

A Dialectical Reading of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*

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Abstract:

A dialectical reading of *Miss Julie* offers an explicit depiction of history's change and progress; it shows how society changes by the growing needs of the subjects and how void relations are negated into new ones. In this play, the transition of feudalist and patriarchal relations have been depicted through a new type of woman who does not believe in the supremacy of her father and husband as owners of the family; the subjects' desire to escape from restrictive relations, breaking the hierarchal relation, and the decline of nobility as well as loyalty. In *Miss Julie*, Strindberg shows that the subjects cannot be liberated under the class relation of the coming capitalist mode and profit-oriented relation of the subjects ends only in destruction. He represents the problem of women becoming worse under capitalism and the new bourgeois ideology of bourgeois feminism not only fails to liberate women but also provokes a battle of the sexes as well as chaos.

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Introduction

From a philosophical perspective, Marxism is based upon a dialectical and materialist foundation; a firm basis upon which it renounces and opposes any idealist approach towards history and life. Dialectical materialism scrutinizes the movement of history which cannot be divorced from the conflicts and contradictions that are caused by material needs. It claims that when the needs are not obviated, change will be inevitable:

Dialectical materialism consists of three laws:

- 1: The transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa
- 2: The unity of the opposites
- 3: The negation of the negation

The first law declares how quantitative aggregation changes into a qualitative transformation. The Well-known example of Engels is the aggregation of three molecules of O (Oxygen) and a qualitative change

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into O₃ (Ozone). A drop of water for instance goes through different qualitative transformations; it consists of H₂O which is a different qualitative state and when it is vaporized or frozen, it goes into other qualities. The drop of water can also be dissected into its quantities that are two H and one O. The second law is the most important law of dialectical materialism. Contrary to the mechanical materialism which considered the external world made of solid and inconvertible pieces, dialectical materialism shows how the opposites are interconnected and solved into a higher form. Given that, the slaves and slaveholders in slave society, the serves and masters in feudalism, the proletarians and the capitalists in capitalism are therefore connected to each other. These connections do not mean they are united peacefully but on the other hand show how the antagonist sides are dependent on each other. A capitalist therefore needs a proletarian for gaining profit and capital and a proletarian needs a capitalist for survival. However, historical evidences prove that this dependency is relative; at the time of a successful revolution it completely disappears and the opposites are solved into a higher form. The third law shows how a new mode of production evolves from the womb of previous mode. Feudalism was born out of slave society which was in turn born out of the primitive communism; therefore, feudalism was a negation of slave society which was a negation for the primitive communism. Capitalism negated feudalism (the negation of slave society) and socialism will be the negation of capitalism. This law can be easily seen in everything which goes through evolution in the external world. Take how a seed becomes a tree or a sperm becomes a baby. The seed is negated into a sapling which is in turn negated into a tree and the sperm goes through different states and stages which is not simply a repetition. As it can be seen, a tree in the twenty-first century is more developed than that from million years ago as the modern man too is more developed than his animal ancestor.

In dialectical materialism, being determines the consciousness. The consciousness is hence the result of the action of external and independent materialist world on the perceptory organs. Contrary to idealism which believes the idea that thought, and mind are prior and primary to matter, dialectical materialism claims there will be no idea without matter. A mountain therefore does not merely exist because a perceiver thinks about it; it exists independent of the perceiver's thought. Consequently, dialectical materialism is a science and philosophy which shows the materialist continuity and growth of nature and society; for dialectical materialism no external being, no mode of production, no concepts and no beliefs are solid and immutable. Proposed by Marxism, dialectical materialism is the philosophy of change that is used by the oppressed to destroy the capitalist repressive

mode and replace it with a socialist one in which everyone earns according to his ability without any class and political advantages. When it is applied to history, historical materialism presents a map for how the dead and reactionary relations are replaced by new and revolutionary forces. Dialectical materialism asserts history, society, and nature neither have finality nor reach any perfection based on the fact that development is inevitable and permanent.

No mode is permanent because by the passage of time the needs of the people change and the current mode is unable to obviate them. There are many reasons why the feudalist mode was replaced by the capitalist mode such as the bourgeois revolutions against the Catholic Church by John Calvin in France, by Oliver Cromwell in England, and by Martin Luther in Germany, the growth of industry and commerce, peasant revolts, and the crusades. The decline of feudalism was necessarily accompanied by the centralization of power in the hands of a more extended kind of government. Marx declares how the executive power hastened the decline of feudalism in France and replaced the local and disunited powers into a whole. He states:

The princely privileges of the landed proprietors and cities were transformed into so many attributes of the Executive power; the feudal dignitaries into paid office-holders; and the confusing design of conflicting medieval seigniories, into the well regulated plan of a government, whose work is subdivided and centralized as in the factory. The first French Revolution having as a mission to sweep away all local, territorial, urban, and provincial special privileges, with the object of establishing the civic unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarchy had begun—the work of centralization, together with the range, the attributes and the menials of government. Napoleon completed this government machinery. The legitimist and the July monarchy contribute nothing thereto, except a greater subdivision of labor within bourgeois society raised new groups and interests, i. e., new material for the administration of government. (Marx, 1907: 70)

When man moved from the higher stage of barbarism to civilization, he replaced the gentile constitution with a centralized power: the state which was a means of coercion against the common people. A qualitative change in the mode of production is therefore accompanied by a transformation of political power and the relations among the people. Under the first Napoleon the middle class was reinforced and liberalism replaced feudalism. The third Napoleon who was the founder of the first Fascist government, took the political power from the Orleans and Legitimist only to increase immeasurably their social advantages and domination.

Discussion

Before going any further let's see from where the consciousness originates. In Marxist philosophy, the consciousness of human being is resulted from his participation in production. Mao declares:

Marxists regard man's activity in production as the most fundamental practical activity, the determinant of all his other activities. Man's knowledge depends mainly on his activity in material production, through which he comes gradually to understand the phenomena, the properties, and the laws of nature. And the relation between himself and nature; and through his activity in production he also gradually comes to understand, in varying degrees, certain relations that exist between man and man. (1965: 295)

The people with different consciousness live in a web of interrelations that is the society. Marx declares:

Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand. As if someone were to say: Seen from the perspective of society, there are no slaves and no citizens: both are human beings. Rather, they are that outside society. To be a slave, to be a citizen, are social characteristics, relation between human beings A and B. Human being A, as such, is not a slave. He is a slave in and through society. (1973: 265)

The capitalist society is a class society with different ideologies and attitudes; a place of permanent class struggle between the exploiter and the exploited. Correspondingly, what man knows is brought about by the condition in which he lives. A proletarian knows capitalism is an oppressive system and seeks for a change. On the other hand, a capitalist only knows it is a highly profitable one and there must be a repressive organ to protect his wealth and avoid any change. But, it is important to ask whether all the people easily get the correct consciousness? Of course not. The masses become aware and united by revolutionary and military advancement against the state. I skip further explanation because this matter cannot be discussed in few paragraphs or pages.

In *Miss Julie*, Jean desires to have class progression while Julie wants to break the patriarchal law. At the same time, Kristin respects all the laws defined for her in that society; even in her sleep she mumbles her duty that "the Count's boots are cleaned" (Strindberg, 1955: 83). Julie breaks the feudal restrictions made for a docile woman; moreover, she removes the class relations voluntarily. Before enticing Jean to dance with her, she tells him, "To-night we're all just people enjoying a party. There is no question of class" (Strindberg, 1955: 79). It is the relations among the higher class Julie and the lower class Jean as well as Kristin that makes the society. Jean is sexually superior to Julie and financially inferior to her while Julie is only financially privileged to her valet. Consequently, she desires sexual superiority. The only way for her

to break the patriarchal restrictions that imposes sexual inferiority on her, is revolting against the behavioral and ethical codes which restricts women as inferior to men. It is important to realize that under patriarchal relations, class cannot save a woman; that is, although she is superior to Jean financially, she is left to destruction at the end of the play. When Jean faces her strange behavior, he says, “Don’t you know it’s dangerous to play with fire?” she replies, “Not for me. I’m insured” (Strindberg, 1955: 85).

Julie is progressive, quite opposite to Kristin who is docile and conservative. Strindberg aims to show that the consciousness which is resulted from the society is blurred under a fog. If all the people got revolutionary, the break of system will be inevitable but most of the subjects (like Kristine) are controlled by the ideologies which ends in their servitude or prompted by digressive ideologies (Like Julie) that ends in their destruction. Strindberg is aware that the bourgeois feminist ideology, which is resulted by Julie’s oppression in a patriarchal domain, brings about destruction and is totally a madness as well as futile new attitude for the new woman: Julie. In fact, he manifests his resentment of the battle of sexes which worsens the condition of women rather than liberating them.

Reading *Miss Julie* from a dialectical and historical materialist perspective shows how history goes onward and how the transformation of modes of production transforms the relations of the subjects. *Miss Julie* is a ground upon which the decline of feudalism can be easily observed by the appearance of new concepts and needs that are to be fulfilled under the next mode. In Marxist philosophy no society is able to avoid the dialectical development; therefore, the social transformation and change in people’s life is inevitable; and relations of production determine the relations of people. However, it is always the people who determine the modes of production based on their needs. That is to say no change in the mode of production will happen if the oppressed do not desire and try to replace the oppressive, unjust mode. Marx states:

At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. (1904: 12)

Thus, history is the growth of productive forces and the conflict among the different strata in the society due to their needs. Marxism believes that without class struggle which contains ideological, economic, and political struggle, transition is impossible.

Every transition is accompanied with change in the superstructures. For instance, family under feudalism was gradually changed to a new

one under capitalism or power gradually transmitted from local authorities to a centralized government which was a requirement of the modern society. Under capitalism, man's ultimate domination over children and wife is changed. Equally important is that, the transition from feudalism to capitalism was due to the crisis of feudalism in obviating the growing needs of the people. The mode of production changed but the relation among sexes and people did not changed at once. Delany mentions:

Since economic evolution can be charted with some precision, even in earlier periods of history; but social relations, always more mixed and indefinite, adapt neither smoothly nor rapidly to economic change. It does not lie in our power to change our personalities overnight, except in rare instances of conversion; psychological conflict must therefore be endemic in a dynamic society. Traditional styles of relationship will be continuously undermined by the forces of change, but the personality structure appropriate for new kinds of social organization can evolve only gradually. (1977: 429)

It must be noted that the qualitative transition from one stage to another takes time; capitalism did not completely replace feudalism and feudal codes over a night but hundreds of years; that is, building a new society with new people and new ideologies takes a long time. The power of patriarchy therefore remains in the capitalist societies which are not still emancipated from their past contradictions. Thus, the characters of this play live in a capitalist era but the relics of reactionary past has preserved its moribund existence on their lives.

In this play government is absent but its ideologies, apparatuses and institutions such as hierarchy, religion, family, and church are present. One thing is simple, under capitalism hierarchy, religion, and other superstructures and institutions will continue to exist in a more complicated and extended form. The hierarchy is not between a serf and a noble person but rather among a gigantic bourgeois and millions of proletarians as well as middle classes, religion never ceases to stop controlling people but absorbs most of the inclined minds, and family is neither completely controlled by the father nor is a safe and hospitable place to live, it is an institution made on the power of capital. Under capitalism, property still exists for the upper middle class and bourgeois family but not merely in the hands of the father. But, it is important to ask why Julie does not have any capital to elope with Jean? The answer is that the lack of capital for Julie means the feudal relations still exist among the people though it is the capitalist era.

The road to feudalism was paved by the conquest of the Roman Empire by the Germans. It was the Germanic tribes who abolished the slavery exercised by the republic of Rome. The transformation of feudalism to capitalism was not brought about by the lords and masters

but by the peasants; meaning that, the productive forces were developed by the peasants. Under capitalism, a proletarian hardly possesses anything but his labor power which he sells to survive; in addition, the proletarians do not possess the means of production which are specified to the ruling class. The transformation from capitalism to socialism will be done by the proletariat which is the agent of the oppressed; the oppressive relations under capitalism lead to the misery of masses which join the red flags of the proletariat. At the same time, any change is suppressed by those at power because they do all they can to save the order. In *Miss Julie*, Julie, her mother, Jean, and Kristin are repressed by the system and consequently the oppressed (except the ideologically controlled Kristin) fight for liberation; Jean fights for financial and Julie, the same as her mother, fights for sexual emancipation. There is a conflict in Julie as a new woman and the concept of a submissive woman. Such conflict is caused by the growing needs of women for sexual equality that is impossible under the patriarchal feudal mode. Anyhow, humanity has growing needs and constantly struggles to obviate them. In fact, the nineteenth century was an upturn for Swedish women. Many organizations and feminist voices supported the public participation of women. Expectedly, in 1873, The Married Woman Property Association – the first women’s rights organization was established; the association was a reformist bourgeois organization for the upper class women that had as its members the liberals like Ellen Key and Amanda Kerfstedt. It worked to end the supremacy of man over his wife and give the right to the professional woman to control her earning; however, this reform failed, the supremacy of man over his wife was preserved, and the association dissolved in 1896. The transition of old beliefs and their replacement by the new ones is revealed through Julie's words when she talks about her mother:

My mother wasn't well-born: she came of quite humble people, and was brought up with all those new ideas of sex-equality and women's rights and so on... So when my father proposed to her, she said she would never become a *wife*... but in the end she did. I came into the world, as far as I can make out against my mother's will, and I was left to run wild, but I had to do all the things a boy does – to prove women are as good as men. I had to wear boys' clothes; I was taught to handle horses – and I wasn't allowed in the dairy. She made me groom and harness go out hunting; I even had to try to plough. (Strindberg, 1955: 97)

Her mother reared her like a man in order to liberate her from her second sex position. This bourgeois feminist misleading attitude is explained by Kollontay. She states:

The more hard-bitten feminists adopted a male style of clothing “on principle”, cut their hair with long masculine strides... When the feminists found out that, driven

by necessity, women were working as dockers in ports and lugging impossible weights, these naïve advocates of equal rights brimmed over with triumph and wrote in their newspaper and periodicals: “Women score yet another victory for equal rights! Women dockers carry four hundredweight, hold their own with men!” (Kollontay, 1949: 47)



Julie demands liberty from the feudal and patriarchal relations and Jean wants to become rich and unchain himself from the submissive feudal relations; one of them is motivated by social needs and another by economic needs; additionally, both of them seek egotistically and opportunistically their personal interest and use each other to fulfill their goals. Until exploitation and oppression exist, what can be expected from the subjects except following personal wishes as well as commodifying each other by any means? Though women were restricted under feudalism, capitalism never brought liberation for them because capitalist ideologies have never condemned the bourgeois system but represented man as the enemy of women.

The Count is the symbol of dead relations; he has no existence in the play and is only heard and feared by the two transgressors; that is, he is held back by the power of the new society. Under feudal relations lords had domination over those beneath them but here the Count is absent; in addition, his pride and dignity are demolished by his wife, Julie, and Jean. Under feudal relations the lords were responsible with protecting their higher position in society from the peasants by political power and the economic advantages which were specified to them. In this play, the Count's state is set on fire; his wife, his daughter, and his valet are disloyal to him. Thus, he has no power and even existence in the play.

The nobility and aristocracy became weaker after the decline of feudalism. Thus, not only the Count's absence but also Julie's behavior to give away gentry and to act like a common person shows the decline and demise of feudalism. In summary, this play shows how a noble man by rank and sex under feudalism is negated, betrayed and his patriarchal power is decreased under the power of capitalism. *Miss Julie* shows how the economic transformation of the society from feudalism to capitalism brings about change in the life of the subjects. One is forced to the background, betrayed and humiliated: a castrated count, another wants to dominate men and defeat the patriarchal power and authority: a freedom seeking woman, and the other wants to gain capital and private property: a valet in need of class progression. All of these are resulted by the change in the economic base of their society. It is the decline of feudalism and the need for change which makes the valet; Jean, feel no guilt to betray and humiliate his lord. Indeed, Jean does not seek for justice; he is an opportunist person who desires to be a lord of his own

in the emergent capitalist era. The transition of feudalism to capitalism was accompanied by the liberation of the serfs from their masters. Furthermore, the betrayal of Jean to the count shows the undermining of such dependency. Without a capitalist mode he cannot be liberated from such dominance and it is why he desires to go to another place to institute a hotel which can bring about profit and capital for him independent of his lord. Instituting a hotel is therefore a way for Jean to get rid of the dependence on his master. Becoming a lord places Jean above other individuals and makes him a prospective capitalist; in other words, it makes him a member of the upper class.

Setting the state on fire is the symbol of struggle against the patriarchal authority. The feudal home which Julie's mother sets on fire is owned by the father. She tries to break the hierarchy of man/woman by bringing her daughter up like a boy and giving the men on the estate feminine jobs and vice versa only to prove that women are as good as men. But everything is controlled by the Count and she reacts with putting the estate on fire as Julie says "That was my mother's revenge because he made himself master in his own house" (Strindberg, 1955: 98-99). Julie's mother aims to gain ascendancy over her husband by having a clandestine relationship with her lover, reversing women's job with men's, controlling the state, and bringing her daughter up like a boy as well as filled with hatred to men. The same as her mother, the sexist Julie is a prototype of bourgeois feminism. She never fights for equality and like a bourgeois woman hates men, not the system which oppresses the women; further, she abuses men due to her abhorrence. In other words, for her, fighting against the evil man brings liberation for the oppressed sex. Nonetheless, neither treating her fiancé like a dog nor asking Jean to kiss her feet liberates her. In fact, Julie has inherited such hatred from her mother as she reveals to Jean, "I'd learnt from her to hate and distrust men – you know how she loathed the whole male sex. And I swear to her I'd never become the slave of any man" (Strindberg, 1955: 99). The relation of Julie's mother with a lover is a revolt against the monogamous marriage which is only monogamy for women and putting the state on fire is again another revolt against the private property that is owned by the Count. Under feudalism, women's right of inheritance was limited, they were restricted to home, responsible to raise the children, and did all other household affairs. All Julie and her mother do is a revolt against the patriarchal society which makes them slaves of the husband and father. Actually, Julie cannot unchain herself from the patriarchal restriction because she has no property. The only remaining way to hurt men is therefore abusing, betraying, and hating them; and that is exactly what Julie and her mother do.

Miss Julie shows how the opposites are united in a society. In comparison to the reactionary Kristin, three other characters: Jean, Julie, and Julie's mother are progressive. According to class relations, the noble Julie and the Count are the opposite of the lower class Jean and Kristin. From such union of the opposites and the growing needs of the oppressed a transition is inevitable; that is, the inevitable transition of feudal relations to capitalist ones. The transition of the relation among Jean, his master, and his mistress is a sign for the transition of the feudal social relations. Under feudalism the serfs were supposed to be loyal to their masters who protected them. On the other hand, Jean breaks this loyalty; he degrades the Count by sleeping with his daughter and abandoning his mistress only after disgracing her. Thus, Jean breaks the feudal service to the superior that was a very strong bond under feudalism. The inevitable transition to capitalism can be understood by the contradiction in his service. It shows that, under capitalism and the progression of the means of production wage payment replaces loyalty. Meaning that, the acutely repressive connection between an upper and a lower class rarely allows loyalty to appear between the two antagonist sides. How can be an oppressed loyal to an oppressor who exploits him every day? *Miss Julie* is a depiction of how the struggle between two antagonistic sides never resolves by peaceful means and until class relations among the people exist, exploitation survives. The union between the upper class Julie and the lower class Jean is impossible because one strives to obviate her sexual needs and desires to belittle men while another commodifies his mistress for financial supports and fantasies. The union and dependency of these two are therefore only relative; moreover, the impossibility of permanent dependency depicts how antagonisms among the classes remain in a class society.

The feudal crisis can be seen by the contradiction between the growth of productive means to obviate the growing needs of the subjects and the existent moribund restrictive relations. Instituting a hotel is a kind of absorption to a more economically developed place rather than the restricted place in which they are living in. It is a signal of change, a qualitative transformation to capitalism. Jean demands a breach with the past as he says:

There's the past and there's the Count. I've never been so servile to anyone as I am to him. I've only got to see his gloves on a chair to feel small. I've only to hear his bell and I shy like a horse. Even now, when I look at his boots, standing there so proud and stiff, I feel my back beginning to bend. *Kicks the boots*. It's those old, narrow-minded notions drummed into us as children... but they can soon be forgotten. You've only got to get to another country, a republic, and people will bend themselves double before my porter's livery. Yes, double they'll bend themselves, but I shan't. I wasn't born to bend. I've got guts, I've got character, and once I reach that first branch, you'll watch me climb. Today I'm valet, next year I'll be proprietor, in ten years I'll have made a fortune, and then I'll go to Roumania,

get myself decorated and I may, I only say *may*, mind you, end up as a Count. (Strindberg, 1955: 91–92)

As Jean fantasizes about becoming a count and making Julie her countess, Julie replies, “What do I care about all that? I am putting those things behind me. Tell me you love me, because if you don’t... if you don’t, what am I?” (Strindberg, 1955: 92). Through Jean, Strindberg ridicules the concept of new woman (as seductive, irrational, and uncommitted to the ethics), talks about the quarrel of the couples, misuses Julie, and insults her incessantly. Julie emotively talks of love but Jean replies with financial fantasies. Later, her desire for ascendancy ends in a humiliating submission which the writer vehemently welcomes.

However, Jean is unable to break his dependency because he has no property. He tells Julie how he was brought up under hard conditions in comparison to Julie’s comfortable upbringing; in addition, he declares that he had fallen in love with her since childhood but she was unachievable. Jean says, “you were simply a symbol of the hopelessness of ever getting out of the class I was born in” (Strindberg, 1955: 88). Indeed, Julie is used to pave the way for his progression but the plan fails because she too has no property. Such dependency is therefore economic and expectedly when Jean realizes she has no property, he leaves her; that is, he changes from dependency on his lord to Julie and again retreats to his lord and returns to his lower class position. Julie on the other hand wants to break all kinds of dependency. She proudly desires to be free from any restriction but she is too weak to break the patriarchal authority and ends in a humiliating submission to the power of men and the dependency on them that still exists in her society. Though she had formerly treated her fiancé like a dog, in her dilemma she pleads in Jean, “Help me. Order me, and I’ll obey like a dog” (Strindberg, 1955: 113).

After getting united, the dependency of Julie and Jean on each other becomes more tangible. Julie talks about love and Jean replies with words concerning financial issues. However, Julie is more dependent on him than Jean on her because, firstly, she has no property to persuade Jean to elope with her and secondly she is a woman. Julie therefore feels more insecure and such insecurity and dependency is the result of her desire to dominate men and being a victim to a man in financial needs and fantasies. She says to Jean, “I loathe you – loathe you as I loathe rats but I can’t escape from you” (Strindberg, 1955: 97). Human is a material being with material needs and he does everything for obviating his needs whether consciously or unconsciously, whether cautiously or incautiously. As can be seen, the needs of characters are completely oriented by the emergent capitalist ideologies such as class

progression for the lower class and equality for women. Both of them act incautiously and unconsciously, meaning that bourgeois feminism does not bring equality for women and under capitalism a poor valet cannot attain upper class.

In comparison to the patriarchal and limited industry of feudalism, the large-scale machine industry of capitalism is more progressive. Lenin states:

Large-scale machine industry, which concentrates masses of workers who often come from various parts of the country, absolutely refuses to tolerate survivals of patriarchalism and personal dependence, and is marked by a truly “contemptuous attitude to the past”. It is this break with obsolete tradition that is one of the substantial conditions which have created the possibility and evoked the necessity of regulating production and of public control over it. In particular, speaking of the transformation brought about by the factory in the conditions of life of the population, it must be stated that the drawing of women and juveniles into production is, at bottom, progressive... By destroying the patriarchal isolation of these categories of the population who formerly never emerged from the narrow circle of domestic, family relationships, by drawing them into direct participation in social production, large-scale machine industry stimulates their development and increases their independence, in other words, creates conditions of life that are incomparably superior to the patriarchal immobility of pre-capitalist relations. (1977: 546–547)

The plan to leave for Switzerland and working in a hotel is therefore an escape from the patriarchal restrictions and on the whole from the reactionary feudal relations. It is a contemptuous attitude to the past as well as an endeavor to replace the restrictive feudal and patriarchal relations with a capitalist and supposedly free one; besides, working in a hotel along with Julie shows the growth and complexity of economy in comparison to a feudal economy. It shows the movement towards capitalism; without being a property holder under feudalism, Jean wants to become a capitalist under capitalism. Alas! This is useless. Proving these words, Marx declares how the self-employed land possessors became the future capitalists, “The old self-employed possessors of land themselves thus give rise to a nursery school for capitalist tenants, whose development is conditioned by the general development of capitalist production beyond the country-side” (1959: 799). The wish to gain independency from his lord is the sign for the decline of feudalism but the lack of property is a signal that Jean will not become a capitalist but a proletarian under capitalism. Actually, only the prosperous peasants and farmers became the future capitalists and the serfs were driven to the property-less class: the proletariat. Jean reveals his opportunistic nature by exploiting his mistress in order to have a class progression; anyhow, ending the supremacy of lord and feudal relations brings about for him not a class progression but transition to a

proletarian. His capital is supposed to be gained from the hotel and the property to institute the hotel is supposed to be paid by Julie. Jean therefore cannot break his dependency upon his master and mistress because he is only a servant who under capitalism becomes a lower class.

Under feudalism men were the breadwinner of the family and the family was owned by them; the power of men decreased when women were equally engaged in work outside the home. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the women are free under capitalism; the patriarchal restrictions are dead and both sexes are major parts in the oppressive capitalist production system regardless of their sex; in other words, capitalism brought woman out of the home not to liberate her but to complete its productive force. On the contrary, feudalism constricted women to home as Jean says, “the countess was more at home in the kitchen and cowsheds than anywhere else” (Strindberg, 1955: 77). Julie is brought up to retaliate for her oppressed sex. The first act of standing against patriarchal relations is belittling her fiancé Forter. She treats him like a dog; a pejorative action which leads to ending their relationship. The second is her unwillingness to participate in the midsummer night and accompany the head of family: the Count. The third is her relation with a person not qualified enough for her rank and family: Jean. And the fourth is her hope to elope with Jean and institute a hotel where Jean, Kristin and she work together. Working in a hotel, far from her patriarchal society is her last hope to liberate herself from her present dilemma.

Julie is negated both under feudalism and in the emergent capitalism; his father owns her and Jean too abuses her. She tries to unchain herself from feudal relations but indeed capitalism does not bring salvation for her because the oppression of women has its roots in private property that is still owned by her father. Moreover, the negation of feudalism shows no mode is permanent. *Miss Julie* shows how the patriarchal and restrictive relations in a society are not stable and like the feudal mode of production, such relations will be negated. It also shows how under capitalism the relation of the subjects will be changed into bourgeois- proletarian relation and the battle of sexes. In this play, there is a battle of wills between Julie (to control men) and Jean (to become rich) but their wills end in futility. In fact, none of them seek equality and justice; they fight for ascendancy. Strindberg crushes Julie under social determinism but at the end of the play gives her free will to commit suicide in order to preserve her human dignity and to give her an end that somehow provides redemption. Delblanc claims that “in Strindberg’s naturalistic works, we seem to see determinism in operation, until once again the tragic conclusion brings free will into

action and lends human dignity and grandeur to the destruction of the central character” (1988: 9). Undoubtedly Julie could survive and forget her affair with Jean but nothing can survive the demise of feudalism. The false consciousness of Julie which is brought about by the society in which she lives brings her destruction. Consequently, Julie is not the victim of the blind forces but her society. Some questions left to be answered at the end of the play: Who is to be blamed? Who needs redemption? The society or the subject? The suicide is not redemption for a subject, as a matter of fact, it is putting the blame on Julie not her society.

Jean and Julie are both the negation of relations under feudalism; Julie is the negation of a servile woman and Jean is the negation of an obedient servant. Strindberg reveals her antipathy with the concept of new woman which is prototyped through Julie: an emancipated woman who abhors men and seeks to gain transcendence and dominance over them with whatever possible means. Jean is also treated as an opportunist lower class. It shows that, though Strindberg does not accept the bourgeois feminist concept of women, he is also not inclined towards the working class which is prototyped in the opportunist and villain Jean. All the relations are negated with the decline of feudalism into new relations under capitalism which has been grown from the womb of feudalism only to negate it. The growing needs of the characters; Julie and her mother for equality and Jean for class progression are the reason for the negation of feudalism. After all, Julie and Jean fail because of their futile wishes. One is remained a lower class and another left to commit suicide, that is; capitalism will never bring equality for women and make a property-less lower class a capitalist.

Conclusion

History moves forward and contradictions are resolved into higher forms; as well, the antagonistic contradictions which are the result of the growth of productive forces and the growing needs of the subjects lead to a qualitative transformation. Slave society, feudalism, and capitalism could not avoid anti-antagonistic contradictions because they had been based upon exploitation. In *Miss Julie* the growth of productive forces and the restriction of social relation make Julie and Jean try to break the order which is unable to obviate their needs; however, under capitalism, neither a property-less valet can become a lord nor a suppressed woman, who is reared by the hatred towards men, can satisfy her new desires under the patriarchal and oppressive relations. In this play, though the characters fail to materialize their wishes in the still existent feudal relations, the demise of feudalism is inevitable. Julie is the outcome of the battle of the sexes; she is born in a family that includes a man in

power and a woman in desire of gaining ascendancy over him; the chaos among the sexes is caused by the power of capital and will never end under capitalism. Further, this play is a tragedy for feudalism and then for Julie. To put it differently, it is the demise of feudalism and destruction of Julie. The play is the battle of the sexes that is oriented by sociological and economic needs. It is the battle for freedom from oppression; one from superiority of men and another from class relations. A key point is that Julie is a tragic hero; she is ahead of the place in which she lives. She is scarified and at the end and many readers may convict her of her inappropriate behaviour which brought her such a misery. As a matter of fact, the real cause of her misery are not the blind forces but the real forces of history; she is sacrificed by her needs which are too much for the times she is living in. Julie is the victim of the patriarchal society as well as the bourgeois feminist ideology. The inequality of the sexes makes Julie hateful of the opposite sex. Inevitably, she is sacrificed by her time as did her mother. In summary, this play is the battle of the sexes, different classes and the ideologies which control the subject in order to deliver the last hit on feudalism's body and to replace it with capitalism.

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