usual. Her life seems to be unchangeable.

Strindberg had also uncovered the Darwin’s theory of the lion and the bee through the persona of Christine. Christine’s position in the house is as little as a bee in the natural world. However her final action in the play indeed drives Julie and Jean into a corner, just as a bee that might drive a lion mad. In Authors Forward in Strindberg’s Plays: One Strindberg had mentioned his Darwinian idea towards life. According to the author “life is not so mathematically idiotic as only to permit the big to eat the small; it happens just as often that the bee kills the lion or at least drives it mad” (Meyer 94).
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