

73. Vital lie in Strindberg's *Miss Julie*: Illusion versus reality

Müjde DEMİRAY¹

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Abstract

Lying is an act of distortion of reality by pretending what is communicated is true. Then, what if people tell lies to themselves to manage to carry on their lives and bear the unpleasant facts of the world surrounding them? We all tell lies to ourselves to be content with our lives, and these lies are well-constructed and long-lasting. People try to create an alternative to reality, i.e. an unreal life. These lies are commonly regarded as *vital lies*, *life lies*, and *illusions*. Illusion and reality have been a significant concern and theme of literature, most particularly in modern drama since the Renaissance. Many scholars, philosophers, and writers have dealt with the dichotomy between reality and illusion in their works since ancient times. The study explores how the vital lies adopted by the characters in Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888). It also aims to exhibit the characters' motivations and worldviews in their social context and question why they lie to themselves. Furthermore, it reveals if any loss of vital lie causes harms to the characters. The reason why I have chosen this play for my analysis is that the plot of *Miss Julie* is mainly based on lies, deceptions, dreams, and illusions. The play features the characters from nobility and lower class with a dialectic of class conflict. The paper also attempts to deal with how this dialectic of class conflict operates between Julie and Jean in terms of their vital lies. The extracts taken from the play exhibiting the life lies are good opportunity for the readers/audiences to be conscious of the vital lies embedded in real life. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach.

Keywords: Miss Julie, vital lie, illusion, reality, naturalism

Strindberg'in *Matmazel Julie* oyununda hayati yalan: Yanılsamaya karşı gerçeklik

Öz

Yalan, iletilen mesajın doğru olduğunu iddia ederek gerçeği çarpıtma eylemidir. Peki ya insanlar hayatlarını sürdürmek ve dünyanın çirkin gerçeklerine katlanmak için kendilerine yalan söylerse ne olur? Hepimiz hayatımızda memnun olmak için kendimize yalanlar söyleriz ve bu yalanlar iyi kurgulanmış ve uzun süreli yalanlardır. İnsanlar gerçekliğe karşı bir alternatif yaratmaya çalışırlar, diğer bir deyişle bu gerçek olmayan bir yaşamdır. Bu yalanlar genellikle *hayati yalanlar*, *yaşam yalanları* ve *yanılsama* olarak adlandırılır. Yanılsama ve gerçeklik, özellikle Rönesans'tan bu yana modern tiyatrodaki edebiyatın ilgi çeken bir konusu ve teması olmuştur. Birçok bilim insanı, filozof ve yazar, antik çağlardan beri eserlerinde gerçeklik ve yanılsama ikilemini ele almıştır. Bu çalışma, Strindberg'in *Miss Julie* (1888) adlı oyununda karakterler tarafından benimsenen hayati yalanların neler olduğunu ele almaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca karakterlerin motivasyonlarını ve dünya görüşlerini sosyal bağlamlarında sergilemeyi ve kendilerine neden yalan söylediklerini sorgulamayı

¹ Arş. Gör., Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü (Isparta, Türkiye), mujdedemiray@sdu.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5370-0049 [Araştırma makalesi, Makale kayıt tarihi: 31.10.2022-kabul tarihi: 20.12.2022; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1222251]

amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca herhangi bir hayati yalanın kaybediliřinin karakterlere zarar verip vermediđini de incelemektedir. Analiz için bu oyunun seřilmesinin nedeni, *Miss Julie*'nin olay örgüsünün esas olarak yalanlar, aldatmalar, hayaller ve yanılsamalar üzerine kurulu olmasıdır. Oyun, sınıf çatıřması diyalektiđi ile soylu ve alt sınıfa mensup karakterlere sahiptir. Çalıřma ayrıca, Julie ve Jean arasındaki bu sınıf çatıřması diyalektiđinin hayati yalanları açasından nasıl iřlendiđini ele almaya çalıřmaktadır. Oyundaki hayati yalanları barındıran alıntılar, okuyucuların/izleyicilerin gerçek hayattaki hayati yalanların farkına varmaları için iyi bir fırsattır. Bu çalıřmada nitel betimsel bir yaklařım kullanılmıřtır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Miss Julie, hayati yalan, yanılsama, gerçeklik, dođalcılık

1. Introduction

Illusion and reality have been a significant concern and theme of literature, most particularly in modern drama since the Renaissance. Many scholars, philosophers, and writers have dealt with the dichotomy between reality and illusion in their works since ancient times. Scholars have been asking questions about the nature of truth and reality such as “What is truth? How can truth be discovered? What is reality? Is there an objective reality on which we can all agree?” (Bressler, 1999: 117). In ancient times, truth was, somehow, considered something knowable and attainable but with the advent of modernity and postmodernism truth is not something easily obtainable and discoverable. In other words, there is no absolute truth. According to postmodernists, reality or meaning is a social human construct so there are many realities rather than an absolute truth (Bressler, 1999: 119). Postmodernism makes us stop trying to find unknowable and undiscoverable truth. In order not to face the truth and reality modern man and literature creates a world full of illusion in which we live.

Lying is an act of distortion of reality by pretending what is communicated is true. The addresser knows the fact in hand but withholds or distorts it to mislead his/her addressees, i.e., the one who fabricates a lie violates the cooperative principles required for effective communication. Crites defines it as “the liar does not get confused. He thinks he knows what is what; he simply has his reasons for telling others what is not what” (1979: 122). However, what if people tell lies to themselves to manage to carry on their lives and bear the unpleasant realities of the world surrounding them? As rational human beings, we need to survive by faithfully clinging to our dreams, hopes, and illusions so that we can put up with our lives more contently.

Modern man and literature create a world full of illusion in which we live to avoid facing the downsides of the truth and reality. Akay writes “modern man lives in a world in which there are no concrete distinctions between real and unreal or right and wrong. On the contrary, he sees things as shades of grey, not as black and white. Lies, illusions and delusions make up the entirety of our personal realities” (Akay, 2019: 13). It is known that people comfort themselves and keep their vitality in life with their own illusions.

Many scholars and critics call illusion (s) ‘vital lie’, ‘life lie’, and ‘self-deception’. Oxford English Dictionary defines *illusion* as “1 a false idea or belief, especially about sb or about a situation; 2 something that seems to exist but in fact does not, or seems to be sth that it is not” (OED, 2000: 646).

Abbott, in *The Vital Lie: Reality and Illusion in Modern Drama*, defines it as:

The term illusion may mean that set of structures-games, rituals, masks, disguises, diversions, roles-that human beings use to keep themselves from facing reality, which, if viewed nakedly, would destroy them. On a deeper level, an illusion may be a special strategy-a dream, ideal, fantasy, a created vision-which the individual devises to give life meaning. (Abbott, 1989: 4)

The term reality signifies the natural world in which we are inhabitants. It refers to a set of political, social, and economic structures that people use to transact the business of everyday life (Abbott, 1989). Therefore, we could contend that reality is physical. Human beings want to have joy and happiness in life by escaping the truth, so they create strategies to achieve their purposes. They call it “vital lies’ or ‘illusions’ or ‘dreams.’” (Abbott, 1989: 5). As mortal beings, human beings refer to lying to survive. We all tell lies to be content with our lives, and these lies are well-constructed and long-lasting. In our daily lives, though we know that truth should be championed under all conditions, we cannot help lying to ourselves and others.

In *The Denial of Death*, Becker says that all men are subject to vital lies. “The hostility to psychoanalysis in the past, today, and in the future, will always be a hostility against admitting that man lives by lying to himself about himself and about his world, and that character ... is a vital lie” (Becker, 1973: 51).

In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), George Bernard Shaw argues that man creates masks not to face reality and truth, so his masks are his ideals. Ibsen draws characters who pull masks off and face the sheer reality. If that character fails to pull the mask off, then becomes an idealist who lives by a life lie. Shaw contends that man cannot live without ideals and their masks, so they stick to a life lie that makes them escape the unpleasant actualities of life (Shaw, 1994). Moreover, he claims that “in our novels and romances especially we see the most beautiful all the masks-those devised to disguise the brutalities of the sexual instinct in the earlier stages of its development...” (Shaw, 1994: 10-11).

Ibsen calls these masks *life lies* in *The Wild Duck* (1884). In the play, Dr. Relling utters it in his exchange with Gregers as “deprive the average man of his vital lie, and you’ve robbed him of happiness as well” (2006 :203). Thus, it can be inferred that vital lies are of great importance not only for survival but for a meaningful life as well. It was Ibsen who coined the term and introduced it to the readers and audiences. Ibsen’s characters deny the existence of external truth. Instead, they create their own ‘truth’ and ‘life lies’ as Keane, in *On Truth and Lie in Nietzsche*, writes “Nietzsche denied the existence of any objective, external truth. For him, truth is not something there, that might be found or created...” (Keane, 1975: 72).

Ibsen depicts the characters facing unpleasant realities and trying to disguise them under the mask of idealism. Abbotson writes that Ibsen believed that “many of us find reality so unpleasant that we try to cover it up with a mask of idealism, creating an alternative, unreal ‘life’ for ourselves that is essentially a lie” (Abbotson, 2003: 173).

It is clear that when we avoid facing the unpleasant realities and actualities of life, we try to create an alternative to it: unreal life. It is a “lie”. We see it as dangerous, so we keep ourselves away from reality and maintain our idealistic masks. Though there are various and diverse terms and concepts for ‘life lie’, In *The Aesthetics of Self Deception*, Crites gives a common ground for all ‘life lies’ as follows;

Self-deception is as old as the human race, and its dimensions are perfectly awesome. Nobody with one eye open can escape noticing how good we are at justifying ourselves, making excuses for ourselves, rousing false fears and false hopes, castigating ourselves without realistic grounds, and performing the same favors for our friends and kinfolk. We talk ourselves into the most egregious follies, and often as not cling to them until folly has been fanned into catastrophe. (Crites, 1979: 108)

Crites' contention of self-deception explicitly shows that it is prevalent among us and literary characters to make the unfit life fitful where there are no facts but only interpretations.

2. Analysis of *Miss Julie* (1888)

The reason why this particular play has been chosen is that it provides rich enough resources to analyze how the major characters, Julie and Jean resort to life lie or vital lie and use it to achieve their aims. Şekerci, in his *A Textual and Contextual Reading of Selected Dialogic Text: A Doll's House*, provides a good explanation why drama or dramatic texts are rich enough to interpret and analyze interactions in dramatic texts. "Drama texts or dialogic texts can be interpreted and analyzed from textual or thematic perspectives. We can use linguistic methodologies to explain the diverse and complex nature of drama texts" (Şekerci, 2020: 1). In connection with this, I could contend that literary texts provide enough space for researchers to examine the literary texts from diverse perspectives and ways by employing varied methods and techniques let it be linguistically or thematically. Compared to other main genres of literature such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction and short stories, dramatic texts are open to various analysis as they are regarded as the closest literary genre to real life speech events among others.

Miss Julie is a One-Act naturalist play by the Swedish playwright August Strindberg. It is mainly based on the count's daughter who has a relationship with the servant, Jean. Julie represents nobility while Jean is the representative of lower class. After going to bed with him, Julie commits suicide. Julie objects to surrendering to a world which is defined by the 'naturally determined' patriarchal laws. Templeton puts it as "according to Strindberg, Julie's tragedy is that she is caught in the middle of indifferent life-forces that doom her to weakness and death" (1990: 471). Julie falls victim to the laws of cause and effect under the spell of naturalism as she is a daughter of an aristocratic father and unorthodox mother whose background is of the common working class. Thus, Julie represents the modern character whose fate stuck at a particular space and time due to the indifferent life-forces such as heredity and environment. In connection with this, Lamm argues "basic differences in upbringing and social position cannot be reconciled, even temporarily" (qtd.in Templeton, 1990: 470). Miss Julie adamantly rejects to accept her destiny of an aristocratic upbringing and her socially determined gender role in the community. Jean is a materialistic and opportunist character desiring to upgrade his social standing. He is a young man belonging to working class but he is biologically superior compared to Julie in terms of sex. Singh claims "Strindberg suggests that the difference between man and woman is that, that women are masochistic and want to ruin themselves, while men are better equipped for evolution and want to survive" (2014: 18). Miss Julie desires to step out of her conventional gender role and class station. To Templeton, this desire is *revolutionary* and she furthers "with no program for change, with no means of expression of her own beyond those rooted in class and gender, and with subtle coaxing from Jean, she pursues transformation through sex" (1990: 472). The play features the dialectic of class conflict between Julie and Jean who tries to transgress his class boundaries. After their sexual intimacy, Stokenström contends that Julie "shields herself in the romantic myth of love in her recurring plea- 'Tell me that you love me!'- while Jean falls back on a pipe dream he has rehearsed so many times, to escape, start a hotel, and gain the world" (2004: 47). Julie, as a master, desperately begs for love while Jean, as a servant, implies his desire to be financially backed up by her to realize his vital lie.

In the preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg comments on Miss Julie's character:

Miss Julie is a modern character which does not mean that the man-hating half-woman has not existed in every age, just that she has now been discovered, has come out into the open and made herself heard. Victim of a superstition (one that has seized even stronger minds) that woman, this

stunted form of human being who stands between man, the lord of creation, the creator of culture, [and the child], is meant to be the equal of man or could ever be, she involves herself in an absurd struggle in which she falls. (Strindberg, 1998: 149)

The play opens On Midsummer Eve, Kristine, the cook of the count, is frying something on the stove. Jean, the count's valet, and her fiancé appear in the kitchen. They gossip about Miss Julie, the count's daughter, and their mistress. After a brief conversation, Christine serves Jean a meal with a cold beer. "JEAN: Beer? On midsummer eve? No thank you! I can do better than that, [opens a drawer in the table and takes out a bottle of red wine with yellow sealing wax] See that? Yellow seal! Give me a glass! A wine glass! I'm drinking this *pur*" (1998: 48). Jean declines her offer because he believes he deserves the best beverage on that particular night. Although he is an ordinary valet of the count, he aspires to live and enjoy his life to the fullest extent as the aristocrats do. Jean has stolen the red wine from the count's wine cellar. He prefers to drink a high-quality wine instead of beer in the absence of the aristocratic household. Jean's desire for upward mobility in the social hierarchy is laid bare in his aristocratic tastes. He associates himself with the aristocracy. He has created an illusion in which he pleasantly lives by imitating those from the aristocracy. His pretence of being an aristocrat, i.e. his vital lie, appeases his uneasy class consciousness.

Miss Julie appears in the kitchen after returning from dancing with the peasants in the barn. She is now alone with Kristine and Jean at home after seeing off her father to his relatives. Instead of going to her relatives with the count, she prefers to stay with the people from the lower class. She longs to defy the workings of the conventional class structure and patriarchal order. Şentürk and Şentürk state that "Miss Julie's refusal of her father's invitation for the celebration and preferring to spend time with the servants could be read as her self-determination" (2021: 106). In fact, her self-determinism is a precursor to her tragedy. She rejects to obey the requisites of her gender and social status. Her vital lie is to achieve a class transformation and live in an egalitarian society. Her pretence of being a common person provides her a peaceful life free from the very rules of the class structure. Her illusion about creating a world where everybody is equal, has captivated her. She wants Jean to be her dance partner as she does not seem to get enough of dancing in the barn. At first, Jean kindly refuses Julie for fear of any possible damage to her reputation by the local people but fails to decline his mistress, Miss Julie.

JEAN: As you order, ma'am! I'm at your service!

JULIE [gently]: Don't take it as an order! On a night like this we're all just ordinary people having fun, so we'll forget about rank. Now, take my arm! -----Don't worry, Kristine! I won't steal your sweetheart! (1998: 49).

Miss Julie desires to step out of the bounds of social classes on Midsummer's Eve. She wants to dance rambunctiously with Jean to show off their waltz before the peasants there. She wishes to be the same as the other common people. To eliminate the social hierarchy between her and the peasants, she insists that Jean should accompany her in dancing. Her illusion of a classless society overwhelms her. Class transformation is her vital lie. However, she has no available means or methods to achieve her illusion. After they return from dancing in the barn and having a brief conversation in the kitchen, Miss Julie orders Jean to take off his livery on a special night such as Midsummer's Eve. Jean fulfils her order and wears his frock coat and bowler hat. He appears as if he was an aristocrat before her. Witnessing his transformation in appearance, Miss Julie compliments him in French. Jean also responds in French to form a common ground with his mistress, Miss Julie.

KRISTINE: But nothing came of it, did it? [JEAN returns dressed in a frock coat and bowler hat.]

JULIE: *Tres gentil, monsieur Jean! Tres gentil!*

JEAN: *Vous voulez plaiser, madame!*

JULIE: *Et vous voulez parler français!* Where did you learn that? (1998: 50).

Jean demonstrates his intellectuality by speaking French to eliminate the hierarchical bias that Miss Julie has possibly adopted. He uses every opportunity to make his dream come true to ascend in a hierarchy-driven society. His vital lie of climbing the ladder of the upper class motivates him to survive and pursue his dream of getting a proper place in aristocracy one day at whatever cost. Furthermore, Jean demonstrates the arbitrariness of the class distinctions which he has to live, as well. He is the embodiment of nurture rather than nature. Thanks to his vital lie, he incessantly improves himself with his hope of socially ascending. Now Miss Julie gets highly attracted to Jean and says he looks like a gentleman. Jean kindly utters as:

JEAN: My natural modesty forbids me to believe that you would really compliment someone like me, and so I took the liberty of assuming that you were exaggerating, which polite people call flattering.

JULIE: Where did you learn to talk like that? You must have been to the theatre often.

JEAN: Of course. And I've done a lot of traveling (1998: 50).

Jean has nurtured himself. He is a well-read, well-travelled, and self-improved man; thus, he regards himself as an individual whose social standing deserves better than the class he belongs to. After Julie expresses her admiration, he responds in a formal style of speaking to affect her and minimize the gap between their social classes. His speech in French and formal language exhibit his adaptability to the higher class. Moreover, Templeton states "his display of aristocratic language leads to other revelations about his travels, his acting ability, and his exposure to upper class culture" (1990: 474). Julie's aristocratic background is a useful means for Jean to demonstrate his capabilities as well. Thus, he can subtly persuade Julie to help him realize his vital lie. After Kristine falls asleep by the stove, Miss Julie and Jean are left alone together in the kitchen, and their intimacy begins to escalate slowly.

JULIE: Sit down, then. No, wait. Can you get me something to drink first?

JEAN: I don't know what we have in the ice box I think there's only beer.

JULIE: Why do you say "only"? My tastes are so simple I prefer beer to wine. [JEAN takes a bottle of beer from the ice box and opens it. He looks for a glass and a plate in the cupboard and serves her.] (1998: 50).

Miss Julie wants to have a drink from Jean. He offers beer as the only available drink. Julie asserts that she does not have aristocratic tastes as expected from her social class. She wants to live her life as much as ordinary people do. Her illusion is to eradicate the hierarchical structure within the community. She dreams of falling from her social class; thus, she uses every opportunity to actualize her illusion and live her vital lie. She approaches Jean with positive politeness to form a common ground with him. Furthermore, empathizing with the lower class satisfies her curiosity and renders her pleasure. Miss Julie makes intimate advances on Jean and offers to go outside together. Jean refuses her because the possibility of their being seen together at night may tarnish her reputation. Although Julie comes from aristocracy and Jean thinks that dancing with her would be advantageous to him, he is fully conscious of the fact that he would look ridiculous flanked by her among the common people. He assumes that the more time he spends with the lower class, the more discontented he will be.

JULIE: What? That I've fallen in love with a servant?

JEAN: I'm not a conceited man, but such things happen—and for these people, nothing is sacred.

JULIE: I do believe you're an aristocrat!

JEAN: Yes, I am (1998: 51).

Shocked by his warning, Julie appreciates him and asserts that he is an aristocrat. Jean does not make any objection to her claim. On the contrary, he decisively approves of her. Furthermore, Jean dissociates himself from the peasants by claiming "... for these people, nothing is sacred." He regards himself as a superior person far beyond the class he was born into. He views them with disdain. In his vital lie, there is no room for common people but the upper class. Miss Julie says that she will step down, but Jean warns her against the other ordinary people because she cannot make them believe that she voluntarily steps down. Her vital lie of descending is not welcomed by Jean. Afterward, they tell their dreams to each other.

JULIE: Perhaps! But so are you! — For that matter, everything is strange. Life, people, everything. Like floating scum, drifting on and on across the water, until it sinks down and down! That reminds me of a dream I have now and then. I've climbed up on top of a pillar. I sit there and see no way of getting down. I get dizzy when I look down, and I must get down, but I don't have the courage to jump. I can't hold on firmly, and I long to be able to fall, but I don't fall. And yet I'll have no peace until I get down, no rest unless I get down, down on the ground! And if I did get down to the ground, I'd want to be under the earth ... Have you ever felt anything like that?

JEAN: No. I dream that I'm lying under a high tree in a dark forest. I want to get up, up on top, and look out over the bright landscape, where the sun is shining, and plunder the bird's nest up there, where the golden eggs lie. And I climb and climb, but the trunk's so thick and smooth, and it's so far to the first branch. But I know if I just reached that first branch, I'd go right to the top, like up a ladder. I haven't reached it yet, but I will, even if it's only in a dream! (1998: 51).

Miss Julie recounts her dream and describes her dream related to her downfall. She has climbed atop a pillar but is struck there miserably. She eagerly desires to fall and feels uneasy until descending. However, she cannot achieve it without the means she is left. Jean's illusion stands in direct contrast with Miss Julie's. He dreams of ascending. He desperately wants to climb up a high tree under which he is standing. He aspires to go beyond where he is. If he grabs the first branch, he will manage to climb the social ladder. The characters' vital lies and desired illusions are explicitly revealed in the given extract. They are dissatisfied with their social positions. Jean's vital lie is to climb up the social ladder while Julie's vital lie is a kind of class transformation based on living in an egalitarian society, but first of all, she ought to get rid of her upper class position. Unfortunately, it seems that she does not know how to achieve her vital lie. Upon hearing the dirty songs of the revelling crowd outside, Miss Julie and Jean get into a panic, and Jean offers her to run into Jean's bedroom to hide. In the meantime, they get into sexual intimacy. After the crowd leaves, they reappear, and Jean says they can no longer stay in the house, so they should escape together to Switzerland. In fact, it is the first time for Jean to mention his vital lie directly.

JULIE: But what'll we do there?

JEAN: I'll open a hotel—with first-class service for first-class people.

JULIE: Hotel?

JEAN: That's the life, you know. Always new faces, new languages. No time to worry or be nervous. No hunting for something to do—there's always work to be done: bells ringing night and day, train whistles blowing, carriages coming and going, and all the while gold rolling into the till! That's the life! (1998: 53-4).

Jean is a well-travelled, self-cultivated and, more importantly, an ambitious character whose ideals keep him alive. His speech turns exhibit his dreams related to the future. All his life depends on his vital lie of becoming a wealthy gentleman. He includes Miss Julie in his plans to benefit from Julie's presumed wealth. He draws a rosy picture to persuade her to come with him and open a first-class hotel and thus

begin a new life. The life he aspires to live is a kind of life which constitutes his vital lie and Miss Julie is just a means to actualize his illusion. After sexual intimacy with Julie, Jean thinks that he has grabbed the first branch of the tree, i.e. Miss Julie. He feels closer to his vital lie. Julie falls down from her social class as she desires but she fails to achieve the class transformation. Miss Julie says that she does not have her own money to help Jean achieve his dream. Therefore, all his plans with her are dropped now. He insults Miss Julie, and he asserts that he can manage to make his illusion come true on his own, but Miss Julie is doomed to fail irrespective of her class. He begins to regard Julie as a degenerate woman rather than an aristocratic mistress of the manor house. Kristine wakes up and finds out that her fiancé Jean and Miss Julie went to bed together at night. She angrily claims that she can no longer stay with Jean in the manor house where they do not respect the household they work for and asks Jean to accompany her to the church. Having been tired of all the happenings, Jean says that he will not attend the sermon at the church.

JEAN: No, I'm not going to church today. You'll have to go alone and confess what you've been up to.

KRISTINE: Yes, I'll do that, and I'll bring back enough forgiveness for you, too. The Savior suffered and died on the Cross for all our sins, and if we go to Him with faith and a penitent heart, He takes all our sins on Himself (1998: 61).

Kristine is a devout Christian. Her life lie is related to the afterlife. Whatever sin a poor believer commits is of no importance on the condition that s/he has true faith. Kristine clings to life with her hope of salvation and Heaven by ignoring her lower class, her occupation and even Jean's unfaithfulness. She believes that the more she suffers, the more chance of salvation bestowed by The Providence she will get. Furthermore, when Julie asks if she truly believes that, Kristine responds as "it's my living faith, as sure as I stand here. It's the faith I learned as a child, Miss Julie, and kept ever since. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" (1998: 61). She is faithfully committed to her illusion of heaven and does let nobody even question her vital lie. Her illusion of heavenly reward is what keeps her alive and lets her live contently.

3. Conclusion

Jean, the valet of the count, aspires to transcend the social class he was born into. He is eager to climb the social ladder. He has been exposed to the aristocracy thanks to his hard work experience in some upscale hotels and restaurants. He finds true happiness in wealth and becoming a member of the upper class of society. He has learnt to speak politely, get dressed like a gentleman and learn a foreign language. He has dramatically improved himself. Even if he learns that Miss Julie is penniless, he does not give up his hope and still holds on to his dream of becoming wealthy and a count one day. His vital lie is to achieve to improve his social standing and get a proper place in the aristocracy. He does not believe in nature but nurture. What keeps him alive and hopeful is his cultivation, experience and intellectuality. The only disadvantage results from his lack of financial support. However, it is a matter of time for him to get his vital lie fulfilled. Kristine is a devout Christian and believes that she will be rewarded in afterlife. She finds true happiness in blind commitment to God. Her vital lie is to be worthy of heaven and get rewarded God's grace. She blindly believes that whatever sin she commits, the God will reward her thanks to her faith in Him and her regular attendance to the church. Jean and Kristine are faithfully committed to their vital lies. Miss Julie desires her downfall and pretends to be an ordinary person irrespective of her upper-class upbringing and conventional class differences. She rejects to visit her aristocratic relatives with her father on Midsummer's Eve. She prefers beer to wine. She dances crazily with the local people in the barn. She makes intimate advances on Jean, attracts his attention, and finally sleeps with him. She wants to eliminate the social class differences. She hopes to find happiness in class

transformation. Miss Julie voluntarily steps down. However, she fails to strip off the shackles of the class and actualize her vital lie. She commits suicide for fear of bringing disgrace on her father in the end. Her loss of vital lie leads her to death.

Drama, as of the major genres of literature, is a good tool to mirror life based on vital lies. People from every part of society may stick to their illusions and life lies to put a mask on their fears such as death or sheer facts of life. I could contend that Strindberg's *Miss Julie* explicitly depicts the fact that we all live by our vital lies to forget our fears of any kind, sorrows and disillusionments no matter what race, nationality, social rank and gender we come from. *Miss Julie*, as a drama text, once again proves that drama is rich enough to discover the vital lies embedded in the deep structure of any dramatic texts which are about reality of our daily lives.

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