

# Surrender or Resistance

## —Interpretation of Miss Julie's Individuation from the Perspective of Jungian Archetype Theory

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**Abstract.** Miss Julie by Strindberg is a typical naturalistic tragedy. It tells the story that after the one night stand between a French Count's daughter Miss Julie and her servant Jean on a midsummer night, which brought her a change of identity, Miss Julie, unable to face the reality, chose to end her life by suicide. Based on Jung's archetypal theory, this paper analyzes the process of Miss Julie's individuation from childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Through the interpretation of the process of Miss Julie's individuation, this paper analyzes the influence of archetypes (Ego, Persona, Shadow, Anima) on her psychological growth in different stages and the female subjectivity of her psychological contradictions, so as to make sure whether her suicide is surrender or resistance.

**Keywords:** Miss Julie; Jung; persona; shadow; individuation.

### 1. Introduction

Miss Julie is a naturalistic tragedy created by the Swedish drama master, Strindberg. The play is full of class and gender contradictions, for which Miss Julie is walking towards death step by step. Many works in the past regard Miss Julie's suicide as a surrender to the patriarchal society and a victim of the tragedy. However, it is too one-sided to regard her suicide as a helpless act under the pressure of male power. The author believes that Miss Julie's choice of suicide is actually an active and spontaneous act. Not only that, but also her suicide is a struggle against fate, which shows her awakening of female self-consciousness. Undoubtedly, her growth experience has an indelible influence on her decision to make this choice.

Based on Jungian archetype theory, this paper will analyze Miss Julie's individuation process from childhood, adolescence to adulthood. Through the explanation of Miss Julie's individuation process, the influence of archetypes (Ego, Persona, Shadow, Anima) on her psychological growth in different stages is analyzed. In fact, her suicide is a kind of resistance, is the highlight of female subjectivity, and has certain positive significance for female self-awakening.

Jung, a Swiss psychologist and founder of analytical psychology, once proposed four archetypal elements that play a special role in everyone's spiritual development and social adaptation: Ego, Persona, Shadow, Anima (Animus). In the early development of children, ego, as the core of consciousness, comes from the self. Jung repeatedly emphasized that "The ego stands to the self as the moved to the mover or as object to subject, because the determining factors which radiate out from the self surround the ego on all sides and are therefore supraordinate to it. The self, like the unconscious is an a priori-existent out of which the ego evolves." Persona is the illusion that an individual plays when communicating with others in order to get recognition from the external social environment. Persona were formed in the early childhood, resulting from the need to comply with the wishes of parents, peers and teachers. In the process of growth, these hidden traits exist in the individual subconscious, forming another complex or part of the personality, which is called Shadow. Shadow contains some dark elements and is regarded as a threat. In order to protect ourselves from this threat, we use various defense mechanisms, especially repression, denial and projection. Anima is the female element in the male heart, and Animus is the male element in the

female heart. As a pair of opposites, they not only affect the relationship between men and women, but also affect the subconsciousness of both sexes.

Therefore, the process of personal maturity is through a series of innate archetypal expectations. Jung believed that personality is composed of many different parts, some of which are still in conflict with each other. “Individuation, a process of integrating all parts of one’s personality, means a person eventually becomes himself. It is also an integrated and indivisible development process that is different from that of others. Individuation implies a kind of transcendence, transcending the persona and shadow, and obtaining an internal psychological integration. If some archetypes are missing in the process of growth, individuals will adjust themselves according to the compensation theory in their future lives.

## **2. Childhood: the Tragic Starting Point of Individuation**

Miss Julie, as a female character, shows her masculinity, which is closely related to her childhood life experience. Miss Julie was born against her mother’s will. Her mother was born in a common people’s family with a low status. She was educated by such ideas as social equality and women’s freedom since childhood. She advocates equality between men and women, advocates women’s independence, and does not want to be an accessory to men, marry men, or have children for them. So throughout her childhood, Miss Julie was raised as a boy by her mother, who asked her to do the boy’s work in the manor. She “had to wear the boy’s clothes, learn to handle horses —but not to milk the cows; I was made to groom the horses, and harness them, and learn farming and go hunting—I even had to learn how to slaughter the animals.” All these made her a woman with male characteristics. Her existence was to prove that “women were just as good as men in her mother’s words. Both her mother’s absolute possession of her and her father’s absent participation in education have resulted in her psychological disability to some extent. Miss Julie’s childhood was unfortunate. The lack of father’s love and the severity of mother’s love caused the imbalance of her spiritual world. The lack of projection of Animus forced her to wear a mask of hatred for men in front of her mother. She obediently accepted the ideas her mother gave her. She promised his mother that she would never be a slave to men. At the same time, the women occupied by Animus will lose a lot of femininity, so she can’t help sympathizing with those women who fall into difficulties and do stupid things. She sympathized with her mother. Her mother got sick because she couldn’t bear the sudden control of her father. She hid herself in the attic or garden, even stayed out all night, and burned down the manor. Even so, Miss Julie didn’t hate her mother. Without her father’s intervention, the masculine Miss Julie would probably become a feminist leader in the future, just as her mother expected. But her mother, through her own behavior, also imperceptibly cultivated Miss Julie’s character of disregard for decency and lack of self-respect, which gave birth to her shadow behind her persona. Miss Julie’s childhood was cultivated with wrong cognition. Under the different educational concepts of her parents, she had a romantic revolutionary thought of resisting gender and class discrimination, but she could not get rid of her own sense of class superiority and gender view under patriarchy. The ego was distorted, her childhood certainly foreshadowed that her process of individuation was doomed to be full of twists and turns.

## **3. Adolescence :the Biggest Obstacle to Individuation**

Professor Yuping Rui believes in the study of Bildungsroman that “Adolescence is a period in which a person becomes increasingly sensitive to his or her self-identity—gender identity, ethnic identity, social identity, political identity, etc. It is also a period in which a person is increasingly concerned about self-development, consciously builds his or her self-image and identity, longs for more recognition, and longs for establishing close interpersonal relationships.”

After Miss Julie’s mother conspired with her lover to deliberately set fire to the manor and asked her husband to borrow money from her lover, Miss Julie’s father tried suicide and failed, but her

mother finally had to pay for her mistakes, which left a deep shadow on Miss Julie. She subconsciously believed that she was the daughter of a female arsonist, but she was unwilling to admit the shadow and chose to suppress and deny it. Since then, Miss Julie, who was in her teens, has been completely raised by her father, who was a count. At first, because his father loved her mother, he flattered her by every means, even connived at her mother's chaotic arrangement of the manor. Although he had interfered with Miss Julie's dress, he did not end it. Now her father has "come out of his trance. He rebelled, and everything was changed according to his wishes". His father's power at home has become supreme, so that even when Jean hears the voice of the count, the devil like slavery will become entangled in his body, and as long as he hears the bell of the count, he will unconsciously tremble. Under such patriarchal family rule, Miss Julie lost her right to speak. In order to gain her father's approval, she was forced to shape herself into a noble lady. Therefore, the persona that she originally hated men was covered by the persona of "angel in the house". The common influence of her father and mother made her lose gender identity, which was the biggest obstacle she encountered in the process of individuation. As she herself said later in response to Jean's question about her feelings for her father: "Yes, (I did love my father)enomously. But I must have hated him too. I must have hated him without knowing it. It was he who brought me up to despise my own sex, to be half woman and half man. Who's to blame for what he has happened. My father, my mother, myself? Myself? I don't have a self that my own." It was precisely after the loss of her ego that her suppressed shadow became stronger and stronger, trying to fight against her persona, which prompted her to make a series of "rebellious" behaviors in adulthood, and it was also her initial attempt to discover herself, break away from her persona, admit her shadow, and realize her individuation.

#### **4. Adulthood: Unyielding Resistance to Realize Individuation**

In adulthood, when Miss Julie is set to be 25 years old in the play, she become "wild" in the eyes of servants. Unlike traditional women, Miss Julie is a maverick. Although she is a female physically, she shows her male side more psychologically, especially in the dominance of "sex". At first, she was occupied by the animus and "tamed" her fiance like a dog in the patriarchal society, but her fiance's unyielding led to the dissolution of the engagement, which caused the first projection of her Animus archetype to fail. It can be seen that Miss Julie's character is as rough as a man. At this time, the persona of class supremacy transcends gender conflict. Later, on the night of midsummer night, the count's departure meant that Miss Julie no longer needed to wear the persona of obedience like "an angel at home", and the shadow was free. Miss Julie wanted to fall down on the ground. She defied her class status, danced with the game warden among the servants, trying to seek the release of the shadow, admit the shadow, and yearn for a complete ego, taking the first step on the road of individuation. Before having a sexual relationship with Jean, she ordered Jean to dance with her, ordered him to kiss her shoes, asked him to accompany her to the park, and suggested him to take her to see the sunrise. The animus always prevailed, and the masculinity of Miss Julie seemed to be positively projected and coordinated on submissive Jean. As a noble lady, she descends to seducing servants., which is also due to her shadow overcoming the persona. This is a strong struggle against the patriarchal system and a struggle for her ego.

But the good times didn't last long. After she and Jean had a sexual relationship, their relationship was completely reversed. Jean, who is in a gender dominant position, will not yield to Miss Julie, who is in a class dominant position. This makes Miss Julie's animus in trouble, and she lost herself again. Miss Julie showed her weakness to Jean again and again, hoping that he would show his love to her. Under the struggle between the sexes, she could no longer recognize herself, until she finally gave up the persona completely, revealed the scandal of her family to Jean, and committed the theft she once despised. After being insulted and belittled by Jean, Miss Julie's shadow broke out completely. She no longer repressed herself, but took the initiative to choose. At this time, "death"was the first choice she proposed. When Jean suggested running away to start a

hotel, Miss Julie said to Jean, “To enjoy ourselves for a day or two, or a week, for as long as can—and then—to die—”, “Then you don’t want to die with me?” It can be seen that the final suicide is not an act imposed on Miss Julie, but the awakening of Miss Julie’s own subjectivity, which is the result of the struggle between her shadow and persona. She realized that her misconduct would not be accepted by the society and would humiliate the family. She agreed to elope with Jean but was unwilling to yield to Jean. The remaining animus helped Miss Julie coordinate the imbalance between the persona and the shadow.

At the time of elopement, Jean killed Miss Julie’s beloved canary. Miss Julie no longer gave in, and her animus was highlighted again, and her resistance was incisive: “You don’t believe that I can stand the sight of blood? You think I’m so weak, don’t you? Oh, how I’d love to see your blood, your brains on that chopping block. I’d love to see the whole of your sex swimming in a sea of blood just like that. I could drink blood out of skull. Use your chest as a foot bath, dip my toes in your guts!” , She would rather break a jar than give in to Jean’s advice. The suppressed shadow was released through the most direct words.

Then, with Christine’s indifference and prevention, the shadow began to bite back at the main body. Miss Julie was afraid of death and could not commit suicide. Miss Julie began to refuse to face up to her shadow, expecting God to take care of her who was originally “the first” but now “the last”, hoping that her sins could be forgiven. However, the more she longed to return to her previous high social status and wore the original persona, the easier it was to form a contrast. At this time, the only remaining animus prompted her to order Jean to pretend to be the count and command her, not for other purposes, but to “save her honor, save his name” and recover the lost persona and the lost ego. However, the timid Jean did not give Miss Julie an order at last. The method of suicide with a razor was originally thought out by Miss Julie herself, and suicide was also her last determined choice. Miss Julie, who is so proud and smart, suddenly realized the true meaning of life when the doorbell rang, and sighed that “the first shall be the last”. Like her independent and advanced mother, she chose to commit suicide. It is precisely for this reason that Miss Julie’s reputation has been saved, her persona has been retained, and the shadow has been fully released. The surface of the persona and the deep shadow have finally achieved a balance, and the animus has also been coordinated in this brave act. After a long and painful ideological struggle, Miss Julie’s suicide made her free and realized self-redemption and awakening, which not only expressed her resistance to the patriarchal society’s male-centered consciousness, but also mocked the unfair class and gender biases, and finally realized her individuation.

## 5. Summary

Throughout the play, Miss Julie has always struggled in her childhood, adolescence and adulthood with the conflict between ego, persona, shadow and the animus archetype. Finally, through the coordination of her ego, she eliminated the conflicts between these archetypes, completed the process of individuation of her ideal in her heart — suicide, achieved spiritual liberation, preserved her persona, and released the psychological shadow. She fulfilled her promise to her mother that she would never be a slave to any man, did not choose to live a life of obscurity, and did not blindly accommodate herself. Her suicide on her own initiative realized the strongest resistance to traditional gender and class politics that she could achieve, and demonstrated her subjectivity as a woman. The in-depth analysis of Miss Julie’s growth process has not only literary value, but also social value. It can cause people to reflect on class and gender conflicts, and has a positive significance for the awakening of contemporary women’s self-consciousness.

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