



Miss Julie

August Strindberg

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In *Miss Julie*, a willful young aristocrat, whose perverse nature has already driven her fiancé to break off their engagement, pursues and effectively seduces her father's valet during the course of a Midsummer's Eve celebration. The progress of that seduction and the play's stunning denouement shocked Swedish audiences who first attended the play in 1889.

Despite its controversial debut, this now-classic drama, inspired by the new ideas of naturalism and psychology that swept Europe in the late 19th century, helped to shape modern theater, and remains one of the most potent-and most frequently performed-of modern plays. The full text of *Miss Julie* is reprinted here as translated by Edwin Björkman, complete with Strindberg's critical preface to the play, considered by many to be one of the most important manifestos in theater history.

Miss Julie Details

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Author : August Strindberg

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From Reader Review Miss Julie for online ebook

Disha Acharya says

It is difficult and quite uncomfortable to read and write a review for a writer who was/is famous for his open misogyny and especially more difficult for someone who is a feminist and a woman. You might then say, then why read the play? The answer to this is that I had to read the play as the dramatics society of where I work was putting up a performance of the same play. However, that is not when I got around to reading it, that was last year and as you can see I have read play the six months later and that too on and around Midsummer (that is when the action of the play takes place) . I firmly believe that one reads a particular book or watches a particular movie when one is supposed to, not before, nor later. Now, after having read the play, I have as you seen given it three stars and I found it to be alright. Just about alright. Sure, the play grapples with very relevant social themes of class and social hierarchy, sexual relations and the power struggle between the sexes, themes which are very much relevant today in 2012 as they were in 1888, however the inherent and deep seated patriarchal and misogynistic moorings of the writer are so blatant that they can't be ignored.

Jean the valet, in the play is the archetypical 'Bosola', if you may, the social climber and aspirant, someone who wants to transcend his class, having a fascination and an abhorrence of the same class that he aspires for- the aristocracy. Miss Julie is portrayed as this 'wild' (pg. 3) woman, given to impulse and fancy. This image of a woman gone 'wild' and of being 'fanciful' has been a common portrayal in literature, also seen as 'untamed' and hence deserving to be punished. The setting of the play is also such which Strindberg seems to suggest brings out the 'unconscious' of the characters to the surface. It is Midsummer's Eve, a festival which is often associated with paganism and a surfeit of gluttony, lust and general wantonness. Moreover Miss Julie as is suggested by Christine, the cook is on her period (pg. 8) and is hence more 'strange' than usual. This is again quite usual of patriarchy to either 'devalue' women's experiences or associate a woman's biological experience/ function with her 'indiscreet' behavior. Midsummer's Eve, some wine and menstruation seems to be suggested by Strindberg is quite a heady combination for a woman to completely transgress not only her class but her sex as well. Women are like 'witches' (pg. 43) and can only concoct disorder and a 'witches brew '(pg. 6).

It is not Jean who will take the 'extreme measure 'at the end of the play, it instead will be Miss Julie who has to 'pay' for her 'sin' as not only is she a person of noble birth who has 'defiled' herself with having sexual intercourse with a 'lowborn' but also a woman who dared to break the barriers of patriarchy and asserted her sexual desire. It is quite alright for Jean to have libidinous desires and can have a 'fuck' (pg. 23) when he wants to and can 'cheat' on Christine if he so wishes to, but the same rules do not apply to Miss Julie. She is called a 'whore' (pg. 24) by Jean and a 'fallen' woman. Miss Julie always dreams of 'falling' while Jean dreams of 'rising'. What was also quite grating to note was the fact that Miss Julie who was hitherto seen as a woman who is 'wild ' and ' strange' is 'tamed' by Jean and almost under a hypnotic trance induced by Jean, she does his bidding and obeys him. Strindberg seems to suggest that a woman must be 'tamed' at the end and Miss Julie's fate is same as her Serine, who must be taken to the chopping block by Jean – a man! The constant animal imagery used as a motif in the play alludes to Miss Julie; she is both – her pet bird and her pet dog. She is likened to a female dog in heat and a bird in the cage if it tries to fly away is set right by its master. The Count is conspicuous by his absent presence in the play. He is a shadow which can't be ignored, both Jean and Miss Julie fear him , he is perhaps representative of the ultimate Patriarchal Power- the Ultimate Authority; Jean is only the cog in the machine of Patriarchy. Miss Julie is always known as Miss Julie and never called by her first/given name and that is because patriarchy always sees a woman with respect to her social relations, she is always someone's daughter/ wife/ mother and never her own self, and that is why towards the end of the play Miss Julie says "I haven't got a self" (pg. 44) It is because the self that she earlier knew; that of being an aristocratic lady has been 'compromised' after having sex with Jean

and there is no other ‘self’ that she knows. It is highly ironic to note that Diana, the hunting Goddess in Greek mythology, her pet dog’s name in the play reminds us of Miss Julie who is not only ‘hunted’ at the end but as we know that Jean can never change his class, Miss Julie’ casts off’ her caste by tainting her honour and the valet who was kissing her shoe earlier on in the play (pg. 11) now dares to throw a coin at her (pg. 33) implying that women if they have sex of their own volition are ‘whores’ (pg. 24) , while no such term applies for men.

A word about Christine - She is a woman but not entirely sympathetic to Miss Julie’s predicament, she calls her “Poor woman/ girl (pgs. 8 and 35) “, she merely chides Jean for taking ‘advantage ‘ of Miss Julie and we see her fawning over Jean throughout the play, she knows about his sexual encounter with Miss Julie and is strangely indifferent to it, as she herself points out and instead of helping her fellow woman ‘sister’ she merely leaves Miss Julie to her own devices by going to the Church to pray for them.

There is an interesting talk of love in the play. Strindberg though excellently blurs the line between sex and love. Is it lust that drives both Jean and Miss Julie or is there love on the part of Jean towards Miss Julie but which is overridden by his desire to overreach his class? The play is deliciously ambiguous on this matter. It is highly ironical that Strindberg shows us that ‘nurture’ plays a huge part in ‘nature’. He presents to us this figure of Julie’s mother who is portrayed as a ‘diabolical’ woman, hell bent on breaking societal boundaries. She does not believe in marriage and motherhood, both are thrust upon her, she goes on to remodel societal structures by reversing the gender hierarchy by making the men do the ‘women’s work’ and vice versa at her house , which results in her and the Count becoming the laughing stock of society and an utter disaster, this according to Strindberg is what happens when the ‘natural order’ of things is reversed and tampered with and such a woman can only have given birth to something ‘wild ‘ as Miss Julie. Strindberg seems to suggest that women are half- brained, dull creatures who if given power will only wreak havoc in society and bring about anarchy and disorder. Which is precisely why Miss Julie needs to be gotten rid off as she is a threat to ‘order’ with her ‘disorderly’ and ‘wild’ ways. A woman is ‘fallen’ if she transgresses and expresses her sexual desire and volition. Miss Julie then is reminiscent of the figure of Eve, tempting Adam, in this case Jean, with the forbidden fruit of knowledge, leading to the ‘fall’ (pg. 15).

I am guessing that patriarchy must have had a field day with the play as the class issue is just a smokescreen, the real success of the play, In my opinion lies in the fact that women are reviled and ‘taught’ a lesson, lest they wish to transgress. Can you begrudge me then that I thoroughly enjoyed the scene wherein Miss Julie asks Jean to kiss her shoe? I feel deeply disturbed and angry that Strindberg, a deeply misogynistic writer is hailed as one of the greatest dramatists. I guess if I have to talk about the greatness of drama, I would say that Strindberg is not a patch on the greatness that was Henrik Ibsen.

Jonfaith says

I would've rated this 1.5 stars last night as I finished and turned off the light. I didn't feel great, was disappointed with a classical program on NPR and found this play a touch hysterical. During the cold darkness of early morning I reflected on some of the subtle touches, the yellow label and the ill fated bird. The condensed nature of the action was difficult to believe. The pastoral passages by comparison were beautiful.

That said I would afford the Author's Preface five stars as a validation of Naturalism. Strindberg is wonderful in his exposition.

I am still not a fan of the play but would read it again.

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4:

A reimagined version of August Strindberg's 1888 stage play by Roger James Elsgood, starring Sofie Grabol, Lars Mikkelsen, and Marie Bach Hansen.

Strindberg's Miss Julie concerned a well-bred woman from the land-owning classes who has a one-night stand with her father's valet, Jean. Over the course of a midsummer night, Julie and Jean discuss their different stations in life and, emboldened by alcohol, she goads Jean to cross the social, economic and sexual lines that divide them and seduces him into her bed. Following their lovemaking, the axis of their relationship reverses - he now has power over her as she realises she is vulnerable to exposure and disgrace. Julie becomes conflicted about the implications of their deed and, with no one else to turn to, relies on Jean for advice. Jean is concerned about losing his job and he contrives a lethal scenario which best serves his needs.

In this new version, the themes that lead to the dramatic denouement are not so much those of social class, status, and breeding, but gender, identity and sexual orientation - issues that Victorian-era audiences were not ready for, but which are being openly debated today.

The production was recorded on location in a 19th-century country house in Ballerup on the island of Zealand in Denmark.

*Written by August Strindberg
Adapted by Roger James Elsgood*

*Director: Willi Richards
Producer: Roger James Elsgood*

An Art and Adventure production for BBC Radio 4.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07h2v3d>

Czarny Pies says

This thoroughly nasty play works very well on the stage even with less than stellar casts. Do not read Miss Julie. Go and see it performed; productions are still quite frequent.

If nothing is available then download one of the versions available on Netflix. A new Miss Julie movie with Colin Farrell is coming in the Fall.

Haaze says

Gender and Society

Strindberg's play, *Fröken Julie*, from 1888 focuses on gender and society in late 19th century Sweden. Even though it is quite brief it brings a lot of fire to these topics so I can see why it gained such prominence at the time. Even today it seems to be one of the works that Strindberg is recognized for abroad (together with his other plays) even though I personally favor his novels and stories to a much greater extent. The latter are generally not translated into English or are OOP.

I sense a very negative view of womanhood in Strindberg's writing. Based on his life (as well as this particular play) it appears as if he favors bright and able women, but simultaneously view such individuals to hate men by default. I suspect he had some bad experiences that clashed with his own narcissism and manhood in his relationships with women.

The play unfolds during a midsummer eve when the daughter of a rich household (Miss Julie) has a powerful and fateful interaction with the man servant Jean. As an audience we get exposed to a warped passion viewed through the spectrum of their imagined futures, a pulsating passion and the immersion of the magic of the shortest night of the year. Fate seems to be in the room as the play unfolds. A recent film version (2014) directed by Liv Ullmann seems to be an interesting follow-up to reading this play. However, an older Swedish film (1951) (starring Ulf Palme (Jean) and Anita Björk as Miss Julie) is even more alluring to me. Reading/watching this play is literally a requirement if one is interested in Strindberg as an author. Besides, just like Ibsen, Strindberg has the ability to bring forward themes that are eternal. These issues are still reverberating through our modern society.

Nick says

This was my first stab at Strindberg, and dear lord did he stab back. This is a play about hate & power, and about passion & the lack thereof.

I'm shocked, looking back on this emotionally brutal play, to see how deeply engaged it was with the same "topics" of oppressive gender and class power structures. It does these right: they inform the emotional physics of the scenario, instead of being its end.

The play is set over the course of a perfect Summer night. The characters are Jean (30), a servant to the count; Kristine (35), cook to the count; and Julie (25), daughter to the count. The seeds of the drama are already present in their ages. Jean and Kristine are (kind of, sort of, if nothing better comes up) together. Julie is drunk & Jean is bored. One thing leads to another and no one ends up happy.

The thing that hits you so hard in this play is the tension between passionate emotion and muddledness. For the most part the characters carry on in normal, everyday dialogue- self-contradicting, unarousing, stable. Every now and then though, this erupts in vivid, imagistic and often horrifying language. After the emotional strain of the commonness of the rest of the dialogue, these interruptions have a fantastic rending strength.

Thoroughly enjoyed, thoroughly recommended.

Jessica says

I have no idea what the hell I just read.

Sarah says

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Mohammed says

It had strong language, the form, layout of the play was well done. The story was pretty shallow, not much of a story really. It was only two characters with over the top feelings screaming at each other. That sounds like many great plays but you need more quality, depth than this.

In the foreword Strindberg says he wanted the characters to be characterless. It felt too much like the main female character was only a way to write his views on how a woman of his times should not be. Jean the male main character had more depth, motive he was a person while she was only a symbol of everything that is wrong with a woman in the writer's eyes.

Stuart Aken says

The modern mind rebels instantly against the extreme misogyny expressed in the preface to this play. Strindberg may be typical of his time (the play was written in 1888) but he comes across as a man without any understanding of the reality of humanity. Stating that women, who he ranks with the uneducated and children, are incapable of full understanding and making a plea for the development of humankind into creatures who eschew emotion, he reveals himself as a man only half alive to the wonders of our species.

The play tells the story of a high ranking woman who has an affair with a servant. It has, of course, to be read with the mores of its period in mind. At the time, and in the land in which it is set, ultra-conservatism would make her sin intolerable and render her reaction to it wholly understandable.

I nevertheless found his characterisation of both women in the play not credible. These were superficial sketches drawn by a man with no grasp of what women really are. He certainly shows no love or respect for the gender, giving them lines that illustrate his prejudice rather than allowing them to develop into rounded human beings. The affair, initiated by Julie, is given no sound basis, seeming to come about almost by accident. It could even be argued that she is the victim of a predatory male in the form of the unscrupulous servant, Jean, a man who claims to be engaged to fellow servant, Kristin, but happily mates with his employer.

I found this a thoroughly unsatisfactory account of an event that could so easily have been made into a tale of tragic love formed under the pressures of a restrictive and conservative society. Strindberg's rejection of the role and importance of emotion prevents him developing any true understanding of the motives and concerns of his players, rendering them into no more than the mouthpieces for his narrow views of humanity. He was a married man and one can only wonder at the life his wife must have led with such a mountebank.

Not a play I would wish to see performed.

Liz says

What did I just read?

Okay, first of all - this was required reading for my course in university. I would have never read this play voluntarily. This was a disaster. I know many authors of the past were misogynic in a subtle or not so subtle way...Sometimes I can ignore it, in cases like this one I cannot. Not with a foreword almost as long as the damned play itself.

After three pages of the foreword the reader gets an insight into the inner-world of Strindberg who was basically a misogynic dumbfuck, repeatedly uses the word "stunted" when talking about women and who incorporates everything he hates about women in the main character Julie.

Right.

Not that her "opponent" is any better. A walking talking insult to all men. If, at least, he was interesting. But he wasn't. Both he and Julie acted like fucking retard. No. Just no.

It is such a waste of time.

???? ?????? says

I read the translation made by Peter Watts.

A beautiful play by the master Strindberg, This is the kind of play that makes the one sure about the role of inspiration in the art. The most remarkable element of the play is how it shows the changes in the characters in a smooth unconstrained way, You believe what you watch and understand it although its characters very odd behaviours specially Julia's.

The relationship between the servant and the master presented in this powerful way only in Losey's important movie The Servant (1963) which is a Harold Pinter adaptation of a 1948 novelette by Robin Maugham.

James says

Book Review

Miss Julie is one of the more naturalistic pieces that I have ever seen. Throughout the piece, everything is

real and truly shows a *tranche de vie* or ‘slice of life.’ The characters are usually treated much more as psychological personas than in realistic productions like *Ghosts*. In *Miss Julie* it seemed as if each character was representative of a specific type of person. Julie was the vixen from a higher class who was attracted to Jean, a man from a lower class. Jean was the strong man who put up with their relationship enough to hold a sexual advantage, or at times, disadvantage, but put a stop to it in the end. Kristin was a typical cook or maid in the house who was forced to put up with things simply because she had to. All of the characters were incredibly strong. Although the play was an idea play, it was the characters that stick out in my mind. Also, the characters are different when one looks at the idea of a crowd. While in *Ghosts* there was a priest, a matriarch, a diseased son, a housemaid turned inheritor, and a bum for a father, in *Miss Julie*, there were the three main characters and a group of characters that was representative of lower servant’s games. It is typical in naturalistic pieces that a group of characters stand for one idea or persona. In *Miss Julie*, the lower class servants are showing the pagan ritual of losing virginity. This highly symbolic scene contributes to the idea that a crowd can sometime be the protagonist of a play. Although the servants were not the main characters, they contributed to the understanding of when Julie loses her virginity to Jean in the upstairs bedroom at the same time as the pagan ritual.

The characters in *Miss Julie* also seemed to have more life in them than the characters in *Ghosts*. Although in *Ghosts* they constantly talk about the “love of life,” I don’t always see this love. Also, the characters in *Ghosts* are never truly defined. It is left for the audience to interpret who set the nursery on fire, and whether Pastor Manders has lust inside of him or if he doesn’t. I never understood whether or not Engstrand was a pious and reverent man, or if he was an unscrupulous man who wanted to offer his ‘daughter’ up to others. Each of the characters had some good and each had some bad so that they were just common everyday people. They could represent any man or woman. In *Miss Julie* though, there were stereotypes and strongly defined characters. They weren’t just any characters put on a stage so get an idea across, which is the impression that I received after seeing *Ghosts*.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

Manny says

Boy meets girl, boy seduces girl, boy plans to elope with girl, boy wrings girl's pet bird's neck, boy changes his mind, girl kills herself. For some reason, Hollywood have never wholeheartedly embraced this formula. I can't imagine why not.

My late grandmother-in-law was an amazing, larger-than-life character, who looked as though she'd stepped straight out of *Fanny och Alexander*. Her family was distantly related to that of Strindberg's first wife, and, until the day she died, she steadfastly refused to read any of his books, "because he behaved so badly towards poor Siri von Essen". Harriet was born in 1899, when von Essen was 48. I'm not sure if they ever met. I wish I'd asked her!

Hend says

Miss Julie an aristocratic woman that expresses the social Diseases common in many of the families of her class, still recovering from a broken engagement—an engagement ruined because of her attempt to train her fiancé like a dog , flirting in a moment of despair her servant Jean ,she takes an adventure of uncalculated results,Jean seduce Julie , , telling a heart-breaking story of his childhood love to her,after their love affair ,Jean rejects her and confesses that he has deceived her, leaving her to her disgrace.....

Julie kept having a frequent dream ,that symbolize the desires of her own fall...
