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## Character Comparison: “Miss Julie's” Julie And Kathy In “Never Let Me Go”

The characters of Julie and Kathy in both Ishiguro's ‘Never Let Me Go’ and Strindberg's ‘Miss Julie’ are similar in that they are both ascribed roles in the societies in which they have been placed. The roles ascribed restrict the characters, whose limitations are based on their relative class, gender and time period. Julie's aristocratic social position in 19th century patriarchal Sweden restricts her, not only because of the expectations of women, but also because of her class. Conventionally, Strindberg informs the audience of the characters, location, themes and time in the expository scene. We can only determine the nature of a character and their position from their presentation on stage. Strindberg's play mimics a ‘perfect illusion of reality’, referred to as naturalistic theatre, popularised by European and Russian writers in the 1800s and articulated by the practitioner Stanislavski. Strindberg's use of this style demonstrates his thoughts and attitudes towards women who dared to challenge the expectations that had been placed on them. In Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, it is clear that there are always underlying fears about what will happen to the clones after Hailsham, and their final destinies. With many students neglecting to shine a light onto the subject matter, either due to fear or pure ignorance.

Kathy's retrospective view of her life as a student details her ignorance when questioning her own purpose as well as the purpose of Hailsham. Her incapability to question her role as a clone can be seen in her failure to analyse her own surroundings from an early age, which she had been told about her fate. Kathy's young age combined with the lack of information disclosed to the students as the Hailsham staff attempted to maintain order in the organ donating cycle at the beginning of the novel makes her passivity completely comprehensible. However, later on in the novel Kathy reveals that her character grows while at Hailsham as she uncovers the truth about her future when Ms Lucy, a teacher transgresses the rules by telling the clones that “Your lives are set out for you”, “You were brought into this world for a purpose”, and “you'll start to donate your vital organs”. Although this is a very distressing and direct uncovering of the truth, Kathy views this sudden outburst as a way of being “told and not told” due to her young age, however, this can be interpreted as her being conscientiously passive rather than being unable to escape.

With the growing demands of women for emancipation and arguably support from playwrights such as Ibsen and Shaw, Strindberg outlines his views on women in his Preface to the play. His construction of Julie is also based on the Darwinian Theory, of ‘survival of the fittest’, ultimately placing women at the bottom of the social structure as he sees them as inferior to men. This ideology is challenged by Julie, who attempts to use her class position to dominate Jean. Strindberg makes apparent in his preface to the tragic play that no matter the efforts made “no more than two parallel lines can ever meet and cross”, referring to women's incapability to achieve the same as men. Suppressive societal expectations placed on upper class women set standards surrounding their behaviour, implying that they must be sensible and calculated in the way that they approach situations. Even though Julie is the daughter of a count, “the man-hating half-woman” which “has now been discovered” places all of her power into breaking out of the role given to her, overlooking her father's wishes. Julie sees herself coming “down to earth” and ultimately wishes herself “down in the ground”, metaphorically symbolising her

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attempt to lower her class and defy the expectations placed upon her. In this confessional scene Julie reveals her desire to lower her position through the visual metaphor.

Strindberg also affirms Jean's thirst to rise up in the social hierarchy. His ambition to "climb" up the social ladder is indisputable in his tale of a "bird's nest...where the golden eggs lie" demonstrating his recognition of his role in society as well the actions needed to move up it. Jean's character has a sense of eagerness to it, which helps him to become an opportunist, taking advantage of Julie when possible in order to rise up in station and fulfil his desires nearer to the end of the play. Jean as well as Julie are prime examples of characters who recognise their roles in society, however, completely reject them. Although the audience is exposed to Julie's intentions of lowering her station in this exchange between her and Jean, we have been aware from the beginning of the play that Julie is uncomfortably tangled in with her servants. Her mingling with lower classes is made apparent in the expository scene as the symbolic Greek nymph "Syringa" can be seen in a statue form atop of the servant's table, signifying Julie's closeness to the kitchen staff, as she attempts to lower her status.

Kazuo Ishiguro is writing in a different time and it is not female emancipation that is being challenged in his dystopic novel. It has been argued that it is not a "clone novel", but "a love story ... about the depths of passion set in a cruel and hostile environment which denies clones the right to love on the basis that they are less than human". Ishiguro explores a love affair between Kathy and Tommy, giving them a cause to fight against their ascribed roles for. However, it is clearly seen by the end of the novel that Kathy has silently accepted her role as a "carer" and ultimately her fate as a donor of her organs, dismissing the cause that she had been given in order to fight. On the other hand, Julie fatally overcomes her place in society and falls from her position after she has been publicly seduced by Jean. It could be argued that, unlike Kathy, Julie does show an attempt to rebel against her given position.

Kathy's passivity is disheartening in this novel and has been presented very clearly to the reader at the very end, as Kathy chooses to be passive as she claims 'I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be'. Ishiguro has addressed her desire to remain in the role that she has been given at the end of the novel so that it would act as an anti-climax, going against the literary tradition of there being an uprising, and the expectation of character rebellion. This not only creates frustration in readers due to her acceptance of an unfair, unsettling destiny, but because she had had so many opportunities to escape. It is reasonable to say that the clones had enough numbers collectively to begin an uprising, or Julie and her companions having the resources needed to drive away from Hailsham and the cottages. Her silent acceptance of her fate reveals her true satisfaction to playing along her ascribed role, ultimately submitting herself to a painful and lonely death.

Much like her servants Julie is actually a descendant of simple commoners. The status acquired by her family had actually been gained through a series of sexual favours completed by one of her family members. Her family's title was earned through sexual favours performed by one of her ancestors. Jean explains, 'The founder of [Julie's] family... was a miller whose wife found favour with the king during the Danish War.' As a favour back to Julie's ancestors the king had given the miller, the title of a count. Julie's background of commoners does in fact explain why she might behave in such a common manner, in which she involves herself entirely with her servants. While interacting with her servants, Julie is forced to return to her natural form of being a commoner. She is also able to return to having a simple status by being completely seduced by Jean, as well as acting as a 'whore,' would, which is stated by Jean. Her tragic downfall

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demonstrates the impact that both her roots as well as her environment have on her, and is also a striking reflection of Strindberg's personal views on the aristocracy. He believes in the order of society, which is rigid and must not be interfered with, so he ultimately looks down on Julie's rebellion and attitude towards the prescribed roles in society.

Symbolically, in the scene where Julie's engagement is broken off due to her failed assertion of power over her fiancé, the whip which she had used to physically dominate him is taken "from her hand and" broken "to pieces". The whip she uses as a weapon is destroyed and therefore is symbolic of the male power in this society and demonstrates the rejection of female dominance and independence. Also, as many other naturalistic works, Julie ends up committing suicide to escape the fact that she has fallen in status by giving herself to a servant.

From the expository scene, the audience is informed of Julie's risqué behaviour that is perceived as lunacy as she openly dances with those of a lower class, making her appear as "perfectly crazy". Julie's construction at the beginning of the play is based on a conversation between the servants, Jean and Kristin, who are contemptuous of Julie's actions. Their conversation reveals that Julie does not act according to her station, putting her name and social identity at risk. Jean's introduction of Julie, as "crazy again, perfectly crazy", combined with her recent actions in the midst of the Midsummer Night reflects how she transgresses the expectations of a woman of that time period. Midsummer Night is a Swedish celebration of both life and love, where girls envision their ideal husbands. Julie's recent actions in which she has tried to dominate her husband have led to the termination of her engagement, and these actions completely contrast the traditional midsummer night setting, in which love is celebrated. In this case a loving bond is destroyed, making Julie seem out of place, and foolish due to her outrageous actions with the intention of asserting her power over a male. In Julie's society, there is a high sense of propriety, with anyone misbehaving ultimately facing the consequences.

It is particularly evident that Julie faces criticism of her rebellion to her prescribed role when Jean exclaims, "she danced in a way such as I've never seen anything of the kind before. She is simply crazy." Julie's actions are seen to warp the way that she is viewed, even by her own servants who are of a lower class, which might reflect Strindberg's views on the corruption of the aristocracy, as suggested by Alice Templeton in "she represents a degenerating aristocracy". This corruption arises from Julie's feminist and confrontational manners, when she challenges the role that is prescribed to her, which ultimately threatens the traditional 19th century misogynist society.

Jean is a direct correspondent for Strindberg's male dominated views. He identifies male superiority in society, and supports the downfall of any woman who defies the social strata as well as the humiliation that comes with it. The play is in fact set in a patriarchal society, however, the women's suffragette movement that had been occurring had been an attempt to empower women. Older societal views went against this empowerment, with many upper class men opposing women who did as they pleased. Some viewers have said that Jean tries to reduce Julie much like the upper class men during the movement, so that she is put in her place, or in other words act as a woman of her class would be expected to. Strindberg's view of the female attempt to dominate is clearly addressed through Jean's account of Julie in "she is not refined... she snatched Forster away from Anna and asked him to dance with herself. We wouldn't behave like that", as she danced in the barn. This clearly demonstrates how the servants view Julie as not their superior, but rather their inferior due to her behaviour, which ultimately leads to her downfall. From the beginning of the play Strindberg foreshadows Julie's

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downfall in the plight of the dog Diana, who has been impregnated by the gamekeeper's dog and is made a concoction to prompt a miscarriage. This foregrounds Julie possibly being impregnated by Jean and her subsequent downfall.

Unlike Julie, whose image is created by her servants, Kathy is able to construct a version of herself through the use of a first person, and a non linear narrative. Narrative ambiguity as well as a distorted timeline at the start of the novel is crucial to the hiding of Kathy's true nature of being a clone, which ultimately warps our view of who she really is. Even though the narrative is vague, Ishiguro subtly hints at her being a clone. For example, retrospectively, after discovering Kathy's nature in chapter seven, there are clues as to Kathy's identity and role. "My name is Kathy H." We may see the "H" as a convenient method of differentiating the narrator from any other Kathy, but it reveals her lack of a family legacy and therefore a surname. Chapter 1 is a vague exposition in which Kathy introduces herself and her role in society. The tone throughout this exposition is one of deep irony, as Kathy, who is a carer to a dying donor that is envious of her previous life at Hailsham, paints an idealised version of her past through images of a "beautiful place"; which, with a retrospective view appears false. By being a clone, and coming from Hailsham, Kathy's destiny has been decided for her, as she will die in the donation process for which the clones have been made.

However tragic this destiny seems, Kathy seems unable to challenge it demonstrating her inability to rise above her circumstances and social role which contrasts to Julie who acknowledges her status, and openly rebels against it. Julie's actions throughout the play are an attempt to reconstruct herself but Strindberg suggests she is doomed by her gender. Kathy is told from an early age of her fate and seems to conform to what has been set for her, ultimately leading to her death. She accepts her fate and silently abides by society's rules, although it could be argued that Kathy is unable to escape the role that she has been given in this dystopia. There are various moral implications in this novel as students' fates have been pre-planned, allowing no room for escape. The only caveat is simply a rumour, an unreachable myth that tricks students into believing that if they can prove they have souls, they will be freed from the donor obligation. This myth does in fact help to build up the sense of tragedy in this novel as it creates false hope, as a means of escaping the fatal destiny. Kathy is also revealing a daring, dominating aspect of her personality, as her striking Jean symbolizes the way she imposes her own power on men, using her social position to do so. Julie's boldness is ironically suggested as Jean's reference to "violets", has a classical significance of modesty. He rejects inferiority, assuming that her inappropriate behaviour removes her class advantage and as a woman she is beneath him. Her behaviour where she challenges her social role is shown by her inappropriate dancing and mingling with her servants. Jean's comment "I await your orders, miss; I am at your service." is almost mocking even though she asserts herself in taking him from Christine. The way she attempts to exert authority over Jean makes her seem manic, and her actions absurd as he is tempted into a seduction that could end badly.

The introduction of Julie on stage confirms her servants' opinions as she demonstrates a level of confidence and mischief that would not be acceptable for an aristocratic woman. She flirts with him

"Julie. [Strikes him in the face with her handkerchief.] Is he inquisitive?

Jean. Ah! what a nice smell of violets"

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'Kathy H' as a narrator is unreliable as she conceals vital information, leaving the reader to question who she really is and why she is in this position. The opening of chapter two reiterates that her narration might not be as reliable as we may have thought, as she admits "This was a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong". Although Ishiguro introduces the reader to Hailsham in a very intense and detailed manner through Kathy in the first chapter, her uncertainty of specific details surrounding the past such as the location of the boarding school become very apparent through her narrative, making us question what she is saying. An example of when we question her reliability is when she exclaims "I might pass the corner of a misty field... and I'll think.. This actually is Hailsham", which can be interpreted as either her being unable to actually recount the past correctly, or that she is purposefully concealing information. With this level of distrust, we as readers can also question if Kathy has simply accepted her fate of becoming a donor, rather than being forced into it. This is also supported by her claims to have a level of love for Tommy, but appears as unaffected by his death and unwilling to exit the cycle of donations, which makes what she claims ironic. This unreliability makes us question if she did in fact have any desire to challenge the role that she has been given. \*\*\*\*\*

Julie's rebellion is an attempt to lower her precarious position in society, which we discover when Julie tells Jean about her dream saying if she "came down to earth" she "would wish myself down in the ground". Julie defies expectations while trying to liberate herself from the rigid order of society. Although women throughout the 19th century tried to liberate themselves, many misogynists frowned upon their attempt as it would disrupt the order of society that had been in place for centuries. Julie completely goes against beliefs about the social structure and the expectations put in place, as she tries to dominate her male peers and assert her own power over them. Jean is a prime example of a character that opposes this liberation of women and could be reflecting Strindberg's personal views on the liberation of women. Strindberg's chaotic construction of Miss Julie is done so that instead of praising her capacity to leave the role ascribed to her, she is viewed as unstable, hysterical and emotional.

Kathy's character on the other hand is restricted due to her creation for the sole purpose of supplying organs to unhealthy humans. In the novel Ishiguro hints to her identity as a clone, of which we are unaware until chapter seven when one of Kathy's teachers reveals that she was "brought into this world for a purpose". By doing this, Ishiguro leaves his reader to evaluate Kathy's character, her reaction to her role in society and consider why she chooses not to resist her fate. Strindberg, on the other hand makes it clear in his preface that he is constructing a "new woman" and as a misogynist he intends to present a hysterical, mad, man-hating half-woman who he will not allow to succeed.