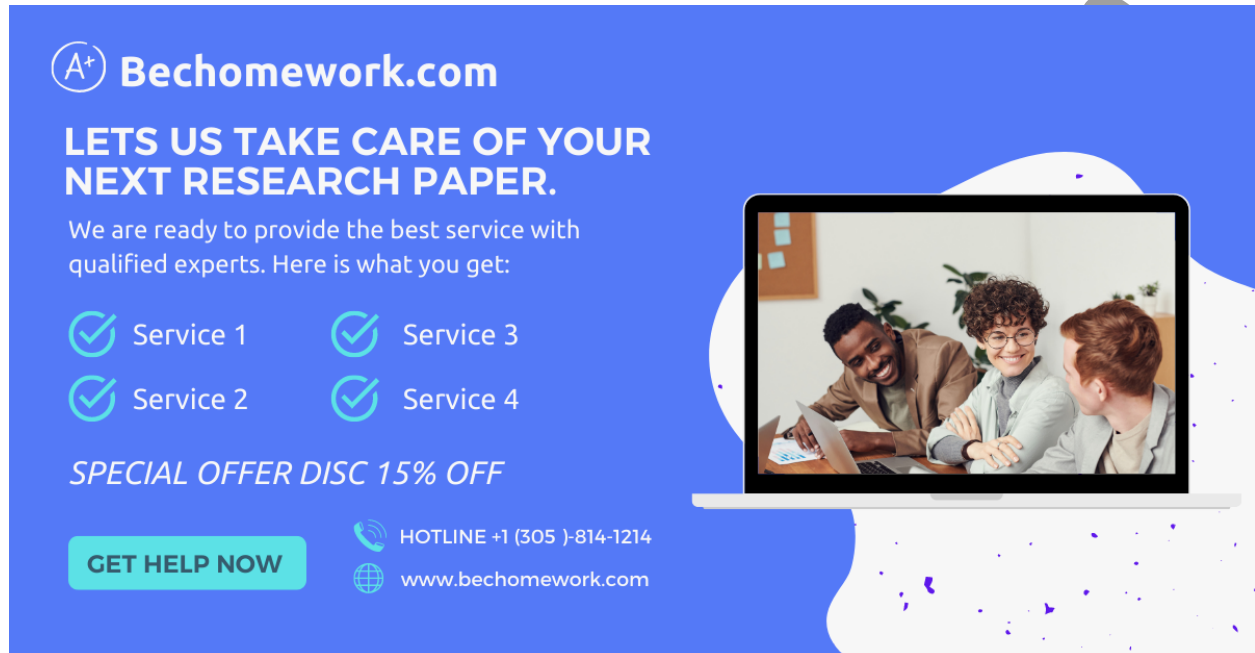


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Strindberg's Preface to Miss Julie

Introduction

Ideally, the society is set in a way that the rich mostly interact with the rich, while the poor mostly interact with the poor. Strindberg's preface to Miss Julie is one of the most recognized theatres that reflect how social classification affected lives in the 1800s. The play is set in the Victorian era, where social hierarchy controlled a significant portion of life. The main personalities in the play are Miss Julie and Jean, who reflect the upper and lower classes, respectively. Typically, Strindberg's play depicted the actual society in the 19th century,

reflecting how the upper class, considered the wealthiest and lower classes, considered the poorest lived. Undisputedly, the social classification in the 19th century had negative consequences because it negatively affected how people lived concerning the distribution of power, resources, lifestyle, and marriages. Even though people have tried to erase the barriers between the poor and the rich, these efforts seem futile because social classification still controls the most significant portion of our lives. Therefore, it is critical to investigate whether the social classes of the 19th century and 21st century differ because it can help understand the steps the society has taken to put an end to social classification in the society. The play will be used as a guideline, reflecting how the social classes in the 19th century interacted and how the interactions may differ in the 21st century.

Title

In the 19th century, most families from the upper classes had a title, and all of them had the privilege of bearing the coats of arms. The title significantly affected the social lives in society. In the play, Miss Julie's family had a title, and her father was referred to as a Count. Counts were significant members of the society in continental Europe, and they were rendered special services such as owning a county. When Jean confirms to Miss Julie that her ancestor '...was a miller who let the king sleep with his wife one night during the Danish war...' (Wea 43), Jean confirms that Julie's family did something which was viewed as an honor to the king, while his family had not done that. The act gave Miss Julie's family the privilege to own the title of a count. Undisputedly, from Jean's confirmation, it can be noted that Jean wished to have an ancestor who could honor the king to enable his family to get a title because the title symbolized power.

Undoubtedly, having a title created a picture that made the lower class people feel that they could not be on the same level as the upper classes, making them serve the upper classes. Because Jean's family had no title, Jean viewed himself as an inferior person to Miss Julie. Typically, in the 21st century, the power in upper classes may be reflected in different ways such as race, title, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. For instance, studies reveal that in the United Kingdom, family lineage still plays a critical role in forming social classes, with family members who belong to aristocracy being considered the upper class (Social Class). Remarkably, when the society views itself in terms of titles, races, and family lineage, some families may be viewed as inferior to others, making them less privileged in resource allocation. However, they may be discouraged from fighting for their rights whenever they face oppression from the upper classes because of the inferiority feeling.

Shelter

In the 19th century, shelter played a critical role in society, and it reflected living in an upper class. Notably, most upper-class houses tended to have many employees and large, well-maintained gardens, and well-furnished furniture. The description of Miss Julie's house signified that it was a mansion with significant beauty. It is described as having a large kitchen with rare walls that ran diagonally down left to upright. The house also had an icebox, a sink beside other expensive households. The luxuriousness of the house signified honor, powers, and a higher socioeconomic status in the society. Jean emphasizes this belief by confirming that Miss Julie's house was the most attractive house he ever saw. Jean honor the residence and views himself as a lower class who cannot have such a mansion.

In contrast, Jean lived in a shack with his seven siblings. The house also had limited furniture. Undoubtedly, in this era, the poor people viewed their houses as a sign of poverty

because of their simplicity. In the 21st century, houses played a vital role in the formation of social classes. In most cities, people who live in slums are considered the lower class. The conditions and the sizes of the houses are below the level of those found in the upper classes, and they view themselves as slum dwellers who cannot live in areas inhabited by the upper classes. According to research by World Economic Forum, living in slums has high social and economic constraints and can lead to generational poverty. The research also found that living in a slum signifies a significant shortage of finance and affordable housing (Kim). Typically, this finding reflects what happened in the 19th century, where the lower class members lived in poorly conditioned houses, and they viewed themselves as unable to escape poverty.

Lifestyle

In the 19th century, the lifestyles of the upper classes were full of travelling to zoos and attending opera and theatres. According to Miss Julie, Kristine, Jean's finance had never travelled and needed to get out and see the world (Wea 48). From Miss Julie's talks, it can be noted that she described the way her lifestyle looked like as an individual in the upper-class. Her lifestyle was full of pleasure, including travelling to zoos, castles, museums, and watching opera and theatre. Even though this kind of lifestyle seemed familiar to Miss Julie, the people in the lower class viewed the glamorous and luxurious lifestyle in the upper classes as a sign of their high status. Notably, Miss Julie tells Kristine that the kind of lifestyle she lived was very common; however, according to Kristine, this lifestyle was way beyond how she could live.

The lifestyle of the lower class people was dominated by work. They worked to improve the living standard of those in the upper classes while their lifestyle deteriorated because they could work hard for the upper classes to earn a living. Additionally, they did odd jobs that did not require a high level of education, with Jean being a valet looking after Miss Julie's fathers'

boots. On one occasion, Julie is viewed telling Jean to put her father's boots down, but Jean declines, confirming that that is the work he had to do (Wea 52). Ideally, this job seemed to earn Jean very little to keep him surviving. In the 21st century, this kind of lifestyle seemed to be constant. The upper classes have much to spend travelling and visiting the zoos, while the poor seem to languish in poverty. The poor never imagine having a luxurious way of life the upper classes live. In the 21st century, the people in the lower classes are primarily employed for low-paying jobs such as doing the gardens and keeping the compounds in the upper classes clean. According to research, the household income from the lower class in the United States is \$25000. Many of these people lack high school certificates, and they are employed in unskilled jobs. Most of them work as house cleaners, shoe shiners, and janitors, and they lack houses. On the other hand, members of the upper classes get employed in well-paying jobs earning more than \$200,000; they belong to luxurious clubs and send their children to expensive private schools (8.3 Social Class in the United States). Typically, the kind of lifestyle in the lower classes may be described as a poverty-stricken form of lifestyle because they cannot afford to make frequent visits to the zoos and engage in other luxurious activities, lest they sleep hungry.

Marriage

In the 19th century, marriage was considered an essential factor in the upper class. According to the upper classes, marriage was intended to secure the family's essential connections, such as maintaining political strength and bringing more political connections. It was also meant to serve the economic needs of the upper class. Therefore, because of such beliefs, the rich mostly married their rich fellows because the poor or lower class people had no political connections, and they could not meet the economic expectations of the upper class. When Miss Julie tells Jean that, '... bear you a child and take your name! By the way, what is

your family name?..' (Wea 49), she is seen questioning Jean's family and wonders if she could have a child with him because Jean's family had no significant connection and his family was not known. Miss Julie supposes that unless she bears a child with someone whose family is known, her prestige and family status will remain reflected in her child's name.

Comparatively, the lower class in the 19th century also valued marriage. They viewed marriage as a union that united them as people of the same class. Kristine and Jean are seen to bond strongly compared to how Jean and Miss Julie bonded in the play. Ideally, Miss Julie's talks were mainly boastful and downgraded Jean despite having an affair with him. In contrast, Kristine and Jean are proud of each other, and Kristine willingly says Jean is her fiancée (Wea 53). Ideally, the upper classes viewed marriage as proof signifying the gap between them and the lower classes. In the 21st century, the trend seems to continue with marriage between races disregard in some societies. The poor and the rich also marry within their class. According to research, 56 % of the middle and upper classes were married in 2017 in America, while the married lower class only constituted 26 to 39 percent in 2017. The research found out Americans dislike marrying or dating outside their social class (Mohan). Even though the act disadvantages the poor economically, it is worth noting that class marriages are still being practiced in society.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the gap between the upper and lower classes in the 19th century and 21st century seems equal. The rich seem to have everything while the lower class has nothing and lives in poorly built houses with less furniture. The lower class faces a more complicated life while the upper class languishes in wealth without considering the lower classes. Ideally, these events in the play reflect an actual capitalist society where the rich continue to enrich themselves while the poor continue to sink into poverty. Typically, most people from the upper classes

prefer marrying within their class to maintain their status and to relieve the economic burdens of marrying from the lower classes. The social stratification makes the lower class individuals view themselves as less superior and get demotivated to work hard due to limited opportunities and economic capabilities. Therefore, because of these effects, 21st-century institutions such as schools and other government agencies need to develop ways of helping the poor to attain a similar level as those in the upper classes. The ways may include equal distribution of resources such as schools and roads to enable them to grow economically and academically.

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