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Naturalism in August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*

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Abstract

Naturalism is a literary movement that emerged in the late 19th century to portray life with scientific precision, emphasizing the influence of heredity, environment, and socio-economic conditions on human behavior. In drama, this approach offers a stark and unfiltered depiction of human struggles within oppressive social systems. This study aims to explore August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* through the lens of naturalism, specifically using Vernon L. Parrington's seven characteristics of the movement: Objectivity, Frankness, An Amoral Toward Material, Determinism, Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail, Characters Are Liable to Specific Enticements and Pessimism. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyzes selected dialogues from the play to identify naturalist elements. The findings reveal that *Miss Julie* strongly embodies all seven aspects, with a particularly dominant presence of negative detail (44%) and objectivity (20%). The discussion highlights how the characters' actions are shaped by class conflict, psychological trauma, and instinctual drives, leading to tragic outcomes. Through its bleak realism and emotional depth, the play not only fulfills but also expands the boundaries of naturalist drama by dissecting themes of gender, power, and existential despair.

Keywords: *naturalism, drama, Strindberg, Miss Julie*

Introduction

Literature is one of the most complex and expansive forms of human expression, as it reflects thoughts, emotions, culture, and the social conditions of a society through both spoken and written language. As a symbolic medium, literature not only conveys messages but also interprets reality and shapes our worldview. Historically, literature has played a vital role in preserving cultural values and transmitting human experience across generations. According to Terry Eagleton (2022), literature can be seen as a form of discourse that not only represents reality but also transforms it, as it operates within ideological structures while also challenging them. This definition emphasizes that literature is not merely ordinary writing, but a work of depth and meaning that requires critical interpretation. Generally, literary works are classified into five main genres: poetry, prose, fiction, nonfiction, and drama. Each genre has its own structural and thematic characteristics, but all share the same goal—to reflect human reality. Among these genres, drama occupies a unique position due to its performative nature, allowing literary narratives to be embodied and directly experienced by the audience.

Drama is one of the oldest and most profound branches of literature, fundamentally designed to depict human conflict through dialogue and stage action. Drama strives to reflect life, dilemmas, and values in a direct and visually expressive manner. As Anne Bogart (2020) states, drama differs from other forms of literature because "it unfolds in time and space through live performance, making it a unique fusion of literature and event." This places drama at the intersection of literary work and performing art, where

the story develops not only through words but also through body movement, voice, and the physical presence of actors on stage. According to Bogart, drama is "a medium of storytelling that is visceral and tangible, speaking both to the intellect and the emotions, and capable of creating immediate social engagement." Because of its performative aspects, drama becomes a more immersive form of literature that can deliver strong social criticism, explore inner psychological conflicts, or engage in philosophical reflection. Over time, drama has been analyzed through various theoretical and aesthetic approaches such as realism, expressionism, absurdism, and naturalism—a movement that seeks to depict life on stage with scientific objectivity and truth, often highlighting the social and biological forces that shape human behavior.

Naturalism is a major literary and theatrical movement that emerged in the late 19th century as a direct response to the romantic idealism and emotionalism that dominated the previous literary period. Rooted in the philosophies of determinism and positivism, naturalism aimed to portray life with scientific precision and uncompromising realism. Writers and dramatists who embraced this movement sought to present humans as beings heavily influenced—even controlled—by their environment, biological heritage, and socio-economic conditions. In recent discussions on literary movements, Sharon Friedman (2020) emphasizes that "naturalist drama is marked by its emphasis on environmental determinism and its portrayal of characters constrained by historical and material forces, reflecting the scientific and sociological roots of the movement." This view highlights the enduring influence of thinkers such as Darwin and Comte, whose ideas about evolution and social structures shaped naturalism's perception of humans as both biological and sociological subjects. As a dramatic technique, naturalism focuses on ordinary characters, often from marginalized backgrounds, and presents their lives without romantic embellishment. Its tone is typically bleak, its dialogue every day, and its endings often tragic—underscoring the limited control individuals have over their fate, which is governed by greater and impersonal forces.

The Swedish playwright August Strindberg's 1888 Miss Julie is among the most well-known and extensively researched works of naturalist drama. The play is widely regarded as a milestone in naturalist theater, as it presents the movement's central themes through psychological depth, social critique, and uncompromising realism. *Miss Julie* is also closely related to naturalism concepts such as determinism, pessimism, and frankness. Set during a single night in the kitchen of a Swedish nobleman's house, the story focuses on the interaction between Miss Julie, an aristocratic woman, and Jean, her father's valet. The power dynamics between these two characters reflect the rigid class divisions of the time, as well as emerging tensions regarding gender roles, sexuality, and individual autonomy. *Miss Julie* skillfully weaves these elements together to explore how heredity and environment shape behavior—Julie's psychological instability and emotional turmoil, for example, are not seen as personal failures but as the inevitable consequences of her upbringing and social pressures. The setting, dialogue, and plot are carefully designed to resemble real life, drawing the audience into an experience of raw and intense human conflict. In this paper, Authors will perform a thorough examination of *Miss Julie* through the lens of naturalism, demonstrating how the play not only portrays the philosophical and aesthetic goals of the movement but also pushes its boundaries by addressing taboo themes and emotional complexity.

Naturalism in drama does not appear as a mere embellishment or romanticization of life, but rather as a sharp mirror—reflecting the dark and harsh side of human conditions shaped by environment, social class, and biological inheritance. In Miss Julie by August Strindberg, naturalism is used not just to show events, but to reveal how

characters have no control over their lives, as if they are puppets trapped by social structures. One of the most emotional and naturalistic moments can be found in a tense exchange between Julie and Jean near the end of the play.

> Jean: "You're a bit of a puzzle, you know. ..."
>
> Julie: "Perhaps I am.... But then, so are you... If it comes to that, it's all a puzzle—I find myself sitting on top of a very high pillar without any idea how to get down—and yet I know that I must get down. I'm too afraid to jump—but I can't hold on. I long to fall—but I don't fall. And all the time I know there can be no peace for me until I am down... right down on the ground. Yet, somehow, I always know that, the moment I'm on the ground, I shall long just as terribly to be in the ground— right under it...."
>
> Jean: "No. I dream that I'm lying at the foot of a tall tree in a dark wood. But I want to be up at the top and see the fat lands lying in the sun, while I help myself to the golden eggs in the nest on the top branch…"
>
> Julie: "I wonder why I'm standing here exchanging dreams with you like this... Come along—I thought we were going into the park."

In the context of the drama Miss Julie, the dialogue illustrates Julie's psychological turmoil as she finds herself trapped between the desire to escape her current reality and the fear of the consequences such a change might bring. She is a noblewoman undergoing an identity crisis in a world that is beginning to challenge traditional social structures, including class and gender roles. The high pillar symbolizes her elevated status, which brings her not peace, but isolation and anxiety. When she continues, "And all the time I know there can be no peace for me until I am down... right down on the ground. Yet, somehow, I always know that, the moment I'm on the ground, I shall long just as terribly to be in the ground—right under it," Strindberg conveys the core of naturalist thought, particularly the aspect of pessimism as defined by Vernon L. Parrington. In this theory, humans are portrayed as victims of a mechanistic, indifferent world, unable to meaningfully alter their fate. Julie, like many naturalist characters, is driven by unconscious impulses, social background, and environmental pressures. Even her desire for change is overshadowed by the tragic awareness that such change can never truly bring peace. Julie's pessimism reflects the fundamental helplessness of human beings in a world where real hope is unattainable.

According to Heidarzadegan and Yıldız (2020) in the article *"Kitchen Sink Drama and Naturalism: Trends of Post-War English Theatre"* naturalism is manifested through Kitchen Sink Drama, which portrays the reality of working-class life in post-war England using domestic settings and a naturalistic approach, following Zola's theory that rejects idealization and emphasizes the details of everyday life. Bhatta (2021), in *"Influence of Past on Present: A Naturalistic Study of Ghosts"* asserts that Ibsen's Ghosts illustrates how individuals are controlled by heredity and social environment, emphasizing that both Mrs. Alving and her son Oswald are victims of forces beyond their control—Oswald suffering from inherited syphilis and Mrs. Alving being trapped by societal conventions, thereby affirming Zola's deterministic view that the past irreversibly shapes the present. Bahri et al. (2022), in the article *"An Analysis of Naturalism in Sean Baker's Movie The Florida Project"* use Vernon L. Parrington's naturalism theory, which includes seven aspects such as determinism, objectivity, inclination toward negative detail, and pessimism, to show how the main character is trapped in an oppressive social reality. Mashree (2023), in *"The Effect of Naturalism School on Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie"* explains how Eugene O'Neill applies Emile Zola's naturalism to illustrate social and psychological determinism, where

characters have little control over their fate. In the article by Wulandari and Surur (2024) titled *"Practice of Naturalism in Naguib Mahfouz's Midaq Alley"* Zola's theory of naturalism is used to identify elements such as objectivity, determinism, pessimism, harsh setting, and plot twists to depict the harsh life of lower-class society in post-colonial Cairo. All the previous study consistently apply naturalism—either through Zola or Parrington—to represent human life truthfully, without romanticization or idealization.

Naturalism is a literary movement that developed from realism, emphasizing a scientific and deterministic view of humans and their environment. This movement sees humans as biological beings subject to natural laws and social environments that they cannot fully control. According to Vernon L. Parrington (1927) naturalism is a form of "pessimistic realism," a type of realism that sees people as victims of a mechanized world to which they belong. Parrington divides naturalism into seven aspects: Objectivity, Frankness, An Amoral Toward Material, Determinism, Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail, Characters Are Liable to Specific Enticements and Pessimism. These seven aspects illustrate how characters in naturalist works are often portrayed without moral glorification, trapped by instinct, and strongly influenced by environmental factors and biological drives.

1. Objectivity

Objectivity in naturalism refers to a neutral stance in portraying characters and events. The author does not pass moral judgment on the characters' actions. Characters are seen as products of their environment and social conditions. They are not portrayed as purely good or evil, but as ordinary people reacting to life's pressures. This objectivity creates distance between the author and the story's subjects. The goal is to present life as it is, without dramatization or glorification.

As in the example below, taken from a scene in the play "*A Streetcar Named Desire*"

Stella : "Blanche!"
Blanche : "You're a fine one to sit there accusing me of it!"
Stella : "Blanche!"
Blanche **: "I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard!"**

In these dialogues, Blanche describes her suffering without any dramatization from the author. She is simply portrayed as a victim of a series of family tragedies. The author does not cast her as a hero or villain, but as a fragile person trying to survive. There is no moral judgment on how Blanche copes with her grief. The focus is on the emotional and social burdens that cause her breakdown. This reflects the naturalist objectivity, where characters are shaped by fate rather than personal will. Blanche represents an ordinary person destroyed by harsh realities.

2. Frankness

Frankness refers to the open portrayal of basic human drives. Authors do not shy away from showing hunger, fear, or sexual desire. Everything is described plainly and without censorship. The aim is to depict humans as biological beings. There is no idealization—only raw, unfiltered reality. This reflects a scientific approach to observing human behavior.

Blanche : "Please, please do."
Stanley : "Be comfortable is my motto."
Blanche : "It's mine, too. It's hard to stay looking fresh. I haven't washed or even powdered my face and—here you are!"

Stanley : **"You know you can catch cold sitting around in damp things, especially when you been exercising hard like bowling is."**

Stanley is portrayed as a masculine figure focused on his physical needs. He talks openly about his body and physical activities. This dialogue shows a character driven by basic instincts like comfort and bodily care. There is no attempt to romanticize or refine his behavior. He is a realistic example of a biological human being. The author presents him directly and unapologetically. This is the essence of frankness in naturalism: an honest portrayal of humans as physical, instinctual beings.

3. An Amoral Toward Material

This aspect shows a dismissive attitude toward material possessions. Characters are often portrayed as indifferent to money, property, or personal belongings. It reflects a life of instability and spontaneous survival. They lack a strong sense of responsibility regarding ownership or financial consequences. This behavior is often rooted in poverty or constant life pressure. Characters seem to live day by day without long-term planning.

Stella : "Not sold—lost, lost! Stanley!"
Stanley : "Open your eyes to this stuff! You think she got them out of a teacher's pay?"
Stella : "Hush!"
Stanley : **"Look at these feathers and furs that she come here to preen herself in!... Pearls! Ropes of them!..."**

Stanley expresses anger at Blanche for bringing luxurious items into his modest home. To him, Blanche appears unrealistic and careless in flaunting wealth she no longer has. These items symbolize her illusion of social status that has already collapsed. She still tries to appear glamorous despite her financial ruin. Her attitude shows indifference to the practical value of material things. This reflects a naturalist trait where characters act irrationally about money or possessions. They live in denial of their economic reality.

4. Determinism

Determinism is the idea that humans do not have full control over their lives. Every decision and action is influenced by biological, social, and economic factors. In naturalist works, characters are shown as victims of circumstance, not as agents of free will. They struggle, but outcomes are determined by external forces. Their efforts to escape fate often end in failure. This creates a strong sense of tragedy in the narrative.

Stella : "No, I—thought you might have—resigned ..."
Blanche : "**I was so exhausted by all I'd been through my-nerves broke"**
Stella : "Won't you have another?"
Blanche : "No, one's my limit."

Blanche admits to a mental collapse due to overwhelming life burdens. She has no control over her fate, as misfortunes keep coming relentlessly. This line shows how emotional and social pressures pushed her toward breakdown. She lacks agency because her past and environment are too dominant. It illustrates naturalist determinism, where external forces govern human behavior. Free will is an illusion, replaced by inevitable consequences. Blanche becomes a tragic figure trapped by forces beyond her control.

5. Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail

Naturalism tends to focus on dark and tragic elements of life. The details often include poverty, illness, failure, or trauma. These are used to emphasize the harsh reality of human existence. Writers aim to highlight aspects of life that are often ignored or hidden.

This narrative choice reinforces the pessimistic tone of the story. Negativity is not for shock value, but for an honest portrayal of reality.

Stella : "Blanche!"
Blanche : "You're a fine one to sit there accusing me of it!"
Stella : "Blanche!"
Blanche : **"Funerals are pretty compared to deaths... Sometimes their breathing is hoarse... sometimes they cry out to you, 'Don't let me go!"**

Stella expresses her emotional and physical dependence on Stanley. Even though he can be harsh, she deeply longs for him. Her attraction is instinctive and hard to explain rationally. Stella cannot resist Stanley's primitive, physical charm. This shows how naturalist characters are ruled by biological and sexual urges. Her choices are not based on logic but on deep subconscious needs. In naturalism, characters often fall into temptations they cannot control.

6. Characters Are Liable to Specific Enticements

Naturalist characters are often easily tempted by instinctual urges. Things like sex, power, or money frequently drive their actions. These desires arise spontaneously and are difficult to control. Characters are unable to resist these temptations due to their environment and psychology. They act based on impulse, not logic or morality. This reveals the limited power of free will in human behavior.

Stella : "When he's away for a week I nearly go wild!"
Blanche : "Gracious!"
Stella : **"And when he comes back I cry on his lap like a baby.."**.
Blanche : "I guess that is what is meant by being in love... [Stella looks up with a radiant smile.] Stella"

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7. Pessimism

Pessimism in naturalism shows life as a hopeless struggle. Characters often fail despite their best efforts. They exist within a system that cannot be defeated. The world is portrayed as cold, harsh, and indifferent to individual suffering. Endings are typically tragic or sorrowful. This view emphasizes that humans are merely pawns in the forces of nature and society.

Blanche : **"You're all I've got in world, and you're not glad to see me!"**
Stella : "Why, Blanche, you know that's not true."
Blanche : "No?—I'd forgotten how quiet you were."
Stella : "You never did give me a chance to say much, Blanche. So I just got in the habit of being quiet around you."

Blanche expresses loneliness and despair when speaking to Stella. She feels she has no one left in the world except her sister. Yet even Stella does not welcome her warmly. This shows that Blanche's hopes for support are also collapsing. Her life is filled with rejection and emotional ruin. In naturalism, this represents a world where even family cannot offer safety. The world portrayed is one of isolation and indifference.

Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative and quantitative method to examine elements of naturalism in August Strindberg's play *Miss Julie*. This approach is considered appropriate because it focuses on interpreting textual data without numerical analysis, aiming to uncover how naturalistic characteristics—such as environmental, hereditary, and social influences—are represented in the work. According to Yusanto (2020), the descriptive qualitative method emphasizes a detailed and systematic depiction of phenomena in their natural context, allowing researchers to explore the complex dimensions of literature through textual interpretation.

The primary data in this study consists of dialogues from the play *Miss Julie*, which are analyzed contextually and theoretically to reveal representations of naturalistic elements through the interpretation of situations, social backgrounds, and character relationships in line with the framework of literary naturalism. Supporting data are drawn from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and literary criticism to provide a theoretical foundation. The analysis is based on literary naturalism theory, particularly that of Vernon L. Parrington, with an emphasis on the concepts of determinism, instinct, and class conflict. Naturalistic elements are categorized, interpreted, and connected to broader literary theory to ensure a systematic and theory-based analysis.

Resulsts and Discussion

Tabel 1. Percentage of Parrington Component

Parrington Component	Number of dialogues	Percentage
Objectivity	5	20%
Frankness	2	8%
An Amoral Toward Material	3	12%
Determinism	2	8%
Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail	11	44%
Characters are Liable to Specific Enticements	1	4%
Pesimissim	1	4%
Total	25	100%

Naturalism as a literary movement emphasizes determinism, heredity, and environmental factors as dominant forces shaping human behavior and destiny. It views individuals as products of their biological makeup and social surroundings, often powerless against the circumstances that govern their lives. Originating in the late 19th century, naturalism emerged as an extension of realism but with a deeper focus on scientific objectivity and psychological depth. Characters in naturalist works are typically placed in situations beyond their control, where free will is limited or entirely absent. August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* stands as a powerful example of naturalist drama, portraying a tragic encounter between characters from different social classes caught in an inescapable web of desire, resentment, and fate. Strindberg's use of concise, emotionally loaded dialogue allows readers to see how deeply his characters are influenced by their upbringing, environment, and psychological conditioning. The play does not present heroes or villains, but complex individuals acting out their roles within a rigid social order. The following section analyzes *Miss Julie* using Vernon L. Parrington's

seven characteristics of naturalism, revealing how these theoretical aspects are embedded in the play's text and character interactions.

1. Objectivity

Julie : "And where did you learn to talk in that style?-—Have you spent a lot of your time at the theatre?"
Jean : "You bet I have! I've been to a whole lot of places in my time!"
Julie : "But you were born in these parts, weren't you?"
Jean : **"That's right. My dad was a farm-labourer. He used to work on the county judge's estate down in the valley. I saw you many a time when you were a child—but of course you wouldn't have noticed me!"**

In this scene, Jean and Julie are engaged in a conversation about their social backgrounds, gradually revealing the class differences that have long shaped their worldviews and power dynamics. Jean, who comes from the working class, recounts his past to Julie without expressing anger, inferiority, or any inclination to blame others. He does not complain about his position in society, nor does he suggest that Julie should feel guilty for her higher social standing. Instead, he simply presents the facts of his origin and his experience growing up as someone from a lower class who used to see Julie from afar, never being acknowledged. Theoretically, this moment reflects the aspect of *objectivity* in naturalism as defined by Vernon L. Parrington, in which the author serves as a scientific observer who portrays characters with neutrality and without moral interference. This is evident in Jean's line: **"That's right. My dad was a farm-labourer. He used to work on the county judge's estate down in the valley. I saw you many a time when you were a child—but of course you wouldn't have noticed me!"** This statement is delivered in a matter-of-fact tone, neither condemning Julie nor expressing resentment toward social inequality. August Strindberg refrains from assigning ethical judgment or emotional embellishment to either character; he presents them as products of a social structure that shapes their behavior and thinking. Within the framework of naturalism, this approach embodies the movement's primary goal: to depict human beings as shaped by their environment, not by moral virtue or individual free will.

2. Frankness

Julie : "O God, take my life rather than let me sink in this filth.... O God, save me!"
Jean : "You know—it's a funny thing; but I do feel sorry to see you like this. When I was lying in a muck-heap, and looking up at you among the roses, I—well, it doesn't matter telling you now—I **had dirty thoughts, just like any other boy**!"
Julie : "And after that you were ready to die for me!"
Jean : "Die? . . . Oh, yes—in the oats-bin! You don't mean to say you swallowed that!"

In this scene, Julie is at her emotional lowest point—physically and mentally collapsed, begging for salvation from the moral downfall she feels consuming her. Jean, witnessing her deterioration, briefly shows sympathy but quickly responds with a startling confession. He recalls his childhood, when he used to watch Julie from a distance—not with innocent admiration, but with sexual desire, which he openly admits. This confession is not poetic or regretful, but a blunt, uncensored statement unfiltered by social

politeness. Theoretically, it reflects the aspect of *Frankness* in naturalism as described by Vernon L. Parrington, which refers to the unembellished portrayal of basic human impulses such as lust, hunger, and fear, without romanticization. This is exemplified when Jean says, **"I had dirty thoughts, just like any other boy!"** The line is not softened by euphemism but delivered in raw honesty, revealing that Jean never saw Julie as a noble figure, but rather as an unreachable object of desire. Strindberg employs this kind of coarse honesty to portray humans as biological beings driven by instinct rather than morality. Within the framework of naturalism, such frankness is not merely a dramatic device—it is a means of dismantling the false decorum of social conventions and exposing the most unfiltered, primitive side of human nature.

3. An Amoral Toward Material

   Jean : "Then I do as I'm told!"
   Julie : "Sit down, then! No—Wait a moment. Can't you find me something to drink?"
   Jean : "I don't just know what there is in the ice-box—only beer, I'm afraid."
   Julie : **"Well, don't say it like that. What could be nicer than beer? I prefer it to wine. My tastes are quite simple…"**

In this scene, Julie attempts to break down the social barrier between herself and Jean by responding to the offer of beer in a relaxed and modest manner. As an aristocrat, she is expected to exhibit refined tastes consistent with her status, yet she instead states that she prefers beer to wine and that her tastes are simple. This statement appears to be an effort to blend in or humble herself in front of Jean, but it also implies that material things—including status symbols like luxurious drinks—hold no fixed value for her. She treats material objects with indifference, as if they lack stable social meaning. Theoretically, this reflects the aspect of *An Amoral Attitude Toward Material* in naturalism—namely, a morally neutral or indifferent stance toward objects and material status. This is evident when Julie says**: "Well, don't say it like that. What could be nicer than beer? I prefer it to wine. My tastes are quite simple…"** This line demonstrates that she does not regard beer as a 'low-class' drink, even though it is socially considered such for the aristocracy. Through Julie's attitude, Strindberg shows that in the world of naturalism, material objects lose their ideal or symbolic aura and become mere elements of shifting social responses.

4. Determinism

   Jean : **"….a farm-labourer's child couldn't come into the park and play with the Count's daughter here on God's earth."**
   Julie : "D'you think all poor children think like that?"
   Jean : "That all poor children... Oh, yes—of course—Of course they do!"
   Julie : "It must be a terrible thing to be poor…."

In this scene, Jean recounts his childhood memories as the son of a farm laborer who, from an early age, became aware that he had no right or place to exist in the same world as the upper class. When Julie questions whether all poor children think that way, Jean confidently asserts that they do. This is not merely Jean's personal view but a reflection of

the collective consciousness of the lower class—that social boundaries are absolute and impenetrable. Julie's response—"It must be a terrible thing to be poor"—reveals the shock of an aristocrat who has never truly grasped the depth of the social limitations inherited from birth. Theoretically, this conversation reflects the aspect of *determinism* in naturalism as explained by Vernon L. Parrington: that human beings do not act freely, but are shaped and constrained by social forces such as class, heredity, and environment. Jean's statement, **"A farm-labourer's child couldn't come into the park and play with the Count's daughter here on God's earth,"** underscores that social status is not merely an economic reality but a system that determines fate, boundaries, and even the scope of childhood imagination. Within the framework of naturalism, Jean's awareness is not personal pessimism, but a manifestation of structural entrapment that leaves no room for choice or change of destiny.

5. Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail

   Julie : "Oh, but all little boys steal apples…"

   Jean **: "I promptly crawled into a rubbish heap—right into it, and lay there among the nettles and the rotting weeds like part of its own evil-smelling muck, and watched you walking there among the roses."**

   Julie : "D'you think all poor children think like that?"

   Jean : "That all poor children... Oh, yes—of course—Of course they do!"

In this scene, Jean recalls a childhood memory filled with social and emotional suffering. He tells Julie about a moment from his youth when he hid himself out of shame over the stark difference in class between them. This recollection does not come across as innocent nostalgia, but rather as a traumatic flashback. Jean does not portray his childhood through a romantic lens but instead presents it with a sense of degradation and humiliation rooted in his social condition. The imagery he uses is intentionally vile and crude, emphasizing the gap that separates him from Julie. Theoretically, this moment reflects the *Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail* in naturalism as described by Vernon L. Parrington—namely, the tendency to emphasize the darkest and most grotesque aspects of reality in order to expose the true condition of human life. This is evident when Jean says**: "I promptly crawled into a rubbish heap—right into it, and lay there among the nettles and the rotting weeds like part of its own evil-smelling muck, and watched you walking there among the roses"** Words like "rotting weeds" and "evil-smelling muck" create a stark contrast between Jean's filth-ridden world and Julie's world of roses. Strindberg does not shy away from ugliness; on the contrary, he emphasizes it to reveal social injustice and the psychological wounds caused by poverty. These negative details are not decorative—they are diagnostic, exposing the suffering of a man raised in an unforgiving environment. Within the framework of naturalism, this repellent reality becomes the most honest mirror of an unequal social structure.

6. Characters are Liable to Specific Enticements

   Julie : **"Kiss my hand!"**

   Jean : **"All right. ... But don't blame the wrong person, that's all."**

   Julie : "For what?"

   Jean : "For what? Are you still a baby at twenty-five? Don't you know it's dangerous to play with fire?"

In this scene, the tension between Jean and Julie culminates in a power play that carries strong sexual undertones. Julie, as a woman of higher social rank, commands Jean to kiss her hand—a gesture that is provocative and socially transgressive. Jean, though aware of

the consequences, complies with the request. He warns Julie that such behavior is dangerous, implying that their interaction is quickly veering into forbidden territory. Despite his attempt to stay rational, Jean is clearly caught between physical desire, class resentment, and the allure of rebellion. The situation illustrates the naturalist concept of *Characters Are Liable to Specific Enticements*, as defined by Vernon L. Parrington—namely, that characters are easily driven by biological impulses, sexual tension, or subconscious urges that override rational control. This is evident when Julie says, ***"*Kiss my hand,"** and Jean replies, **"All right. ... But don't blame the wrong person, that's all."** Though Jean understands the danger, he still yields to the temptation, suggesting that his behavior is governed less by reason and more by inner compulsions shaped by class and instinct. In the framework of naturalism, their actions are not moral choices, but outcomes of irresistible social and psychological forces.

7. Pessimism

> Jean (speaking into tube: "It's Jean, my lord... Yes, my lord.... Very good, my lord. At once? … Yes, my lord... Very good, my lord—in half an hour!"
> Julie (with desperate urgency): "What did he say? Dear God! What did he say?"
> Jean: "He wants his boots and coffee in half an hour.
> Julie: "**Half an hour.... And I'm so tired.... I can't do anything. I can't repent I can't run away—or stay here—I can't live... and I can't die...** Now you must help me. Tell me what to do—and order me to do it! I'll do it—I'll obey like a dog. Do this last thing for me. Save my honour—his name. You know what I should do; but I can't—I haven't the will.... It must be your will—yours..."

After Julie and Jean transgress moral and social boundaries through their sexual encounter, the plot immediately shifts toward emotional collapse. The turning point occurs when Jean receives a message through the speaking tube: Julie's father (the Count) will return in half an hour. This news shatters Julie's already fragile psychological state. Overcome with shame, exhaustion, and fear, she descends into a state of utter helplessness. Her free will completely vanishes: she cannot flee, cannot repent, cannot stay, cannot live and cannot die. Julie pleads with Jean to give her an order, saying: **"Half an hour... and I'm so tired. I can't do anything—I can't repent—I can't run away—or stay here—I can't live... and I can't die."** This moment captures the essence of *pessimism* in naturalism as described by Vernon L. Parrington. Julie no longer functions as a morally or rationally autonomous individual; she becomes a character utterly destroyed by inescapable consequences. Her identity shaped by aristocratic background, gender pressure, and emotional repression collapses in the face of her social downfall. In Strindberg's naturalistic vision, there is no path to redemption only destruction remains. Julie's despair is not merely a personal tragedy, but reflects a broader, fatalistic worldview in which human beings are powerless against larger forces such as class, heredity, and circumstance.

Conclusion

As a naturalist drama, *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg serves as a powerful representation of how individual will is often rendered powerless under the weight of greater forces such as heredity, environment, and socio-economic structures. Through the

lens of Vernon L. Parrington's seven characteristics of naturalism—Objectivity, Frankness, An Amoral Attitude Toward Material, Determinism, Inclination Toward Negativity In Choice Of Detail, Susceptibility To Specific Enticements, And Pessimism—this study demonstrates that Strindberg portrays his characters not as agents of change, but as victims of circumstance. In particular, the aspect of *inclination toward negativity in choice of detail* emerged as the most dominant in the script, accounting for 44% of the total data analyzed.

This prevalence can be attributed to Strindberg's stylistic tendency to emphasize degradation, decay, and both physical and emotional suffering in explicit detail, in order to expose deep social realities and psychological wounds. His characters are consistently depicted through crude, grotesque, and painful imagery—not to embellish, but to reflect the darkest conditions of human existence. In contrast, the aspect of *pessimism* appeared in only 4% of the data, making it the least frequent element. This low frequency is understandable given that, although *Miss Julie* ultimately culminates in destruction and despair, explicit expressions of hopelessness or loss of life's meaning are not distributed evenly throughout the play, but are instead concentrated in critical climactic moments. In this sense, pessimism does not function as a pervasive tone but rather as the final consequence of the social and psychological pressures experienced by the characters, most notably in Julie's complete mental breakdown toward the end of the play.

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