

"Infidelity" as an "Act of Love": Patrick Marber's After Miss Julie (1995) as a Rewrite of August Strindberg's Miss Julie (1888).

مسرحية After Miss Julie للكاتب البريطاني باتريك ماربر كإعادة
إبداع لمسرحية Miss Julie للكاتب السويدي أوجست ستريندبرج

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Abstract

Depending on Linda Hutcheon's notion of adaptation as "a creative *and* interpretative act of appropriation" and David Lane's concept of the updated "context of the story world in which the characters are placed," this paper undertakes a critical examination of Patrick Marber's *After Miss Julie* (1995) as a creative rewrite of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888). The play appears to be both a faithful adaptation and appropriation of its model, reflecting "matches" for certain features of it and "mismatches" for others. So in spite of Marber's different language, his adjustment of the "temporal and spatial dimensions" of the original, and his several additions and omissions, he retains the same theme, characters, and—to a considerable extent, plot. To some extent, he manages to stick to his master's brand of Naturalism by retaining the special form of conflict upon which the action is based. In addition to its depiction of the failure of post-war class system, it shows strong relevancy to the spirit of the 1990s, both in its implicit critique of some aspects of feminism (especially its call for gender equality) and its bold address of the masculine concerns of that period. And while consolidating Marber's affinities with the European avant-garde drama, the play also anticipates the concerns of his next play *Closer* (1997) — a seminal play of the 1990s especially in its treatment of sexual desire and the fatal struggle for power.

Key words: Adaptation—appropriation—naturalism—conflict—class—gender.

مسرحية *After Miss Julie* للكاتب البريطاني باتريك ماربر كإعادة إبداع لمسرحية *Miss Julie* للكاتب السويدي أوجست ستريندبرج

باستخدام فكرة إعادة توطین النص للناقدة لندا هانتشون، ومفهوم تحديث السياق الذي تتحرك فيه الشخصيات الدرامية للناقد ديفيد لين، يقوم البحث بدراسة نقدية لمسرحية *After Miss Julie* للكاتب البريطاني باتريك ماربر كإعادة إبداع لمسرحية *Miss Julie* للكاتب السويدي أوجست ستريندبرج. وأظهر البحث أن المسرحية بدت كإعادة توطین وتهذيب للنص الأصلي، عاكسة أحياناً تطابقاً معه، واقتراحاً عنه في أحياناً أخرى، وبالرغم من لغته المختلفة وتعديله للبعدين الزماني والمكاني للنص الأصلي فإن ماربر يحتفظ بنفس الثيمة والشخصيات وإلى حدٍ ما الحكمة الدرامية، ويحافظ ماربر أيضاً على الإطار العام للمذهب الطبيعي لنص سترندبرج بالإبقاء على فكرة الصراع التي بُني عليها النص الأصلي، وبالرغم من أن مسرحية ماربر توضح فشل النظام الطبقي في بريطانيا بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية فإنها تبدو قريبة من روح تسعينات القرن الماضي في انتقادها لبعض مظاهر الحركة النسوية ومعالجتها الجريئة للاهتمامات الذكورية في ذلك الوقت. وفي الوقت الذي توطدّ فيه المسرحية صلة ماربر بالدراما الطبيعية الأوربية فإنها تمهد لمسرحيته التالية المسماة «تقارب» وبخاصة في معالجتها لموضوعات الرغبة الجنسية وصراع القوة المُميت.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

توطین النص – تهذيب النص – المذهب الطبيعي – الصراع – الطبقة – النوع

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Renewing interest in an old text, adaptation is part of a "long-held tradition in theatre of working stories, reconfabulating, and re-configuring them for a new generation" (Delgado and Svich 12). Adaptation creates "a conversation between the past, the present, and the world of the story" in a manner that captures our attention and enhances our "understanding of the three..." (Lane 161). A creative act of returning to "an original textual encounter," it is "transformative" of the "original text" (Carroll 1) into "a different language, medium, or culture..." (Laera 4) through processes such as "revision... trimming and pruning" as well as "addition, expansion, accretion, interpolation" (Sanders 18).

Adaptation works within "the parameters of an established canon" (97) which serves "as a lens through which to view and understand contemporary social and political issues" (Forsyth xxi). Original texts are conversed with because they still retain a universal resonance long after they have been written: they are returned to because their plots, characters, and thematic concerns are relevant to a particular moment in the present. An adapting writer rewrites an original text in relation to his social climate while his work remains resembling it. The adapted work may share the general plot and characters of the original text while its formal structure reveals noticeable changes—be they changes in time or place or both. In addition to making those formal changes, the adapting writer may also reinvent the original so that its distinctive characteristics may not be recognized by anyone familiar with it.

The critical paradigm that dominated adaptation studies since its inception in the 1950s¹ was textual fidelity—faithfulness to the original text—which soon started to be challenged by the paradigm of "textual *infidelity*" which suggests that every return to the original text, whatever the form it assumes, is inevitably an act of "*interpretation*" (Carroll 1—author's italics) of it. Thus, if the details of the plot, characters, and theme are to a considerable extent retained, this is then a faithful "literal" (Cahir 106) adaptation, but if some other details are also to a considerable extent deleted or added, this is then not a quite faithful adaptation—some prefer

to describe the latter practice as "appropriation" (Sanders 26) because, removed from the original text, it becomes a conscious manipulation of it.

Prominent theorist of adaptation Linda Hutcheon argues that adapting writers can undertake "an acknowledged transposition of recognizable other work or works" or "a creative *and* interpretative act of appropriation / salvaging" or "an extended engagement with the adapted work" (8—author's italics). These strategies correspond to what David Lane describes as triply conceived change of "context." Defining adaptation as "the act of taking an existing book, play text or screenplay and transposing it to another context," he argues that change of context may be a change "of the medium, such as a book into a stage play," "of the story world in which the characters are placed by updating the timeframe" or of "the source text completely" to recreate the initial response to its first appearance (157-182).²

Depending on Hutcheon's notion of adaptation as "a creative *and* interpretative act of appropriation" and Lane's concept of the updated "context of the story world in which the characters are placed," this paper intends to undertake a critical examination of Patrick Marber's *After Miss Julie* (1995) as a rewrite of Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888). Acknowledged as "a modern classic" (Törnqvist and Jacobs 135) by "the most revolutionary spirit in the modern theatre" (Burstein ix-x)—dubbed also as its "prophet" (Klaf 85)—*Miss Julie* is the "best known" and the most widely produced play. In addition to twenty English translations of it, the play has been transposed into modes such as film, radio, television and presented as opera, ballet, and musical (Törnqvist and Jacobs 7-8). Although it is not easy to detect a direct impact of *Miss Julie* on contemporary British Drama, the play has appealed to Marber who found it relevant to post-war British society because of its dramatization of class struggle and the war between the sexes—though its relevancy to contemporary British society cannot be masked by this new setting as this paper will show. The paper seeks to investigate the "creative potentialities" of Marber's text, showing how his rewriting of Strindberg's is a "(re)creative process" and not a "parrot-like replication" (Letissier 2). It tries to demonstrate how Strindberg's text is couched in a contemporary

social and political landscape, how its themes and ideas are imaginatively reinvented for different times.

The "most characteristic voice" (Innes 428) of contemporary English comic writers, Patrick Marber (b. 1964) started his career in British radio and television, where he worked on such popular shows as *On the Hour* and *Knowing Me, Knowing You*³. In the mid-1990s he became identified with playwrights such as Mark Ravenhill (b.1966), Anthony Neilson (b.1967), Sara Kane (1971-1999), a generation "widely compared to the angry-young-man generation of British playwrights" (Kramer, qtd.in *Contemporary Authors Online*) that emerged after the World War II—both generations initiating a renaissance in British theatre following barren periods precipitated by atmospheres of uncertainty in the 1940s and 1980s. Against the backdrop of the end of the cold war, decline of left-wing policies, fading interest in feminism, rising concern with masculinity, and the dominance of the suffocating Thatcher's era, those dramatists were free to do theatre on their own. Theorizing that period's drama, Aleks Sierz points out that they share a similar sensibility which he labels as "In-Yer-Face Theatre"⁴, a name which emphasizes break with the past, as they adopt "novelty" over "tradition," which establishes a close link between "play and audience" ("Mark Ravenhill and 1990s Drama" 109), and which is suggestive of the general spirit of the times. Responding to their conditions, they depict extreme "psychological and emotional" (*Modern British Playwriting* 57) states such as sexual abuse and viciousness" and focus on "the problem of violence, the horror of abuse, the questioning of traditional notions of masculinity, the myth of post-feminism, the futility and injustice of consumerism"² ("Still in Yer-Face? 22)—this is what gives that theatre its political edge. They use shock to awaken the "moral response of the audience" by pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable because "they want to question current ideas of what is normal, what it means to be human, what is natural or what is real," a questioning which becomes "part of a search for a deeper meaning, part of a rediscovery of theatrical possibility—an attempt by them to see just how far they can go" (*In-Yer-Face Theatre* 45). In terms of characterization, they introduce in their drama "images of violent men and rude women" ("Still in Yer-Face? 20)

and of characters who are more "complicit victims" rather than innocent ones in obscene street language. They present their experiences in terms of a "ninety minute structure" that drops the "relief of the interval" (*Modern British Playwriting* 57-58) and avoids "closure," "the tactics of the well-made play," and the "dictates of Naturalism" ("Still in Yer-Face?" 19-20). More than an "aesthetic style"(which is not without faults⁵) and less than a movement, their theatre uses raw, intense, and swearing language in furious, shorter dialogue which is "more telegraphic and direct, more filmic even—and much, much faster" (21).

In spite of its openly declared post-war setting—that promised an end to British class system—*After Miss Julie* is close to the spirit of the 1990s particularly in its depiction of the sexual war between the heroin who appears to be a "complicit victim" of her sexual audacity and the hero who is a violent man intent on making his class revenge, a war in which psychological and emotional states such as love, hate, fear, and hysteria are dramatized in a short, faster dialogue that is articulated in an intense language. Both concerns of the play will be examined in terms of its plot, setting, structure, and characterization in order to discover "matches" for certain features of Strindberg's text while also locating departures from it.

Initially, Marber exercises "textual fidelity" as he keeps the main threads of the plot and the play's theme unaltered. Recently separated from her fiancée, the aristocratic Julie chases her father's servant John. Her reckless behavior with other servants in her father's estate leads to a sexual affair with him, and she pays a terrible price for it. Aware of his position, John claims he had loved her from distance ever since they were children, and he wants to use her attraction to him to change his social position—with this clear aspiration a false humility is mixed. While the valet consciously sees in her a chance to rise, she unconsciously sees in him a "chance to death" (Lahr 108). A typical cook, Christine, John's fiancée, is the third character whose role is a little bit expanded. Examining the social and psychological causes of Julie's falling and John's rising—what Marber's master calls "the way up or the way down the social ladder, of being on the top or on the bottom, superior or inferior, man or woman" (Preface 58)⁷—the play dramatizes the

disintegration of social place, class, and gender. By focusing on the engagement between the spoiled daughter of a socialist who scorns the lower classes and her father's valet, it unveils how both are trapped by a long history of inequality, which disintegrates in the moment of seduction—itself appearing to be an act of class revenge that finally leads to her suicide.

Marber's most notable "textual infidelity" is the change of the social setting from Midsummer night in 1880s Sweden to the eve of the British Labor party's landslide victory in July 26, 1945. Next to Christmas, Midsummer Eve (23 June) was, and still is, the most "popular festival in Sweden" (Törnqvist and Jacobs 87), and the next day, according to the ecclesiastical calendar, is also a day of festivity that honors the birth of St. John the Baptist. These two festivals are significant for the progression of action, the first helps to relax class barriers between Miss Julie and Jane, and the second signifies the manner by which she will be executed. The Swedish setting stands in parallel to the British setting, a parallel which, according to Richard Eyre, suggests "a sense of social and sexual liberation" to an England on the brink of revolution (intro. *Plays I* xiii-xiv). Strindberg's text is then adapted because of its relevancy to the moment of the Labor's victory in 1945 (though its relevancy, again, to the 1990s where Marber rose to prominence cannot be mistaken). It was a moment when England was changing from "the slump" to "full employment, the economics of Keynes," which it advocated state intervention "whether through ownership, control, or regulation "and" the politics of a welfare state constructed by Labor." But although the Labor victory brought about "a degree of 'equalization' of experience and condition that was greater than any before"(Kumar 15-23), Britain was not ready to rid itself of its pre-war class system—as the end of the play will show.

Marber's text is framed by the new setting. John, an ex- soldier whose engagement to Christine was interrupted because of the war, arrives at his Lord's house carrying the London edition of *The Evening News* after he drove him to "London for the celebrations; big do at Central Hall" (*After Miss Julie*127—latter referred to as *AMJ* followed by page number). It is a night of celebration, and, therefore, he asks Christine to

serve him with his master's wine and afterwards retorts, "Like Winston Churchill: robust, full-bodied. And finished" (129). When Julie first arrives, she thinks they are excited about the Labor's victory though John does not reveal his vote. Trying to relax what she calls his "feudal anxiety," she entreats him to dance with her because they are "a free country now," adding, "I know you are a secret Tory, aren't you? Everyone in their place forever" (133)—although he denies the charge, his hesitation suggests that he will remain fixed in his class position. The post-war hopes are also invoked in Julie's cheering of him to drink for "Socialism," for "peace," for "Love," and for "the workers" and in her promise to take him to "Covent Garden" when it reopens—there she, unlike her "hypocrite father," will sit him with her in "the grand tier" (145). Encouraging him to slough off his "biological" class outlook, she reminds him that "the world is changing" and that there are new "opportunities" for "self-improvement" (147)—an idealistic outlook as the end of the play will unveil. And after their sexual tryst, he suggests they escape to New York to start a new life, and in the middle of their row he reminds her of her vulgar sexual behavior during the intercourse, "You'd shame a two-bit tart in Piccadilly" (155). While haunted with fear of her father, she describes his class contradictions, "He plays the Labor peer but he despises the lower classes, they're stupid and disappointing" (156-157). After her sexual downfall, she threatens the valet to shoot and feed him to "dogs, like a fallen horse at the Grand National" (157).

In spite of his several additions and omissions to Strindberg, Marber maintains in this new setting the special form of conflict that his master bases the action on. That form of conflict, which had its roots in a dualism— that informed Strindberg all his life— of "the male and the female, the father and the mother, the aristocrat and the servant, spirit and matter, aggressiveness and passivity" (Brustein xxiv), makes the play a modified version of Naturalism. Strindberg did not conceive Naturalism as a mere photographic representation but as a representation of a special form of conflict or struggle between "natural forces" (Strindberg *on Drama and Theatre* 82) whatever they may be. He embraced Naturalism's Darwinian conception of characters in terms of "the survival of the fittest, natural selection, heredity, and environment" (Brustein xxv) while, in the

meantime, adding the psychological idea of struggle to write his "one-act psychodrama" (Törnqvist and Jacobs 38). His naturalist hero Jane develops from an aggressive position to a submissive one, and although he gains an upper hand over Julie (sexually, at least), he remains a helpless coward on hearing his master's bell at the end. His antagonist, Julie is an emancipated woman. She is a typical Strindbergian heroine who has a "masculine" quality in her character even stronger than the man's—and this is the cause of her struggle with him. The paradox of this struggle is that while he is physically superior to her, he becomes victim to her innate weakness. And the conflict between the two remains unresolved until he triumphs. The play is not then strictly naturalist not only because of that psychological dimension, but also because of Strindberg's failure to observe what Brustein calls "Naturalist impartiality"—apparent in his identification with both his hero and heroine who become symptoms of his "split sympathies" (x1)—and his deployment of three elements from classical drama, the pantomime, the chorus, and the ballet (played in the musical interlude). In his "explicitly political play," Marber, while retaining that form of conflict, changes Strindberg's "brutal portrayal of Darwinian selection" into "a lament of the broken promise of social revolution" (Innes 431) in postwar Britain. In his Interpretation of Strindberg's text as a "love story that has gone wrong," he attempts to challenge his master's predestination by addressing the question of free will: "To what extent," he says, "can we create ourselves, or are we created at birth? That's what I am interested in" (qtd. in Renner 22). But how far does he succeed in dealing with this existential question in terms of the bitter struggle of class and gender in the characters of the aristocratic Julie and her servant John? How far does he, like his master, disclose mixed feelings toward both his hero and heroine? And how far does he succeed in making structural changes to Strindberg's text?—questions which the following analysis will try to answer.

To begin with, Marber presents Julies in terms of the same psychological motives which Strindberg dramatizes in his text and lists in his preface ⁶. These include the dusk, the festive atmosphere marking the Labor victory (instead of the Midsummer festival in Strindberg), her

monthly sickness, her failed engagement, her parents' negative influence on her, and, the most important of all, her hysteria. Against the atmosphere of celebration, he introduces his sexually adventurous young lady, who seeks pleasure in the servants' quarters. She is a rich, bored, and given to risk. She makes a reckless sight of herself: John and his fiancée describe her as "off her rocker" and "barking mad" (*AMJ* 127-128)—just as she appears in Strindberg when she arrives distracted, restless, and torn between aggressiveness and vulnerability. Like her counterpart, Julie violates the sexual and social mores—an indication that she does not appear to be aware of her place like her cook. Therefore, "her sexual status" contradicts her "social rank" (Morgan 33), and this contradiction causes her to be instable while also revealing unconscious desire to go down. The set itself (the kitchen) symbolizes the world she has descended into and indicates how she, unlike other naturalist heroines, is "a character out of her milieu" (Sprinchorn 29).

The symbolically charged incident concerning her dog's infidelity predicts her sexual downfall later on. In Strindberg, she decides to have it killed for it, while in Marber she orders Christine to prepare a "magic potion" that might "induce a miscarriage"—a hint at a more sexually tolerant atmosphere in the latter dramatist's time. The other incident concerning her shoe unveils her unconscious desire to fall which contrasts with the valet's conscious desire to rise. If Jane hesitates before kissing her shoes, John directly kneels down to kiss it in a moment of erotic charge. But behind the servant's clear respect, there is a hidden sexual desire, which this incident unravels. Both this incident and the other one concerning her fiancé—whom she tried to train like a dog—reflect a deep-seated desire on her part to dominate and humiliate men, a desire she inherited from her mother who controlled her father for sometimes.

The build up to the sexual liaison continues as the valet prevents his mistress from awakening Christine so that they can remain alone in that erotically charged atmosphere. In the middle of this build up, Strindberg presents the dreams of both, of her climbing down and his climbing up, making the events that follow to be an embodiment of them. Her dream reflects an inner self overrun by a death wish while his dream, in addition to reflecting an erotic desire, expresses a deep wish for social

uplifting. So besides their dramatization of the complex traits of both characters, those dreams represent another psychological strength of the text because they present two "incompatible people" attracted to each other and, therefore, are heading toward a "catastrophe" that is "almost a *fait accompli*" (Steene 54—author's italics). Marber appropriates Strindberg by leaving those dreams out, thus diminishing the richness of the play's subtext. But he, however, rewrites the events that follow so that they appear to be a fulfillment of them—hitting the same end like his master.

Marber replaces those dreams with a number of questions by Julie to John about her father—whom he respects because he (the father) brought him back from war. The next segment of the action centers on how each mistress views the valet's sexual identity. While Miss Julie is not aware in which capacity she can relate to him, a servant or a lover, Julie is somewhere aware of his being a potential lover. Though upsetting his sexual advances, the lady does not like his shying away from her. And remembering her aristocratic position, she determinedly orders him to stop polishing his master's shoes. Seeing her attraction to him, Jane warns her to stop playing with fire, and she responds lightly, "And irresistibly handsome? What incredible conceit! A Don Juan, maybe! Or Joseph! Yes, bless my soul, that's it: you're a Joseph!" (*Miss Julie* 84—afterwards referred to as *MJ* followed by page number). Similarly, viewing him in his submissive position, her modern counterpart's emotions also go high: "you're *proud*. You're a Don Juan—a Don Juan" (*AMJ* 145—authors italics), a characterization which indicates how she, unlike her Strindbergian model, now becomes, somehow, aware of the nature of her attraction to him.

For Miss Julie, Jane is "a Joseph," the social slave who refuses his lady's temptation, and for Julie, John is "Don Juan," the sexual aristocrat who takes the initiative. Whatever the lady's characterization of him, it is clear now that she displays an open interest in love which he will manipulate for his own ends. Jane rouses her passions by pretending to have experienced love "like the princess in the Arabian Nights—who couldn't eat or drink" (*MJ*85) for it. And she is moved when he reveals that she was the one intended. He plays on her romantic longing seeing in

it a chance to rise socially (without ignoring the fulfillment of his hidden sexual desire). Without taking much time admitting his love to her, John also sees in her attraction to him a fantasy for self-promotion (and the fulfillment of same desire). Before that moment, she was for Jane a "symbol of the absolute hopelessness" (*MJ* 87) of changing his class position, and Marber interprets that hopelessness in John's description of barriers between them not only as social but also as "biological"—a character naturalist trait because of its suggestion of hereditary. From his dirt, Jane looked up to her as an impossible lover. Without focusing too much on his dirt, Marber describes John's similar aspiration, and lets him tease her about her sexual innocence (or the lack of it) when he accuses her of unbuttoning her fiancée's britches, a charge that she denies—the whole incident is never mentioned in Strindberg.

This was the case until this moment. Moved by the valet's admission of love, the idealistic Julie believes that the new social atmosphere can relax class barriers between her and him, and her model, in addition to praising his gift for telling stories, believes that his little learning and refined taste—acquired from reading novels and going to the theatre—can do it. But irrespective of what each mistress thinks of, the valet has his different tactics to rise up in the world—which in addition to abhorable acts such as lying, cheating, and stealing, is now centered on manipulating her emotions. And as the moment of seduction closes in, he hides his real intention behind a practical bent of mind as he appears more attentive to his reputation than his mistress (he declines to row her out on the lake because he is afraid of losing his job when he tries to establish himself). And, therefore, Jane lures her away from the crowd to his room because "The rules don't count in a situation like this" (*MJ* 89). After a round of aggressive kisses, Julie lures John to his room. Strindberg then keeps his hero and heroine alone to have sex though the hilarious townspeople march to the house to ridicule Miss Julie for her reckless behavior—a reasonable behavior in Strindberg's times. Marber shuts them off inside to be hidden from the crowd attending the party celebrating the Labor's victory.

Because he is interested in making it a drama of three people instead of two, Marber introduces a very short scene in which Christine

discovers the act of infidelity—however, her hypocrisy becomes clear as she is ready to tolerate his infidelity because she wants to establish a family with him⁷. Following this discovery, the deflowered Julie reappears with blood on her slip—an addition to Strindberg which indicates Marber's open treatment of sex. Like his master, he starts to present the contrast between the mistress and her valet regarding the affair. While she in both texts sees it as a romantic love, he looks at it as a mere sexual desire. Jane describes her as "a hot wine with strong spices" (91) and that one kiss of hers is enough to inflame his whole body. So in practical terms, he urges her to "keep her feelings out" of the whole matter and be reasonable. She, however, after realizing the damage she caused to her family's honor, still believes that what drove her to him was love. But he accuses her of confusing love with desire and that she uses love to cover up her mistake, adding that he "could never be satisfied to be just an animal" for her, that he "could never make" her love him (96). Although she realizes his coarseness and wishes the whole affair never happened, she still desires he "loved" her "at least" (102). But he sneers the love she seeks as the occupation of her leisure class.

Though trimming this encounter, Marber retains the same contrast between his passion-haunted Julie and her practical-minded servant who appears coarser than his counterpart: repeating his model's accusation, John derides her protestation of love and describes the affair as seduction. Observing her humiliation, he puts his arms around her in "pity and desire," a move to which she responds by asking whether he loved her at least in bed—unaware that, by asking this question, she is coming down from "love" to "desire" just as she has fallen from aristocracy to (sexual) servility—falling "pleasurably" as he says, a reminder of her counterpart's description of herself as "spellbound" by the intercourse.

While the mistress continues to think of love, the valet is now more concerned with worldly honor—he wants to flee the place to establish his own business, Jane to the continent and John to New York. But if Jane, ironically, wants to do it by being part of the system—he dreams of being a count like her father—John wants to do it by fleeing the system altogether. But to their business plan, both women show little interest because they are obsessed with love—though Julie's obsession is

the stronger. Both dramatists let the lady refashion "love in her imagination as a love that protects and purifies"—something that never happens in reality—and let the servant imagine that it "might have a chance to grow under other social circumstances" (Preface 65) —which will never come to pass.

The sexual intercourse has resulted new positions: the valet has become the sexual aristocrat, and she has become the sexual servant. Like his master, Marber starts to emphasize that power reversal although he edits out some details of the original text—he omits, for example, Jane's characterization of the affair as a stupid "act" and drops Julie's hysterical crying after it. And now the action progresses to a further point in the conflict by reflecting in stronger terms the contrast between the coarseness of the valet and the nobility of his mistress. But while Strindberg uses a life-like dialogue to foreground that contrast,

MISS JULIE. [...] A servant's servant—

JANE. And a whore's whore!

MISS JULIE. You dog!

JANE. You bitch!

MISS JULIE. Well, now you've seen the eagle's back---

JANE. Wasn't exactly its back---!

MISS JULIE. I was going to be your first branch--!

JANE. A rotten branch—(MJ94-95)

Marber adds wit to it:

JULIE. You owe me respect at least.

JOHN. That's the last thing you wanted in here....

JULIE. You're disgusting.

JOHN. No, *you're* disgusting....

JULIE. Tell me what I am.

Pause.

JOHN. A fuck.

JULIE. (*childlike, to herself*) I'm all dirty.

JOHN. So wash. (AMJ 154-155)

The fiery exchange continues as they trade accusations. Strindberg's dialogue suggests the positions of the two:

MISS JULIE. You lackey! You shoeshine boy! Stand up when I talk to you!

JANE. You lackey lover! You bootblack's tramp!....I have never seen anybody in my class behave crudely as you did tonight. Have you ever seen any of the girls around her grab at a man like you did? Do you think any of the girls of my class would throw themselves at a man like that? I have never seen the like of it except in animals and prostitutes. (*MJ* 95).

Recreating it, his disciple is more direct, shorter, and telegraphic:

JULIE. STAND UP WHEN YOU SPEAK TO ME! STAND UP!
REMEMBER YOUR POSITION!

JOHN. Which one, Madam? There are so many.

JULIE. You're still a servant, you scared little squaddie, you're still s servant.

JOHN. And you're a servant's slut. Don't come on all superior with me, Miss Julie. No woman of my class would accost me the way you did last night, no woman of my class would want what you wanted last night; sweating and braying, your face in the pillow, biting your hand to stop yourself screaming the house down. You'd shame a two-bit tart in Piccadilly. (*AMJ*155)

This is the strongest point in the conflict between the two as they are now struggling against each other in their both capacities, male versus female, servant versus aristocrat. She still behaves as an aristocrat and tends to ignore her sexual downfall, while he holds on to his superiority as a male and tends to disregard his social inferiority. The play's general theme of falling and rising becomes clear in this struggle. In the intercourse, she climbed down to him, and he climbed up to her. She has fallen socially, and her status is, therefore, degraded, and he rose sexually, and this is what now gives him power. To her accusation of being dirty in soul—and indeed in body—he reminds her of her shameful behavior during the intercourse. If she orders him to remember his position as a servant, he

ridicules her for disregarding her new one. He has risen, and she has fallen, and this is what she does not seem to be aware of.

Recreating the whole encounter in his witty dialogue, Marber adds John's ironical question about position. Apparently, she has descended into that position because of her inherent nature in the first place. And to that nature, the impact of her deficient parents can be added. But although Marber appropriates rather than adapts that psychological aspect of the drama, he retains the general line of it. He speaks about her divided feelings towards her father: she loved him, and she also hated him—though he drops out her justification in Strindberg for these ambivalent feelings that he raised her to despise her sex, "to be half woman and half man" (*MJ*115). Of stronger influence, her mother was an emancipated woman who believed in the "equality of the sexes" (*AMJ* 157). She preferred to be a mistress rather than a wife—in Strindberg's times she represented "the turn-of-the century feminism and the rise of the so-called New Woman" (Gassner 14) which came under attack in Marber's times as will be shown latter. Giving birth to Julie against her will, she raised her as a boy. When her father became in control, she made her revenge by taking lovers—Marber omits reference to the fire she set on the estate which her lover "the brick manufacturer" rebuilt by her money. From a psychological point of view, Miss Julie and her mother are examples of the hysterics in the nineteenth century. Conceived in Strindberg's time as a female disease, hysteria referred to "theories of innate degeneracy" and "sexual disturbances." Such a sickness was believed to inflict a woman who fails to accept her "sexual desires" or to be a "sexual object for man" (SparkNotes Editors n.p.). Though pruning that aspect of Julie's character, Marber, like his master, describes her attraction to men and her despise of them, her fear of sex and her being drawn to it, her attempt to enslave her fiancé and her submission to her servant—though she was warned by her mother not to slave herself to any man. After the sexual liaison, she appears paralyzed (another sign of her hysteria). She tells Jane how she hates him and would like to see him "killed like an animal" although she appears unable to disconnect herself from him, and she threatens John, "If it were up to me I'd have you shot and fed to the dogs, like a fallen horse at the Grand National" (159) though she kisses him aggressively before

putting her hands into his trousers following the decapitation of her bird. And although the valet appears brazenly coarse, she still looks up to him as a savior. Combining her mother's emotions and her father's thoughts, she becomes "a neurotic whose unresolved conflicts are the product of [their] social contradictions" (Morgan 33) that now inform her life. Marber interprets Strindberg when he lets her reflect on the "horrible ugly mess" that her life has descended into: "You watch the world through eyes filled with acid" (158)—previously she described that pessimistic vision of life: everything in life, she says, is "a scum that drifts across the water until it sinks" (141).

These are then Julie's psychological contradictions which have landed her in "shame" and "humiliation." In both texts, she suggests "a suicide pact" with the valet as a way out of her present situation, but he rejects it outright on pretentious religious grounds. Her courageous attitude is consistent with her nobility, and she is, therefore, ready to the end to obey his orders like a dog to save her "honor" and her father's "name." And nobility asserts itself after she discovers his baseness. In her final encounter with him, she denies being weak or terrified by the sight of her bird's blood:

You think I loved you because my womb hungered for your semen. You think I want to carry your brood under my heart and feed it with my blood! Bear you child and take your name!—Come to think of it, what is your name anyway? I'll bet you don't have one. (*MJ* 109)

And by smearing the blood of the decapitated bird onto his face—an addition by Marber to the original text—her adapted version appears more forceful. Sighting the bleeding of her bird, Julie remembers her own bleeding during intercourse and becomes defiant, "You think I'm weak? Because I wanted you inside me? It's just biology—just chemicals" (*AMJ* 168). In spite of John's cynical commentary, hers is indeed the speech of "the true noble blood"—a further recreation of the whole situation by Marber. He is diminished, and she gains stature.

Both the bird's death and her own are foreshadowed in the reference to the morning church sermon about the beheading of John the

Baptist. The Biblical allegory is reversed: whereas Saint John the Baptist was beheaded by conspiring women, the female bird, which stands for Julie, is executed by a male. Marber tends to fill in gaps as the reference to the church sermon in Strindberg becomes a full-fledged psychological depiction by him: her father, Julie claims, is Herod (who married her mother against her wish to be his mistress—similar then to the Biblical Herod who unlawfully married his wife), her servant is John the Baptist (a wish more than a reality because it is she who will be executed not him), and she is Salome (a seductress like her but who is, ironically, punished not rewarded for her seduction)⁸.

However, it is she who is finally heading towards redemption. But while Miss Julie seems to think of it in religious and social terms, Julie conceives of it in terms of romantic love. The former's final words, "I'm among the last. I *am* the last" (117—author's italics) evoke the Biblical injunction that the last (the poor) shall be the first (to enter paradise) and the first (the rich) the last (to enter it)—unintentionally securing a place in paradise—and the twist of fate that she shall not be the last of her class but the last of her wretched house. If she goes out empowered by these religious and social feelings, her modern version departs energized with her heartfelt emotions, which started before the hypnotist in the village fair. There, romantic attraction relaxed class barriers between her and the servant. She then wanted him as a lover although he did her "father's dirty work." She sought him as her "father's angel" although he intended that love to be his class revenge. And by not beseeching him to save her honor—as her model does—she does not seem to be regretful about it.

Encouraged by the new social atmosphere, celebrated at the beginning of the play, John describes Julie's aristocratic class as a "dying breed." But his panic on hearing his lord's bell at the end discloses how mistaken he is. The father represents one social system just as he stands for another, and, in one respect, the play embodies the conflict between the two. In Strindberg's times, the count represented a rigid class system for which the "temporary ebbing of the tide of social revolution, feminist or democratic" (Morgan 34), failed to change. Though Marber's new setting promised change of the pre-war class system, the end of the play

diminishes that promise. Like Jane's count, John's lord becomes" an incarnation of the factors—heredity and environment—which ultimately cause Julie's death, a naturalistic equivalent of the concept of "Fate" that was "inherent in classical tragedy" (Törnqvist and Jacobs 76-77). Therefore, Marber's attempt to challenge that predestination by framing Julie's love story in terms of free will may be questioned. For while his heroine engages willfully in her love, that love fails at the end because of the same factors that Strindberg dramatizes—embodied, without ignoring Julie's innate nature and the deficiencies of her parents, mainly in the class system which the father stands for.

Therefore, the servant returns to his position and survives, and the lady returns to her position and dies. And in a "strikingly ritualistic" (Morgan 34) manner, she goes out to her end mesmerized—if the hypnotist previously ordered the valet to take the broom and sweep (a task convenient with his position), the latter is now the hypnotist who orders the lady to go out with the razor in her hand. But while Miss Julie goes out to her end open-eyed, Julie barely does. Strindberg strikes a balance between his brand of Naturalism and Greek tragedy. Miss Julie is driven towards her end because of the above mentioned hereditary and environmental factors. But when at the end she takes the initiative and asks the valet to provide her with the power she needs to end her life, "she wakes up from her sleep and 'determinedly' faces her fate" thus saving the tragic idea of "destruction by free will," according to Brandell (qtd. in Törnqvist and Jacobs 104). Although Marber retains the first side of the balance, his handling of the second may be also questioned. While Miss Julie wakes up in the middle of her hypnotism (a sign of her free will), Julie does not, less as a sign of her lack of free will (because she toyed with the razor several times while awake) and more, perhaps, as a sign of faithfulness to her emotions that drove her to mental submission to the valet. Without ignoring the social and biological nature of the conflict, it can be argued that "the battle of the brains"—Strindberg's name for hypnosis in the waking state (qtd. in Törnqvist and Jacobs 19) — becomes more forceful in Marber. It means that in the "struggle for survival intellectual fitness" is not a guarantee for victory as now the great succumbs to the small—she asks him to be the master who gives her

orders—and before she goes out to commit physical suicide, she appears to be already psychologically ready for it.

Although she dies, she displays triumph, and although the valet lives, he shows defeat: she dies as an aristocrat, and he perishes as a servant. She is defeated as a woman just as he is defeated as a servant. But his victory as a male is marred by her "honorable" suicide, and this is what makes his "survival look base" (Brustein xlvi). Therefore, John's phrase in their last encounter "After you, Miss Julie" becomes a significant indicator of class position—he (the servant) comes after her (the aristocrat) in both life and death—as well as artistic position—Marber (the disciple—for the time being, at least) comes after Strindberg (the master) to recreate the same conflict between "nobility and baseness, spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, purity and dirt" (Brustein xlvi) in a new setting while adding his own coloration.

But although he updates the context of the story world, Marber maintains his master's "split sympathies" towards his title character and her antagonist. Both dramatists appear to admire their heroine's nobility and aristocratic code of honor—though there are personal reasons behind Strindberg's admiration for her⁹. On the other hand, they agree on their characterization of her as a "man-hating woman" who forces herself on the valet and suffers a tragic consequence. In her character, they seem to vent their anger against the feminist tendencies of their times. For Strindberg, she reflects the then fashionable call for the emancipation of women, which he describes as a "return to matriarchy," a move, he believes, that would take the western world back to a "state of barbarism" (Törnqvist and Jacobs 14). He dislikes her being "half-woman" viewing her type as bespeaking "degeneracy" (Preface 63). And he suggests that her sacrifice of herself for the sake of her honor appears to be, ironically, an attempt to restore an "old repressive order" of "moribund patriarchy, a crumbling aristocracy" (Morgan 34)—thus showing retreat from the social revolution of his times. In the first place, Marber relocates her in the forties in order to lament Britain's failure to rid itself of its pre-war class system. But it can be contended that she also seems closer to the spirit of the 1990s, where Feminism — reaching its third wave in the 1980s—came under attack for being responsible for many social ills, the

marginalization of men's roles, and the imbalanced treatment toward them regarding issues of sexual harassment, domestic violence, and parenting¹⁰. Specifically, she appears closer what is called the new "Ladette"—which emerged in response to the "New Lad," which will be explained later. The Ladette," reaching its peak in 1990s with the appearance of The Spice Girls, was similar to the unruly "Roaring Girls" that populated Jacobean drama. An expression of "self-centered individualism," it intended to empower woman by helping her get" what she wants "out of life" (Aston 6). However, in addition to causing confusion and tension in gender relationship¹¹, such a model of "gender equality" was shallow because women imitated men's "modes of behavior" (Whelehan 6). Raised by her mother to be "half-woman," Julie is attracted to men and, in the meantime, despises them, is afraid of sex and is drawn to it, attempts to enslave her fiancé and submits herself to her servant. And motivated by her (the mother's) belief in the "equality of the sexes," she is driven to love her valet against all odds. If the festive atmosphere at the beginning makes the realization of that equality possible, the overturn of power at the end discloses the disintegration of that possibility in post-war Britain (this is what the social theme of the play deals with) and the failure of the feminist agenda—especially its model of "gender equality"—in contemporary Britain (as the sexual theme shows).

Although both dramatists admire the valet's sexual aristocracy, they do not view it as separated from his social inferiority. They contrast his attractive outlook with his hidden coarseness and show that in spite of his sexual uplifting after the liaison, he remains socially low. Though emphasizing his baseness, Strindberg views Jean as an embodiment of manhood possessing both "the coarseness of the slave and the tough-mindedness of the born ruler" (Preface 64), qualities which make him superior as a male. He identifies with the servant because of his "masculine strength" and "brutishness." Passing in his life through a period of uncertainty about his masculinity—reflected in the "weaker, more womanish aspect of his nature" that drove him sometimes to think that "he should have been born a woman"—now he is assured about it, and the play comes to embody the qualities he associates with Jane such

as "discipline, control, self-sufficiency, cruelty, independence, and strength" (Brustein xxvii- xxxix).

While Strindberg tolerates the valet's coarseness for personal reasons, Marber condones it for social ones. Although Marber mainly transposes the valet to the 1940s to be an embodiment of its faulted class system, he still fits with the spirit of the 1990s. Marked by many political and social changes, that decade is described as the decade of "Cool Britannia"—a term which some call a "construction of media and public relation companies" (Gottlieb and Chambers 209) though some else dub it as characteristic of the new art made by the "young fashionable people" (Urban 358) of the time. The term characterizes "contemporary metropolitan" awareness, "self-conscious 'coolness'", concern with "surface appearance of things," and a clear "cynicism and bleakness..." (Saunders 9). After "feminist politics and the Age of the New Man" (Sierz *British Drama Today* 191), there emerged in the middle of the decade a sense of uncertainty as far as the relationships between the sexes and the challenges facing feminism were concerned. Many cultural forms¹² explored masculine identity and celebrated "violent and reckless forms of masculinity ..." (Saunders 11). The media devised "The New Lad" as a term to describe that masculinist tendency. "Cool Britannia" was nostalgic looking for the past as a time populated by "real" women and "humorous cheeky chappies" (Whelehan 11). Yet behind that nostalgia the "New Lad" represented gender conflict and the near end of the gains of Feminism in the previous decade. Specifically, he stood for revival of "old patriarchy" that represented "a direct challenge to feminism's call for social transformation by reaffirming—albeit 'ironically—the unchanging nature of gender relations and sexual roles" (6).

Marber returns to the past to rewrite Jane as John, making him a "humorous cheeky" chappie who reflects the masculine tendency of the time. John is characterized by an apparent sense of humor—clear in his commentary on Julie's fiancée's fear of her sexual audacity, "God knows why they decorated him for bravery"(148). He sounds sardonic in his reply to Julie's question about position. And he appears more brutal than Jan: apparent in his short, stark answer "A fuck" to Julie's question about who she is and in his physical violence against her during and after the

intercourse—the bloodied rag she comes out of his room with and his response to her verbal violence toward him (forcing her down on the kitchen table and pulling up her dress) forcefully asserts this. He also appears to be self-consciously cool when he responds cynically to her protestation of love (after the intercourse) and when he declines to pray for her (shortly before she goes out). All these examples—and many others mentioned before—make him a near example of the New Lad of his creator's times.

This rewriting of Jane as John in that manner indicates that Marber's text is then far from being a faithful translation of Strindberg's although he admits that that "infidelity might be an act of love" (Forward xv)—an act of love (that has gone wrong) by his heroin for the valet (his interpretation of her sexual downfall) and an act of love for his master or both. And although it is not a literal translation of its source, *After Miss Julie* comes to be both a faithful adaptation and appropriation of it, reflecting "matches" for certain features of its model and other departures from it. In his rewrite, Marber, in spite of his different language and new setting, retains the same theme, characters, and—to a considerable extent, plot. To some extent, he manages to stick to his master's brand of Naturalism by retaining the special form of conflict upon which that master bases the action—while also observing unities of time and place. He also displays "split sympathies" towards both characters though those divided feelings are projected in a social rather than a personal context. Making structural changes to the source text, he drops reference to the pantomime scene—which follows Julie's invitation to Jane to dance with her—though he keeps Christine alone to perform her domestic chores. In the middle of the build up to the sexual liaison, Strindberg introduces the chorus who sing an obscene song about Julie and Jane—which he uses to lure her to his room. The ballet scene which follows is performed by the same country people celebrating the Midsummer Eve. Marber replaces the chorus by a drunken crowd celebrating the Labor's victory—to whose coming Julie whispers intimately to John to take her to his room after they aggressively exchanged kisses—and drops the ballet altogether. Although he omits both characters' dreams, the psychological dimension of action

remains concentrated, and his adjustment of the classical elements keeps its pace uninterrupted.

By adapting Strindberg, Marber hits a double purpose: he establishes affinities with the European avant-garde drama while he anticipates the concerns of his next play, *Closer* (1997). This is why Saunders considers the play an "important juncture" in his career as many of its concerns such as "the attraction of sexual desire," "the pessimistic depiction of relationship between men and women," and the fatal struggle for "power" (5) would prefigure in *Closer*. Without challenging this view, the present writer believes that the play still has merits of its own. For while reflecting the post-war atmosphere with its failed class system, it also appears close to the spirit of the 1990s both in its implicit critique of some aspects of feminism (especially its call for gender equality) and its bold address of the masculine concerns of that period.

Notes

- 1 - Since George Bluestone's seminal work *Novels into Film* (1957), adaptation has become a serious academic discipline culminating in recent years on publication of many foundational texts—focusing, each in its own right, on the transposition of text to screen, stage, music, and other media venues—and the formation of the Association of Adaptation Studies in 2006. For more details, see Murray and Tricia Hopton et al.
- 2 - Lane offers three examples of this change of context: for the first, he refers to the transposition of Primo Levi's "first person prose account of surviving the holocaust" *If This Is A Man* (1947) into the one person play *Primo*, adapted and acted by the actor Anthony Sher at the National Theatre (2004); for the second, he mentions Harold Brighouse's *Hobson's Choice* (1915)—a play set at the end of the nineteenth century in Salford England—which was adapted as a play in 2003 by Tanika Jupta who relocated the story to "the present day in a modern Asian fashion shop"; for the third, he alludes to Lawrence Olivier's film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V* in 1944—a time of war across Europe in which "propaganda was needed to boost morale" (158-159).
- 3 - To date, in addition to *After Miss Julie* (1995), Marber's oeuvre includes *Dealer's Choice* (1993), *Closer* (1996), and *Howard Katz* (2001). Directed by him for The National Theatre in 1997, *Closer* was one of "the most significant plays of the 1990s" (Saunders 1) which strengthened his popularity in and outside Britain—it has been translated and staged in thirty countries and received academic praise from critics such as Christopher Innes in his *Modern British Drama* (2002) and David Rabey in *English Drama Since 1940* (2003).
- 4 - Originating in American sports journalism in 1970s as derisory term, it entered the mainstream language during 1980s and 1990s to suggest provocation, aggression, and brashness, feelings which were forced on the theatre audience in Britain in the 1990s. See, Sierz (*British Drama Today* 2001).
- 5 - In "Towards a Critique and Summation," Sierz groups together some of the charges leveled against that theatre such as Harry Gibson's critique of it as "a form of cultural tourism," David Edgar's denigration of it as a "fashion," and Harry Eyres' dismissal of it as counter-productive and insensitive (22). Recounting other critics' questioning of its moral seriousness, he also refers to their criticism of its neglect of many "female playwrights of the era" (*Modern British Playwriting* 58-59) and other talents who were not London-based, especially the Irish, Welsh, and Scottish talents.
- 6 - I have relied on the Preface as far as it accords with what is in the text. Written to "sell the play rather explain it" (Sprinchorn 28), some of the views in it "do not agree very well with an intersubjective interpretation" (Törnqvist and Jacob 40) of the text—one notable example is Strindberg's description of Julie's "weak degenerate brain" as one motif behind her condition, a description which contrasts with the strength she demonstrates at the end of the play.
- 7 - My analysis edits out Christine's role because she plays no part in the conflict between the two principle characters. Suffice to say that Marber maintains the main

features of her character as a devout servant, but who is also weak, cold, and somehow hypocritical. Concerned with religion and morality, she cannot understand Julie's downfall. She appears also unmoved when Julie suggests she escapes with them, and at the end is discovered to be as mean as her fiancée

8 - The story of John the Baptist is detailed in the Gospels of Mark (6:14–29) and Matthew (14:1–12), See, Editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica*

9- Born to an aristocratic father and a mother of humble origins, Miss Julie embodies Strindberg's social alienation which was caused by a gulf between him and his father ("a *déclassé* shipping agent who claimed to have noble blood") and his mother (a tailor's daughter), a gulf that caused him to vacillate between "peasant servility and aristocratic arrogance." His childhood followed a classical Oedipal pattern. He adored his mother—though he latter detested her for favoring his brother over him—and hated his father—though that hatred was attended by fear and respect. His ambivalence towards his father was realized in his rebellion and submission to "higher power," and that towards his mother was reflected in his vacillation between "an intense worship of the female and even more intense misogyny" (Brustein xix- xx). At the end of the play, she seems to echo her creator when she thinks where to fix the blame for her current situation—in his autobiography, Strindberg reveals how he as an intellectually superior person becomes a "montage of ideas" (qtd. In Robinson 82) — see, Klaf who has also made a wonderful analysis of the origins of Strindberg's psychological contradictions.

10 - Focusing on the much-hurt male, David Thomas attacks that imbalance, and even a staunch feminist critic like Wolf Naomi, while calling for equal rights and responsibilities for both sexes, blames patriarchy for the situation of woman in 1980s and, in the meantime criticizes the shortcomings of the feminist movement, specifically its focus on the woman's view of herself as a victim.

11 - Such confusion and tension were dealt with by Sarah Kane in her *Cleansed* (1998) and Anthony Neilson in his *The Censor* (1997). See, Saunders.

12 – Saunders (11) lists plays such as Marber's *Dealer's Choice* (1993), novels such as Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995), films such as Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1993) as clear examples.

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