

Bakhtin's Carnival and Strindberg's *Miss Julie*

Bahareh Azad

University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Pyeaam Abbasi

University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Abstract—The subversion of the three feudal, patriarchal, and religious hierarchies turns Strindberg's perennial play, *Miss Julie* (1888) into an exemplar of Bakhtinian carnival. The present study, thus, offers firstly a survey of each hierarchy as concerning its 'king' and 'clown,' secondly of Strindberg's ambivalent stance to these pecking orders, and thirdly of their being violated and the outcome these changes bring about. Highlighting the theory of the carnivalesque which is in direct association with the spirit of Midsummer Eve in overall background of the play, Strindberg's endeavor to create a private utopia of his social, economical, and moral ideals will be explored. As a consequence, such issues as the bodily lower stratum, the simultaneous praise and degradation of each character and also the centrality of down/up motif are dealt with in detail.

Index Terms—Bakhtin, carnival, bodily lower stratum, hierarchies, *Miss Julie*

I. INTRODUCTION

August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888), as a species of the "literature of problems" can be dubbed an example of Bakhtinian Carnival, in which three forms of hierarchies are overturned (Larsson, 1909, p.313). As Bakhtin benefits from the folk culture of medieval festivals to criticize the "strict hegemony of the Soviet Union," Strindberg's setting of pagan Midsummer eve helps him liberate his characters from Victorian & feudal hierarchies they were subjected to (Grindon, 1996, p.148).

The assumption to deem *Miss Julie*, Strindberg's dream of a utopia would not seem unrealistic. What he aims at is not achieving a democracy, though. His utopia is Hobbesian i.e., not devoid of hierarchies and power relations, but confirming a naturalistic supremacy of 'the stronger,' namely, men over women. A Marxist utopia — a classless community — is not what he desires; he craves for the reversal of the old hierarchies, replacement of the ruling class by the oppressed, and establishment of the 'new order' as opposed to the 'old' one.

II. MAIN DISCUSSION

The present study seeks to discuss Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, with regard to the issue of carnival theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin in his *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, though he did not initiate this theory (Wiles, 1998, p.61). It would be vital, as a result, to commence with the definition of the notion of carnival. Bakhtin asserts.

as opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (1998, p.686)

What Bakhtin valorizes is the carnivalesque spirit, which endorses the reversal of the rank, class, hierarchies and norms, at least temporarily, however "the key to this abolition of boundaries of class and ideology is that joy, festivity, laughter and desire are understood as the revolutionary impetus that brings such a world about" (Grindon, 1996, p.149).

Whilst there are controversies over the carnival's revolutionary spirit, the totally accepted belief among the literary critics and sociologists is that "it posits popular culture as a site of resistance and struggle" (Humphrey, 2000, p.149). Nevertheless, a brief discussion of these controversies would assist with exploring the broad aspects of the carnival theory.

From Plato and his conservative commentary on carnival, which associates it with communal order (wiles, 1998, p.61) to the adherents of the 'safety valve' theory (Grindon, 1996, p.151), all thinkers have countered the notion of carnival as progressive and revolutionary. While Bakhtin and Situationists emphasized that "[c]arnival folk-laughter is egalitarian in its suspension of such binary divisions as official/unofficial, high/low, dialogic/monologic" (Knowles, 1998, p.6), many have argued that "carnival does not have such revolutionary potential, but is in fact a sort of social 'safety valve' that allows the official world to operate unhindered the rest of the time, and is in this sense complicit with that which it superficially opposes" (Grindon, 1996, p.151). As a matter of fact, the safety valve model comes back to Aristotelian and Hippocratic theory of the four humors, according to which "[c]elebration evacuates melancholy and thus restores the body to equilibrium" (Wiles, 1998, p.63). Carnival in this sense is applied as the reaffirmation of the status quo that "reinforces the bonds of authority by allowing for their temporary suspension" (Dentith, 1995, p.71).

Limited potential of carnival, also, is another hypothesis some critics call attention to. Eagleton maintains that the carnivalesque is “a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art” (Eagleton, 1981, p.146). Although he affirms carnival’s potential for temporary disruption of the ruling class hegemony, Eagleton renounces its efficacy to revolutionize the dominant ideology, simply because it is “permissible” and “licensed” by the same ruling class, and is, consequently, only “disturbing” in a *controlled* way.

Hakim Bey, among proponents of ‘interventionist’ carnival, examines the similarities that the carnivalesque shares with the postmodern: “[b]oth appeal to play, dialogism, collage and an opposition to modernism’s fixed hierarchies and elitism” (Grindon, 1996, p.156). It is carnival’s playful spirit which challenges the monologic, authoritative, and absolute assumptions of the rulers, reducing them to the level of mockery; the dialogue among the various social and economical strata of society, possible only at the time of carnival, provides an outlet for suppressed desires. In short, such “comedy of misrule” forms a pastiche, where the upper class achieves the lower class’s vitality and energy, the latter, the opportunity of self-expression and power (Magistrale, 2005, p.168). “The dialogic consist[s] of a truth on the boundaries between people in dialogue,” Cahill observes in his doctoral dissertation, *A Bakhtinian Analysis of Four Comic American Novels* (2005, p.46). Each dialogue occurs between at least two entities – ‘self’ and ‘other’, generally – and carnival becomes “a means for displaying otherness” (Holquist, 1990, p.89): it defamiliarizes familiar relations and “draws attention to their variety, as well as highlighting the fact that social roles determined by class relations are *made* not given, culturally produced rather than naturally mandated” (Ibid.).

In his investigation of Rabelais’ work, Bakhtin alludes to the anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture as opposed to the serious, non-festive official culture and introduces the notion of ‘grotesque realism,’ where “the material bodily principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life, plays a predominant role” (Bakhtin, 1998, p.687). Yet these images are not proposed satirically, to picture private negative aspects of the individual’s body, but as a celebration of universal, social bodily life of all people (Ibid. p.688). “In grotesque realism, an object is sent to the lower strata of life, to the bowels and to the womb, to be reborn,” as Cahill puts it (2005, p.71). In fact, the negative and destructive aspects of the body have, also, a regenerating and constructive role; degradation accompanies with exaltation and body with spirit. Carnival is concerned with “the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs,” manifested as the “acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth” (Knowles, 1998, p.5). It forms a space where the reversals of high and low, king and beggar, as well as upper body (e.g. head) and lower body (e.g. genitals) are realized and the opposites of life and death, fact and fantasy, heaven and hell, mingled (Selden *et al.*, 1985, p.41).

Carnival’s promise of renewal and rebirth is generated from agrarian feasts upon which it is based. Put plainly, it creates a zone of “joyful relativity” which challenges what has been taken for granted as perennial and resolute (Bakhtin, 1984, p.107).

It is intended, here, to expose the complementary details about the idea of carnival with reference to Strindberg’s play. Whether he has been familiar with Bakhtin’s theory of carnival or not, *Miss Julie* (1888) seems to abound with related characteristics.

Miss Julie is set in a Swedish manor house on Midsummer Eve in the eighties (Stockenström, 2004, p.39). Midsummer’s Eve is a Scandinavian celebration with feasting and Maypole dancing (Turner, 2005, p.168). This pagan festival and the opportunity it offers for dancing, singing, drinking, and revelry link it directly to Bakhtin’s notion of carnival (Ibid. p.iv). Consequently, the festive atmosphere of the play liberates the characters, even if temporarily, from the Victorian moral values, feudal hierarchies, and patriarchal restrictions.

The significance of mummery, dance and song in Bakhtin’s carnival can also be perceived by the sections named as “Pantomime” and “Ballet” in Strindberg’s play (Strindberg, 1964, pp.39- 51). In fact, what emboldens Jean, the valet and Julie, the Count’s daughter, to overlook their social, economical, and moral stance and intermingle with each other in the act of merry making is the hypnotizing impact of music and dance; at the beginning of the play, where the audience/reader first learns about Miss Julie “leading the dance with the gamekeeper,” the carnivalization of the standards has already taken place (Ibid. p.35). Besides, Jean’s special expertise in dancing (along with the condescending, yet refined manners and his knowledge of French language) endears him to Julie. Furthermore, it is by the peasants’ song that the idea of running away, which will be discussed in detail subsequently, pops into Jean’s head.

Of the consequential elements of carnival is eccentricity, which brings the suppressed desires to the surface of consciousness (Sidorkin, 2005, p.302); frequent references to Julie’s hysteria and Jean’s oddity stress the point:

Jean. You know, you’re strange.

Miss Julie. Perhaps. But so are you. Everything is strange. Life, people, everything, is a scum which drifts, drifts on and on across the water until it sinks, sinks. (Strindberg, 1964, p.44)

Hence, Julie’s sensual insanity violates the decorous and decent norms of official order and arouses taboos and repressed energies, which are capable of disturbing the established hegemonies.

Also central to the carnivalesque is the function of mask and disguise, associated with “notions of transition, transformation, mocking, and the violation of natural boundaries” (Martin, 1971, p.92). After the Renaissance, however, when the mask – losing its regenerating nature – becomes a deceiving vacuum, the masker turns into a trickster. The trickster’s “capricious acts of sly deception” disclose him as a cunning, lascivious, and conceited jester, who is “at the

mercy of his passions and appetites,” and can pose a major threat to the established order (Davidson, 2008, p.145). Jean’s crafty theatricality, cultural aptitude, and ruthless ambition transform him into the classical Machiavellian anti-hero, for whom “conventions” are arbitrary settlements with which one can choose not to “bother” from time to time (Strindberg, 1964, p.51). As a practical joker, he seduces Julie (by fabricating a story about his forbidden love of her and suicidal thoughts) and tricks her into going to his room, bringing forth the real carnival.

In order to clarify this last point, it is worth mentioning here that singing on Midsummer night is an old custom; and the fact that Jean regards the peasant’s song as “a filthy song. About you and me” (Strindberg, 1964, p.51), seems more like an act of deception than what Strindberg holds as “the chance that drove these two people together into a private room” (Strindberg, 1964, p.22). Firstly, the song, though filthy to the high-born and supposedly innocent Miss Julie, makes no particular reference to any specific person; secondly, in order to escape the disrepute (if any), Jean could have gone to his room alone (if at all); and thirdly, shooting, “if any one tries to break in” would not be a sane solution. In any case, even if one does view the event as a mere coincidence, Jean’s Machiavellian advances, discussed later on, cannot be denied as responsible for the tragedy that befalls Julie.

Miss Julie becomes a topsy-turvy world of inverted hierarchies and constitutes the site in which “[t]he effect of cartwheel circularity denies the polarities of the high and the low” (Good, 2000, p.101). To take the hierarchies of the play into account, one should categorize them as feudal, patriarchal, and ecclesiastical.

Strindberg, the child of a working-class mother and a more privileged father, lived and wrote with a class-conscious mentality (Als, 2005, p.92). His concomitant abhorrence to and desire for the upper classes, reflected in Jean’s ambivalent aspirations, present these people as the species with an “innate or acquired sense of honor” inherited from “barbarism” (Strindberg, 1964, p.25). His unachieved ambitions for power and progress created in him “a mind raging at life,” which sought revenge on the upper classes (Ibid. p.129). It is not surprising, then, when the Lord Chamberlain first banned *Miss Julie* in 1925 as ‘sordid and disgusting’, “he was not referring to the extramarital sex, nor yet to Julie’s suicide, but simply to the way in which it would forever threaten the master-servant relationship and make it harder to hire good valets” (as cited in Morley, 2000, p.49).

The play’s boundaries between the gentry and working class are to be inferred from the divisions of the house spaces. The servants’ quarters are completely segregated from the rest of the house: the kitchen is “connected to the servants’ sleeping quarters but with no access to the rooms above where the count and his daughter, Lady Julie, live in the stately manor house” (Stockenström, 2004, p.39).

From the very beginning, the description of Jean’s and Christine’s clothes in sharp contrast to Miss Julie’s and the absent Count’s, as well as the account of their conflicting activities, underlines the dialectic of class conflict: “Jean enters, dressed in livery and carrying a pair of big riding boots, with spurs” (Strindberg, 1964, p.35). The comparison made between Jean’s livery, as the symbol of his servitude and the recurrent images of the Count’s boots and gloves is highlighted, once more, by Christine’s “light cotton dress, with apron” (Ibid.) which is opposed to Miss Julie’s scented handkerchief.

The opposition between the two poles of leisure and labor, besides, is brought into light by Jean’s taking “his lordship to the station” and Christine’s “standing at the stove, frying in a pan” (Ibid. p.35), while there are broad hints at Julie’s (dancing, drinking, etc.) and the Count’s (riding, drinking coffee, etc.) leisure pursuits.

The Count’s speaking tube and bell for calling and commanding his servants act as the transcendental signifiers for his domestic sovereignty (Blackwell, 1999, p.314).

Owing to Strindberg’s scheme of social emendation, the first hierarchy is violated when the Count — whose ringing bell suffices to reduce Jean to a “frightened horse” — due to her daughter’s transgressions of the normalities, is carnivalized and as a consequence, Jean “kicks the boots” (Strindberg, 1964, p.53). In addition, the master (mistress)/slave binarism dominant in Julie and John’s relationship is overturned by Julie’s misbehavior; Jean’s subsequent abusive language and gestures, discussed later, subscribes to this inversion. Julie’s transformation from the house’s mistress (head) to the house’s servant’s mistress (coquette) follows the same Bakhtinian downward movement, central to grotesque realism.

The second hierarchy treated in the play is what patriarchy presents as men’s superiority over women. Strindberg’s sense of social inferiority towards his wife, a baroness, and the influence of Nietzsche’s theory of the Superman who offer[ed] some consolation against the impending domination of the world by women” were at fault for his misogynistic work (Meyer, 1964, pp.9-11). Blackwell, among many, proclaimed that Strindberg and a multitude of male authors responded with “varying degrees of horror, outrage, and counterattack” to the rise of the ‘New Woman’ in the late 19th and 20th centuries (1999, p.311).

Julie’s unconventional mother, “brought up with ideas about equality, [and] freedom for women” was an easy target for Strindberg’s vengeance. Her aversion to marriage and having a child, her carnivalesque reversal of women’s and men’s roles on the state and her setting fire to the house could not be disregarded as venial sins by patriarchy, specifically, when Julie’s father had been denied access to his wife’s money which was legally “[h]is lordship’s too, then” (Strindberg, 1964, p.60).

The Count, one of the two patriarchs of the play is “consistently equated with proper rule” (Blackwell, 1999, p.320), the Law of the Father in Lacan’s terms. In point of fact, he enjoys a two-fold authority, being both master and father to

Julie. Equally, Jean's treatment of Christine at the beginning of the play adheres to the same master-servant relationship between the Count and his household:

Jean. ... You might have warmed the plate, though.

Christine. You're fussier than his lordship himself, once you start. (She pulls his hair affectionately.)

Jean. (angrily). Don't pull my hair. You know how sensitive I am. (Strindberg, 1964, p.36).

As the dramatist's mouthpiece, Jean's underscoring of the gender differences emanates from his deep yearning to establish himself in social hierarchization. His self-fashioning materializes only through a process of differentiation and displacing the "desire onto a control of the other" (Walton, 1995, p.7):

Jean. But *I* wouldn't do it [commit suicide], mind. There's a difference between us.

Miss Julie. Because you're a man and I am a woman? What difference does that make?

Jean. The difference – between a man and a woman. (Strindberg, 1964, p.75).

In Bakhtin's theory, however, women prompt "the undoing of pretentiousness, of all that is finished, completed and exhausted. [A woman] is the inexhaustible vessel of conception, which dooms all that is old and terminated" (as cited in Cahill, 2005, p.72).

Although a potential patriarch, Jean cannot be a proper king in patriarchal system, since his slave-mentality subjects him to the will of the greater power, the Count. Moreover, he cannot break free from his sense of inferiority to Julie's higher birth to the end. Ergo, he, together with Julie, plays the role of a clown to this system. Julie's stealing his father's money for Jean, which has been paralleled to her mother's entrusting hers to her lover, uncrowns the Count's authority. Their defiance, even though bitterly punished, pokes fun at patriarchal pretensions and brings about the carnivalesque laughter: "we became the laughing-stock of the district" (Strindberg, 1964, p.59).

The reversal of the monologizing patriarchal order by Julie resembles that of the feudal structure by Jean; as the carnival clowns, they have "the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.163). What distinguishes her from Jean, however, is the fact that despite him who cannot be the proper king of an official, non-carnival system (neither feudal nor patriarchal), Julie is that of one i.e. of feudal system. As a member of high society, like her father, she is crowned (consider Jean's mock ceremony, kneeling and kissing her foot) and decrowned during the carnival. But, her fall is not momentarily.

Contrary to Jean's carnivalization, Julie's is doomed to failure thanks to the dramatist's radical misogyny. And despite the fact that the issues of pre/extra-marital affair and misalliance have not been uncommon in Julie's family, regarding her ancestor's – a miller who "let the king sleep with his wife" (Strindberg, 1964, p.63) – and her parents' affairs, she is condemned to death.

Anyhow, of great value is the fact that the result of mismatches and misrule in the play contradicts Bakhtin's impression about carnival's inherently comic outcome; carnival can be "a site of violence against the weak and marginalized" (Crawford, 2002, p.47). In other words, the acts of mock crowning and uncrowning exert context-bound effects which can be either comic or tragic. As a matter of fact, the play's "current of anarchic violence," which is "the festival's bitter side" prepares the ground for Julie's suicide (Bernstein, 1992, pp.5-6).

Carnival's abusive language – language of the marketplace, which is swarmed with all kinds of profanities, oaths, and curses – retains its positive, regenerating pole: "The passing from excessive praise to excessive invective is characteristic, and the change from the one to the other is perfectly legitimate. Praise and abuse are, so to speak, the two sides of the same coin" (Bakhtin, 1998, p.690). Accordingly, Jean's praise is "ironic and ambivalent," that is to say, this grotesque language "abuses while praising and praises while abusing" (Ibid.); his degradation accompanies admiration, from beginning to end:

To my mind, she is not what one would call a lady. Just now, when she was dancing in the barn, she grabbed the gamekeeper from Anna and made him dance with her. We'd never do that – but that's how it is when the gentry try to act common – they become really common. But she's a magnificent creature! What a figure! Ah! What shoulders! and – etcetera! (Strindberg, 1964, p.37)

Even after Julie's fall, when Jean's language grows coarse and offensive, the same pattern is followed:

Servant's whore, lackey's bitch, shut your mouth and get out of here. You dare to stand there and call me foul? Not one of my class ever behaved the way you've done tonight. Do you think any kitchen-maid would accost a man like you did? Have you ever seen any girl of my class offer her body like that? I've only seen it among animals and prostitutes ... Miss Julie, you're a fine woman, much too good for someone like me ... you're beautiful, you're refined. Educated, loveable when you want to be, and once you have awoken a man's passion, it could never die. (Ibid. pp.57-58)

Additionally, the recurrent down/up motif in the play conveys the logic of simultaneous humiliation/commendation, degradation/regeneration, and death/rebirth:

Miss Julie. I have a dream which recurs from time to time, and I'm reminded of it now. I've climbed to the top of a pillar and am sitting there, and I can see no way to descend. When I look down, I become dizzy, but I must come down ... I long to fall but I don't fall. And yet I know I shall find no peace till I come down, no rest till I come down, down to the ground. And if I could get down, I should want to burrow my way deep into the earth....

Jean. No. I dream that I'm lying under a high tree in a dark wood. I want to climb, up, up to the top (Ibid. pp.44-45)

Interestingly, Jean's and Julie's fanciful ascend and descend in their dreams result in a real upside-down pecking order and therefore, exposing the "half-real and half-play" nature of Bakhtin's carnival (Sidorkin, 2005, p.30). Bakhtin's commentary on the grotesque realism is directly relevant to the play's images of the material bodily principle or the bodily lower stratum: "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (1998, p.688).

Indeed, various forms of downward movement or prone position in the play exhibit the physicality and materiality of the grotesque body and accentuate the degradation and regeneration polarity: "the grotesque or material body and its everyday functions (eating, drinking, scratching, excreting, copulating, etc.) were used against decorous behavior and norms of decorum and spirituality" (Peters, 1913, p.24). Frequent references to the characters' eating, drinking, lying, sleeping, excreting, and love-making debunk the sacred, elevated, and official discourse of the aristocracy and guarantee the depletion of suffering and fear (Bakhtin, 1998, p.690). On this account, the beautified portrait of the lavatory – "a Turkish pavilion in the shadow of jasmine trees and overgrown with honeysuckle," decorated with "the pictures of kings and emperors" – underscores the co-existence of the two poles of praise and abuse, epitomizes the glamorized appearance of a rotting aristocracy, and ultimately, signifies the need for change (Strindberg, 1964, p.47).

As the critics postulate, Bakhtin's carnival celebrates "the transition from a stern authoritarian period (the Medieval) to a period in which the individual was liberated from medieval superstition and fear (the Renaissance)" (Davidson, 2008, p.141). Likewise, *Miss Julie* explores a "historical process of change" from the old agrarian system of values to an industrialized culture (Stockenstrom, 2004, p.44).

Julie's fall and death, in consequence, undermine the audience's/reader's fear of death and destruction, as well as, the superstitious sanctity of "Bakhtinian paradigm of them-and-us, officialdom and the folk" (Knowles, 1998, p.67); the solace that ensues is a "relief such as one feels when one sees an incurable invalid at last allowed to die," Strindberg observes in his preface to the play (1964, p.21).

For Bakhtin, the notion of carnival and the up/down movement in the hierarchies are associated with the observer's place, which determines the domination of one of the two poles of degradation/admiration: "everything is perceived from a unique position in existence. Its corollary is that the meaning of whatever is observed is shaped by the place from which it is perceived" (Holquist, 1990, p.21). Thus, Jean perceives Julie as an inaccessible dream, when escaping from the lavatory and soiled with his master's waste, he hides "under a pile of weeds – under" (Strindberg, 1964, p.48). Julie's high stance in the social stratum, on the other hand, grants her a more advantageous perspective of the world. That is why Jean inquires: "Do you know how the world looks from down there? No, you don't. Like hawks and eagles, whose backs one seldom sees, because most of the time they hover above you" (Ibid. p.47).

To return to the categories of hierarchies, one would regard the third hierarchy in *Miss Julie* as religious. Strindberg enunciated, "[t]he theater, and indeed art in general, has long seemed to me a Biblia pauperum, a Bible in pictures for the benefit of the illiterate; with the dramatist as a lay preacher hawking contemporary ideas in a popular form" (Ibid. p.19). Strindberg's handling of drama as an image of Bible in motion, denotes the substantial impact of religion on his life and career. *Miss Julie* exemplifies such didacticism; it must be read/watched and reflected upon.

The officialdom of the religious hierarchy is reinforced by the play's Biblical allusions. In this respect, Midsummer Eve is a Christianized festival with pagan roots which are conquered in Sunday sermons of St. John the Baptist's Day (Turner, 2005, p.168). Moreover, Christine's faith in the Savior's blessing and God's special grace that make it "easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" transforms her into the moral center and, therefore, the carnival king (queen) of the play (Strindberg, 1964, p.74). But soon this queen is also decrowned, when the reader is informed that "[s]he goes to church in order to be able to shift the guilt of her domestic pilfering on to Jesus, and get herself recharged with innocence" (Ibid. p.27). Accordingly, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the play is reversed after Julie's fall, since she is no longer from "the first" but already "among the last of all" (Ibid. p.77).

Eventually, the reestablishment of order, after this night of chaos takes place with the Count's return. As Frye illustrates, the expulsion of the carnival king concludes the festival and a far better community emerges from the chaos of the former one. In *Miss Julie*, as well, the death of the tragic scapegoat pays the price for this "social and political protest" (Kristeva, 1982, p.65). Strindberg's utopia, then, is a world in which a servant "survives the battle unharmed, and will quite possibly end as an hotelier" (Strindberg, 1964, p.26).

III. CONCLUSION

To conclude the discussion, one would infer that even though Strindberg adopts a narrow definition of social justice, his strategy to achieve it corresponds to Bakhtin's theory of carnival. This immoral disorder Strindberg benefits from to appraise the possibility of change seems as repulsive and dishonorable as it has been to the audience; he takes no pains to justify the maliciousness of the disturbances triggered by the unprivileged side of the social hierarchy. To Strindberg, upper classes deserve being fooled and exploited. But unlike Bakhtin, whose carnival promises "an alternative social space of freedom, abundance, and equality, expressing a utopian promise of plenitude and redemption" (Bell and Gardiner, 1996, p.767), what Strindberg anticipates as utopia in his play, however, is not a "republic" with flattened social hierarchies, where the public are endowed with equality, uniformity and democracy (Strindberg, 1964, p.53). In

lieu, he exploits naturalism, which guarantees the irresistible and inevitable decadence of the aristocracy as a means of justification for his political theory. Otherwise, his lower class characters are either too subservient or too revengeful to the ideology and in both cases too corrupted to hold the entitlement and capability for hierarchical inversions.

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Bahareh Azad is an MA student in English Literature at the University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Pycaam Abbasi is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at the University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.