



Laura Gröndahl

EXPERIENCES IN THEATRICAL SPACES

Five Scenographies of Miss Julie

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1 Introduction

1.1 SCENOGRAPHY AS THE SUBJECT OF MY STUDY

This is a study of theater scenography written from the viewpoint of a practicing scenographer. My intention is to understand how modern and post-modern scenography functions as a part of a performance. By using five examples from recent Finnish theater history I will examine some ways in which scenic space and vision are constructed, and, conversely, how they are supposed to construct the spectator's experience of viewing the play.

Scenography is perhaps more connected to the tangible materiality of the stage than any other aspect of a theater performance. Being a physical construction of a place, it seems to be furthest away from the literal and abstract contents of a drama, which have traditionally gained the most appreciation and attention from theater theoreticians. The visual and spatial arrangement of a performance, carried out by the scenography has, however, a great impact on the reception of a production. After all, a significant, perhaps even major part of scenic communication is received through the eyes. The scenographer's artistic value lies in creating living and meaningful experiences through the dead materiality of stage space and objects.

Although modern theater research has increasingly concentrated on the performances of actors, scenography has received little attention. One explanation could be that it is very hard to be precise about the parts of a performance that really belong to scenography. Spatiality and visuality have in fact often been profoundly analyzed in the contexts of other domains of a performance, for example as; the dramatic story, the stage action, the proximity of the theatrical building and acting, or the relation between performers and audiences.

As a theater practitioner I have entered into a new and strange field of scholarly research. The theoretical and artistic discourses have traditionally been separated in Finnish theater culture, as if they were completely different domains. This distinction is not justified in my opinion because the practical work is always founded on some – mostly unuttered – perceptions about the tasks and functions of theater, which can be identified as theoretical, or even ideological and philosophical standpoints. On the other hand, a scholarly discipline should not ignore the importance of the practical conditions of artistic works.

At an early stage, I gave up on the idea of using my own scenographies as part of my thesis. Instead I decided to discuss a sample of five different scenic designs created by my colleagues for one particular play – *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg. These five designs span the last three decades in Finnish theater – a context I am familiar with through personal experience.

My intention in this study is not to focus on scenography as an independent expression but rather on the ways in which it interacts with other channels of theatrical communication. Instead of looking into the essence of my profession, I want to explore the margins of scenography. How is scenography related to acting, to audiences, to theater venues, to the play-text? How can scenography discuss the abstract contents of a drama? Can it be translated into a verbal idea? Can it be just a gesture of the actor? What are the practical and economical limits of carrying out a scenic design?

When looking at the theatrical communication in the scenic designs of *Miss Julie*, I will consider the artistic reasons or internal logic that justifies the uses of images on the stage and spatial arrangements. How are scenic designs made and used? How are artistic attitudes related to more general thinking? What kind of ideological or psychological conceptions about the human mind do they reveal? How are these ideologies carried out through the existing methods of producing performances?

The theoretical background of my thesis consists of three parts. In Chapter 2 I scope the roles of scenography and scenographers from the viewpoint of theater practice; Chapter 3 is an introduction to the theory of vision and visibility connected to modern scenography; and in Chapter 4 I discuss the functions of the scenographic apparatus in *Miss Julie* as it was understood by

Strindberg. In Chapter 5 I briefly consider the tradition of performing *Miss Julie* in Finland. The five scenographies are each dealt with in the individual Chapters 6–10.

1.2 COMMUNICATION OF SPATIAL AND VISUAL EXPERIENCES

I am interested in the communicative capability of scenic designs. This refers not only to what the scenographers intend to say through their work but also to the means through which they express themselves. This may be called the ‘rhetoric’ of scenography, meaning the use of a communicative apparatus that is based on presumptions about the receiving audiences.

My attitude can be called phenomenological, although I want to avoid a stringent subscription to any philosophical ideology. The base of my ‘phenomenology’ is that a scenographer – like any artist – attempts to transmit an experience to the spectator. It is not simply about the relation between the artist and the perceived thing. The work of art is not just a material vehicle carrying abstract thoughts but it is an experience itself – it requires visual, aural or even tactile interaction. When communicating his/her ideas, the artist must give it some kind of perceivable structure, making it understandable to others.

Scenography, like any work of art, is not a completed object that can be categorized according to its properties. Rather it is a living experience, an interactive process between the internal mind and external stimuli. To me the diversity of representational modes in modern arts shows the changing and dynamic character of this interaction; and it also reflects the philosophical dilemma that the outside world is never completely comprehensible to us.

When creating spatial and visual representations on stage, the scenographer also considers the ways in which artistic interaction works. Creating a work of art is like providing the audience with one possible access route to the world; or more simply put, it provides one way of seeing the world. In this sense the scenic design always contains a philosophical statement. The proposed access route to the world relies on certain assumptions about the relationship between the internal and external. However, the practitioners are seldom conscious of this – I never think of it that way when I work on a

design. It can be suggested that unawareness of the foundations of one's own thinking is one reason why the theoretical studies and artistic experiences are often seen as incompatible. For me it is the main reason why a dialogue between the two is necessary. It is a matter of understanding the ideological statements lurking in the artistic and technical apparatus of scenography.

Scenography is a theatrical apparatus that makes the play-world visible. As Freddie Rokem suggests, it has been sensitive to the historical changes of perceptive modes.¹ In other words, the 'rhetoric' according to which scenography communicates, proposes a hypothesis about our ability to comprehend the outside world through our eyes. The attitude towards vision has been ambiguous throughout the history of Western thought. According to Martin Jay it has been construed either as the empiricist sight of the carnal eye or as the immediate imagery of the inside mind.² In both cases sight was celebrated as the noblest sense, and as our main route to knowledge.

Jonathan Crary has suggested that in the 19th century a new understanding of subjective vision developed in both art and science. The perceiving subject began to be studied which was in opposition to the God's-eye view promoted by Cartesian modes of vision.³ This is seen, for example, in artistic movements such as impressionism or expressionism where the subjective experience of the artist is the relevant content of a work of art. In modern scenography there has been a persistent movement towards spatial experiences, perceivable through all senses; and also towards an embodied inhabitation of space.

I suggest, based on the arguments of Rokem, Jay, Crary and Arnold Aronson,⁴ that contemporary scenography has developed from the Cartesian vision not only to different forms of subjective vision but it has also focused on the boundary between internal and external, where the theatrical meanings emerge, and which is the site of artistic experiences. The scenographies analyzed more closely in this study, exemplify some variations of this development which Aronson connects to postmodernism.⁵ However, these developments are also apparent in some scenographies that are better classified as modernist. The time period of my study, 1970–1999, certainly saw a movement from modern to postmodern culture in Finnish society. However, I do not want to figure out any linear path leading from one stylistic innovation

1. Rokem 1997, 28.

2. Jay 1993, 29.

3. Crary 1990, 69–70.

4. Aronson 1991.

5. Aronson 1991, 2.

to another, but rather I want to discuss different artistic possibilities coexisting and overlapping with each other.

1.3 THE SCENOGRAPHIES OF MISS JULIE

I will deal more closely with five individual scenographies, all done for the Strindberg's tragedy, *Miss Julie*. My study is, however, not primarily about the traditions of performing the play, but about the scenographic thinking found in some stagings of it. *Miss Julie* mostly serves as a common context that ties the separate scenographies together, especially through its naturalistic ideology, which modern theater makers have tended to work against.

The reason for focusing on stagings of *Miss Julie* was initially purely statistical, though it had its origin in my own experiences as a scenographer. I was obsessed with the double character of scenography. On the one hand it was a visual design in its own right, and on the other it was a functional construction assisting the actors' work – an issue that seems to have bothered many other scenographers as well. I had realized that a visually magnificent set could sometimes grow into an obstacle for the actors' creativity. Like Grotowski, I was ultimately convinced that all you really need in the theater is an actor and a spectator, and I wanted to understand how scenography fits into the equation. What is the role of the visual and spatial arrangement in this basic interaction?

These questions seemed to be linked to the theatrical space. I had been working for several years in a very tiny theater house where the stage was not separated from the auditorium by a proscenium opening. Creating scenographies for this space was different from creating for conventional venues with a proscenium, where you can think of the scenic design as a pictorial vision. On a small stage with no clear boundary between audience and actors the scenographer has to be more involved with the development of stage action. Moreover, the audience can not be hidden but has to be included to the design as an unpredictable element that completes the scenography.

I concluded that the basic interaction between actors and audiences was more visible in tiny theater-rooms. Consequently I decided to take a look at what kind of scenographies had been done in such venues. One of the play-

wrights most performed on small stages was Strindberg, and especially his naturalistic tragedy *Miss Julie*. This should be no surprise since Strindberg, in his preface to the play, made suggestions about staging it in an intimate theater-room which he considered necessary for the suggestive illusion he wanted to create.

Miss Julie contains a spatial dramaturgy, intertwining the actors and stage space into each other in a very creative way. By letting the drama take place in a single setting over one night the author emphasized the intensity of atmosphere but he also developed a stage space where the actors and the scenography were inseparably connected to each other. The naturalistic ideology, expressed in *Miss Julie* and the famous preface written shortly after the play, linked the spatial arrangement of the stage-world to the relationship between performance and its audience.

The preface of *Miss Julie* is a manifestation of theatrical principles that have very much shaped the development of modern theater, providing models that have been both replicated and directly contested. Looking at Strindberg's proposals, it can be noted that most of them have not only come true in contemporary theatrical practice but also become generally accepted conventions.

One uniting feature for the various movements of last century has been the rejection of naturalistic representation based on a verisimilitude with the appearance of the objective world. However, as Una Chaudhuri has shown, *Miss Julie* is a play, which both represents the tradition of high naturalism, and implicitly makes this tradition vulnerable.⁶ This is one reason why the play provides an interesting context for studying scenic modes of representation. It ties them to philosophical discussions about the relationship between man and the world, about our perceptual access to the world, and about how we construct visual illusions.

This problematics has been linked to the spatial arrangement of *Miss Julie* by Freddie Rokem⁷ in his analysis of the theatrical space used in early modern drama. According to Strindberg's instructions, the kitchen should be presented diagonally so that only one corner of it is visible and the audience is conceptually sitting in the invisible part of the kitchen. This imaginary inclusion of the audience to the play-world was linked to the possibility of getting knowledge about the play-world.

6. Chaudhuri 1995, 35.

7. Rokem 1986, 55–58.

Everything the spectator saw was dependent on his/her position inside the performance space. This could be seen as a spatial equivalent to the philosophical idea of existing in the world without access to an absolute knowledge, made possible by means of outside observation. This experience could be applied to the idea of the uncertainty of all knowledge presented through the performance. The function of the scenographic apparatus in *Miss Julie* thus has an epistemological dimension, linked to the question of our existence in the world. The scenographic experiments with *Miss Julie*, discussed in my study, engage with this problematics in different ways.

1.4 UNDERSTANDING SCENIC DESIGNS

I have discussed the scenographies as distinctive case studies, all of which have their own field of problems. The emphasis of each individual study is on a different aspect of scenography, illuminating the many sides of its co-operative character. The questions that have come out of the material correspond to my ideas about the central issues that scenographic design must engage with: the actors' use of space and the production of visions; the practice of constructing the scenographies; the carrying out of the directors' intentions; the spatial experimentations with the audience's position; the use of visual imageries; and the subjectivity of scenographic experiences.

I was faced with the general difficulty of getting relevant information from past performances which exist only as a temporary interaction between actors and audiences. Many factors have influenced the creation of the set designs, and all of them cannot be analyzed within this study. Often it is impossible to be certain, whether a particular solution is due unavoidable circumstances or personal preferences, or whether it is an indication of cultural and social development. The documentary evidence available from the performances is very different. The preserved documents and personal memoirs about the productions exist in fragments and differ greatly.

I am guilty of certain pragmatism because I decided that each scenic design should be studied relative to the evidence that I had access to. In instances where I have seen the staging live or on video, I have focused on giving a performance analysis, as my access route to the design is as a spectator. When I have not been able to view the performance, I have concentrated on

problems related to the creative process of scenic design. For this I have used rehearsal diaries, notes and interviews of the artists as my primary sources.

I have not systematically posed the same questions to each scenography, as if they were different paradigmatic versions of one basic task. Nor do I compare them to each other in order to categorize their features and to discern a common linear development. This is partly because of the differing nature of my sources but also because such attempts did not give answers that would have satisfied me.

Rather, I aspire to engage in five relatively independent discussions about the ways in which the world can be seen through scenography, and what kind of problems this creates. My method has been to develop the theoretical questioning starting from the concrete evidence, and not so much to systematize the evidence into a uniform, previously defined theoretical network. This may cause confusion but I hope that through this attitude I can better respect the particular artistic character of each scenography.

My study unfortunately lacks a scoping of connections between scenography and the historical development of culture and society. I am deeply convinced that this relationship is of vital importance but I have not the scholarly qualification needed for that kind of analysis. I am not a historian, nor a sociologist, but a scenographer. The focus of my study is on artistic thinking, not in the economical and political structures irrevocably conditioning it.

1.5 THE CHOICE OF THE SCENOGRAPHIES FOR CLOSER STUDY

The Finnish Theatre Information Centre has listed almost 40 professional stagings of *Miss Julie* in Finland. Chapter 5 gives a short overview of the *Miss Julie* scenographies after 1945, concentrating on periods when the play seems to have awoken particular interest; the years immediately after the wars, and the end of the 1970s and 1980s. All professional stagings of the play in Finland are listed in the Appendix 1, and the most relevant information of the performances since Second World War is introduced in Appendix 2.

I have chosen to closely examine five scenographies, which offer the most opportunity to discuss the subject of my interest. Firstly, they differed from the

conventional kitchen and somehow challenged or negotiated the naturalistic ideology of the play. These kinds of stagings were mostly found among the experimental performances starting in the 1960s. The following decades have been a time of rapid development for Finnish theater and society; and scenographic thinking has gone through fundamental changes during this period.

Secondly, the chosen scenographies represent, in my eyes, some of the most distinct styles of recent Finnish scenography, although they cannot be seen as a comprehensive overview. My major concern has been the relevance of scenographic statements and problems from the perspective of common theater practice, as I know it from my own experience. I have not looked for artistically or historically remarkable performances, introducing new innovations but for examples of scenographic thinking that have come to be representative of contemporary Finnish theater. Although I have not participated in the making of any scenographies discussed, I have assisted with other productions that have similar methods, aims and difficulties.

I first examined Finnish *Miss Julie* performances by means of newspaper reviews where I could get some rough idea about each scenography. Through this resource my attention was drawn to about ten performances that seemed to exemplify the issues of my interest. I decided to focus only on half of them in order to keep the material within a reasonable size, and also to avoid overlapping discussions of the same issues. Another criterion for the selection was the availability and richness of documentary material about the performances.

I have also tried to pay attention to the diversity of the theatrical context of the performances. It ranges between an experimental project at Tampere University to a staging in the Finnish National Theatre. The performance spaces vary from modern studio stages to temporary touring venues. The scenic artists have different backgrounds, for example one of them was a Polish actor-director, and the professional Finnish scenographers are also from dissimilar backgrounds.

I'm painfully aware that I have put aside many stagings which are equally worth studying. This kind of a choice is always more or less arbitrary, following my own preferences and interests. And by limiting myself to *Miss Julie* I have missed the opportunity to deal many important scenographic phe-

nomenons, not represented among the performances of this play. My thesis should not be read as a complete survey either on Finnish scenography or on *Miss Julie* but as an attempt to shed some light on this still very unexplored domain of theater.

“*Strindberg 70?*”, discussed in Chapter 6, is an example of a scenography that is devised during stage rehearsals and therefore benefits spontaneous impulses. The set and props had no realistic function but the actors used them metaphorically. The actors’ gestures also created visual images and representations of space and place. The scenography and the actors made up an interactive system, and there was needed no special scenic designer. “*Strindberg 70?*” focused my attention to the construction of theatrical signs through embodied action instead of stable images, and to the meanings created by lived experiences of space.

Chapter 7 discusses the production of *Miss Julie* in the Turku Swedish Theater. It draws attention to the technical procedure of creating the set. It considers the challenges of making scenic designs for touring performances relevant to their various local environments. Finally, it investigates the communicative role of modern scenography as a spatio-visual metaphor for the director’s underlying message. This chapter is certainly the most practically oriented, pointing out some conditions and premises of a scenographer’s daily work. However, a more theoretical statement can be made about this. The machinery of designing, constructing and setting up scenographies exists within the context of a historically and materially conditioned apparatus, which not only draws the limits of artistic expression, but also creates meanings of its own. The intended artistic communication only takes place within this apparatus.

These two chapters focus on the scenographic process from three different perspectives: acting, stage practice, and the director’s analysis. My viewpoint is that of the artists working on a stage.

Chapter 8, *Miss Julie* at *KOM-teatteri*, deals with spatial arrangements and defines the limits and possibilities of how a performance can be received by an audience. The perspective of the audience was observed by situating the play in a cafeteria. Julie’s tragedy took place here, among the spectators. This draws the attention to the boundary between public and private, and also to

the fragmentary view of each spectator sitting in the middle of the events. Instead of constructing a set on stage, the scenographer operated on the entire perceptual apparatus of the theatrical event.

Chapter 9 introduces *Miss Julie* at the studio stage *Willensauna* in the Finnish National Theatre, here the visual appearance of the stage superseded the performance. Images were used to manipulate the spectators' emotional experiences, thus determining the way the play was to be received. The primacy given to visual perception emphasized the significance of senses in the constitution of thought. The spectators' receptive mode was defined by the overwhelming visual apparatus – in spite of their outer differences; this scenography shared a common attitude with the *KOM* staging. They both openly manipulated the limits and possibilities of seeing, and thus made us aware of the subjectivity of vision.

These two chapters concentrate on the ways in which scenography functions as an apparatus that can determine the play's reception. In the chapters I have placed myself in the audience and considered the impact of scenic designs from this position.

In Chapter 10 the scenic design for *Miss Julie* performed in *Q-teatteri* is discussed in terms of its facilitation a dialogue between subjective inputs and reactions to the play. The scenery creates a boundary between inside experiences and outside worlds. I benefited from seeing the performance live and speaking in depth with the scenographer about her creative process. This enabled me to consider this staging as a dialogue between different subjective perspectives (ie that of the scenographer and that of the audience) which in my opinion is the basis of artistic communication.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 11, I suggest that the scenographic thinking in all these performances undermines the naturalist comprehension of vision as a direct route to the world 'as it is'. The productions engage with questions about the ways in which our perception is constructed. How do we get information from the outside world through our eyes; why do we experience images as meaningful; can we share our vision with other people? The scenographies of *Miss Julie* problematize the act of seeing the world, thus continuing the discussion started by Strindberg.

The five scenic designs will all be dealt in their own chapters. The documentary material of the performances will be introduced more profoundly in separate appendices containing photographs, interviews, notes from rehearsals, reviews, background information etc. In these sections I had to be strategic with my selection in order to keep the appendices at a reasonable size. They mainly included photos, stills from the videos, contextual material, interviews and notes that shed light on the issues discussed in the study.

1.6 LITERATURE AND SOURCES

One of my biggest problems has been the limited amount of theoretical writings on scenography. Although there are a number of practical guidebooks, only few writers have taken an interest in scenography as a scholarly subject. The most important of them is arguably Arnold Aronson. His book *History and Theory of Environmental Scenography*⁸ and article “Postmodern Design”⁹ have been greatly beneficial to my study.

The few written discussions by scenographers that exist are often accessible only to professionals in the field. Pamela Howard has made a remarkable step with her book *What Is Scenography?*¹⁰ It combines practical knowledge, personal experience and artistic opinions to theoretical questions, and makes them comprehensible for a wider audience.

The opportunity for doctoral students at the art universities has created a new scholarly field of practicing artists in Finland. The director Annette Arlander graduated as the first doctor of art at the Theatre Academy with her thesis *Esitys tilana (The Performance as Space)* in 1998.¹¹ In this she discusses her own productions in different spaces, giving a text-based analysis, as well as a director and actor’s perspective. The 1996 licentiated thesis *Mistä kuvat tulevat? (Where Do Images Come From?)* by Liisa Ikonen, deals with the process of four experimental performances from the subjective perspectives of the scenographic artist.¹² Rauni Ollikainen has given an overview of the development of Finnish scenography in her licentiated thesis *Muuttuva lavastus (Changing Scenography)*.¹³

Although these works are close to the context of my study, my theoretical support is rather derived from using scenography ideas that have been devel-

8. Aronson 1981.

9. Aronson 1991.

10. Howard 2002.

11. Arlander 1998.

12. Ikonen 1996.

13. Ollikainen 1996.

oped for more general purposes in theater studies. The theories I have selected for my study are those that seem to enrich my questions.

First of all I have linked the development of modern scenography to the use of vision, space and platiality in the dramatic works of August Strindberg, particularly in *Miss Julie*.¹⁴ While I have been short of scholarly approaches to scenography, there is an overwhelming amount of work on this naturalistic play and its author. I have had to focus on texts that directly deal with the spatial thematic or with the apparatus that makes the play-world visible to audiences.

I have rested primarily on Freddie Rokem's spatial analysis of *Miss Julie* introduced in several books and articles: *Theatrical Space in Ibsen, Chechov and Strindberg; Public Forms of Privacy*,¹⁵ "The Camera and the Aesthetics of Repetition: Strindberg's Use of Space and Scenography in *Miss Julie*, *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*",¹⁶ and "From One-Point Perspective to Circular Vision: Some Spatial Themes and Structures in the Modern Theatre".¹⁷ The concept of *geopathology* developed by Una Chaudhuri, and her reading of *Miss Julie* as an impasse of naturalism in the book *Staging Place, The Geography of Modern Drama* have both proved very useful.¹⁸

I gained an overview of modern writing about *Miss Julie* from the books *Miss Julie, a Play and Its Transpositions*¹⁹ by Barry Jacons and Egil Törnqvist, and *Perspektiv på Fröken Julie*²⁰ edited by Ulla-Britta Lagerroth and Göran Lindström. Strindbergian thinking related to my study has been explored more generally in the following articles: Egil Törnqvist: "Strindberg and Subjective Drama",²¹ Harry G. Carlson: "Strindberg and Visual Imagination",²² Eszter Szalczer: "Nature's Dream Play: Modes of Vision and August Strindberg's Re-Definition of the Theatre".²³

These studies deal primarily with the literary text instead of performances on stage but they offer a view into the ways in which the visual and spatial apparatus is supposed to work as one primary element of the drama. Thereby, they enable discussions about the role of scenography as a tool for making the spectator see. I have borrowed the idea about a 'rhetoric of scenography' from William B. Worthen, who in his book *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theatre* has analyzed the ways in which different performance genres speak to their audiences.²⁴

14. I have been using
The english edition
Translated by
Edwin Björkman,
Dover publications
1992 (1913).

15. Rokem 1986.

16. Rokem 1988.

17. Rokem 1997.

18. Chaudhuri 1995.

19. Törnqvist-Jacobs
1988.

20. Lagerroth-
Lindström 1972.

21. Törnqvist 1991.

22. Carlson 1991.

23. Szalczer 2001.

24. Worthen 1992.

Since scenography is primarily a visual art form, a great part of my theoretical framework must come from that field. However, art history has traditionally almost totally ignored scenography, probably because of its uncomfortable position between the fields of theater and art. My solution has been to raise visibility itself into one central problem. The scenic design represents the visual dimension of a performance received through all communicative channels. For this I have been using the historical survey of the philosophy of vision by Martin Jay: *Downcast Eyes, The Denigration of Vision in the Twentieth Century French Thought*²⁵. Another useful book has been *The Techniques of the Observer* by Jonathan Crary²⁶ introducing the concepts of Cartesian and subjective visions. I have also benefited from the phenomenological ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty²⁷, and the impressive work about spatial imageries by Gaston Bachelard²⁸.

One of the most recent books related to scenography is *Space in Performance* by Gay McAuley,²⁹ who emphasizes the inseparability of physical space and the experience of a live performance, and thus justifies my phenomenological approach. There are also many great books like *Places of Performances* by Marvin Carlson³⁰, *Architecture, Actor & Audience* by Iain Macintosh³¹, *Environmental Theater*³² and *Between Theater & Anthropology* by Richard Schechner³³, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* by Bert O. States³⁴ which are a bit further from my exact subject, but have helped me to link stage design to larger contexts and structures, and influenced my thinking concerning the representative capability of stage. *Den moderna teaterns genombrott 1890–1925* by Gösta M. Bergman³⁵ gives a good introduction to the history of early modern scenography showing how theater makers and theoreticians working a hundred years ago were involved with the same kinds of questions as they are today.

The history of Finnish scenography has been studied very little. When the University of Industrial Arts and the Theatre Museum arranged a seminar about research and documentation of scenography in 1983, professor Timo Tiusanen noted that it was a very unaccomplished project containing more gaps than a skeleton.³⁶ Twenty years on, the situation has not improved much, although a number of important individual studies have come out of the University.

25. Jay 1994 (1993).

26. Crary 1990.

27. Merleau-Ponty
2002 (1945).

28. Bachelard 2003
(1957).

29. McAuley 1999.

30. Carlson 1989.

31. Macintosh 1995.

32. Schechner 1994.

33. Schechner 1985.

34. States 1985.

35. Bergman 1966.

36. Tiusanen 1986.

Aside from the survey by Rauni Ollikainen,³⁷ there is the work of Heta Reitala who has studied Finnish scenography in the early 20th century, particularly the works of Matti Wärén³⁸ who is perhaps our most well-known scenographer. Pentti Paavolainen has analyzed the scenographic ideas of the director Jouko Turkka as part of his theatrical development in the late 1970s.³⁹ The link between industrial art and scenography has been discussed by Johanna Savolainen in her study about the theatrical works by Timo Sarpeneva and Oiva Toikka.⁴⁰

Lastly I would like to mention the most unreliable, uncertain but not unimportant source of my study: the unwritten knowledge acquired through my own experiences in theater practice. It can not be relevantly generalized or proved because of its subjectivity, particularity, inaccuracy and transitional nature. Regardless I think that this knowledge should not be ignored because scenographic communication takes place through the procedures you experience as a practitioner and spectator.

This experience is invaluable for overcoming the problematic of the temporal performance that no personal experience nor any detailed documentation can ever bring back. For the last twenty years my job has been to figure out how a planned scenography would work in the *mise-en-scène*. The experience of anticipating the scenic visions and stage events more or less successfully has probably given me some idea about the relation between imagined and realized scenes. The documentary material of a past performance can be approached as if it were a design. How would it look when staged, according to my experiences? What kind of practical problems arise with certain kinds of design?

My opinions are of course influenced by my own artistic and practical thinking. It is for this reason that I would rather describe my writing as discussions about and interpretations of the scenographies, rather than as verifiable statements about their 'real' beings. This is particularly true of the newest scenography which I have seen as a live performance. I think that my reading of it is even more unreliable than that of the older productions which I know only from the recorded perspectives of other individuals; photos, rehearsal notes, diaries, videotapes, reviews and interviews.

37. Ollikainen 1996.

38. Reitala 1986, 1991.

39. Paavolainen 1986.

40. Savolainen 1999.

2

Being a Scenographer

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss scenography from the viewpoint of a theater practitioner. Instead of suggesting an exhaustive definition for the word scenography, I understand it as a multi-leveled field of problems dealing with spatio-visual perception and its use as a means of artistic communication in theater.

The word scenography originally derives from the Greek *sceno-grafika* which means writing on stage. For contemporary purposes it could be translated as; using the stage as a way of creating meanings.

In theater practice scenography means the design and construction of stage space which traditionally represents the fictive milieu of the play. However, in modern theater it refers to a holistic arrangement of the performance space which does not have to stand for any particular environment. In Finnish the word *skenografia* also includes the costumes, lights, props, hair-dresses and make-ups, therefore incorporating all the visual signs of a performance, except the actors' mimes and gestures.¹

We have another Finnish word for scenography, *lavastus*, which I like very much because it literally means to put something on stage, or to equip something with a stage. It comes close to the word *mise-en-scène*, which has a holistic meaning rather than referring simply to background sceneries. Scenography is inextricably linked to the direction process of a play – it is probably no coincidence that in Estonian the word *lavastaja* means director.

Scenography cannot be thought of as distinct from the transient theatrical performance which – as often repeated – is completed only in the interaction between the spectators and the actors. Although the set and costumes

1. Reitala 1986, 90.

can be seen as artifacts documenting the past event, and sometimes as artifacts on their own terms, they cannot be properly referred to as scenography outside the live performance. Hence you cannot talk of scenography as an independent artistic enterprise. It seems more useful to think of it as a specific viewpoint on a performance.

It can be said that there is a scenographic aspect embedded in every performance because all theatrical action takes place in some physical location. On the other hand, the fictive time and place can be represented by almost any communicative channel. A visible illusion can be completely replaced by spoken texts that just give information about the time and place of a scene. The place can be represented by mere sounds, for example the cries of seagulls bring the performance to the seashore, or the whistle of a locomotive makes us think of a railway. Even a radio play creates an experience of space and place, and so does a drama only silently read for oneself.

Consequently, the set may work aurally when for example the material of the stage floor makes a particular sound when stepped on by the actors. It can also be smelt, or the audience may have physical contact with the set, for example, by means of unusually placed seats. Finally all scenic meanings are only created and decoded in the context of a living performance. That is why scenography resembles of the everyday experience of an environment where all communicative channels merge into each other.

Scholarly definitions of scenography are often based on semiotic understandings of performance as a network of sign-systems that can be grouped according to their properties, for example, visual or aural signs; fixed or moveable signs; signs existing in time or space; signs closely connected to actor's body or those outside of it.² Scenography could thus be defined as a system of visual and spatial, relatively fixed, theatrical signs existing outside the actor's body.

However, the semiotic classifications are usually accompanied by the understanding that one system may take over the task of another, and the meanings are fluctuating and exist only in cooperation with all the systems. Erika Fischer-Lichte gives a useful definition, suggesting that theatrical signs are always derived from cultural signs. They may or may not have the same material constitution as the primary signs that they signify.³ A chair can be rep-

2. Salosaari 1989, 36;
Elam 1980, 50–51.

3. Fischer-Lichte
1992 (1983), 9.

resented by a chair but it also possible that the actor only imitates the act of sitting down. That gestured sign is understood by our cultural habit of sitting on a chair. The skill of creating scenic illusions is not that of constructing visual equivalences but to make the spectator recall an experience from his/her memory. This may happen by any means.

It is mostly for practical reasons that scenography has been separated into a domain and profession of its own. Whether a specialized spatio-visual designer is needed at all in every production, has in fact been a much-debated question among Finnish directors and scenographers during the past decades. The professional identities, as well as the practical job descriptions, continually change depending on local and historical circumstances, production systems, institutional structures, traditions and conventions, rehearsing methods, technical facilities, individual skills and personal preferences.

In her recently published book *What Is Scenography?* Pamela Howard has listed a definition for the word scenography formulated by 44 professional scenographers from different countries. Their answers make out a divergent selection of possible conceptions of scenography. Howard seems to propose the notion that being a scenographer means adopting a more holistic attitude towards theater-making, as compared to that of a traditional set designer responsible only for the background sceneries.

Scenography describes a holistic approach to making theatre from the visual perspective.

...

To be called a scenographer means more than decorating a background for actors to perform in front of. It demands parity between creators, who each have individual roles, responsibilities and talents. The prerequisite for going forward in this new century of theatre-making starts with all the different disciplines involved in creating a production having a better understanding of each other's work processes and achievements.⁴

...

When designers redefine themselves as scenographers, they signify that they are willing to go further than just designing sets and costumes to create an attractive stage picture. It means they are prepared to watch and study the actors in rehearsal, understand how a performance

4. Howard 2002, 125–126.

*grows, and how the stage environment and the costumes can work together to enhance the actor's performance.*⁵

This coincides with the description of the job given by the Department of Scenography at the University of Art and Design Helsinki in 2002:

*A scenographer is a designer, who is responsible for the totality of space and action in a performance or audio-visual production together with the director and other artistic staff.*⁶

The emphasis of space and action is remarkable because traditionally scenography has been closely connected to the visual arts. Ever since the Renaissance scenography has meant the skill of painting sceneries and constructing illusions of perspective. While the same backdrops could be used in different plays performed in conventional surrounds, the scenographer was more involved with the traditions of painting, than stage action. In spite of the artistic skill required, the professional identity of a scenographer has been seen as that of a craftsman rather than of an artist.

The typical painted sceneries of the Finnish National Theatre were mostly imported from abroad until the early years of the 20th century. In the 1910s and 1920s the first generation of scenographic artists emerged, bringing new international styles of symbolism and expressionism to Finland. Among them were, for example, Yrjö Ollila, Matti Warén and Karl Fager. Still, in the lesser Finnish theaters, especially in the provincial towns, most sets were made by actors and amateurs who happened to be skilled in painting and carpentry. This was the case until the 1960s and 1970s.

Along side the development of modern theater in the 20th century the scenographer has gained artistic importance as one of the leading members in the ensemble. The foundation of a federation for scenographers in 1928 was a significant indicator of a new artistic awareness among scenographers. The growing number of professional scenographers and the demand for them in theaters all over the country are illustrated in the following figures: The first constitutive meeting of the federation was attended by nine artists, eight of whom came from Helsinki.⁷ In 2000 there were 161 members in the Union of Scenographers, and a third of them lived outside the capital region.⁸

5. Howard 2002, 87.

6. The study guide of the University of Art and Design Helsinki 2002.

7. Reitala 1986, 10.

8. The Union of Scenographers, list of members 2000.

The educational level of scenographers has become more prestigious. Training for scenographers was available in the teaching program at the Theater School in 1953 but it was moved to the Graphic Design Department in School of Industrial Arts in 1961 which was at that time a vocational school. Scenography was established as a separate faculty in 1973 when the School of Industrial Arts became accredited as an independent university.

The TV and film industry has of course played an important role for scenographers by offering an increasing number of jobs, and also by glorifying work done in the new media sector. In the theater, the new artistic position of scenographers has been made possible because of the rapid growth of professional theaters subsidized by states and communes.

Along with the building of new theater houses with advanced stage technology, dozens of vacancies for scenographers emerged throughout the country during the 1970s and 1980s. Modern stages did not only offer possibilities, but also created a need for visual attractiveness that required a special artistic know-how. In the same way that scenography has, costume, lighting, sound, hair, masks and make-up have all become distinct and separate fields of artistic design, employing trained and specialized professionals.

The scenographer has also become more dependent on the collective working process. In the 1960s it was still customary in Finnish theater that a scenographer, after completing his/her maquette at the start of rehearsals, would only reappear to watch the premiere. During the 1970s and 1980s it became more and more usual for the scenographer to regularly attend rehearsals, visit the workshops and be ready to change his/her design if necessary. The scenographer became more closely integrated to the team.

Theater history has taught us that the great scenographic advance of the 20th century was the move from flat representations to three-dimensional, architectural spaces, best known through the works by Adolphe Appia. The new way of spatially conceiving the stage created closer links between the actors and the stage space, thus, inextricably connecting set design to the direction of the play. The traditional painting of background decorations obviously required great artistic skills but from the viewpoint of the actors the spatial order of stage was always the same. The movements and actions on

the stage could be rehearsed independently of the scenographer's job which was simply to fill in the background of the performance.

Modern theater generated constant experimentation with the stage space. Spatial scenic solutions were not borrowed from conventional practice but rather created by the working team and devised specifically for each production. Therefore, much more collaboration and negotiation between the team-members was needed. The relationship between actors and the set became more complex. It was devised for each production during the rehearsals which meant that the scenographer had to be present in order to develop his/her plans.

In contemporary theater, where several different working methods and artistic values are accepted, a scenographer has to be a little like a chameleon. Instead of always employing their personal style, most scenographers – with a few exceptions – have to adjust to the variable conditions of different productions if they want to make a living. This kind of an adaptation may sound like it undermines the artistic originality of a scenographer, however, in my opinion it allows the artistic identity to be collectively shared with the theater ensemble. What counts there is not the scenography as an independent work but the performance.

It is often said that after the premiere nobody can remember who originally invented the scenic ideas. Usually they are not discovered all at once but rather they are developed through dialogues between all members of the working team. If that process can be traced back a series of loose associations and intuitions is often revealed whose development seems quite irrational and sporadic. That is why any strict division of labor or schematic model of production seldom works.

We also know how difficult it is afterwards to discern between artistic intentions and practically or even coincidentally determined decisions. The only reason for the color of a wall may be due to the abundance of cheap left-over paint. Nevertheless, there is an element of artistic choice involved, namely a lack of concern about the color. If the scenographer has been satisfied with the available paint instead of striving for a particular shade, it is obvious that the exact tone of the color did not matter at that time for some reason. For example, the color perceived by audience may be created by the lightning,

and the hue of the wall would therefore not be visible. And of course, the scenographer may be lazy, the financial manager may be stingy, there may be a lack of money or time restraints.

The scenographer seldom makes the final decisions about scenes singularly. Rather they are made in negotiation with other domains of the performance and production system. This does not necessarily take place through an oral conversation, it may only happen in the mind of the scenographer responding to the course taken by the process. Being a professional also means the internalization of certain values and preferences accepted by the cultural reference group of the artist, a kind of artistic paradigm.

There is nothing new in the fact that any act of communication needs at least two participants, the speaker and the listener. The role of the listener is active in many ways, not only as the interpreter of the message. Even if there is no direct contact with the audience, the speaker has certain expectations about their capabilities to understand, and modifies the message according to them. The presumed receivers are thus included in the rhetoric of communication.

If we think of scenography as communicating a message, this basic model can be applied to it. The designer anticipates what kind of visual and spatial experience the spectator is going to have. S/he also has a relative knowledge about how visual and spatial perception is constructed and understood by the human mind. To put it simply, the scenographer more or less consciously thinks of questions such as: How does our act of seeing and sensing space actually take place? How can I use this knowledge in order to generate an illusion? How can I fool the mind's perceptive faculties? What kind of significance do we see in an image or in space? Where do they come from? How can the audience be made to grasp the intended significant message?

The answers to these questions require an artistic and rhetorical attitude. The scenic design is a tool that allows us to represent the world. It constructs a visual and spatial experience for the audience by making the spectator see the environment of the drama in the way the authors wish. It does not represent only a place and its inhabitants but also a way of perceiving and conceiving the surrounding world. Therefore, it always rests on some assumptions about how we see and how we make sense of our vision – an approach

that connects scenography to the phenomenological questions. In other words, a scenographer not only stages the play world but also stages the supposed audience as experiencing subjects.

When we talk about language, we usually can easily discern between different speech styles that are directed to certain kinds of audiences. However, when it comes to scenography, we are mostly dealing with a phenomenon that is not primarily thought of as communication with a particular addressee.

Most of the visual communication is taken for granted. If we, for example, see a chair on stage we probably do not think of it as a source of knowledge. However, we immediately register its style, age, condition, size and use, thus gaining a lot of information without paying much attention to it. That is what often happens in everyday life. We rarely think of space and vision as a vehicle of metaphorical communication but rather as a commonplace phenomenon always surrounding us.

However, when looking at the world we do not just passively receive information, but we actively, even if mostly unconsciously, try to make sense about everything we see. In other words, there is no pure perception, but we tend to conceptualize the world around us. When making a scenic design (or any kind of visual art) we try to reproduce the visual and spatial experiences that elicit our intended significations and associations.

Theatrical communication takes place between living subjects, and is limited by their constitution. A staging is an invitation to have a dialogue with the artist's thoughts. The language necessary for this interaction may have its foundations in very different kinds of human experiences.

3

Making the Spectator See

Vision as a Problem

One of the most apposite definitions of scenography has been given by Freddie Rokem, according to whom the visual apparatus “can, simply put, present what we are supposed to see”. He goes on to say that

For this reason the dialectical interaction between the subjective forms of vision and the objective exterior world, the changes of which Crary as well many other critics and historians have examined, has been one of the most central issues for the modern theatre.¹

The role given to scenography in the context of a performance has to do with understanding visual perception as our channel to the outside world. What kind of knowledge can be achieved through our eyes? The simplest answer seems to be found in the classical distinction between empiricism and rationalism.

For example, if we believe in our ability to gain information by looking empirically at the world, we might be inclined towards naturalistic modes of representation where careful observation provides enough tools for explaining how things really are. Disregarding scenography as a meaningful mode of expression could be connected to distrust in sensual perception as a source of knowledge. A performance emphasizing the spoken words might rest on a philosophy that gives primacy to literal language and reason as fundamental ways of understanding the world. A visual illusion may also be understood as a view into a metaphysical world, the ‘truth’ of which can be achieved by an inner eye.

However, when it comes to our present day interpretation of the distinction between mind and matter, the relationship between the observer and the

1. Rokem 1997, 29.

world observed has become more complicated. As Rokem points out, it is the interactive process of perception itself which has become one of the major concerns of modern art and theater. According to Arnold Aronson

*Postmodernism shifts the basis of the work of art from the object to the transaction between the spectator and the object and further deconstructs this by negating the presence of a representative objective viewer.*²

In this chapter I intend to scope the ways in which scenography has negotiated the process of perception for the past three decades. In the first part (3.1) I introduce the hegemonic scenographic tendencies, to go from pictorial to spatial and embody modes of representation, that were manifest in the work of Finnish theater practitioners during the late 1980s. The second part (3.2) is more theoretical, concentrating on the development from naturalistic observation to modern expression of ideas and internal experiences; and from there to the postmodern focus on external surfaces. Although Strindbergian naturalism certainly belongs to the modern era, I have used the term modern to refer to the various movements rejecting naturalism and the representation of the world ‘as it is’.

Thereafter, I attempt to figure out the more general and even philosophical thinking implicated by these scenographic phenomena. I introduce some theoretical readings about our cultural understanding of vision and visibility. Inspired by Martin Jay’s suggestion about the denigration of vision in modern Western thought, I ask the fundamental question, what exactly is vision? (3.3–3.4) The two last parts of the chapter (3.5–3.6) are influenced by the works of Martin Jay and Jonathan Crary. I present a theory about subjective and corporeal conception of vision that exists in opposition to the Cartesian ‘angelic eye’.

3.1 VISUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY SCENOGRAPHY – FROM PICTORIAL TO SPATIAL EXPERIENCES

A central tendency of contemporary scenography is an emphasis on the holistic corporeal experiencing of space and place which differs from the traditional pictorial understanding of the stage. It is most clearly seen when space

2. Aronson 1991, 2.

is privileged as the general starting point for scenic design, endorsed for example by Pamela Howard at the very beginning of her book on scenography: “The world view of scenography reveals that space is the first and most important challenge for a scenographer.”³

William Faricy Condee also starts his guidebook for directors and designers by claiming: “Perhaps the most important step in the production process – and one all too easily rushed through – is the first encounter with the theatre space.”⁴

An emphasis on the dynamics of space in Finnish scenographic thinking was expressed in the annual book *Theatre in Space*, published by the Finnish Theatre Museum in 1988. It presented viewpoints from several leading theater artists. The interest in space was then so omnipresent that the director Jouko Turkka – one of the major scenographic innovators who used theater space with great creativity – expressed frustration in his article: “For ten years or so there has been talk of nothing else but ‘what kind of space is it?’”⁵

The important distinction between spatial and pictorial scenographic thinking is that a space is experienced by entering it, while a merely visual perception is more detached. You do not perceive a surrounding environment only with your eyes but with all your senses. There is the tactility of materials, the warmth, humidity and smell of the air, the sounds echoing from the walls, to mention a few examples. In order to perceive them, you cannot observe from the outside but you must inhabit the world through your body. This corporeal holistic experience of space creates meanings by appealing to our ability for sensual recall. We ‘read’ space by recognizing the smells, sounds and tactile senses which we know from various contexts.

Spatiality also means the possibility for movement inside the space. Although the spectators can seldom physically enter the stage themselves, their imagination can be made to anticipate the possible movements that can exist there. A spatially oriented visual perception should activate the sensomotoric imagination and memory, and not be restricted to simple pictures. This feeling can happen, for example, when we, by looking at a painting, feel like we are really there; sensing the touch of air, the smells and sounds.

3. Howard 2002, 1.

4. Condee 2002, 1.

5. Turkka 1988, 22.

Tiina Makkonen, current professor of scenography at University of Art and Design Helsinki and one of Finland's most prominent scenographers, has expressed this very lucidly in words:

I have not been able to find a solution to the eternal problem of stage decorating that which is associated most concretely with the relationship between stage and auditorium. That world inside which I have been inevitably causes disappointment when it is transferred to the stage. It is no longer the world that surrounded me. The picture flattens out, just like in the cinema or on television. Depending on the size of the stage one finds oneself staring at cinemascope or a video screen. Looked at straight on, the perspective of depth disappears and the further one is from the stage the worse the staging looks. The angle of view flattens the staging, making it no longer possible to get inside the atmosphere created. The staging ends up lacking just that atmosphere which is produced when the space breathes around you.⁶

She goes on to say:

One has to get inside the performance space for the simple reason that we live in spaces. We can look at the landscape but we can always get into it too. Human nature does not take easily a situation where one can only look at something from outside. It's a bit like being told not to go into forest or talking to someone but not getting close to them, by their side. Everyone has experienced the different atmospheres of different spaces; a church has its own atmosphere, people's homes always feel different. Each space breathes its own world. This world should also be the world of the theatre. People have got more senses at their disposal than traditional theater allows for. Subconscious feelings that go straight for the spine, the smell or cold of old buildings, for example, can easily be missed out on in the theatre.⁷

The whole genre of environmental and site-specific staging celebrates this kind of holistic and embodied way of experiencing. A site-specific performance also evokes the memories and history connected to the place which gives the environment a temporal and narrative dimension. The space is conceived as something to be lived through; not as an abstract, atemporal architectural unit, but as a container of experiences. It is not the geometry

6. Makkonen 1988, 36.

7. Makkonen 1988, 38.

of space but the locality and history of a place that thrills scenographers. As Pamela Howard puts it: “A space is a living personality with a past, present and future.”⁸

The disgust at the abstract unparticularity and neutrality of so-called black boxes was uttered out by Måns Hedström, another influential Finnish scenographer:

*If by empty space however we mean the black, static theatre stage, we end up with a way of thinking about space which does not interest me as a practical theatre person and set designer. It is true that on a black stage it is interesting to use lights to good effect, and it's possible to use scenery sparingly. This kind of theatre nearly always remains unreal, static. It is not firmly fixed in reality. We have a theatre performance located in spaceless time. I believe the audience also senses this. We sit in a space where there are no walls to be seen or other familiar things to provide security. We sit in a black theatre machine without knowing where we're flying. We sit in an international machine, with only the name of the airline to distinguish our machine from another exactly the same.*⁹

On the other hand it is not the walls of the theater space, but the social happening inside them that counts. According to the director Pekka Milonoff:

*Putting on a theatre performance does not depend on the stage or the building. It is possible to create a comprehensive, audience-engaging atmosphere just about anywhere. Restrictions and limited external resources have mobilized the imagination. One can start from the theatre's magic, visuality and world of objects. An object can turn in a flash from a vacuum cleaner into an animal, from a handkerchief into one's beloved and these emotions can be heightened by using music.*¹⁰

This also shows the idea of theatrical illusions produced through playful associations instead of visual illusions. If one cannot have a ‘real thing’ on stage it can be represented by an explicit sign which does not rest on an exact iconic similarity. The illusion is generated by activating mental images by means of words, acting, sounds, or other stimuli associating with the represented object.

8. Howard 2002, 2.

9. Hedström 1988, 42.

10. Milonoff 1988, 100.

3.2 FROM MODERN TO POSTMODERN SCENOGRAPHY

Arnold Aronson has very accurately scoped the change from modern to postmodern scenography in his article “Postmodern Design”¹¹ where he points to the most recognizable features of international scenic design in the recent past – documenting it right up to the time of publishing the article, in 1991. However, I have found it difficult to make a clear distinction between modern and postmodern tendencies in Finnish scenography. I rather agree with Aronson when he writes that there is no clear-cut movement that can be termed modern design, let alone an unambiguous understanding of postmodern design. They seem to merge and negotiate with each other, and the postmodernism does not only challenge modernist premises but also develops out of them.

The terms modern and postmodern are extremely problematic, and it is not within the range of this study to examine them exhaustively. However, the period from 1970 to 1999 were a time of large economical, political and cultural change in Finland, and one aspect of this development was certainly a move from modern to postmodern society. The scenographies done during that period reflect this shift, and it seems justified to analyze them using Aronson’s remarks about the modern and postmodern features of scenic design.

What Aronson sees as relevant for modern design is “the presence of a strong metaphorical or presentational image or related series of images”¹² connected by a singular quality or unity, identifiable with the style of the designer, and embodying the fundamental concept or metaphor of the production. Moreover, the modern stage was not to be the place for illusions but identified as the space for acting. If there was any need for representing a location, it “was to be established through dialogue, action, reference, or through suggestive rather than explicit scenery”¹³. The audience was presumed to be homogeneous, sharing perceptual mechanisms common to all viewers within society.

According to Aronson, postmodern design distances itself from modern tenets by constantly making the spectator aware of the experience of viewing, and “of the whole history, context and reverberations of an image in the contemporary world.”¹⁴ There is a dialectical examination of the problematics of seeing which manifest in a kind of pan-historic, omni-stylistic view: “the

11. Aronson 1991.

12. Aronson 1991, 1.

13. Aronson 1991, 4.

14. Aronson 1991, 2.

world is seen as a multiplicity of competing, often incongruous and conflicting elements and images”¹⁵.

*One definition of postmodern design, then, is the juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous elements within the unifying structure of the stage frame, the purpose of which is to create a referential network within the mind of the viewer that extends beyond the immediate apparent world of the play.*¹⁶

According to the article by Aronson, a roughly outlined picture of the development of 20th century scenography can be made: “While a naturalistic set was a physical representation of psychological or sociological theory,” and “the new, modern décor conveyed the spiritual essence of an object – scenery as Platonic shadows,”¹⁷ postmodern design “pastes together a collage of stylistic imitations that function not as style but as semiotic code”.¹⁸ Thus, there is a development from the construction of empirical observation to that of inner images, and finally the conception of scenography as a visual scenic language.

Martin Jay has drawn a line between naturalism and realism in the visual arts concerning the depth of the gaze: “Naturalists relied on a vision that privileged the raw description of surface appearances over the more penetrating gaze revealing the deep structures preferred by Realists.”¹⁹

The concepts of naturalism and realism are frequently used interchangeably within common artistic practice but most people make the distinction that a naturalist artist mechanically copies the outside world, whereas a realist artist distils meaningful content from superficial appearance. The word naturalist has become a term of abuse to describe a failed realist, one who has nothing interesting to say and only lists insignificant details.

Modern artists often called themselves realists when the foundation of their work has been based in the existing world, but they still rejected the claim that they are aspiring to verisimilitudinality. Instead, their priority is with communicating the inherent logic of the world found behind the irrelevant flow of loose details. The modernist idea of scenography is a representation of deep structures instead of mere appearances. Their denial of naturalism is ultimately the denial of its transparency. For example, the director Ralf

15. Ibid.

16. Aronson 1991, 5.

17. Aronson 1991, 4.

18. Aronson 1991, 5.

19. Jay 1993, 173.

Långbacka, who had great influence on Finnish theater in the 1970s, started his definition of realistic theater in the following way:

The realistic theater is not a theater where you, by means of scenography and actors, try to create an illusion of reality, and make believe that what happens on stage really happens somewhere else, and that the actors are not actors but rather, the people that they represent.²⁰

The realistic stage, as described by Långbacka, was openly used as a rhetorical apparatus. The proposed structure of the play-world was presented as a statement made by the artists who were aware of their standpoint and position. This rather Brechtian attitude has very much shaped Finnish scenography during the past three decades.

What surprisingly connects postmodernism to naturalism is its interest in the surface level. The difference is that whereas the surface appearance in naturalism served as a source of reliable knowledge – an attitude often seen as the artistic equivalent to positivism and empiricism – postmodernism denies the possibility of having access to any ‘truth’, and sticks to the uncertainty of unreliable appearances.

The postmodern representation of reality does not offer relevant knowledge, but rather highlights the impossibility of ever providing that. Seeing the world means precisely the inability to understand. Perhaps this is why recent scenography has unashamedly returned to the illustrative pictorial illusions traditionally associated with positivism and empiricism. The naturalistic rhetoric of showing the world ‘as it is’ suddenly means the opposite to its original function, the impossibility of making sense of the world through observation.

What also distinguishes postmodernism from naturalism is a break between visual signs and the objective, ‘real’ world they represent. The illusion has lost its transparency, its capability to serve as a window into another world. The visual sign is not only related to its object but to the very act of representing it. Disconnected from their origins, postmodern images serve as signs for meanings, which are decoded according to variable contexts. In some sense they come more close to the arbitrariness of language which makes it possible to use them more freely than ever.

20. Långbacka & Holmberg 1977, 204.

3.3 AN ANTIVISUAL DISCOURSE?

In his book *Downcast Eyes, the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought*, Martin Jay studies the process of conceiving visuality in Western thinking through 20th century French philosophy. He claims that an *antiocularcentric* discourse has evolved in contemporary philosophy, which has opposed the primacy traditionally given to vision, and can be found in the movements of modern art.²¹

Common sense demands that we question this proposed anti visual discourse and how it fits with the expansive growth of visuality in contemporary culture. Do we not explicitly live in a society, where visual media rules; where teachers are concerned about the new illiteracy among a youth that is accustomed only to a constant flow of images; where an ability to read pictures is repeatedly demanded?

Or are these often-repeated clichés in fact an indication of the high-cultural inimicality to the visual? They mostly highlight the negative aspects of visuality, connecting it to popular culture and entertainment. Is the low value attributed to visual stimulation due to its abundant but successful use in movies, videos, computer games, etc? Is the visual seen as incapable of serving the needs of high culture? (Proof of this kind of attitude can be found in the lack of pictures in any scholarly book. For example there are none in the 600 pages by Jay that discuss the issues of vision and visuality.)

Or is it exactly the overdose of visual stimuli that has jaded us? I probably see more pictures in one day, than anybody living in the earlier centuries of history saw in his/her whole life. How can I call the sight my noblest sense when I know that I ignore most images I see in order to prevent my brains from getting overloaded? Has the anti visual discourse developed as a defense against the growing field of visuality which otherwise turns our thinking into a stream of superficial images?

Or is this paradox just proof of the rupture between philosophical theories and everyday life? Are philosophers so engaged with their books that they do not see what happens around them? Has the practical world already changed direction to revalue vision, and does the future hold a new, visually oriented philosophy?

21. Jay 1993.

The concept of vision of course has a different emphasis in philosophy than in everyday life. What might unite philosophy to the common act of seeing is vision conceived as a deep-rooted metaphor for knowing. It manifests for example in the common English phrase “I see” meaning “I understand”. The contemporary distrust of the eyes can be thought of as analogous to a more general uncertainty of all knowledge. The philosophical denial of a fundamental, absolute ‘truth’ is parallel with the denigration of the sense, by which we most consciously receive knowledge about the outer world. The various experiments of modern art, studying and redefining vision, can be seen as expressions of the insight that there is no access to ‘truth’. The connection between seeing and knowing has not vanished but it has become as relative and complicated as the concept of knowledge itself.

The more closely I have looked at the concepts of vision and viscosity, the more ambiguous and confusing they appear. Every time I manage to formulate some sort of conclusion, the next day I realize that a contradictory claim might be as justified. The reason for this is probably that vision itself is something not reducible to one clear definition. Therefore, it is necessary to ask such a simple question, what actually is vision?

Technically speaking the vision is a process through which light waves reaching the retina are turned into a meaningful representation in human mind. As far as I know the detailed course of this process has not yet been completely explained by science. There is a complicated interaction between the material outside world, the light as a physical phenomenon, the physiological nervous system and the conceptualizing apparatus of the human mind.

3.4 WHAT DO WE SEE?

The process of seeing exemplifies the complicity of human interaction with the outer world, and it is metaphorically connected to our conceptions of knowledge. This was pointed out by George Lakoff and Marc Johnson in the introduction to their theory about embodied understanding of conceptualization and abstract thought.²² They take the concept of color as an example, which is primary for our visual experiences but considered as a secondary property of objects by many philosophers, including John Locke.

22. Lakoff – Johnson
1999, 23–26.

We know that different wavelengths of light are received as colors in the human brain. All material surfaces absorb certain wavelengths and emit others. The light-rays reflected from a surface contain a sample of wavelengths characteristic to it. That is how we determine the color of that surface. Still we all know that depending on the lighting conditions the same surface may have very different shades. (Although daylight is usually considered as neutral, the exact tone of it depends on many factors. It is different, for example, on a winter morning compared to an afternoon in July.) Therefore, you can not actually call color a permanent property of a material, but rather a consequence of its interacting with the variable lighting.

There are three kinds of color cones in the retina of the eye that are specialized in distinguishing different wavelengths of light. Their stimulation makes us see colors. But the cones are receptive to only a small fragment of electromagnetic rays which we call visible light. Some insects can see the ultraviolet light invisible to us, whereas most mammals see fewer colors than humans. No eyes have receptors for X-rays and thus, we do not see through walls. The concept of color makes sense only to somebody sharing the same kind of a perceptual apparatus. For others it would be as incomprehensible and invisible as X-rays were for our ancestors who lacked all knowledge of them.

That also brings us to the old philosophical question: how do we know how other people see the colors? I have no tools to provide assurance that the blue color experienced by you is like that of mine and not, for example, like my experience of red. The perception of color is an internal experience never to be separated from the perceiving subject.

Anybody who has studied fine arts has probably come across Josef Albers' color theory, *Interaction of Colors*.²³ He suggests that when a color is put beside another color its reception is changed. For example, a gray piece of paper next to a green one looks reddish, but when the same gray paper is confronted with a red one, it turns green. The phenomenon is due to the tendency of our eyes to compensate missing stimuli. The perception of a green tone activates the neighboring nerves sensitive to its complementary color, which is red, and vice versa.

Hence, even if we could register the accurate wavelength of light beam, our nervous system would modify the actual perception of its color. It is impossi-

23. Albers, 1972.

ble to establish color as some stabile physical phenomenon since the concept of color itself exists only in the human sensual apparatus. There is no point in talking about an absolute or objective shade of color, since the only way of measuring this shade is looking at it through a human eye. And that, we know, is a very unreliable instrument.

Since the simple physical sense, perception of color, has proved to be so complicated, I do not intend to discuss the huge question that surrounds the symbolic values and interpretations of colors. It is a topic for a completely new dissertation. Color is only one aspect of our vision; however, we could equally have similarly complicated discussions about issues such as outlines, shapes and three-dimensionality of space.

It is extremely important to acknowledge that the act of seeing is not only a passive reception of nervous impulses but a process guided by visual culture and habits. There is a story about an Inuit artist who was very skilled at sculpting animals but could not draw a match box. Rectangular shapes were unfamiliar to him as a result of their absence in his environment. None of us are able to observe the surrounding world with universal, objective or neutral eyes. We all have learned to see and we can not observe things impartially.

Although we know how easily the eye can be fooled throughout history sight has been considered a powerful provider of truth: “I won’t believe until I see”. According to Martin Jay, vision has until modern times typically been considered the most important human sense and therefore, as the primary source of empirical knowledge about the external world.²⁴ This coincides with our everyday experiences since we gain a great deal of information through sight. On the other hand, the vast developments in science and technology have made us more and more aware of physical phenomenon inaccessible to our embodied senses; and respectively our culture has produced a huge amount of visual experiences with no equivalence in existing reality. To quote Lakoff and Johnson, there is an increasing gap between the “phenomenological and scientific levels of truth claims”.²⁵ This might have something to do with Jay’s proposed “denigration of vision in 20th century philosophy”.

What this has to do with scenography? Scenography can be understood as precisely this use of embodied experiences (sight and sense of space) as sourc-

24. Jay 1993, 29.

25. Lakoff – Johnson
1999, 105.

es for knowledge, understanding, abstract ideas and meanings – relevant as well for naturalistic, modern and postmodern orientations. The negotiations and experiments with different modes of vision can be seen as metaphorical negotiations with the inconsistency between phenomenological experiences, and conceptualized understanding.

Moreover, there are visual experiences that seem to work from our inside minds rather than from the stimuli of outside reality. Our visuality is not only a flow of instantaneous and immediate perceptions, but it is also a part of the process of memorizing things, organizing experiences and even creating new images that reflect our mental processes. We conceptualize things by giving them a visual shape in our minds, and this is echoed, for instance, in the countless visual metaphors found in language.

I have never been able to read fiction without having some, mostly very vague, undetermined and even irrational images circling in my head. The literal words are able to activate our visual apparatus without providing any physical entity to perceive. The reception of fine art probably involves a similar kind of negotiation between the perception of eyes and inner images and visual memories stored in the mind.

3.5 CARTESIAN VISION

According to Martin Jay the continuous privileging of sight during most historical periods is due to the ambiguous nature of vision itself. Vision may appear as a projection of outer reality, or as an inside image, which for its part can be seen as a production of the human or divine mind.

For if vision could be construed as either the allegedly pure sight of perfect and immobile forms with 'the eye of the mind' or as the impure but immediately experienced sight of actual two eyes, when one of these alternatives was under attack, the other could be raised in its place. In either case, something called vision could still be accounted the noblest of the senses.²⁶

Ocularcentrism reached its peak in the theory termed Cartesian vision which separates the corporeal observer from the object of his/her observation. The

26. Jay 1993, 29.

act of seeing is changed into an “eternal container of objective processes”.²⁷ Vision is conceived as an atemporal gaze, achievable for everyone. Even more important is the independence of vision of any seeing subject, the valorization of the disembodied, ‘angelic’ eye. The act of seeing is reduced to an abstract, unembodied construction to be studied and reproduced by means of pure reason outside the restrictions of corporeality.²⁸

One central idea of Cartesian philosophy, the distinction between the material body and the rational mind, can be seen as metaphorically represented in the laws of optics, studied by Descartes himself. The linear perspective, which has been fundamental in Western painting since the Renaissance, carries out a mathematically – and thus is independent from the carnal eye – constructed projection of space. Vision is therefore understood as an abstract model, according to which light-waves are supposed to act regardless of the whims of the corporeal eyes.

According to Jay the separation of vision from the incarnate observer made Cartesian perspectivalism successful, since it encouraged both speculative and empirical concepts of vision.²⁹ Cartesian Vision can easily be interpreted as the view of an almighty God who sees the true essence of the world. However, the new empirical science could share this notion of an absolute representation of the existing world that is achievable by means of an advanced technique of observation.

*Descartes assumed that the clear and distinct ideas available to anyone’s mental gaze would be exactly the same because of the divinely insured congruence between such ideas and world of extended matter. Individual perspectives did not, therefore, matter, as the deictic specificity of the subject could be bracketed out in any cognitive endeavor.*³⁰

Vision could be elevated above the temporality and uncertainty of other senses. Observation could thus be a tool of a rational mind, capable of achieving permanent knowledge of the world.

The idea of vision as an objective process of representing the world makes it also theoretically possible for everyone to have a similar access to it, since it is not dependent on the observer. This rationalizing of vision contributed to

27. Jay 1993, 53.

28. Jay 1993, 81.

29. Jay 1993, 80.

30. Jay 1993, 189.

the presumption of a 'democratic' view of enlightenment similarly perceived by everyone. On a practical level it was carried out by modern observational innovations, and by copying and distributing pictures. Interestingly, the advance of optical science and new instruments contributed to the denigration of Cartesian perspectivalism in the 19th century.

Perhaps the possibility of reproducing visual representations by technical means provoked questions about the specific nature of human seeing. Once the appearance of the outside world could be replicated by photography, artists started to focus on the phenomenon of perception which was not reducible to the optics of a camera. Despite the strong belief in the authenticity of a photograph, we more or less consciously sense the profound rupture between the view of a camera and our lived experience. On the other hand, the camera and other optical instruments can reveal views not otherwise visible to our eyes, and thus point to the limits of our everyday vision.

The art historian Jonathan Crary, who has studied the advance of technological instruments of observation and tools that reproduce visual images, claims that a new understanding of subjective vision emerged in both optical science and fine arts before the middle of 19th century.³¹ He proposes that, "by 1840 the process of perception itself had become, in various ways, a primary object of vision."³² It was then understood that the perception of the outside world was created in conjunction with the psycho-physiological apparatus of the perceiver. The notion of this subjective vision has led to knowledge about the limits and possibilities of our senses but it has also enabled the huge manipulation of perception that is omnipresent in modern mass culture. In art it means the representation of the world as it seen through the eyes of the artist. The subject of the work is not the object existing in the outside world but the artist's internal experience.

Crary sees the development of subjective vision as an opposition to the former *Camera Obscura* -model that represented the Cartesian perspective. In the *Camera Obscura* the observer sat in a dark chamber. On the wall of the room a vision of outside world, reflected through a hole on the opposite wall, appeared as an immaterial shadow. The position of the observer was parallel to the Cartesian notion of the separation of mind and body:

31. Crary 1991, 67–70.

32. Crary 1991, 138.

*The camera obscura a priori prevents the observer from seeing his or her position as part of the representation. The body then is a problem the camera could never solve except by marginalizing it into a phantom in order to establish a space of reason.*³³

It is tempting to see the theatrical illusion on a proscenium stage as representing the *Camera Obscura* -model. The audience is sitting in the dark watching the illuminated scene beyond the proscenium opening which separates the observer from the world observed. That compares to the separation of the reasoning, conscious mind and the immediately experienced outer world.

It is probably no coincidence, that theater has often been used as a metaphor for the relationship between human consciousness and the outer world. For example, we talk of Cartesian theater, or of the stage of inner mind. Thereby, the act of watching the performance compares to the constitution of human thought, and the theatrical space can be seen as an apparatus that makes the formation of meanings visible.

For example, the different experiments of bringing the audience concretely or mentally inside the stage space seem to correspond to attempts of breaking the Cartesian vision, and making the corporeal and subjective constitution of the spectator an inherent part of the perception.

The fundamental inability to grasp the constitution of our thought apart from metaphysical presumptions can be seen as a part of the artistic structures of modern theater. Esa Kirkkopelto has discussed the stage as a place for exploring this difference between inside and outside. The performance functions precisely in this tragic impossibility of achieving correspondence between sign and its meaning. There is always a transmitting act, a 'writing', a theatrical representation of in-between, and the meanings that can never be immediately present. The theatrical performance is an outside construction of inside meanings.³⁴

The vision is not a simple appearance but a process of making meaning. In spite of providing a fundamental connection with the world, visual experience is also a historically and culturally determined apparatus which never offers immediate access to an objective world nor to inside meanings.

33. Crary 1991, 43.

34. Kirkkopelto 2003.

3.6 CORPOREAL VISION

The *antiocularcentric* discourse examined by Jay was primarily a philosophical phenomenon that he believes provided three major changes to traditional thinking: the detranscendentalization of perspective; the recorporealization of the cognitive subject; and the revalorization of time over space.³⁵ They all contributed to the displacing of vision as the primary sense in favor of notions about a holistic being that exists in the world, the inseparability of senses and the linguistic constructivity of reality.

*The death of God meant the end of a God's-eye view. The very distinction between an illusory appearance present to the fallible senses of the observing subject and the deeper, essential truth available to the intellect or reason (there to be 'seen' by the 'mind's eye') collapsed.*³⁶

Our understanding of sight seems to be so strongly connected to the Cartesian mode of vision that the whole visual domain seems to be under suspicion when direct access to truth was denied. The only 20th century philosopher, who, according to Jay's survey, has successfully tried to establish a new value of vision, is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose corporeal phenomenology gives primacy to our embodied perceptual experiences as the foundation of our conscious thinking. Here vision plays a relevant but not independent or privileged role among the other senses.

According to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty the experience of our own physical bodies, which differs from all other objects, is the primary way in which we inhabit the world. Consciousness and thought develop out of this primary level of embodied experience which is different from any external relationship to objects. Vision is part of the embodied constitution of our consciousness, which escapes both speculative and empiricist thinking.³⁷

The philosophy of Merleau-Ponty offers art a special position as an attempt to reach this fundamental experience of coming into contact with the world before the formation of rational thought. It is this primary experience that gives birth to more complicated levels of thinking. Merleau-Ponty claims that the primary perception is meaningful in itself and our abstract thought and consciousness is actually developed out of this embodied experience. Here he compares the human body to a work of art:

35. Jay 1993, 187.

36. Jay 1993, 190.

37. Merleau-Ponty 2002 (1945).

*A novel, poem, picture or musical work are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression is indistinguishable from the thing expressed, their meaning, accessible only through direct contact, being radiated with no change of their temporal and spatial situation. It is in this sense that our body is comparable to a work of art. It is a nexus of living meanings...*³⁸

It is probably no coincidence that Merleau-Ponty has been frequently read by visual artists and art scholars. He has given a philosophical legitimization to sensual perception and even to visual pleasure. For example, the experience of an impressive color has often been considered as a secondary property of matter because it can neither be completely reconciled with the characteristics of objective matter, nor to mere subjective illusions. However, if we think of color as a living interaction between our body and the world, it can be seen as exemplifying our fundamental way of inhabiting the world.

When we for example see a color we come into contact with the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, our mental being is constituted by that interaction, but on the other hand, our perception of the color is determined by our being. Instead of stable associations, there is a dynamic process in which we learn to understand both ourselves and the color we see. The artistic experience can be thought as a renewal of this fundamental way of inhabiting the world. In this sense the artistic experience is always somehow fresh. It gives us the feeling of seeing something for the first time and only looking for its meaning.

I am aware that it is a very precarious enterprise to link the thinking of an artist to any philosophical theory. At least according to my scenographic experiences it is hard to think very theoretically when doing a practical job. It becomes almost impossible to complete the work when grappling with too much philosophy.

However, in order to create any visual significance we must trust that some issues are more meaningful than others. We also have an understanding about the conceptual and perceptual visual apparatus of the audience – and hence of the working of the human mind. Even if the artist himself/herself does not take the least bit of interest in philosophy, his/her choice

38. Merleau-Ponty
2002 (1945), 175.

of practical methods may imply a kind a popular version of philosophical thinking. This proposal is supported by Merleau-Ponty himself who writes:

*...The opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy.*³⁹

The problem here is that one can make no claims about the private thoughts of an artist without the danger of being arrogant *besserwisser*, who always knows better than others how things really are. However, one can propose a possible reading of the thinking present in works of art. This reading can and must be also questioned.

39. Merleau-Ponty
2002 (1945), viii.

4

The Scenographic Challenges of Miss Julie

In the preface of *Miss Julie* Strindberg pointed out its correspondence to the thinking of modern times:

*In the following drama I have not tried to do anything new – for that cannot be done – but I have tried to modernize the form in accordance with the demands which I thought the new men of a new time might be likely to make on this art.*¹

For a contemporary theater maker the Strindbergian innovations introduced in *Miss Julie*, alongside many similar suggestions by other artists in the late 19th century, appear as hallmarks of a hegemonic style in mainstream theater. Most of his visions have not only come true but they have become signs of conventional theater making, for example, the audience sees the play through the ‘missing fourth wall’ as if it were happening in real life.

*If, in addition, we might escape the visible orchestra, with its disturbing lamps and its faces turned toward the public; if we could have the seats on the main floor raised so that the eyes of the spectators would be above the knees of the actors; if we could get rid of the boxes with their tittering parties of diners; if we could also have the auditorium completely darkened during the performance; and if, first and last, we could have a small stage and a small house...*²

In this chapter I will discuss Strindberg’s ideas about scenography as they appear in *Miss Julie*. It is an illuminating example of scenographic thinking, very much labeling the more general development of modern theater. Even if the author himself called the play a naturalistic tragedy, I think it proves to be anything but simple naturalism based on an empiricist, unproblematic

1. Strindberg 1992 (1888), x.

2. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xx.

trust in objective knowledge transmitted by perception. The protagonist's involvement with her environment, the construction of illusion, and the position of an observing spectator intertwine with each other in a very creative way.

Miss Julie takes place on Midsummer's Eve in the kitchen of the Count's country house. The time and place make out an important context for the events. Although the kitchen is the only room visible in the Count's house, there is a ringing bell and a speaking tube leading to the upper floors that alludes to the social order ruling over the life of the servants inhabiting the kitchen. The time of Midsummer is traditionally connected with heightened sexuality, and represents uncontrollable natural instincts and impulses.

The tragedy develops when Julie refuses to obey the rules of society and gender, and wants to spend Midsummer's Eve with the valet. Here the structure of the stage space, comparable to that of the surrounding society, creates a trap from which she can never escape. Once Julie has made a fatal mistake, there is no honorable exit for her.

The dramatic importance of the visual environment is found in the detailed scenographic instructions written by Strindberg. These types of instructions were commonplace in the work of other early modern playwrights such as Ibsen and Chechov. However, they would work separately from the team that carried out their instructions. Hence, we know that the instructive text for *Miss Julie* was written by the author before the play was ever staged. The scenographic instructions do not rest so much on the existing theatrical conventions and stage technology but rather on how the playwright imagined the scenes.

From the viewpoint of a scenographer the naturalistic parentheses are like descriptions of how the milieu would appear in everyday reality, and do not instruct how to represent this on stage. For example, the shifting sunbeams at the end of *Miss Julie* are easy to imagine in a real kitchen but they would be very hard to carry out even with modern technology, let alone with the lamps available in 1888:

*The sun has risen and is shining on the tree tops in the park. The light changes gradually until it comes slantingly in through the windows.*³

3. Strindberg 1992
(1888), 28.

In this sense Strindberg was waiting for possibilities that could only be offered by cinema. In modern theater the scenic instructions of the author have often been ignored or even deliberately opposed. The task of the scenographer is to create a visual correspondence that communicates the essential dramaturgical idea, rather than to copy the instructions.

The spatial structure of *Miss Julie*, however, is profoundly intertwined with the thematics and dramaturgy of the play. That is why the practical scenographies are based on Strindberg's spatio-visual thinking even in instances when the performance is situated in an environment completely different from the original specified location. It is necessary to be aware of the spatial and visual ideas embedded in the play in order to understand later scenographic experimentations.

How did Strindberg work out his ideals about theater? He began his famous preface to *Miss Julie* with the following assertions:

Like almost all other art, that of the stage has long seemed to me a sort of Biblia Pauperum, or a Bible in pictures for those who cannot read what is written or printed. And at the same time the playwright appears to be a lay preacher spreading the thoughts of his time in a form so popular that the middle classes, from which theatrical audiences are mainly drawn, can know what is being talked about without troubling their brains too much. For this reason the theatre has always served as a grammar-school for young people, women, and those who have acquired a little knowledge, all of whom retain the capacity for deceiving themselves and being deceived – which means again that they are susceptible to illusions produced by the suggestions of the author. And for the same reason I have had a feeling that, in our time, when the rudimentary, incomplete thought processes operating through our fancy seem to be developing into reflection, research, and analysis, the theatre might stand on the verge of being abandoned as a decaying form, for the enjoyment of which we lack the requisite conditions.⁴

Comparing theater to pictorial illustrations of the Bible, Strindberg sees it as a sort of easy-reading for non-intellectual audiences who were the only people capable of enjoying the betrayal of their eyes. His dislike of the con-

4. Strindberg 1992 (1888), ix.

temporary theater seems to be connected to its clumsy visual iconicity but he also shows a more general hostility towards illusions as a medium of creating simple entertainment or irrational affections. Visual perception, which is easy to manipulate and hence unreliable, was presented as an opposition to the intelligibility of written language capable of transmitting human thought.

Strindberg is not alone in his opinions. He agrees with Aristotle, according to whom the visible *mise-en-scène* was the least important aspect of tragedy. A good drama should produce a catharsis without stage machinery but merely by means of the tragic events themselves.⁵ The relation between the essential contents of a play and the visible stage – the field of a scenographer – has been a problem for theater theoreticians who traditionally privilege the literal drama text.

There is a long philosophical tradition that undermines sense perception as something temporal, changing and dependent on the human corporeal being. But can we think of a theater performance that can not be carried out on stage as a more or less visual performance by embodied actors? Are the meanings generated by visual perception only an extra, unnecessary surplus, or can the scenography be used as an expression comparable to written and spoken language?

In spite of his detestation of illusions it is certainly not justifiable to blame Strindberg for a disinterest in visuality. He was a remarkable photographer and painter, and he was also very concerned about the scenography of his dramas. *Miss Julie* contains a detailed description about the set and lightning, and there is a profound discussion about his scenic ideas in the preface. Instead of rejecting scenography entirely, he wanted to reshape its visual conventions in order to find a relevant connection between the stage and the contents of his drama text.

4.1 ILLUSION IN THE SERVICE OF AN INVESTIGATING EYE

Although the beginning of his preface castigated the non-intellectual middle-class audiences for their susceptibility to illusions, Strindberg was also

5. Butcher 1951, 49.

looking for a means by which he could hold the attention of a more cultured and sophisticated spectator:

And I have done so because I have come to fear that our decreasing capacity for illusion might be unfavorably affected by intermissions during which the spectator would have time to reflect and to get away from the suggestive influence of the author-hypnotist.⁶

He did not after all want to abandon deceptive illusions but to develop them to a more elaborate standard. So, what was the fundamental difference between an illusion created by the traditional painted fakery and that of Strindberg's naturalism?

Was it only the obvious remark that a three-dimensional wooden table looks more 'real' than one painted on canvas? The illusion still remains because a theater remains a theater, a mimicry of something that is not actually there, but is represented by some other thing, a theatrical sign. The real table stands for another, fictive but similar looking table. Was Strindbergian naturalism just a technical question about the degree of verisimilitude?

The answer is to be found in the ideology of naturalist tragedy. Strindberg envisioned a new theater that responded to the demands of modern people by revealing the psychological mechanisms of human mind:

Our souls, so eager for knowledge, cannot rest satisfied with seeing what happens, but must also learn how it comes to happen! What we want to see are just the wires, the machinery. We want to investigate the box with the false bottom, touch the magic ring in order to find the suture, and look at the cards to discover how they are marked.⁷

In spite of their proposed newness, Strindberg's ideas can once again be traced back to Aristotle, according to whom the pleasure of mimesis lies in its contribution to the process of learning. Art offers us an opportunity to study ourselves and the world around us.⁸ What was different in the naturalistic worldview, from earlier centuries, was the modern idea about the basis and origins of significant knowledge.

6. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xvi.

7. Ibid.

8. Butcher 1951, 17.

In the 19th century an omniscient God was no longer seen as the ultimate source of all understanding and wisdom. Instead of locating the enigmas in a metaphysical realm, modern drama internalized them and focused on the psychological processes open to explanatory systems. The actual subject of a drama like *Miss Julie* is not the course of events, but what happens in the minds of the protagonists. The illusionist vision in naturalism serves primarily as a source of knowledge which gives the scenography a philosophical and epistemological dimension. This has been expressed by Freddie Rokem in the following way:

*The knowability of the theatrical work of art as presented on the stage or through a “theatrical” reading of the text depends on the structure of the fictional world, which itself is presented through the scenography of the play and/or its production.*⁹

A naturalistic-realistic illusion rests not only on the presumption that the world shown on stage corresponds to reality, but also on a claim that the spectator is free to observe the vision on his/her own terms and therefore is empowered to make objective conclusions. The illusion is shown as an unmediated entry point into a world where everything necessary can be seen by a competent observer. The problems in the play – the reasons for Julie’s tragedy – create a riddle which the spectator should be able to solve using the information offered by the staging.

Una Chaudhuri has linked the naturalistic desire for scientific explanations to the visibility of the play world:

*Once contextualized outside of religious ideology, the unknown appears not as mystery, but as enigma, conundrum, and puzzle, a region not merely hospitable to, but positively begging for colonization by powerful explanatory systems. Such systems are the true protagonists of the drama of naturalism, which, having set as its goal the observation, exposition, and explication of life as it is, must at every moment engage and overcome the unknown. This project involves both the stage and the audience, connecting them to each other in a new – and impossible – contract of total visibility.*¹⁰

9. Rokem 1986, 74.

10. Chaudhuri 1995, 31.

The task of a naturalistic scenography is to show the surrounding world that has molded the characters and outlined their fates. The social, geographical and historical environment of a drama is not only an illustrative milieu but a representation of the factors that have an influence on the protagonists. It is at this point that scenography becomes meaningful in a new way.

A naturalistic performance shows the protagonist in their everyday life unaware of the presence of the spectators. When s/he is confronted with the enigmas of the drama, the spectator gradually sees deeper and deeper into his/her private person by identifying with his/her reactions to the painful situation. The environment is laden with information from past events and present circumstances which the spectator should be able to read in the scenic signs.

The naturalistic spectator is a kind of detective for whom the world appears like a system of infallible signs. S/he has the ability to see the occasional-looking objects as traces of past events, which s/he thus can understand.

The privacy of the protagonist's mind in naturalistic theater is broken by revealing his/her hidden thoughts, and showing how they have been constructed by various internal and external factors. In his book *Theatrical Space in Ibsen, Chechov and Strindberg* Freddie Rokem analyses the dialectics of the private and the public in realistic dramas and understands them on three levels: the thematic one, where the private interests of the characters conflict with the public sphere of society; the scenographic level which allows the spectator see into the characters' private world; and finally the cathartic level produced by the spectator's identification with the hero's struggle for a more clearly defined identity.

The scenographic dimension is defined by Rokem as "the major visual means by which the private is visually opened to the public":

*The scenographic dimension is here seen as one of the keys through which the spectator is enabled to interpret the private world of the fictional heroes. The physical surroundings of the heroes function as objectifications of their inner world, and as such, provide access for the spectator to some fundamental structural features of these inner worlds.*¹¹

11. Rokem 1986, xii.

The naturalistic scenography is primarily not the illustration of a place but a vehicle that makes the hidden world of the protagonists accessible. Their internal world is visible through their external living environment. That is also connected to the ways in which the actors concretely use the set and props.

Strindberg's central scenographic request in the preface of *Miss Julie* was to replace the painted props by real, three-dimensional things, and to enable the actors to move naturally in the space, sometimes turning their backs to the audience or being only partially visible. His aim was to make "the figures become parts of their surroundings".¹² Strindberg writes:

*Of course, I have no illusions about getting the actors to play for the public and not at it, although such a change would be highly desirable. I dare not even dream of beholding the actor's back throughout an important scene, but I wish with all my heart that crucial scenes might not be played in the centre of the proscenium, like duets meant to bring forth applause. Instead, I should like to have them laid in the place indicated by the situation. Thus, I ask for no revolution, but only for a few minor modifications. To make a real room of the stage, with the fourth wall missing, and a part of the furniture placed back toward the audience, would probably produce a disturbing effect at present.*¹³

These requests were made possible only by the development of stage lighting which was part of a massive technological process that turned the night into day in big cities at the end of 19th century. The innovations of gas and electricity enabled more flexible lightning of actors. They were therefore no longer forced to stick to the fore-stage which had previously been the only place where they could be clearly seen and heard.

Artificial light, which suddenly enhanced the possibilities of seeing, is comparable to advances in science that enabled people see things never seen before. This metaphorically parallels the naturalistic idea of showing the construction of the internal psychology of the characters. Modern stage machinery allowed the spectator see more and deeper than before.

12. Strindberg 1992
(1888), xviii.

13. Strindberg 1992
(1888), xix.

Naturalistic scenography should be credible and meaningful in the eyes of a scientifically aware spectator, and the illusion created by painted walls would collapse as soon as the living actor entered the stage:

*They are not even capable of expressing the anger of an irate pater familias who, on leaving his home after a poor dinner, slams the door behind him "so that it shakes the whole house." (On the stage the house sways.)*¹⁴

Strindberg's want for real props was not only a question of creating an illusion for the modern spectator so that they would not have to engage in "the too great effort of believing in painted pans and kettles".¹⁵ There was also a demand for actors to grasp concretely at things. The world around them should not be an immaterial illusion, perceivable only by sight, but environment where material objects are central to the action.

The importance of the three-dimensional stage lies not only in the more realistic illusion it produces. It also can be seen as a symptom of the idea that the environment of the play is not a shadow of a metaphysical idea but a material entity existing in the real world. The actors moving around in the space and concretely grasping at the props had a new, creative relationship with the set and its objects. The scenography became a tool of acting and thus, a key part of the play's direction instead of being just a necessary background. The interaction between the setting and acting means that the practicalities of scenography can not be discussed independently from the protagonists and their analysis. The relationship between actors and scenography can also be seen as a metaphor for the interaction between the protagonist and his/her surrounding world.

Aside from the naturalistic style and ideology this continuity between acting and space is essential for both theater practice and a more theoretical approach to scenography. This stage space is not only a background creating atmosphere, but a dynamic element, serving as a resistance or an obstacle for actors. The acting must be included in the design of a set by anticipating the potential use of the space and stage elements. Thereby the scenography is inextricably involved with the direction of the actors.

14. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xviii.

15. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xviii.

Theoretically this means that the representation of the protagonist's mind is not limited to the inside of the character but it is also constructed by an interaction with the environment. The way of inhabiting the space is conceived of as being a tool to make the mental constitution visible.

4.2 JULIE IMPRISONED IN HER WORLD

Strindberg's proposal about the constitution of human mind, in which he compares it to a sample of different layers, is renowned:

*My souls (or characters) are conglomerates, made up of past and present stages of civilization, scraps of humanity, torn-off pieces of Sunday clothing turned into rags – all patched together as is the human soul itself.*¹⁶

The mind of the protagonist is not understood as a permanent, solid character but rather as a process of interaction with other people and the surrounding world. Barry Jacobs and Egil Törnqvist have noted that the Strindbergian concept of human mind comes close to modern psychology theories,¹⁷ according to which our behavior is more defined by changing social situations than by a solid nature.

Instead of having an independent psychic nucleus of their own the identities of the protagonists are collages of different roles created by their past and adopted according to present situations they enter into. Even the most personal character traits are developed in constant interaction with the outer world. Inherited genes have been selected through evolution and social behavior is learned culturally.

This shows the interest Strindberg took in the advance of the new psychological science and advancements in biology. The behavior of the characters is determined by their biological conditions – especially in the case of the female sex – or by traumas that have their origins in their personal past.

The Strindbergian protagonist is thus carrying both his/her own history, and that of the whole mankind. S/he is imprisoned in his/her historical, social,

16. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xii.

17. Jacobs-Törnqvist 1988, 83–86.

biological and psychological being, and vice versa, the surrounding world has become a part of the protagonist's mind.

In the preface Strindberg offered several explanations for miss Julie's sad fate:

*Her mother's fundamental instincts; her father's mistaken upbringing of the girl; her own nature, and the suggestive influence of her fiancé on a weak and degenerate brain; furthermore, and more directly: the festive mood of the Midsummer's Eve; the absence of her father; her physical condition; her preoccupation with the animals; the excitation of the dance; the dusk of the night; the strongly aphrodisiacal influence of the flowers; and lastly the chance forcing the two of them to be together in a secluded room, to which must be added the aggressiveness of the excited man.*¹⁸

The sexual desire of miss Julie and the self-destruction that follows the intercourse are consequential of several factors, some of them belong to her own personal qualities, others are derived from her past or present circumstances. The functioning – or rather malfunctioning – of miss Julie's mind is dependant on her contact with the surrounding world and the people inhabiting it. Julie refers to this in her lines at the end of the play. She argues that her tragic outcome is due to a complicated network of human interaction, of which only a few aspects are visible during the play.

*Whose fault is it, this that has happened? My father's – my mother's – my own? My own? Why, I have nothing that is my own. I haven't a thought that didn't come from my father; not a passion that didn't come from my mother, and now this last – this about all human creatures being equal – I got that from him, my fiancé – whom I call a scoundrel for that reason!*¹⁹

The scenic objects are like traces left from different factors. For example, the Count, who is the dominating figure in the house, is represented mostly by scenographic means. There is an awareness that the upstairs is his residence; the sound of his steps come from upstairs; there is the speaking tube and the bell mediating his orders; there are his riding boots cleaned by Jean; and all these details symbolize his absolute power in the kitchen. The relation of

18. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xi.

19. Strindberg 1992 (1888), 34.

Jean to the Count is exemplified in his behavior to the signs of the Count's existence. The invisible ruler of the world is present in the structure of the space, and his power is made visible by the ways in which the characters react to the scenic signs.

The inseparability of the characters and their world is one very obvious reason for common use of the home in modern realistic plays – another reason is of course the practical easiness of creating a real-looking living-room on a small intimate stage proposed by naturalists. A home is a place where public and private spheres interact naturally. On the one hand it is the site of solitude where the most intimate secrets can be hidden but on the other it is a place where the decent facade of the family is maintained in front of the eyes of visitors.

Una Chaudhuri has examined the imagery of the home in relation to the psychological coherence of protagonists in realism. She has developed a discourse called *geopathology*, where ill placement – or placelessness – forms the psychological problematics of the hero and thus, contributes to his/her tragic fate.²⁰ Although the placement of Julie is not a pure example of *geopathology*, the concept is very helpful for my spatial analysis of the play.

The kitchen in *Miss Julie* is part of the Count's house which is the dwelling place of all characters in the play. The hierarchy of place found in the kitchen is also derived from the conventions of gender and society. It is the place for lower class women – the territory of Kristin – and it belongs to the house under an invisible masculine rule. The situating of the play can, thus, be seen as an example of the idea of an “ill placement” or “inadequacy of home”, caused by the social structure projected on the order of space. At the most obvious *geopathologic* level Julie is trapped in the kitchen because she literally does not know her place.

However, the kitchen hardly serves as a home to Julie who is an outsider there and rather a nuisance to the servants doing their duties. On the other hand, although Jean and Kristin live and work in the kitchen, they are outsiders that are hired to do their jobs and are not personally involved with the place. The Count's house represents a social order that puts Jean and Kristin in a subordinate position; however, they are still free to leave as soon as their contracts run out.

20. Chaudhuri 1995,
1–45.

In fact, the kitchen first becomes a fatal place when Julie is forced into Jean's room as a consequence of her own behavior. Julie is trapped because of her failure to believe in her equality with Jean. However, if the failure of Jean and Julie's budding love was only due to the social system, the play would be a more traditional tragedy – or even a melodrama – and the Count's house would only have the symbolic role of an unconquerable obstacle that destroys the heroine. The relationships between Julie and her home, and that of Jean and Julie, are more complicated.

Although it is almost immediately apparent that there can be no happy common future for Julie and Jean, she desperately tries to escape from her father's house with him. It might be useful to compare Julie's attempt for "a heroic departure"²¹ to that another *geopathologic* female character of modern drama, namely Nora in the Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Nora believed in her ability to realize her true self but it relies on her escaping her home which represents the falsity and lovelessness of her marriage (whether she succeeds is inconsequential). Unlike Nora, Julie never leaves.

Leaving one's home metaphorically also means the capability of freeing oneself from the *geopathologic* power of the environment, defining the identity of the protagonist. It means a possibility to re-construct one's psyche according to better conditions which are voluntarily chosen. When Julie tries in vain to leave everything behind, she actually refuses to enter a new environment which would develop her into a new kind of personality – without her inherited privileges. She cannot exist as herself outside the world that she belongs to. A successful departure would be a symbolical death too: the death of a noble girl who becomes a common woman working in a hotel. Julie prefers to choose a real death.

That is why Julie can not save herself by escaping from the inadequate circumstances. She is part of them and, thus, carries her prison in her personality. This is symbolized by the birdcage, which she can not leave behind, and which finally prevents her escape. It is not only that she becomes a victim of her environment. The place has become part of her mind, and vice versa. Nora's revolt against the inadequacy of her home is like Julie's desperate struggle against the dictation of her own identity. And finally she has no other exit out of herself but suicide.

21. Chaudhuri 1995, 61–64.

One fundamental difference between Jean and Julie lies in their ability to adjust to surrounding circumstances. Jean's superiority is based on his ability to adapt his behavior to every new situation. The relevant question is not where he belongs, or where he comes from but how he can take advantage of the place in which he presently exists so as to achieve a better position. He could probably live anywhere but actually he belongs nowhere. Thus, he is preceding the image of a homeless hero in later modern and postmodern drama, analyzed by Una Chaudhuri; a hero who has lost all private connections to a physical place, and rather his/her life is defined by a life-style or other conceptual images.²²

One reason for the homelessness of Jean lies in the poor circumstances of his childhood from which he has continuously tried to break away from. For him every place is just a step on the way to the next one. But Julie is tied to the Count's house with its beautiful garden. She can escape her high social status only by falling and dying. Strindberg explains the difference between Jean and Julie:

*The valet, Jean, continues to live, but Miss Julie cannot live without honor. In so far as he lacks this life-endangering superstition about honor, the serf takes precedence over the earl...*²³

The social difference gives Jean a kind of freedom not possible for Julie. It is symbolized by a story told by Jean where he was secretly creeping to the Turkish pavilion as a child. He says that the upper class had only one way out but he had one more, a lower and dirtier one.²⁴ But Julie can not let herself get dirty. Once she has gone beyond her limits, she has no longer has a respectable exit and is trapped in the kitchen. The privileged position guaranteed to Julie by her social status is valid only as long as she stays in her golden cage. As an emancipated woman Julie does not obey the limits of her social and sexual position. She is seeking a gendered liberty – just like Jean is striving for a social advance – and that is doomed to failure in the Strindberg's world.

22. Chaudhuri 1995, 113–117.

23. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xiii.

24. Chaudhuri 1995, 36–37.

Julie: What would you do in my place?

Jean: In your place? Let me see. As one of gentle birth, as a woman, as one who has – fallen. I don't know – yes, I do know.

Julie: (Picking up the razor with a significant gesture): Like this?

Jean: Yes! – But please observe that I myself wouldn't do it, for there

is a difference between us.

Julie: Because you are a man and I a woman? What is the difference?

Jean: It is the same – as – that between man and woman.²⁵

This shows Strindberg's famous misogyny reaching a peak in his writing about emancipated "half-women" like Julie:

It is not a good type, for it does not last, but unfortunately it has the power of reproducing itself and its misery through one more generation. And degenerate men seem instinctively to make their selection from this kind of women, so that they multiply and produce indeterminate sexes to whom life is a torture. Fortunately, however, they perish in the end, either from discord with real life, or from irresistible revolt of their suppressed instincts, or from foiled hopes of possessing the man.²⁶

Even if Strindberg stresses the constructed nature of a character, he seems to take the gendered essence of a woman for granted. Julie perishes not only because she has made a fatal mistake but because nowhere in the Strindbergian world can give refuge to a woman like her. She is not only a product of her society or of her distorted psychic development but a product of the Strindbergian view of the world, resting on the psychological insight of his own age.

The staging of *Miss Julie* according to the instructions of the playwright means constructing this Strindbergian world. Challenging the naturalistic style can respectively be seen as a reaction to the obvious nature of its structure, and particularly the position of women there. Therefore, experimentations with the representational modes also have an ideological dimension because they re-value the ways in which the tragedy is seen and explained. That of course has to do with the cultural status and reputation of Strindberg whose well-known opinions and colorful relationships with his wives seem to haunt most readings of *Miss Julie*.

4.3 UNCERTAINTY ON STAGE

The philosophical background of naturalism lies in the emergence of materialism and science. The existence of the world and human fate were no

25. Strindberg 1992 (1888), 33–34.

26. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xiii.

longer seen to be caused by metaphysical forces beyond our comprehension but they could be examined in materialistic terms. Hence, the tragic events of the drama could be understood by means of the psychological and sociological factors that constituted the characters and their circumstances. The tragedy was caused by things that could be explored and to some extent explained, however unavoidable.

The task of the spectator is to understand the hidden motives and the psychological or sociological structures that lie behind them. The author offers him/her information through which s/he must work out an explanation for the play's events. When looking at the play the spectator does not actually gain more knowledge than the protagonists. Rather, s/he is put in front of a riddle that s/he must solve using given the hints and allusions of past events. I assume this is what Chaudhuri means when she writes that "the naturalistic agenda transfers the function of recognition from the protagonist to the spectator."²⁷

Miss Julie takes place in the kitchen of a big country house owned by a count, Julie's father. The absent Count rules over the kitchen although his presence is only made known by his riding-boots, a ringing bell and the mouthpiece of a speaking-tube. What we see on stage is a space for the servants; Kristin's working place and the dining table for all servants. We are never shown the upper floors of the house which form the house's most public part. Rather we are invited into the infrastructure that keeps the house functioning and makes the public facade possible.

Unlike someone's private room, the kitchen is an open space facilitating the staff's comings and goings. The objects in this space do not provide evidence of any personal secrets. However, access is provided to the private rooms of the servants, and that's where Jean and Julie hide from the gossiping crowd.

There, behind the public kitchen are the private worlds that are never revealed in *Miss Julie*. Similarly we are never told the ultimate truth about the protagonists. The secrets and unsolved enigmas are never revealed, but they are left to be imagined by the spectator. The visible stage is like an iceberg, only the top of which can be seen. This thought is echoed in a famous quote from Strindberg's preface to *Miss Julie*:

27. Chaudhuri 1995, 32.

*Because the whole room and all its contents are not shown, there is a chance to guess at things – that is, our imagination is stirred into complementing our vision.*²⁸

This works in conjunction with his proposal that there are several motives for their behavior from which the spectator may select the most fitting ones.²⁹ The negotiations between visibility and invisibility, showing and hiding open up a scenographic discourse about the knowability of the perceived world, which has been explored by Freddie Rokem in his analysis of stage space in *Miss Julie*.³⁰ Rokem highlights the novelty of including the spectator in the fictional kitchen by means of a diagonal setting and partial, impressionistic vision. This differs from the common realistic convention of the ‘missing fourth wall’ where the auditorium and the stage are on the same axis.

The angular position of the scenic space makes one corner of the fictional kitchen overlap with the auditorium. The spectators place is imaginarily situated inside the kitchen. They are therefore not only observing the play-events but invited to share the same conceptual space and to be present at the play-event. The consequence of this arrangement is that not all of the kitchen is discernible but it continues outside the margins of the visible stage.

This can be understood as a statement that a spectator cannot have the detached position necessary for an omniscient observer. Every viewpoint inside the scenery is limited, partial and hence relative. The spectator has no access to objective knowledge about the world represented. The stage space of *Miss Julie* presents the world as an enigmatic place never to be totally understood and explained. This brings us to question the origins of knowledge: “Strindberg places the question of the reliability of information and the rhetorical tools used to present it in the foreground of his plays.”³¹

The reader of *Miss Julie* remains ignorant about the truthness of the stories Jean and Julie are telling about their pasts, in the same way that Strindberg leaves only parts of the kitchen visible. He creates an ambiguous construction with gaps, a fragment of a world, which only gives clues to possible conclusions. The play text does not, for example, reveal the reliability of many facts discussed by Jean and Julie in the play. We are told different versions about Julie’s broken engagement, stories of Jean as a young boy, and Julie’s parents’ past.

28. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xviii.

29. Strindberg 1992 (1888) 10–12.

30. Rokem 1986, 49–58.

31. Rokem 1986, 50.

Even the decisive act of making love takes place in Jean's room hidden from the eyes of audience. The author does not tell us, whether Julie has had sex voluntarily or whether she was raped – or whether they had sex at all. All alternatives create grounds for very different readings of the latter part of the play. (If the intercourse was presented as a rape today, the fundamental question about Julie's self-destructive behavior could turn into one about a woman's right to refuse to have sex regardless of her seductive behavior, and the explanation for her suicide could be found in her legitimated depression after the violation of her body.)

In the famous final scene of the play Julie is guided by a vivid dream tempting her into death. The spectator does not share Julie's hallucination but only sees the realistic sunshine illuminating Jean. The subjective motive leading Julie to her suicide remains invisible and ultimately unexplainable to an outsider.

The final scene has often been blamed for its incredibility and lack of logic. Not even a degenerated noble woman would commit a suicide just because of falling for her servant and the failure of such a love affair. It is remarkable that this naturalistic tragedy in fact ends in a very mystical conclusion which seems to be caused by some unknown forces. The mysterious motive, which we can term the death instinct, exists only in Julie's head. It is an innate phenomenon, which finally escapes "colonization by powerful explanatory systems", as Una Chaudhuri has put it.³² The human psyche, which was the actual arena of the drama, can never be made totally visible nor explained.

It is probably no coincidence that *Miss Julie* is set in the kitchen situated downstairs below the public rooms of the Count's house. The cellar is understood by Gaston Bachelard as a dark space connected to irrational, underground forces, which we never dare to face in daylight.³³ When Julie descends to the kitchen, she loses her capability to act rationally and to see clearly. The spectator sees her inexplicable behavior, but not the cause of it.

The restricted vision is also a reference to the impossibility of ever achieving complete knowledge about what other people experience internally. Strindbergian drama has been characterized as subjective by Egil Törnqvist:

32. Chaudhuri 1995, 31.

33. Bachelard 1969
(1958), 17–19.

*If we combine these two ideas – the idea that you only know your own life and the idea that the ego is heterogeneous – we naturally arrive at Strindbergian subjective drama, that is a drama in which one character, the protagonist, tends to embrace all the others, who below a thin realistic veneer function as radiations or emanations of his or her ego...*³⁴

The scenographic equivalent of the subjectivity in Strindbergian drama has been studied by Rokem. According to him the theatrical communication in Strindberg's plays is comparable to the technique of a movie camera which can change perspective and focus. The subjective vision was developed mostly in expressionistic plays which are situated in the inner landscapes of the mind.³⁵

In *Miss Julie* the kitchen is represented from one solid viewpoint, and the other different perspectives are represented only in the spoken lines of the characters. However, the technique of the subjective, movable camera is present in the act of framing the view of the Count's kitchen, much like shooting a photograph.

The naturalistic illusion by Strindberg was imitating an occasional everyday perception which takes place without conscious mediation. The performance should awake an illusion of witnessing the play-events as if they happened accidentally. The randomness, which was carefully but secretly premeditated, was similar to the shooting of a photograph, or to the composition of an impressionistic painting, to which Strindberg himself referred:

*As far as the scenery is concerned, I have borrowed from impressionistic painting its asymmetry, its quality of abruptness, and have thereby in my opinion strengthened the illusion. Because the whole room and all its contents are not shown, there is a chance to guess at things – that is, our imagination is stirred into complementing our vision.*³⁶

Strindberg and the impressionists had the common aim of sharing their subjective experiences with the spectator and therefore, creating a very effective suggestive illusion. Moreover, they trusted the imagination of the spectator as being capable of completing the invisible parts of the represented world. Impressionist paintings are so lively because of their rough and incomplete

34. Törnqvist 1991, 99.

35. Rokem 1988, 105.

36. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xviii.

brush strokes which leave room for an active response. We are allowed to fill in the gaps according to our own imaginative capability and thus, we become a co-creator in the work of art.

Not only is the spectators' mental completion of the painting important but their consciousness of the picture's incompleteness is an essential feature of the impressionistic working method.

Like impressionism in fine art, Strindberg both developed the naturalist premises as far as they could go, and anticipated the non-realist styles of the modern era. This comparison between Strindberg's thinking and impressionism is useful in the context of scenography, which is also closely linked to the traditions of modern fine art.

The basic idea of impressionism is to catch an impression from the outer world as immediately as possible. That is why the artists moved their canvases from their studios to the open air, in order to paint according to living nature. Instead of recording the permanent appearance of the world they concentrated on changing modes of perceiving it. The subjective and temporal experience of color became the dominating theme in their paintings.

The use of asymmetrical compositions, to which Strindberg referred, meant that the figures were presented as if caught in the middle of their movement, sometimes only partially shown. This also brought a temporal dimension into the paintings. The vision of the world was thus not a permanent, timeless view, but a dynamic and changing process of perception. An impressionistic painting is like an index of the artist's on-location experience that records his/her fleeting perception of the landscape on canvas. The asymmetry and 'carelessness' of the composition are references to the transitional circumstances the captured moment.

The randomness of a painting that catches a fleeting moment is similar to Strindberg's ideas about the dialogue in *Miss Julie*:

I have avoided the symmetrical and mathematical construction of the French dialogue, and have instead permitted the minds to work irregularly as they do in reality, where, during conversation, the cogs of one mind seem more or less haphazardly to engage those of another one,

*and where no topic is fully exhausted. Naturally enough, therefore, the dialogue strays a good deal as, in the opening scenes, it acquires a material that later on is worked over, picked up again, repeated, expounded, and built up like the theme in a musical composition.*³⁷

The Strindbergian dialogue or impressionistic framing of a view take place as if they were accidental events, not constructed by anyone. This stresses the particularity and temporality of the event, and in imitating the randomness of an actual experience its contrived nature is concealed by its verisimilitude.

One hallmark of modern realistic theater³⁸ is exactly the obscuring of that boundary by making the audience forget that they are at the theater. William B. Worthen has argued that “it is the rhetorical purpose of realistic theater to assert the perception of verisimilitude as the sign of our proper engagement with the play.” Realism is characterized not by its lifelikeness but by “the framing machinery, that seems to make such lifelikeness appear.”³⁹ The practical and mental apparatus enabling the creation of an illusion should be hidden, as if the theatrical machinery does not exist at all.

The naturalistic illusion suggested by Strindberg enabled the audience to focus on the fiction on stage by removing or hiding everything that might imply the presence of theatrical machinery. The representational apparatus itself was to become ‘transparent’ in order to let the audience immediately access another fictional reality. On a practical level this means pursuing verisimilitude through everyday experiences. The performance should be like a slice cut out real life, occupying the attention of audience completely.

However, according to Una Chaudhuri Strindberg shows the impossibility of naturalism by developing its “contract of total visibility”⁴⁰ to its limit:

*Strindberg breaches the naturalist contract of total visibility in its own name, substituting a partial visibility offered as an invitation to the spectator’s cooperative imagination... In a movement that is also typical at the level of the play’s meaning, the spectator’s attention is distracted from its hypnotic fixity, drawn towards the limits and margins of the stage. Upon these margins are inscribed the ideological limitations of naturalism.*⁴¹

37. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xv–xvi.

38. I use the word realism here meaning roughly the same as naturalism.

39. Worthen 1992, 15.

40. Chaudhuri 1995, 31.

41. Chaudhuri 1995, 35–36.

4.4 STRINDBERGIAN AUDIENCES

As a naturalist Strindberg asserted an aspiration “to find the joy of life in its violent and cruel struggles, and my pleasure lies in knowing something and learning something.”⁴² He dreamt of an observer seeing and analyzing the world without being emotionally involved:

*But perhaps a time will arrive when we have become so developed, so enlightened, that we can remain indifferent before the spectacle of life, which now seems so brutal, so cynical, so heartless; when we have closed up those lower, unreliable instruments of thought which we call feelings, and which have rendered not only superfluous but harmful by the final growth of our reflective organs.*⁴³

Strindberg considered the irrational domain of feelings and emotions as an obstacle for the naturalistic observation. We shall not be moved by what we see but remain distanced, objective and indifferent observers. The understanding of tragedy that Strindberg desired was independent from emotional responses elicited from the psyche of the observers. Theater should study the psychological processes, feelings and emotions of the protagonist but this irrational domain was to be excluded from the thinking of the author and spectator themselves.

On the other hand, Strindberg did not hesitate in manipulating the play’s reception through sensual rather than rational means. The precondition for the “suggestive influence of the author-hypnotist” is that the spectator switches off his/her critical apparatus and willingly exposes himself/herself to the sensual stimulation and impressions flowing from the stage.

Therein lies an inherent contradiction in Strindberg’s thinking. The creation of rational conclusions, which an illusion should elicit, and the suggestive means by which it is created seem to be mutually exclusive. Five decades later Bertolt Brecht wanted to reject the emphatic illusion in his plays because of its tendency to obstruct the audiences’ ability to think critically.

42. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xi.

43. Strindberg 1992 (1888), x.

However, this inconsistency has to do with how our mental apparatus combines the irrational, unforeseen aspects of the human mind with rational processing. We know by now, that emotional and rational processes do not

take place separately. The affective aspects are involved even in the most intelligible reasoning and decision-making. It seems that although the affects are conceived of as enemies of our reasoning capacity, we can not do without them as they are constitutive for our thinking.

As a sensitive artist Strindberg seems to have intuitively understood the restrictions on spectators' ability to formulate purely rational conclusions:

And what also will offend simple brains is that my action cannot be traced back to a single motive, that the viewpoint is not always the same. An event in real life – and this discovery is quite recent – springs generally from a whole series of more or less deeply lying motives, but of these the spectator chooses as a rule the one his reason can master most easily, or else the one reflecting most favorably on his power of reasoning. A suicide is committed. Bad business, says the merchant. Unrequited love, say the ladies. Sickness, says the sick man. Crushed hopes, says the shipwrecked.⁴⁴

Even if he was dreaming of a perfect future where the audience was capable of ruthless observation, he knew that every living spectator would finally make up his/her own version of the play. As a matter of fact, he denied the whole existence of an ambivalent, permanent truth to be achieved in his play.

But now it may be that the motive lay in all or none of these directions. It is possible that the one who is dead may have hid the main motive by pushing forward another meant to place his memory in a better light.⁴⁵

In spite of his celebration of the joy of observation and understanding, Strindberg has written a play which can never be completely explained and in which the reliability of observation is put at stake. Your conclusions about Julie are a result of your reasoning capability which depends on the personal limits and possibilities in your life.

The relativity of the knowledge about the motivational forces behind Julie's tragedy can be applied to scenography as an apparatus that enables the spectator to see the performance in a physically contrived setting. By showing

44. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xi.

45. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xi.

the play world it always constructs a specific viewing position, which not only places the spectator in the kitchen, but also puts her/him in a specific situation where s/he must draw on the limits of his/her perception. To put it simply: When you see the illusion of a space, you automatically know your relative position to it because the illusion can be seen only from there.

The creation of a naturalistic illusion is itself only possible through the subjective conditions which make objective observation impossible. A set serves not only as the determining environment of the protagonist, it also determines the relationship between the audience and the performance. The latter function is no doubt carried out by all scenographies, defining the boundaries of visual perception. Modern scenography that opposes naturalistic representation can also be seen as experimentation with the limits of vision; it problematizes the act of seeing a play.

The naturalistic premises of *Miss Julie* generate an incompatible negotiation between the outside world as an object for observation, and the inside experience of the perceiving subject. This negotiation, I suggest, has been one of the most interesting issues in modern and postmodern scenography. The play combines naturalist observation with subjective vision; therefore it also invites the scenographer to focus on the perceptual process, and on the functioning of vision as a rhetorical tool that makes meaning.

5 Staging Miss Julie in Finnish Theater

When Did the Naturalistic Play Start to Thrill?

Miss Julie is one of the most frequently performed plays in the Western world. In Finland it has been staged almost 40 times. Knowledge about the scenographies is minimal, especially concerning older performances but it is possible to have a vague idea about the general artistic aspirations. The emphasis and interpretation of the play as well as the scenic style of the stagings have varied a lot along with the changing times. As more time has past between the Strindbergian era and the present day the need to legitimate the topicality of *Miss Julie* has become increasingly necessary, as its themes are closely connected to a specific historical context. The naturalistic style has also been questioned and challenged but also re-valued during different periods.

I am not going to give a complete survey of all stagings of *Miss Julie*. The focus of my thesis is on the thinking behind the scenographic elements that characterize Finnish modern and postmodern theater. That is why I will concentrate on performances in a period that started with the blossoming of radical theater, the 1960s and 1970s, and ended in our contemporary time.

The latter half of 20th century was a time of very rapid change in Finnish history. Finland developed from being an agrarian country to being a modernized welfare society. There was a significant cultural shift brought on by post-industrialism which emphasized new technologies and globalization. A great number of professional theaters were established or expanded.

The 1970s and early 1980s were an especially lively time for scenic experimentations in Finland. Appreciation for scenography grew enormously along with educational developments, the improved economic position of theaters and increasing number of vacancies for professional scenographers.

These circumstances made it possible for scenography to become an integral and recognized artistic dimension of a performance not only among avant garde groups and on the bigger stages but also in mainstream theater. I would like to call that time the golden years of scenography, since it saw the development of many varied visual styles, and the possibilities of stage space were approached with great creativity.

The depression in the 1990s, which followed the economic boom of the 1980s, created vast unemployment and displaced many people to the margins of society. This period also saw the future of many theaters at risk and the opportunity for artistic experiment in the realm of scenography also decreased.

Although my focus is on the past thirty-five years, it is necessary also to take a brief look at earlier productions of *Miss Julie*, in order to establish the historical context of theatrical conventions against which the experimentations were reacting. The evidence on which this chapter is based comes mostly from newspaper reviews, reflecting public reception and opinions, rather than the stagings themselves or the processes of creation. In particular, I try to ask why *Miss Julie* was considered as relevant or non-relevant. Here, I concentrate mostly on the staging at the National Theatre in 1948, since it seems to have established *Miss Julie's* cultural status as a piece of classical drama.

Before the Second World War *Miss Julie* was performed only at workers' theaters and Swedish-speaking theaters. The class struggle between the countess and valet was seen as too radical for the bourgeois audiences in the Finnish-speaking side. During the 1930s the play seemed to be forgotten by everybody, probably because of the waning interest in naturalism.

It was after the wartime that *Miss Julie* first became topical. It was staged in 1947 at the Swedish Theater in Helsinki and in the following year at the National Theatre where two great stars of that time, Ella Eronen and Tauno Palo, had the leading roles. The latter was also cast in a touring version of the performance with his wife Sylvi Palo as Julie. This tour brought the play all over the country.

The topicality of *Miss Julie* after the wars was pointed out by many reviewers in discussions about the performance at the National Theatre, in 1948. For

example, Olavi Veistjäjä saw an “at least half unconscious mental connection” between the naturalism of 1880s and his own age.¹ The reviewer of *Ilta-Sanomat* wrote:

*Out of this play hurtled surprisingly, even frighteningly many issues that represent the newest views of human characterization... and a strong spirit of community with the endless “undercurrent” or other feeling in the air, that are typical of our time. The main characters of the Strindbergian play, Miss Julie and the valet Jean solve themselves, their motives and possibilities both as human beings in general and in relation to each other just in the same way as a typical modern person does.*²

The post-war period brought a radical change to the social and cultural atmosphere in Finland. It was a time of political uncertainty but also a time to look for new values and ideologies that would replace the old ones. The Strindbergian worldview was at that time connected to the advance of psychology, science and existentialism, which became characteristic of European cultural development in the 1950s. Questions about individual moral responsibility without divine laws or the constructivity of human psyche were hot topics. The Swedish director Alf Sjöberg also referred to existentialism as a theory which inspired not only his interpretation of *Miss Julie*, but most Swedes in the 1950s because of its anti-Nazism and the idea of the human free choice.³

To the reviewer of *Ilta-Sanomat* the role of Jean, played by Tauno Palo, was representative of the average post-war man.⁴ For me the comparison of the upstart valet to the men, who had recently returned from war, is astonishing. Without seeing the performance it is impossible to know, whether the reviewer was actually referring to Jean the character, or Palo one of the most popular actors of his time whose other roles may have ‘ghosted’⁵ his reception.

A contrary view, however, was expressed in the Swedish-speaking *Hufvudstadsbladet*, according to which the audience was laughing at Palo.⁶ Another review in *Savon Sanomat* described how the audience had disturbed the National Theatre’s visiting performance in Kuopio by laughing loudly, even at the most tragic scenes.⁷ A play and style of acting that were considered as rel-

1. Veistjäjä 1948.

2. P. Ta-vi 1948.

3. Lagerroth 1972, 116.

4. P. Ta-vi 1948.

5. I have used the term “ghosting” introduced by Marvin Carlson, meaning, that other roles of an actor have an influence on the reception of his other performances. Carlson 2004 (1996), 48.

6. H.K. 1948.

7. J.T.A. 1948.

evant and topical in the capital, were not necessarily successful in the provinces.

What may have connected Jean to Finnish post-war men was the rapid change in Finnish society, where the previous conservative rulers were displaced by new liberally-minded and leftist politicians. The legitimization of class distinctions and privileges was put at stake; the working class were gaining a new confidence and equality; and general attitudes were slowly becoming more democratic. Perhaps Jean as a proletarian on his way to better social positioning was seen as a representation of this development.

On the other hand a valet wearing pretentious clothes does not appear to be a traditional embodiment of the Finnish working man who was primarily connected to physical labor, proud of his manual skills and dismissive of the values of the idle gentry. Jean, rather, wants to be assimilated into the nobility or new bourgeoisie, and despises his proletarian origins. Compared to the imagery of peasants or workers described in Finnish drama and literature, Jean appears as an inferior member in the upper-class's noble world, rather than representative of the common folk.

Moreover, inferiority by birth, which seemed so painful to Strindberg as 'the son of a servant', perhaps did not represent the idea of class distinctions so well in Finland; where the nobility had mostly been foreign, and where many members of the newly born Finnish-speaking cultural elite came from relatively modest, rural families.

This distance between the social thematics might also offer an explanation for the friction between the Swedish and Finnish traditions of performing *Miss Julie*. The former, insisting more closely on Strindbergian 'originality', has put an emphasis on the social structures and their influence on the protagonists. The Finnish-speaking performances of *Miss Julie* have concentrated more on the individual psychology of the characters, and on the sexual tension between them. There was also a new, more scientifically oriented interest in the psychology and psychoanalysis which was connected to naturalism.

One reviewer put it: "Today the analysis of the unconscious mental processes, which the naturalists were absorbed in, seem to have become relevant again, and in some new way topical."⁸

8. H. J-n. 1948.

The difference between Finnish and Swedish interpretations of *Miss Julie* is visible in the reviews. Ella Eronen's performance at the National Theatre in 1948 was praised for its dramatic style by Finnish critics, and criticized in the Swedish-speaking newspapers,⁹ from which the following extract is taken:

Ella Eronen acts mostly on the sensuality of the role... She happily avoids the pathology of the role and she glides half like a sleep-walker in her fatal adventure. But the neurosis itself in this half-woman and half-man is not worked out with a sufficiently psychological grip.

Eronen plays too much to the audience, she takes advantage of the role in order to play a theatrical tragedy solo, and because of that she loses her connection to it. Her way of emphasizing the end phrase is typical: in a trance, chanting her repeating end lines to herself she follows her destiny.¹⁰

The description of Eronen's acting gives cause to suggest that she detached herself from the surrounding space and co-actors, concentrating on the recitation of her lines. In that way the tragedy became more an enigma of Julie's internal mind, instead of being a series of explicable events guided by outside forces. In some sense Julie created her own environment, being surrounded by her internal delirious state.

Finnish-speaking reviewers for their part did not like the performance at the Swedish Theater without reserve. One of them wrote:

Now we, however, feel that the author has concentrated too much on motoric acts and eliminated the most internal and phenomenal contents of the souls from his description, because of his fear of sentimentality. Hence, the harsh impression this smart play makes on a modern listener. Its characters seem to lack the most delicate scent of life.¹¹

There were very few comments about the scenographies of both these performances in the reviews but it seems that *Miss Julie* was placed in a traditional count's kitchen both at the Swedish Theater (scenographer Olavi Sauvola) and at The National Theatre (scenographer Karl Fager). The latter one was described as a "model kitchen" by one reviewer who also criticized it for being short on signs referring to the atmosphere of Midsummer.¹²

9. Koskimies 1972, 519.

10. N.L-ou. 1948.

11. H.J:n 1947.

12. N.L-ou. 1948.

The set became completely unnecessary in the 1953 touring performance of *Miss Julie* in *Teatteri Jurkka*. The premiere took place in a private living-room and the actors were wearing contemporary clothes. The important thing there is that the play was completely taken out of its historical and social context. This was probably due in the first place to the limited economical and practical recourses of the tiny theater-group run by the Jurkka family.

However, *Miss Julie* was the newly established, *Teatteri Jurkka*'s opening play, which later brought a lot of new international and domestic drama to Finland. The decision to perform *Miss Julie* in spite of the scenographic limitations shows that Jurkkas believed in the topicality and relevance of the play outside of its historical context. The contemporariness of the costumes turned it into a timeless drama about human relationships. The lack of set as a determining environment completely turned the drama into actors' theater, where their interaction created the whole meaningful world.

Apparently the Jurkkas were right. In spite of some reviewers complaining about the lack of a conventional setting the performance was a success, and after the premiere they toured with the play with no set except black curtains. The reviews also reveal that the tragedy surprisingly turned out to be humorous in Emmi Jurkka's direction. One critic described how the audience just kept laughing while Julie was off cutting her throat.¹³

During the following decades *Miss Julie* was found in the repertoires of most Finnish theaters which probably shows its new value as a piece of established drama. However, the productions were not necessarily box-office successes. The staging at Joensuu, in 1954, was only performed four times; the 1955 production at Varkaus was played three times.

The sets of the provincial performances between 1950s and 1970s were mostly described in the reviews as realistic, genuine and faithful to the Strindbergian époque. That was probably because of their correspondence with conventional thinking but also because of a lack of any extra money to be spent on scenographies. A kitchen was easy to set up by using the theaters' own stores and by borrowing things from private people.

It is impossible to talk about modern Finnish theater without discussing the politically active and colorful period of late 1960s and early 1970s. One could

13. H.K. 1953.

easily – and mistakenly – presume that there were several performances of *Miss Julie* dealing with the much debated issues of that period: class distinctions, gender roles, sexual freedom and inevitable social changes. However, *Miss Julie* never inspired any response from the Finnish directors who were committed to the radical left-wing movement.

One reason for this might be that *Miss Julie* is not very fit for the purposes of any political ideology. It escapes all unambiguous interpretations in a very slippery way. Since *Miss Julie* after all gives no final reasons or explanations, nor privileges any standpoint, no political commitment can be supported by it. Moreover, the Strindbergian class struggle within the play is entwined with misogynic and Darwinist ideas about our society which could hardly be approved of by the new-leftist theater makers. Nor does the class-struggle in *Miss Julie* transpire to be an exclusively positive development. And, as was discussed before, Jean was not a typical proletarian hero.

Perhaps the Strindbergian world was also too remote from Finnish society in 1970s. When Swedish Johan Bergenstråhle directed a very traditional *Miss Julie* at *Lilla Teatern* in Helsinki, 1972, most reviews agreed that he had failed. The performance was said to be out-dated, lacking a leading idea, and putting emphasis on Jean instead of Julie. Lasse Pöysti, who acted the role of Jean was univocally praised but in his memoirs he describes how the rehearsals turned into a nightmare since the actors lost the ability to be analytical and interact with each other.¹⁴ The scenographer Måns Hedström had constructed a real-looking kitchen, and he recalls having decided after the premiere to never make any naturalistic scenographies again.¹⁵

The naturalistic style aspires to create a situation that enables the audience to associate the play-world with their own experience. Without this association the performance turns into a museum piece. It is hard to perform *Miss Julie* without its social thematics, but they cannot be properly included by naturalistic means if that specific social sphere is not familiar to the actors and the audience. This has been a worldwide problem whenever *Miss Julie* has been staged in countries with a history different to that of Sweden. The rupture between the Strindbergian world and local social histories has given cause to a large number of attempts to translate the class distinction struggle into other kinds of social inequalities, the most famous being perhaps the 1985 South-African production, where Julie was white and Jean black. One attempt to

14. Pöysti 1992, 145.

15. Hedström 2000.

adapt *Miss Julie* to the Finnish context was a radio-play in which Julie spoke with a Swedish-Swedish accent whereas Jean and Kristin had Finnish-Swedish intonation.¹⁶

The first scenography that I have chosen for my closer study is a production of *Miss Julie*, staged under the title “*Strindberg 70?*” by the Polish director, Adam Hanuszkiewicz in 1970. It was originally an actors training and rehearsing project at the Drama Studio in Tampere University but it had six public performances.

Hanuszkiewicz differentiated himself from contemporary politically engaged theater and concentrated on the relationship between performers and the text performed. His motivation was to focus on the process of actors studying their roles. The main idea behind “*Strindberg 70?*” was to study actors’ work by letting an unplanned process lead the rehearsals. Short pieces from other plays and incidental elements from practical life were included in the performance. The set was constructed little by little during the rehearsals reflecting the scenic process rather than the play-world.

Hanuszkiewicz was himself mostly responsible for the final development of the scenography in “*Strindberg 70?*”, although the whole staging was directed to look as if it were created at the moment of performance. The quest for spontaneity and the emphasis on stage reality, as a vehicle for making meaning, are ideas present in Hanuszkiewicz’s thinking and were shared by many directors involved with modern theater. “*Strindberg 70?*”, represents scenographic aspirations that have played an important role in Finnish theater ever since the late 1960s, although it certainly was not the first instance that they were introduced.

In the following year, 1971, Hanuszkiewicz staged *Miss Julie* again at Tampere Theatre with mostly the same cast for both performances. This performance was apparently more traditional, although a small jazz-band played on stage and the lights were described as expressive. The excerpts from other plays were left out and the scenography clearly represented the Count’s kitchen avoiding extreme statements seen in “*Strindberg 70?*”.

There was a boom in the number of performances of *Miss Julie* in the 1970s and 1980s. It was often staged by female directors then. During this time

16. Törnqvist – Jacobs
1988, 150–151.

politically engaged theater was waning, and a reaction to the political bias of the extreme left developed. The interest of many artists was now directed towards the inner regions of human mind. Instead of one canonized truth, they thought about the simultaneousness of various different experiences, this was linked to the developing feminist movements.

The students of the Theater Academy performed *Miss Julie* at their own studio *Tikapuuteatteri* in 1977. The focus was on the non-completed and open acting process which was symbolized by the roundness of the arena-stage. On the stage they had only two grand pianos, an old closet and a big stove on a black-white checked floor. The performance continued with the experimental, acting-based tradition of “*Strindberg 70?*”, and the questions and issues that concern these two productions overlap significantly. Since “*Strindberg 70?*” was so well documented – perhaps better than any other production ever performed in Finland – I will focus on it, and leave the *Tikapuuteatteri* performance out of my study.

Miss Julie at *Tikapuuteatteri* exemplified also the keen interest in spatial experiments and environmental stagings in the late 1970s. It is worth noting that out of the three productions made simultaneously in the Theater Academy only one was put on a common proscenium stage. However, these issues will resurface later in the context of a *KOM-teatteri* production.

In the performance at the Turku Swedish Theater (*ÅST*) in 1979, *Miss Julie* was read as a psychoanalytical play about female sexuality repressed by our western culture that separates mind and body. The visual aspects played an important role making archetypal images evident. The final staging, however, neither satisfied the director Annette Arlander, nor the scenographer Tove Ahlbäck. In spite of the proposed failure of the performance, I have chosen it as the second subject of my study.

The first reason for choosing the *ÅST* production is its use of the visible stage to embody the invisible contents of the unconscious which I think is a characteristic of modern art. What interests me even more is the dissonance between artistic intentions and its practical realization on stage. Additionally, this *Miss Julie* was a touring performance linked to the new-established regional theater system.

Many features of the above mentioned production were attempted by performance at Vaasa Town Theater 1981, two years later. They were also touring, but they had divided the auditorium into two parts and placed the stage in the middle. I was faced with a difficult choice when deciding between these two productions, but I ended choosing *ÅST*. Firstly, this was because I have experienced doing a touring scenography there in 1983, and hence I know the practical circumstances of *ÅST* better than those in Vaasa. Secondly, I wanted to include a Swedish-speaking performance in my study, and this was definitely the most interesting one.

The spatial experimentation was perhaps mostly developed at *KOM-teatteri* where *Miss Julie* was staged in 1983, in a cafeteria by the director Laura Jäntti and the scenographer Måns Hedström. The actors moved all over in the space among the spectators who were having coffee. The basic idea was to stage the very act of seeing the private tragedy of Julie. The scenography at *KOM* clearly questioned the legitimacy of the naturalistic rhetoric that hides spectators in a safe darkness, from where they observe the stage.

The ideas of turning around conventions, opposing naturalistic premises and negotiating the audience's perception were characteristic not only of the *KOM* style, but of scenographic thinking in the 1970s and 1980s. That is why I find it necessary to include this *Miss Julie* in my study.

There was one performance of *Miss Julie* in *Willensauna* at the National Theatre in 1984 which was described as a feminist production by several reviewers. Interestingly enough, this time the director and scenographer were both men. The scenography by Kari Junnikkala was an expressionist vision, resembling an iceberg. The performance, directed by Olli Tola was accompanied by intense live music, and there was a dancing group, whose erotic appearances referred to subconscious forces.

The production at *Willensauna* can be linked to the concept of visual theater frequently used by theater practitioners, particularly during 1980s. The basic idea here was to understand scenography as a mental space, a physical stage metaphorically equivalent to a psychological one. The non-linguistic signs functioned as an immediate expression of emotional experiences. The scenography here came very close to the art of modern non-representative painting which also caused problems in relation to realistically oriented ac-

tors. This performance offers me a possibility for analyzing theater from a visual perspective, and it is the fourth subject of my study.

The scenographies in the provincial theaters of Imatra, Kokkola and Joensuu were all described in the reviews as reduced and simple in a positive sense. They were not only necessary arrangements but created expressive visions. For example, the scenography by Christer Långland in Kokkola Town Theater consisted of one door in the middle of the stage, a couple of wooden beds and two naked trees. They would certainly have deserved closer examination too but I believe that the scenographic questions found there can be dealt with in connection to other productions.

The 1990s saw only few performances of *Miss Julie*. One reason for the waning interest in *Miss Julie* was probably the new marketing policy caused by the economic pressure on many theaters during the depression. Naturalistic tragedy is seldom a box-office hit.

There was an opera production in Vaasa 1994, and a short-lived, very physical staging at Tampere Workers' Theatre in 1997. The latter was no doubt an important contribution to the tradition of performing *Miss Julie*. Scenographically it connects to the idea of empty space and reduced visuality which have been discussed along with "*Strindberg 70?*" and *KOM-teatteri*. I wish that I had seen the performance personally since it was such a recent staging, and because that kind of physical acting necessitates live experience. I was a victim of bad luck, as in 1997 I had no idea that I would write on *Miss Julie*.

When a version that followed the Strindbergian text relatively faithfully was staged in 1999 at *Q-teatteri*, its success necessitated a revival premiere two years later in 2001. In spite of its closeness to the written play *Q-teatteri* marketed *Miss Julie* as a new reading: "Julie often is represented as a victim who is destroyed, but in the version by *Q-teatteri* Julie is responsible for the events, and seduces the people to carry out her suicide."¹⁷

It was, however, interesting to note that most directors seemed to have drawn exactly the same conclusions that Julie is not a victim and the play is about her uncontrollable sexual desires. Strindberg did not characterize Julie as innocent, either. Instead of being a radical re-interpretation in my eyes,

17. *Q-teatteri* 2001.

the staging at *Q-teatteri* actually presented a *Miss Julie* that was very faithfully to Strindberg's text and to the tradition of performing it. (This certainly did not decrease my enjoyment of the production.)

The scenography at *Q-teatteri* was a seemingly naturalistic space, but unlike conventional naturalism it did not show a rational description of reality, but rather an impossible place, where the details did not fit together. This opens up a discussion about the postmodern return to naturalistic appearances without creating a transparent view into the reality of fiction. The scenography at *Q-teatteri* is not only comparable to Strindbergian naturalism but also to the premises of modern theater. This will be the last subject of my study, somehow completing a circle of the development leading from the naturalism of 1880s through modern theater in the 1970s and 1980s to the present day.

The newest production of *Miss Julie* at *Teatteri Jurkka* is not included in my study, since it premiered around the same time as I was finishing my study. The scenography in this production was almost the exact opposite to the staging in the same theater 50 years earlier. Where the Jurkkas had no set at all in 1953, the director Pasi Lampela and the scenographer Markus Tsokkinen of the more recent production brought a rich visual world to the stage. Here images and objects served as separate signs instead of representing a unified space.

The Count's kitchen was squeezed into a small corner, packed with all kinds of objects, including a TV-monitor and the obligatory pans and kettles. The actual arena for acting was an empty space with a steel floor, and a butcher's hook hanging from a rail in the ceiling. The scenery was rather symbolic, surrounded by large stereotypical tropical photos of palm trees against a red sunset. Jean's room was like a closet facing the audience.

Appendix 1

THE PERFORMANCES OF MISS JULIE IN FINLAND

1910	
1912	Svenska Teatern i Helsingfors (the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki)
1916	The touring performance by the actor Aarne Orjatsalo
1917	Tampereen Työväen Teatteri (Tampere Workers' Theatre)
1918	Koiton Näyttämö (the Koitto Stage)
1919	Åbo Svenska Teater (the Turku Swedish Theater)
1920	
1921	Kuopion Työväenteatteri (the Workers' Theater in Kuopio)
1923	Svenska Teatern i Helsingfors (the Swedish Theater in Helsinki); Jyväskylän työväenteatteri (Jyväskylä Workers' Theater)
1927	Koiton Näyttämö (the Koitto Stage)
1928	Lahden Teatteri (the Workers' Theater in Lahti); Intima Teatern from Stockholm visited Helsinki
1930	
1940	
1947	Svenska Teatern i Helsingfors (the Swedish Theater in Helsinki); Suomen Kansallisteatteri (the Finnish National Theatre)
1950	
1950	Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern from Stockholm visited Helsinki.
1953	Teatteri Jurkka
1954	Joensuun Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Joensuu)
1955	Varkauden Työväenteatteri (the Workers' Theater in Varkaus)
1957	Riihimäen teatteri (Riihimäki Theater)
1958	Åbo Svenska Teater (the Turku Swedish Theater)
1959	Kemin Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Kemi)
1960	
1962	Svenska Teatern i Helsingfors (the Swedish Theater in Helsinki)
1966	Kotkan Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Kotka)
1968	Porin Teatteri (Pori Theater)
1970	
1970	"Strindberg 70?" in Draamastudio (the Drama Department at Tampere University)
1971	Tampereen Teatteri (Tampere Theatre, studio)
1972	Lilla Teatern
1975	Oulun Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Oulu)
1976	Rauman Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Rauma); Lahden Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Lahti)
1977	Tikapuuteatteri at the Theatre Academy
1979	Åbo Svenska Teater (the Turku Swedish Theater)
1980	
1981	Vaasan Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Vaasa)
1983	KOM-teatteri; Jyväskylän Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Jyväskylä)
1984	Suomen Kansallisteatteri (The Finnish National Theatre, Willensauna stage); Imatran Teatteri (Imatra Theater)
1986	Kokkolan Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Kokkola)
1989	Joensuun Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Joensuu)
1990	
1994	Vaasan Kaupunginteatteri (the City Theater in Vaasa) (an opera production)
1997	Tampereen Työväen Teatteri (Tampere Workers' Theatre)
1999	Q-teatteri
2000	
2003	Teatteri Jurkka

Appendix 2

PERFORMANCES OF MISS JULIE IN FINLAND AFTER 1945

The artistic team and a short description of the scenography

Descriptions are taken from newspaper reviews.

SVENSKA TEATERN I HELSINGFORS | 1947
The Swedish Theater in Helsinki

Together with the *Hirsipuumies* (The Gallowsman)
by Runar Schildt

Direction • Gerda Wrede Julie • Kerstin Nylander
Scenography • Olavi Sauvola Jean • Eric Gustafsson

The scenography corresponded to Strindberg's notion of realism.

SUOMEN KANSALLISTEATTERI | 1948
The Finnish National Theatre

Direction • Verna Pionius Julie • Ella Eronen
Scenography • Karl Fager Jean • Tauno Palo
 Kristin • Rauha Rentola

A well-cleaned model kitchen.

TEATTERI JURKKA | 1953

A touring performance

Direction • Emmi Jurkka Julie • Vappu Jurkka
 Jean • Mauno Hyvönen
 Kristin • Emmi Jurkka

No scenography, contemporary costumes.

JOENSUUN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1954
The City Theater in Joensuu

Direction • Veikko Manninen Julie • Lahja Vilen
Scenography • Väinö Heiskanen Jean • Topi Kankainen
Costumes • Aino Makkonen Kristin • Anja Pohjola

*The kitchen in the Count's manor was cozy.
The costumes were from the right époque.*

VARKAUDEN TYÖVÄEN TEATTERI | 1955
The Workers' Theater in Varkaus

Direction • Kaija Paasi Julie • Pia Grönlund
Scenography • Vili Ronkainen Jean • Paavo Hyttilä
 Kristin • Kaija Paasi

Conventional scenography.

RIIHIMÄEN TEATTERI | 1957
Riihimäki Theater

Direction • Kauko Laurikainen Julie • Kaija Kujala
Scenography • Urpo Simola Jean • Martti Räsänen
Costumes • Saimi Nurmi Kristin • Aino Arsi

The scenography and costumes were from the right époque.

ÅBO SVENSKA TEATER | 1958
The Turku Swedish Theater

Direction • Rurik Ekroos Julie • Gunvor Sandqvist
Scenography • Gunnar Clément Jean • Roland Hedlund
 Kristin • Birgit Strandman

*A kitchen situated in the basement of the Counts house
with brown vaulting walls.*

KEMIN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1959
The City Theater in Kemi

Direction • Ilmi Parkkari Julie • Ilmi Parkkari
Scenography • Ensio Seppänen Jean • Leo Lastumäki
Costumes • Toppo Nousiainen Kristin • Hillevi Rautio

The scenography represented the Count's kitchen.

SVENSKA TEATERN I HELSINGFORS | 1962
The Swedish Theater in Helsinki

Together with the chamber play "*Leka med elden*"
(Play with the Fire) by Strindberg

Direction • Nanny Westerlund Julie • Märta Laurent
Scenography • Lasse Elo Jean • Göran Cederberg
 Kristin • Hélène
 Hagelstam

*A romanticized interpretation with detailed realism
set in the right époque.*

KOTKAN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1967

The City Theater in Kotka

Direction • Egil Häggman Julie • Eila Ilenius
Scenography • Seppo Heinonen Jean • Ossi Ahlapuro
Costumes • Irja Laine Kristin • Mirja Immonen

Authentic framing for Miss Julie.

PORIN TEATTERI | 1968

Pori Theater, studio

Direction • Seppo Haukijärvi Julie • Airi Pihlajamaa
Scenography • Matti Saarnio Jean • Erkki Siltola
Costumes • Liisi Vilkmán Kristin • Tellervo Harkko

A genuine environment, costumes from the right époque.

“STRINDBERG 70?” IN DRAAMASTUDIO | 1970

The Drama Department at Tampere University

Direction • Julie • Tuija Vuolle
Adam Hanuszkiewicz Jean • Juhani Niemelä
Scenography • Kristin • Salme Karppinen
Adam Hanuszkiewicz,
Juha Lukala

A performance differing from realistic traditions; the scenography was created by the actors processing their roles.

TAMPEREEN TEATTERI | 1971

The Tampere Theater, studio

Direction • Julie • Tuija Vuolle
Adam Hanuszkiewicz Jean • Juhani Niemelä
Scenography • Ulla Selinheimo Kristin • Ritva Valkama

A realistic scenography. The play was accompanied by a live jazz-band.

LILLA TEATERN | 1972

Direction • Johan Bergenstråhle Julie • Elina Salo
Scenography • Måns Hedström Jean • Lasse Pöysti
Kristin • Birgitta Olfsson

A green colored realistic kitchen, faithful to Strindbergian époque.

OULUN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1975

The City Theater in Oulu, small stage

Direction • Ari Kallio Julie • Eeva-Maija
Scenography • Jukka Salomaa Haukinen
Costumes • Eila Rovio Jean • Juhani Juustinen
Kristin • Seija Näppilä

A realistic, beautiful kitchen with the real smell of food.

LAHDEN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1976

The City Theater in Lahti

Direction and Scenography • Julie • Maarita Mäkelä
Paavo Pirttimaa Jean • Svante Korkiakoski
Kristin • Sirkka-Liisa
Wilén

Realistic.

RAUMAN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1976

The City Theater in Rauma

Direction • Ahti Ahonen Julie • Marjatta Palmio
Scenography • Antti Alasaari Jean • Harri Viita
Kristin • Kaija Kiiski

A Count's kitchen, shabby and brown-toned.

TIKAPUUTEATTERI | 1977

Vanhan Ylioppilastalon Musiikkisali

The Theatre Academy, The Old Students House, Music Hall

Direction • Georg Dolivo Julie • Miitta Nortia
Scenography • Sirpa Virtanen Jean • Risto Tuorila
Costumes • Lilja Mäkelä Kristin • Kaija Kangas

An arena staging. The performance was based on improvisation.

ÅBO SVENSKA TEATER | 1979

The Turku Swedish Theater

A touring performance

Direction • Annette Arlander Julie • Marjorita Hulden
Scenography • Tove Ahlbäck Jean • Lasse Fagerström
Kristin • Janina Berman

A set with red-colored decorative trees and archetypal, symbolic scenic visions.

VAASAN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1981

The City Theater in Vaasa

A touring performance

Direction • Marjaana Castren Julie • Riitta Selin
Scenography • Tiina Makkonen Jean • Kari Kihlman
Kristin • Laila Räikkä

A realistic kitchen. The stage divided the audience into two parts.

JYVÄSKYLÄN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1983

The City Theater in Jyväskylä

Direction • Jarmo Inkinen Julie • Marja Pesonen
Scenography • Jean • Jussi Myllymäki
Timo Martinkauppi Kristin • Maritta
Costumes • Kaija Salaspuro Viitamäki

A realistic kitchen with an accurate depiction of the right époque.

KOM-TEATTERI, KINO CABARET | 1983

Direction • Laura Jäntti Julie • Marja-Leena Kouki
Scenography • Måns Hedström Jean • Kari Hakala
 Kristin • Erja Manto
 Fiddler • Rauno Salminen

The theater venue was changed into a cafeteria.

SUOMEN KANSALLISTEATTERI | 1984

The Finnish National Theatre, Willensaua studio stage

Direction • Olli Tola Julie • Marjukka Halttunen
Scenography • Kari Junnikkala Jean • Risto Aaltonen
Choreography • Anu Panula Kristin • Soila Komi
Music • Pekka Laitinen

The scenography represented 'an icy castle'.

IMATRAN TEATTERI | 1984

Imatra Theater, studio stage

Direction • Heikki Timonen Julie • Tiina Markkanen
Scenography • Pertti Hilkamo Jean • Kari Mäkilä
Costumes • Sylvi Davidsson Kristin • Irma Taivainen
Hairdress • Mika Mustonen

The scenography contained mirrors and walls made of lace.

KOKKOLAN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1986

The City Theater in Kokkola

Direction • Seppo Rantonen Julie • Kerttu Juusola
Scenography • Christer Lågland Jean • Juha Anttila
 Kristin • Silja Saarimaa

A simple, allusive scenography, consisting only of a door in the middle of the stage, a couple of wooden beds and two naked trees.

JOENSUUN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1989

The City Theater in Joensuu, small stage

Direction • Ahti Ahonen Julie • Riitta Piironen
Scenography • Iris Routa Jean • Jarmo Jämsén
 Kristin • Kaisa Ursinus

Faithful to Strindberg's naturalism. A reduced scenography.

VAASAN OOPPERA.

VAASAN KAUPUNGINTEATTERI | 1994

Vaasa Opera, the City Theater in Vaasa

Composer • Ilkka Kuusisto Julie • Riitta-Maija Ahonen
Director • Taisto-Bertil Orsmaa Jean • Heikki Keinonen
Visual design • Markku Sirén Kristin • Anitta Ranta
Musical lead • Matti Tiainen

TAMPEREEN TYÖVÄENTEATTERI, kellariteatteri | 1997

Tampere Workers' Theatre, studio

Direction • Hanno Eskola Julie • Minna Hokkanen
Scenography • Jean • Auvo Vihro
Ulla-Maija Peltola Kristin • Anna Haaranen
Music • Ari Erkko

The play was performed both in the Kellari studio in the Tampere Workers' Theatre and in the Kustaa Hiekkä art museum. The acting was very physical. There was a big table in the middle of the stage, and a bunk bed at the back.

Q-TEATTERI, small stage | 2.9.1999

Direction • Katariina Lahti Julie • Henriikka Salo
Scenography • Jean • Tommi Korpela
Katariina Kirjavainen Kristin • Anna-Maija
 Valonen

An apparently realistic kitchen, the inherent logic of which was broken.

TEATTERI JURKKA | 2003

Direction • Pasi Lampela Julie • Meri Nenonen
Scenography • Jean • Janne Hyytiäinen
Markus Tsokkinen Kristin • Ona Kamu

The set had a steel floor with a butcher's hook hanging from the ceiling; the kitchen was crammed into a corner. Jean's room was like a closet with a mirror on the door. There were large photos of palm trees set against a sunset on the walls behind the audience and in Jean's room.

Experiences in Theatrical Spaces is a study about contemporary Finnish scenography. It deals with five different stagings of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, a play where scenography and vision have a special role. The scenic illusion should help the spectator to understand the tragedy more profoundly, but the spatial order locates the audience inside the fictive world where they only see a fragmentary view. Thereby the certainty of knowledge and the trust in empirical observation is put on stake and the omniscient angelic eye is replaced by a subjective vision.

Each of the *Miss Julie* scenographies studied in this book reject the naturalism that is traditionally connected to the play. Instead they use stage space and vision as communication in a great variety of ways. They give cause for theoretical discussions about the construction and functioning of visual perceptions and spatial experiences. How are meanings created through scenography? How is the audience made to perceive the stage? How is their perception supposed to generate ideas, understanding, emotions and experiences? These issues are analyzed by using the following performances as case studies:

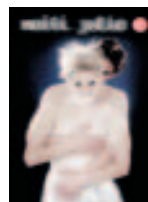
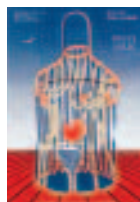
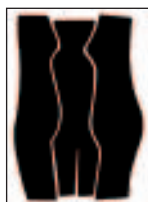
TAMPERE UNIVERSITY, DRAAMASTUDIO 1970: "STRINDBERG 70?"

THE TURKU SWEDISH THEATRE 1979: MISS JULIE

KOM-TEATTERI 1984: MISS JULIE

THE NATIONAL THEATRE, WILLENSAUNA STUDIO STAGE, 1984: MISS JULIE

Q-TEATTERI, PUOLI-Q STUDIO STAGE, 1999: MISS JULIE



6 “Strindberg 70?”

Processing Scenography Through Acting

The Drama Department in the University of Tampere arranged an educational and experimental project for professional actors in the summer of 1970. The participants worked for four weeks on *Miss Julie* under the guidance of the Polish actor and director Adam Hanuszkiewicz. The production called “*Strindberg 70?*” also contained text fragments from the plays *Taming of the Shrew* and *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and the Biblical story about the fall of Adam. It had six public performances at the Tampere Theatre Festival, where it got a mostly positive and even enthusiastic reception.

The thinking and methods of Hanuszkiewicz were evident throughout the production. The scenography can also be attributed to him, although one of the participants, Juha Lukala, was a scenographer. However he rather took care of the practical work. “*Strindberg 70?*” is an example of a performance in which the scenography is so tightly involved with the direction and acting that it can only be discussed as a part of them, rather than as a purely spatio-visual work.

The production was documented very well in a 40-paged special issue of the journal *Vastavalo* published by the Drama Department. It contains a detailed rehearsal diary kept by Kari Salosaari, who was Hanuszkiewicz’s assistant and interpreter. Moreover, there are photographs from rehearsals, quotes by Hanuszkiewicz that express his artistic opinions, a summary from the reviews, comments by the leading actors and a description of the scenography written by Juha Lukala. Aside from using *Vastavalo*, I have interviewed Kari Salosaari and actors who played Julia and Jean, Tuija Vuolle and Juhani Niemelä, all of whom remembered in detail their “*Strindberg 70?*” experience.

The evidence about the production mostly documents the rehearsal process, which fits well with my focus. The relevant aspect for me is the scenographic creation process that happened during rehearsals in tandem with the actors working on their roles. This is also the reason I have emphasized the viewpoints of the actors and director instead of the scenographer carrying out the physical construction of the set.

According to Kari Salosaari, Hanuszkiewicz worked on the stage as if it were an empty canvas. When the situation demanded it, he started to build the scenery. When something was needed, it was added on the stage, and in this way the final composition was created. The only starting point was the framework given by the situation and the text. The actors were expected to react to them with originality and as a result produce new material in the rehearsals.¹ The whole performance, including the scenography, was thought of as an uncompleted process.

Finally the most important part of the set consisted of 17 rehearsing screens, which were used in many different ways. Juha Lukala described the scenography in the following way:

The scenographic outcome in “Strindberg 70?” came about in an exceptional way. At the beginning of the first rehearsal period we had no holistic solution at all. The director approached the scenes as separate entities...

When the first period of rehearsals had ended, consequent decisions were made concerning the set and the costumes. The space for acting was to be marked off by rehearsing screens...

On the screens, which surrounded the acting space, were the following details: A picture of a scenery painted in the style of the 19th century, a photograph of Strindberg and an old interphone...

It was decided that furniture should be rustic and include a genuine wooden table, five chairs, a bed, a wooden bench and a modern electric stove.²

1. Halttunen-Salosaari
1970, 11.

2. Lukala 1970.

> Look at the illustration and more complete description in Appendix 3.

The actress who played Julie, Tuija Vuolle recalled:

If something felt good, it was left as it was. For instance, the screens, at first were only intended to serve the rehearsals, and because they worked so well, they stayed. They also emphasized the educational aspects of the project. Certain incompleteness was left on the stage to stress the process that had been employed.³

It is likely that the use of rehearsing-screens as the main scenographic element was initially due to economic and practical circumstances. The team did not have extra money to build a complete set, nor were there any workshops or carpenters at the University studio. The screens were most readily available. They also served their purpose well, as they were small, light and easy to move. This allowed for rapid rearrangement of space, allowing new ideas to be tested at anytime. The possibility of changing the set was naturally important for a production concentrating primarily on the rehearsal process rather than the finished product.

6.1 THE STAGE REPRESENTING THEATER

What has “*Strindberg 70?*” to do with the art of scenography? It was primarily a training project focusing on actors’ work. There was no scenographic design, but the set took its shape during the rehearsals. The scenic meanings came about only through the action which was generated unpredictably in rehearsals.

The flexibility of the scenic meanings could be seen as a reminder that all meanings are based on an interaction within human communities. The emptiness of the stage provided an opportunity for creating different situations according to which the meanings were coded. It also meant creating a kind of temporal theatrical community outside both the everyday world and the fictive one. A performance playing with the changeable meanings somehow served as a kind of semiotic laboratory for human communication.

Instead of being a pictorial representation of a milieu, the set served as a storing place for objects, providing the actors with possibilities for spatial and visual expression. It was the actors who were the creative agents, and the

3. Vuolle 2003.

scenography was put together according to their needs. In practice it meant that whatever was on stage had to be easy to construct and break up, so that experimentation could be facilitated. This kind of a scenographic approach provides raw-material for a generation of new meanings.

In terms of stage presence the scenography in “*Strindberg 70?*” differed significantly from naturalist premises. It did not represent a fictive reality. It was certainly “identified as a stage or a space for acting”, which according to Arnold Aronson is the first basic principle of modern stage design.⁴ I think this also points to its metaphorical significance. It represented the theatrical and cultural horizon of the production “*Strindberg 70?*” and the ensemble gathered around Hanuszkiewicz in Tampere’s *Draamastudio* in 1970.

The set elements can be analyzed as cultural signs – the rehearsing-screens refer to theater in general and in particular to the phase of rehearsals. On one screen there was glued a photo of Strindberg. It was of course a reminder of the author whose personality is closely connected to his works in our common consciousness. To me it also seemed to represent a ghost of the theatrical conventions linked to his plays. We are familiar with the portrait of Strindberg from our history books, where he belongs to the generation of artists who laid the foundations of contemporary modern thinking. I think that the photo on the screen symbolized his significance in our culture. No matter how much Hanuszkiewicz stressed the freshness of their reading, he must also have known that it was impossible to put all previous conceptions of *Miss Julie* in brackets.

There was also a painting representing a landscape in 19th century style which can be seen as a reference to the historicity of the play. In my eyes it denotes to the realistic tradition of visual representation which influences the reception of modern scenography. Thereby, it was also a metaphor for the mental background in front of which the actors worked.

Similarly the wooden rustic pieces of furniture were not only historical symbols but also symbols of the conventional ways of representing the past. The *Teatterimonntu* venue for its part could be connected to theater studies, and thus made reference to the contemporary radical theatre movement and the rejection of tradition. “*Strindberg 70?*” existed within the framework of the Tampere Theatre Festival which was a colorful happening recalled by Kari

4. Aronson 1991, 4.

Salosaari: “There was one seminar next to another, and in every possible place people were making theater politics and revolutionizing things.”⁵

For me, staging the scenography of “*Strindberg 70?*” emphasized boundaries, the actors and the director were working within certain limits and even the spectator could not escape them. Hence, all speech and acts stood in some relation to these restrictions, and it was to these relationships that the set finally referred. This theme can also be related to the contemporary limitations we are faced with when trying to understand the character of Julie who belongs to another kind of world. Our reading of the character exists within the horizon of our knowledge and conceptions which never matches that of the playwright.

The performance of Miss Julie was interrupted by fragments taken of other plays, like *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* These interludes represented paradigmatic versions of the relationship between man and woman. The sexual problematic was presented as elementary contradictions that were a part of human existence. The repetitive sexual battles also imply a belief in an archetypal human nature that is inclined towards similar behavior in different historical circumstances. Instead of an individual tragedy, the fate of Julie was rather presented as one link in the chain of a continuous social and sexual struggle.

› Look at the illustrations and more complete description in Appendix 3.

In that sense the scenery stood for a changing world capable of showing new aspects of age-old stories. The environment was a field of human activity, on which only the actors and circumstances change, but something remains: the change and struggle themselves – and the theater representing them.

6.2 ACTING A SPACE

One central requirement of a scenography like that of “*Strindberg 70?*” is that the stage elements must not obstruct the execution of ideas invented in rehearsals. This means that not only should the set enable every physical movement but it should also prevent using signs that are too determinate. This demand is often expressed by the idea of an empty space. According

5. Salosaari 2000.

to Juhani Niemelä, who played Jean, Hanuszkiewicz put this method into practice:

He started very much from an empty space. There is so much talk about the book by Peter Brook 'Empty Space', but he [Hanuszkiewicz] used it very early on. In other words: An empty space. What do we need? We need a table. We need a chair. We need a wall. We would not even have had the screens, unless we hadn't needed something behind which we could go and where we could come from. He had only what was essential. The things which remained on stage were used for expression. Now a coulisse was not a coulisse, but a tool for expression. It had some allegoric, metaphorical [function], too.⁶

The claim for an empty space is often met with the opposing remark that there is no such thing. Every room has at least walls, a floor and a ceiling, which give it particular characteristics inextricably linked to its history and location. Moreover, we cannot perceive a space or an object as being without any significance. However, even if a neutral stage, in the sense of a *tabula rasa*, cannot exist, we can play games with the possible meanings linked to a space or an object. A stage element may stand for any other thing depending on the actors' performance. We may create a temporal emptiness of meanings by breaking conventional significations and creating new ones. There, as is often repeated, anything may represent anything.

I think that the screens in "Strindberg 70?" fulfilled the ideological function of an empty space extremely well. Rehearsing-screens typically served as substitutes for unfinished coulisses during the rehearsals of any plays. They were used in different productions as substitutes for all kind of objects but they were not permanently linked to any of them.

As their proper function was to stand in for almost anything not present, they could be conceived as empty, vacant signs, ready to represent any possible meaning. This reduces their previously-given meanings to a minimum. The associations connected to the screens were not implied by the screens themselves but by their changing context amongst the stage action. This enables us to see the meanings as something fluctuating, something to be established, destroyed and negotiated through acting. It has to do with the magic of Artaud and Grotowski, which Bert O. States has described as alchemy:

6. Niemelä 2003.

It is not only that the eye can be tricked into seeing almost any object as something else, but that object that does not represent something in advance, becomes a blank check, an open presence; it becomes the source of something not yet here, a thing without a history or whose history is about to be revised.⁷

According to Richard Schechner the theatrical capability of representation is based on liminality between the ‘real’ being of an actor and the fictive character in the performative consciousness. The actor – or an object – belongs simultaneously to two worlds. He is not-himself and not-not-himself at the same time, which means that he can neither be completely identified with his character, nor with his social personality. As Schechner says, “this field is precarious because it is subjunctive, liminal, transitional: it rests on how things are not. Its existence depends on agreements kept among spectators.”⁸

Since the screens in “*Strindberg 70?*” lacked permanent significance, they in some sense exactly represented this field of ‘not being’. The rehearsal screens have no role in everyday life, and the meanings they stand for are completely arbitrary. They are objects belonging only to the theatrical world but usually the audience never sees them. What they actually refer to is the reality of rehearsals where actors are working on their roles. Revealing the reality of theatrical processing, which is normally concealed from the public gaze, was of course the premise of “*Strindberg 70?*” – after all, it was primarily a training project.

The screens in “*Strindberg 70?*” did not actually represent any other concrete objects, and never lost their character as theatrical screens. They rather stood for metaphorical ideas or human relations. One good example of this was the scene where Jean and Julie discussed their different memories. Julie was hiding behind a screen, which was used as a symbol for concealing and revealing emotions or romantic illusions, and wavering between truths and lies.

› Look at the illustration and more complete description in Appendix 3.

Later on Jean moved another screen behind Julie placing her between the screens like a hotdog in a bun. There she was on the one hand safe, being able to hide her, and the vision was playful. But on the other hand Julie was imprisoned and exposed to the seductive whisperings of Jean. When Jean

7. States 1985, 113.

8. Schechner 1985, 113.

pulled the front-screen away, she was seen helplessly balancing on two counterweights as if robbed of her shelter and caught in a trap.

The exact significance of Julie's relation to the screens was ambivalent. This sense of uncertainty could also be seen to stress the erotic tension, because sexual attraction is also a vague and indeterminate feeling, where opposite emotions interact. Moreover, an erotically excited person is in a sense trapped in a situation where his/her uncontrollable feelings threaten his/her privacy and self-determinacy. The experience created by the scene was not a simple communication of certain meanings but rather a collection of feelings connected to Julie's erotic excitement.

The leading actors Tuija Vuolle and Juhani Niemelä recalled Hanuszkiewicz's directing methods:

He was very pedantic about the actor's visual expression. Although he did not understand the language, he could hear the tone of a sentence, and he saw it in the movements of the actor. He did a kind of choreography. He could spend time perfecting one touch for a terribly long time, focusing on its rhythm...

He was also very pedantic about the space where the actor acts. I don't mean the theater stage, but the mental and physical space in which the person acted by the actor exists. He created the architecture: where is the father [of Julie] – he is there; you can hear him walking upstairs and you have the boots in your hand... You are not on stage, but in the servant's room and there upstairs lives your ruler...

He talked about occupying a space... taking the space for yourself. This means that the actor is a part of scenography through his/her own being. If you are in a sauna, – although you have no sauna [on stage] – it must be a sauna and not a railway station. There is a big difference in the gesture...

It was normal for him that it was the actor who was looked at on stage, not the props and sets. The actor creates the whole space, this was really very essential.⁹

9. Niemelä and Vuolle
2003.

The representation of place and time was thus a concern for the actors rather than the scenography. The important meanings were not in the visible surface but in the structural relations between the actors and the space. They were shown through the actor's orientation in the space. His/her gestures, movements and reactions should make the audience 'see' invisible images. There was a kind of shared imagination communicated through the actors' bodies.

The way in which the actors' gestures worked as scenography can be seen as an extension of Strindberg's wish to get rid of the painted walls that "Are not capable of expressing the anger of an irate *pater familias* who, on leaving his home after a poor dinner, slams the door behind him 'so that it shakes the whole house'".¹⁰

Hanuszkiewicz did not even need the real door and walls but only an aggressive act, which made the audience feel as though the house was shaken. The spectators identify with the physical action and create the corresponding environment in their imagination.

A lot of positive attention was paid to the scene where Julie asks Kristin to follow them to Lake Como and draws her vision of the place on the floor with a piece of chalk. Many critics described her behavior as childish, and Tuija Vuolle recalled it as a moment of regression.¹¹ The spontaneity and naivety of her day-dreaming compared to the fresh and innocent gaze of a child. In some sense this vision symbolized her ability to encounter the world in a new, creative way and escape from her present unhappiness. When Jean wipes her drawing away, he destroys this possibility.

› Look at the illustration and more complete description in Appendix 3.

Without having seen the scene myself I presume that its impressiveness was due to the fact that rather than illustrating a vision, the act of seeing an image in one's imagination was performed. What the scene actually showed was Julie having a dream about the beauty of Lake Como. The audience could not see the scenery from Switzerland, but they were given an opportunity to identify with Julie's act of daydreaming. The simple drawing represented the blueness of the lake and the brightness of the sun as we think of them when longing for a trip to the south. Even if the dreams are unique and different

10. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xviii.

11. Vuolle 2003.

for every person, we all share the capacity to dream. It was not a subjective inner image that was communicated but a common experience of having this kind of fantasy.

That notion of a shared ability to imagine has been described by Gaston Bachelard: You can only give another person the impulse to call forth his/her own dreams, never to invite him/her to your personal dreams.¹²

However, the spectator also sees the dreaming Julie in the framework of her tragedy. She is developing her fantasies of escape which are to be wiped out by Jean. Jean did not belong to the dreamers. When he removed the drawing from the floor he somehow denied the fantasies of Julie and alongside them, her emotional life. Here he showed an incapability to be sensitive to another person's feelings, and consequently an inability to respect them. The last scene of the performance showed Jean alone in the spotlights as if isolated from other people by his cruelty.

6.3 AUTOSTUDIUM – STUDYING THEATRICALITY

Hanuszkiewicz rejected Stanislavski's psychological realism and the theater of illusion. The aim of his rehearsals was not to create a credible character but to study the actors' relation to the fiction. Hanuszkiewicz's assistant and interpreter, Kari Salosaari described his working method in the following way:

He did not think about the contents of the play like this: Well, let's direct Woyzeck (which he directed later in Tampere), there we have the little fellow who becomes a victim of the system and the system will be represented like this and this, and the little fellow and his fall and struggle will be represented like that and that... Hanuszkiewicz did not think like that.

*He simply said during a conversation about Julie, 'Ich weiss nicht was Julie ist – I don't know what Julie is, but I'm looking for it, because she is the protagonist of this play.' It was kept open until the last moment... In that way you could find new aspects until the very end.'*¹³

12. Bachelard 1969 (1958), xiv–xv.

13. Salosaari 2000.

Hanuszkiewicz's working method was called *Autostudium* which meant that the actors were studying their own work. The purpose of Hanuszkiewicz's theater was not to offer an interpretation of the play or give answers to its problematic, but to stage the theatrical process dealing with the questions that had arisen from the text. The emphasis was on that interrogative activity, and representing the play text was of secondary importance. The performance was to be a continuous process reflecting the actors' relationship to their roles and to themselves. In that way they should constantly keep addressing new questions.

According to Hanuszkiewicz, the significant meaning of a play is evident in its scenic expression and structure, not in its distinguishable content or an analysis of it. Therefore, he believed it impossible to understand Strindberg's original intentions. He explained this in a newspaper interview:

You can't be loyal to the text. You can't pull one figure out from a book with violence, nor from a painting, they are their own entities... When I play Hamlet, the spectators are not in contact with Shakespeare, but with my concept of Hamlet. The written text can only mediate an idea; the actor must generate the feeling. The structure of the play is also an idea, the semantics of the text aren't... Everything else can be removed but the actor and the spectator.¹⁴

This quote suggests a hermeneutic notion of a text coming into being through different readings, and conditioned by the temporal and cultural situations that surround these readings. Hans-Georg Gadamer has noted that a work of art only exists through these repeating structures experience.¹⁵ On a practical level the hermeneutic representations appear as a series of individual readings preconditioned by their history. However, it is exactly through the repetitive structure of experience that the work of art is freed from subjectivity. The capability to enjoy the dramatic play remains, although the way of understanding it varies according to particular circumstances. Following this reading it could be said that the stage space of "*Strindberg 70?*" stood for a changeable mental arena where theater takes place over and over again.

Hanuszkiewicz wanted the spectator to see the actors' personal processing of their roles, rather than fictive characters seen through transparent acting. He wanted to avoid the naturalistic rhetoric of Strindberg, a reconstructed real-

14. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 26.

15. Gadamer 1975, 91–100.

ity hiding its artificiality. On the other hand, he did not only reveal the representational character of the stage in the Brechtian sense but also wanted to show and study the very acts of reading and recreating the play. Hanuszkiewicz stressed the artist's consciousness of his/her own expression: "Art begins when somebody talking prose becomes aware that he/she talks prose. Then he/she can switch to verse."¹⁶

I think that the most important level on which "*Strindberg 70?*" took place was on that of theatrical speech. It was the director and the actors who, by their interrogative processing and constant readiness to change their performance, became the actual protagonists. The subject of representation was now the stage language reflecting on itself.

Whereas the intention of Strindberg as a naturalist was to make visible the psychic mechanisms of his fictive protagonists, Hanuszkiewicz aimed at a reconstruction of the artistic process of staging the play. Hanuszkiewicz was not peeping to the privacy of Julie but into that of himself and the actors reading and representing the play.

This manifests most clearly in the planned prologue and epilogue which were left out of the public performance in the final days. Hanuszkiewicz had intended to stage different contemporary characters discussing the play and theater. These roles clearly exemplified various typical audience responses. Their conversation was rehearsed to appear as a spontaneous event. It was meant to be a random situation that could be observed but it was in fact carefully thought out.

› Look at the more complete description in Appendix 3.

According to Salosaari one of Hanuszkiewicz's most characteristic trademarks was "an almost systematical use of accidents, mostly unpleasant, but sometimes positive surprises forming the theatrical working process."¹⁷

Juhani Niemelä recalled how "he had a funny way of catching ideas from his surroundings. If there was a particular kind of a floor he would say let's use it."¹⁸ Hanuszkiewicz himself proposed that a common spectator "should get the impression that everything takes place through a happy coincidence.

16. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 26.

17. Salosaari 1970.

18. Niemelä 2003.

It would be better still if s/he experiences everything as if it were created now.”¹⁹

Here, the Strindbergian representation of a naturalist illusion is, arguably, suggestive. The performance was presented as if it were a random slice cut out of reality; only this time the reality of rehearsals was reconstructed before the audience. The final performance appeared as an inadvertent event, it was as if the actors were inventing everything in the moment of performing.

Anything that happened at rehearsals could be taken advantage of. For example, during the rehearsals a technical assistant climbed up the back wall in order to take a photograph and he was immediately included in the performance.²⁰ The photographer could be seen as a metaphor for the self-reflection characterizing the production but I think that he also represented the randomness of signs surrounding us in everyday life, thus, undermining the constructed nature of the performance.

It can be argued that in spite of the creative openness of rehearsals, the public performances of “*Strindberg 70?*” were very conscious reconstructions of processes that once may have been intuitive and spontaneous but now had become a final product. They represented a well-planned illusion of improvisation and this could be seen, as one critic noted: “Adam Hanuszkiewicz’s instructions, with all their details, were visible all the time and they were obeyed like mathematical formulas.”²¹

That insight can be confirmed by the actors’ reports of how, in rehearsals, Hanuszkiewicz sometimes polished one simple gesture for a long time until he was satisfied with it.²² Instead of making the argument for verisimilitude through stage reality, the proposal for spontaneity should maybe be seen as manifesting an ideal about how an artistic process – a creative or receptive one – should be.

Hanuszkiewicz allowed the actors to intuitively produce any kind of scenic material, a large part of which was forgotten. Some acts and gestures were ‘extracted’ from this chaotic flow and developed further for the next phase. The central artistic task was the selection of material, out of which the scenes could be developed. It required an intuitivism that recognized the most interesting scenic acts and images.

19. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 27.

20. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 10.

21. Aura 1970.

22. Vuolle and Niemelä 2003.

This fundamentally demonstrates that the essence of an artistic expression does not differ from any everyday happening but can be found among them. The artist's privileged skill is not so much to produce meaningful visions but rather to discern the significant ones from the mass, and to put them into a new context which gives them artistic value. The meaningfulness grows out of the flow of occasional events.

If anything that happened (even an accidental disturbance) could serve as an artistic element, according to Hanuszkiewicz's thinking there was no elementary difference between an everyday-phenomenon and artistic one. What tells them apart is only the act of framing the latter as a performance. The task of an artist is to make the spectator grasp some new significance beyond its apparent everydayness. In order to do that, the artists must be sensitive to latent meanings found in an object or event.

There is a similarity with naturalism in showing the visible world as a dilemma: the capability to catch hidden, but not directly visible meanings in the appearance of the surface. The difference, however, is that Hanuszkiewicz did not think of the play-world as a puzzle to be solved but rather as a field of unanswerable questions and suggestions for possible meanings.

Furthermore, it is quite clear that it was Hanuszkiewicz himself who decided which scenes were kept and left out. The public performances disjointed appearance was a constructed result of his preferences, although the choices were not made without discussion with the ensemble. The assistant Kari Salosaari wrote in the rehearsal diary that at the beginning of the second week: "It looks like they only keep the ideas that have 'stuck' to the actors."²³ The actress playing Julie, Tuija Vuolle, confirmed that Hanuszkiewicz could enable the actors to find the materials for the role in themselves.²⁴

Being an actor himself, Hanuszkiewicz did not conceive of a performance as an isolated product created by the director but as an event completed by the audience.

- 23. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 14.
- 24. Vuolle 1970.
- 25. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 35.

*The spectator is a co-worker, not an apathetic gazer. The imagination of the spectator serves as a creative device, his/her reactions, applause, whistling, stampings and all other kinds of expressions and demonstrations make up the most important dialogue in theater.*²⁵

The reception and creation of theater therefore mix together. Hanuszkiewicz conceived of theater as a dynamic process with everybody and everything participating in it. He criticized the Finnish attitude to theater:

*The difficulty of performing an argument in Finnish theater is not due to our national character, but due to our theatrical conventions having too discrete an attitude to audience. As a result no real argument with audience emerges.*²⁶

As a Finnish spectator, who is not too keen on participating in performances, I wonder whether the theatrical ideology of Hanuszkiewicz presupposed an ideal audience, different from the existing Finnish one. When it came to the production of “*Strindberg 70?*” the reception probably fulfilled his expectations, since the majority of spectators were theater professionals and amateurs, and therefore more open to participation than average audiences.

To some extent “*Strindberg 70?*” was a significant project for the insiders of Finnish theater. Being primarily an educational project it concentrated on the ways of doing theater, which probably mostly interested professionals, as one reviewer wrote:

*This kind of studying theater making is no doubt rewarding for the receiving actor and the specialized audience, an ordinary spectator does not always seem to get involved with it, although they are aware of something happening.*²⁷

According to Salosaari “*Strindberg 70?*” was seen as oppositional to political theater which was then in its heyday²⁸. Today it is possible to see analysis of theatrical language as a potentially political exercise but in 1970 the conception of politics was limited to issues directly concerning the structures of society. One reviewer saw the aims of Hanuszkiewicz as purely aesthetic.²⁹ Another critic, committed to the politically engaged leftist theater, severely criticized “*Strindberg 70?*”: “To me the whole performance, with all its methods, was stuffy and outdated theater.”³⁰

In fact, Hanuszkiewicz himself also stressed his disinterest in political theater and social critique which according to him is “rather suited to cabaret, where

26. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 19.

27. Aura 1970.

28. Salosaari 2000.

29. Salomaa 1970.

30. Suvalo 1970.

it has its place in Poland, the task of theater being bigger. Theater should deal with problems to which there are no unambiguous answers.”³¹

Of course, it is possible that Hanuszkiewicz was being careful with his statements because he was an artist from socialist Poland visiting a Western country. The leading actors, Tuija Vuolle and Juhani Niemelä, who had seen several stagings by Hanuszkiewicz in Poland, remarked that in the context of his homeland, Hanuszkiewicz was in fact a very political director who was suddenly discarded from his leading post at the Polish National Theater later in the 1970s. Niemelä described one particular staging he saw both in Poland and in Finland:

*The performance of Hamlet that I saw in Warsaw (1971) was so illuminating. It was a huge success, the applause lasted 15–20 minutes. Two years later the same performance visited the Finnish National Theater. It was the same performance but it did not have the same effect. In Poland at the beginning of the 1970s Hamlet was political, being about a man who overturns the throne. Two years later, when it came here, it was a tired Hamlet with the flu. What political content do we have here? We can understand the relevance: Aha, now they have overturned the throne, but there is no effect. And that's what Adam probably meant in his interview. He realized that he was not political here.*³²

6.4 THE ARTISTIC PROCESS

*When I start to direct I read the text only once in advance, like a caricaturist, who keeps his hand partly in front of the model, so as not to be too involved with him/her and not to lose his/her creative self.*³³

This quote by Hanuszkiewicz presents a typical belief amongst artists who think that the creative process is hampered by too many outside influences. The subjective impressions that arise spontaneously from the mind of the artist are to be protected in order to develop into forms of originality and significance. Hanuszkiewicz combined this with his rejection of psychological or sociological analyses. What really mattered for him was immediate and intuitive contact to the things to be represented, not an intelligible knowledge about it.

31. Hanuszkiewicz
1970.

32. Niemelä 2003.

33. Halttunen-
Salosaari 1970, 26.

Here he showed a romantic belief in the artist's capability to see into the essence of things without being mediated by the conceptualizing apparatus of rational thought. On the other hand Hanuszkiewicz stressed that the 'content' of a performance does not exist in isolation to being projected on stage but it is there in the structure of the play and the *mise-en-scène*.

According to Hanuszkiewicz producing of a work of art is not a projection of ideas created beforehand. The abstract thinking can only emerge alongside the formation. The creativity of an artist is demonstrated in their capability to 'think' perceptively through visions, sounds, movement and other tools used by him/her. An artist's intuition is not a direct, 'transcendental' contact with the world of ideas, but takes place through the work's production. The artist can express his/her ideas only by means of this process mediating between material form and abstract ideas.

To put it simply: our thoughts are not immediately apparent to us, but must be channeled through some vehicle, such as language or a theatrical event. If we want to understand our own thoughts, which also offer us the only way to understand the outer world, we must study the vehicle carrying the meanings. This is my understanding of Hanuszkiewicz's position. It was no exaggeration when Kari Salosaari remarked, thirty years after the production, that it was "a kind of postmodernism before postmodernism".³⁴

The inseparability of form and content was concretely realized in Hanuszkiewicz's method of spontaneously created scenic material. If the content does not exist as a 'pure idea', it only can be found in conjunction with the development of structure and form. He expressed this in the following way: "The actor works to create an idea through his/her tone and the way of speaking."³⁵ Juhani Niemelä also recalled how Hanuszkiewicz approached acting from the outside in:

He paid attention to external appearances but surprisingly this was connected to internal issues. He was discussing nakedness [at the rehearsals of Miss Julie in Tampereen Teatteri]. He wanted us to be naked after we had been in the bed behind the door. He said 'Okay, let's try this naked'. Then he looked at us and said: "You are not naked although you have no clothes on". He was thinking it over and over. Then he wrapped Julie in a bed sheet and I had old army

34. Salosaari 2000.

35. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 26.

underpants on, those very pitiful ones. Then he said, "Now you are much more naked".

In this instance he was thinking in an external way. His way of directing was funny. He advanced slowly and logically. Once he had started, he continued in a methodical way, building brick by brick. The preceding situation gave cause to the next one. He concluded an idea in relation to the next, either in opposition to it, or in harmony with it. He advanced by asking what the natural movement in the situation would be. And then he could in a very irritating way, get stuck on some very little detail. He kept tinkering and tinkering, because he could not find his way out. He always had to find the correct path.³⁶

Hanuszkiewicz apparently had no holistic idea of the final result when he started rehearsals. He only let a basic scenic creation exist, looked at it and considered what it meant. As a result the performance was lead by a process of unpremeditated directions.

Many people working in the creative field have mentioned how their first, vague intentions differ from the final product. For example, many authors explain how their characters start to lead their own live regardless of the original intentions of their creator. The creative process is conceived of as something unpredictable, almost having its own will, and the artist follows its course rather than conducts it. It is not only that a better shape and structure can be found through the process but the whole idea or content of the work also develops and deepens.

This kind of an attitude means that an artist is not consciously producing meaningful forms as projections of already existing ideas. S/he is rather confronted with different images entering his/her awareness either from the outside world or from the internal memory and imagination. The images that seem to awaken the most significant response are developed further and new associations are generated out of them.

I think that this concept of artistic work has some similarities to what Merleau-Ponty writes about the relationship between speech and thought:

36. Niemelä 2003.

If speech presupposed thought, if talking were primarily a matter of meeting the object through a cognitive intention or through a representation, we could not understand why thought tends towards expression as towards its completion, why the most familiar thing appears indeterminate as long as we have not recalled its name, why the thinking subject is in a kind of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them, as is shown by the example of so many writers who begin a book without knowing exactly what they are going to put into it. A thought limited to existing for itself, independently of the constraints of speech and communication, would no sooner appear than it would sink into the unconscious, which means that it would not exist even for itself.³⁷

In other words: The mental ideas cannot exist without concrete forms through which they appear to the human consciousness. When we try to say something, we grasp our own ideas only by formulating them through language. Our thought is comprehensible only in a perceivable form, be it a word, an image or another sign. It is only through this concrete expression that you can find the contents of your ideas. On the other hand, the signs exist before your speech and thus always contain ready-made meanings which are implicated in your uttering.

I assume this is what Hanuszkiewicz meant when he highlighted the danger of being stuck in overly obvious sign systems which he called “traffic signs with a straightforward equivalence to their ideas”.³⁸ He was looking for a fresh way of speaking, not yet determined by conventions.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between ‘an authentic speech’, which is expressed when formulated for the first time, and second-order expression, out of which our common-place speech is derived: the “thought already constituted and expressed, which we can silently recall to ourselves”.³⁹ The world has already been ‘spoken’ to us, although we are no longer aware of the processes that have generated the language.

It was possible for Hanuszkiewicz to create new scenic signs by recognizing them among the occasional flow of events and whims, not by consciously inventing them. That was a matter for collective discussions at rehearsals, because the meanings of a scenic sign can be understood because they are

37. Merleau-Ponty 2002 (1945), 206.

38. Halttunen-Salosaari 1970, 12.

39. Merleau-Ponty 2002 (1945), 207, footnote 4.

shared. Our thought is not a matter for our inside mind, but part of our interaction with other people. That does not of course mean that we would not be able to think if alone, but the tools of thinking are constituted in the communicative interaction between living subjects.

However, the vocabularies of scenography are not as determined and easily recognized as everyday language. In Hanuszkiewicz's method new theatrical signs can be invented only through experimentation. To make it very simple: You put an object on stage and ask yourself whether it carries any interesting meaning in that context. This is like putting in practice Erika Fischer-Lichte's suggestion that scenic signs are derived from cultural signs. The occasional everyday objects and events are adapted to theatrical use whenever they seem to make sense in the performance context.

That is what Hanuszkiewicz did, and that is where the problem with scenography begins. If you plan the performance too carefully, you are inclined to use old patterns because you think of the stage as a system with pre-existing signs. According to Hanuszkiewicz the whole performance was bound to keep changing, and there was no permanent content outside the unpredictable rehearsing process. Moreover, the performance could not be repeated in exactly the same way. In practice it means that you cannot tell in advance what the staging is going to be like.

Therein lies the reason for the repetitive collisions between the artistic desire for experimentation and the practicalities that are necessitated by creating a public performance. The models of production were described by Hanuszkiewicz, according to Salosaari, in the following way:

Hanuszkiewicz said that there were two ways of doing theatre. The first one is to start with a plan made in advance: Everything is analyzed, the roles, the motives, and every detail of the scenographic world is designed. It can be made by a team or alone by some genius. All this is carried out at any price.

The other working method (the one employed by Hanuszkiewicz) is to keep the performance changing and developing during the rehearsals for as long as possible, and let the process to lead your work. You keep reacting to everything that comes to your mind. Thus, you end

*up in a domain not purely rational. But you have to keep the whole entity meaningful in order to not be confusing.*⁴⁰

According to my experiences, this dualism of methodological attitudes is a very crucial issue in the practice of scenography, even today. However, I doubt whether there has ever been an ensemble that was completely faithful to either method and succeeded in having a performance.

Roughly speaking, the production system in most professional theater is based on a concept; the 'essence' of the scenography exists before the first rehearsals in the form of scaled maquettes and drawings, and sometimes these even include the actor's positions. Although I am deeply convinced that you really need a maquette in order to figure out the construction of a space, there is a danger that the miniature model of the stage will be understood as the 'real' appearance of the scenography, to be replicated exactly on stage. Living performance as the foundation of scenography is thus forgotten. And this attitude is exactly what Hanuszkiewicz opposed by his method in "*Strindberg 70?*". I think his critique against it is still valid today.

On the other hand, Hanuszkiewicz's process thinking is often rejected because it causes legitimate frustration among those who are responsible for the practical delivery of the objects needed, as well as among designers trying to carry out elaborate visions. If you cannot anticipate the direction of a performance, you hardly dare to spend much money, time and work on building a scenography that is likely to change. This often blocks the personal ambitions of designers. Hence, the process thinking seldom fits to the institutional theater, where the productions are tightly scheduled, the artistic status of individual scenographers is relatively high, and where a certain polishing is required from the visual appearance of every performance.

Methods similar to that of Hanuszkiewicz can be found in much experimental theater, a tradition which started in the mid 1960s. "*Strindberg 70?*" did not only get an enthusiastic response among contemporary theater artists, but it also had an influence on many later Finnish stagings.⁴¹ Hanuszkiewicz's thinking was different to mainstream theater in 1970 but it was not unseen. The general cultural atmosphere was favorable for new ideas. Even if most actors participating in "*Strindberg 70?*" came from theaters in small towns, where you did not expect to see experimental performances, none of

40. Salosaari 2000.

41. Salosaari 2000;
Vuolle and
Niemelä 2003.

them found Hanuszkiewicz's ideas incomprehensible because of their newness. The leading actors confirmed:

*I think that the people were extremely inspired. There was a very busy and stimulating atmosphere. I have the memory that every morning we went there with enthusiasm.*⁴²

*As a matter of fact people were very amenable and accustomed to new ideas – you see, during the whole 60s there had been summer courses at the University, there were plenty of them... The attitudes were extremely open and enthusiastic.*⁴³

Hanuszkiewicz's rehearsing method reminds me of the process of creating speech without formulating the exact sentences in advance – as we often do. The scenic visions were created, developed and abandoned in the same way in which we stutter, make errors, repeat, correct and specify our speech. Finally, visions should crystallize, which seem to give shape to our imagined experiences. The vision can be seen as an expression of ideas, which we just consider as truthful without other explanations. In that way they represent a fundamental way of thinking and understanding which differs from conceptualizing speech. Ultimately "*Strindberg 70?*" performed the act of making theater according to that method.

"*Strindberg 70?*" typifies the new scenographic ideologies that existed in Finland during the 1970s, and swept the illustrative coulisses away. It must be stressed, however, that although Hanuszkiewicz definitely carried out the aesthetics of an empty, black stage, his stagings were praised for their visuality. The scenography was by no means neglected, although it was partly internalized into the actors' work. The lightning also played an important role.

In "*Strindberg 70?*" there was a visible set consisting of screens, furniture and other objects but alone they did not make up a scenography. This was because the relevant significations were only created through the actors' performances. The appearance of the objects was not decisive but the way they were used was. The actors also represented the fictive surrounding space, or inside imageries, through their physical existence and gesturing. The limits of scenography fluctuated and the visual perception of space merged with a holistic experience that involved all human faculties.

42. Vuolle 2003.

43. Niemelä 2003.

7 Miss Julie in the Turku Swedish Theater: Between Artistic Intentions and Hard Reality

The second *Miss Julie* scenography in my study was made at the Turku Swedish Theater (*ÅST*) in 1979. The performance was touring in the southwestern coast and archipelago but it was also seen on the home stage. The scenographer was Tove Ahlbäck who had just moved to *ÅST*. The first time I asked her whether she remembered anything about doing *Miss Julie*, she answered spontaneously: “Oh yes, of course I remember it because it was such a crazy production!”

Although *Miss Julie* was the first work by Tove Ahlbäck at *ÅST*, she was already an experienced scenographer. Having a degree from both the University of Industrial Arts in Helsinki and from the Yale University, in the US, she had worked for several years at the National Theatre and at the Tampere Workers’ Theatre before coming to *ÅST*. The task of staging *Miss Julie*, however, proved to be problematic. She found it difficult to grasp the intentions of the director, let alone to create a scenic world that corresponded to them. Ahlbäck, herself, was not satisfied with the performance.

What interested me most about this production was an incompatibility between artistic ambitions and the scenographic practice determined by technical and local circumstances. This made me ask a seemingly simple question: How is the artistic design connected to the practical realization? How are the ideas made visible by means of a concrete set? This chapter can be seen as a digression from my theoretical approach but I think it is justified because it highlights the complex practical process that exists between the intended imageries and those received in the final performance.

Most of the evidence for this performance comes from Ahlbäck and the director Annette Arlander personally. I have interviewed both of them, and they also gave me photographs, sketches and notes from the rehearsals. Like “*Strindberg 70?*” the emphasis in the documentary material is on the creation process instead of the finished performance. I have also focused heavily on the director’s role because two clearly separate scenographic concepts existed for this production, that of Ahlbäck and that of Arlander, both offering interesting viewpoints.

Ahlbäck’s scenography for *Miss Julie* was a stylized vision of the Count’s kitchen, entwined with decorative trees. Everything on stage was painted dark red, a shade which was described the blood of an ox. The purpose of the color was to represent the act of killing the bird which according to the analysis of the director Arlander symbolically destroyed Julie’s ability to achieve coherence in her psyche.

› *Appendix 4 provides illustrations and more complete descriptions.*

Another basic scenographic idea was that the atmosphere could be changed from that of the kitchen to a magic wood by means of lightning. The flat, decorative trees serving as the walls of the kitchen could be lit from behind in order to create the illusion of the woods. Their structure was partly transparent because the branches were cut out of plywood, and between them was tulle.

The trees, however, never became ‘immaterial’ in the way intended but looked more or less like plywood and tissue. The reason for this was due to both the technical construction of the trees and the insufficient light equipment. These factors were, for their part, determined by the requirements and limits of touring.

Ahlbäck told me: “Even if we wanted to have quite concrete coulisses, I was left with a feeling that she [Arlander] never wanted to give her final approval to the scenography.”¹

The director Annette Arlander was then a third-year student at the Theatre Academy. *Miss Julie* was her first production staged at a professional theater. She had very ambitious ideas about scenic images embodying archetypes in

1. Ahlbäck 2001b.

the spirit of Jungian psychoanalysis. She also was disappointed with the results. When recalling the production in my interview she kept reiterating that she was very young and inexperienced when doing *Miss Julie*:

My knowledge about scenography and what it can achieve was so minimal. It also had to do with the lighting equipment in those days...

Now, forgive me Tove, but the scenography was quite terrible. I remember that I experienced it as too traditional. It became more an epoch-play than it was meant to be. Somehow it had the character of painted sceneries.

I wanted to create a world that would not only exist in the kitchen. Paradoxically, it worked best when there was as little of that world as possible, and we were performing to people in the small touring venues.²

A lack of common understanding between the director and scenographer is always painful, especially when the visual world should be an essential part of the performance, and that was the case in *Miss Julie*. The cooperation between Ahlbäck and Arlander did not work very well, and two distinct imageries developed. One was based on the set, and the other was created by stage action.

› Refer to the quotes from the interviews with Ahlbäck and Arlander in Appendix 4.

Since Ahlbäck did not get a clear idea from the director, she had to generate a starting point of her own. She founded this in a scenography she had previously made for quite a different play. The premise of her design was, thus, more based on visual ideas linked to her personal artistic development than on a reading of *Miss Julie*.

The solution was derived from a play called “Pitsihovi”, which I had done before at The Workers’ Theatre. For this production I had made two trees grow from both sides over the proscenium opening. Scenographic solutions may often be developed. You start with one

2. Arlander 2001.

*[scenography], find nice material, then you go on [with another] and alternate it there.*³

Judging by the photos the scenery with the trees was beautiful but it did not correspond to the ideas Arlander had about *Miss Julie*. It is also possible that the history of the design by Ahlbäck, with its roots in her previous work for *Pitsihovi*, contributed to the traditional appearance of the scenography. Ahlbäck brought with her the aesthetics she had grown accustomed to at the Tampere Workers' Theatre, where the directors belonged to an older generation – at least in the eyes of the young Arlander.

A scenography experienced as unsuccessful by the scenic artists themselves does not seem to offer the most fruitful starting point for further examination. On the other hand, the dissatisfaction of Ahlbäck and Arlander legitimates a critical study about the premises and methods of producing the performance. What went wrong? Why did the visible stage not correspond to the artistic intentions? There is no reason to blame neither Ahlbäck nor Arlander for any kind of artistic incompetence because both of them have had remarkable careers within Finnish theater.

One lesson to be learned is the fact that artistic ideas can only be carried out through the existing practical systems of theater. These systems not only include the carpentry work, the cooperation, the available technical skills and facilities; but the touring conditions and local audiences also make up the context of the living performance. According to my own experiences as a scenographer, this obvious fact has too often been forgotten, sometimes even by myself. That is why I think that *Miss Julie* at the Turku Swedish Theater is worthy of closer examination.

I suggest that the working method at *ÅST* ignored the practice of carrying out the scenography, as well as the local conditions of theater. The scenography for *Miss Julie* was made for abstract circumstances which never existed. By local conditions I do not only mean the physical structure of a particular stage but also the mental and cultural horizons in which the play is to be performed.

3. Ahlbäck 2001b.

7.1 A TOURING MISS JULIE

The touring conditions in the district of the Turku Swedish Theater were anything but good. The regional venues were mostly old community halls or schools with no adequate backstage rooms. Ahlbäck recalled how the touring sets and spotlights often had to be carried through long, narrow passages. The stage wings were frequently blocked with all kind of old junk and it was hard to find places for spotlights.

The acting area was mostly a tiny proscenium stage but the dimensions of the space varied a lot. An average touring stage measured 5 x 5 meters and was raised about one meter above the floor level. The sightlines to such stages were often quite bad if the auditorium was not slanted enough. This limited the acting space and the area of visible scenery. Anything that happened on the stage floor level could only be seen by the spectators in the first few rows, and all important details had to be placed above the height of the actor's waists.

Not only was the design of a touring scenography defined by things that cannot be done but the restrictions were not the same everywhere. While one stage was too wide, another could be too narrow. The touring set had to be stretched and shrunk according to local requirements. Sometimes the stage floor needed a cover; sometimes it was not visible at all. Moreover, setting up the scenery and the emptying the stage could not take too much time.

Ahlbäck solved the *Miss Julie* touring scenography challenges by having five two-dimensional decorative trees which could be installed differently in relation to each other. The two biggest trees could be left out on the smallest stages. This arrangement allowed adaptation to the size of the stage, and also to the relative dimensions of it. A lack in depth or width could be overcome by making the trees overlap each other in various ways. Ahlbäck also decided to have two different stage-floors: one made of painted fabric was taken to tournés when needed, while another check-patterned one made out of hard-board was used in the performances on home venue in order to frame the scenery on the stage which was far too large.

Miss Julie was the first scenography Ahlbäck made at the Turku Swedish Theater, so she had not yet any experience of the local touring venues. She

remarked that her job was primarily to figure out how the set could be made bigger and smaller. The actors and technicians then adapted the set to each stage when they first went there. According to my experiences this was common practice in Finnish regional theaters. The scenographer did not participate in the touring, unless the premiere was in the region. S/he often had only second hand knowledge from the most distant venues which s/he perhaps never had seen in reality.

Consequently a touring scenography has to be designed in practice so that it fits into any possible stage within the given limits. The common way to do this is to conceal the particular character of the temporary stages by covering them with black curtains. This means actually having a transportable black box that 'neutralizes' the inappropriate local features, and within which the scenography can be set up in a relatively similar way.

However, in the performance the scenography is not received as a vision emerging out of emptiness. In spite of all efforts, local venues can only seldom be completely turned into black boxes. Their particular character does not vanish easily; instead there is a very visible construction of a double setting: first the local house is changed into a provisory theater and within this the fictive space is staged.

Touring scenographies are, thus, designed separately from the concrete spaces where they are seen. The problem here is that you cannot take advantage of the particular character of local venues if you do not know them. The local space of the living performance becomes an obstacle for the design, a structure to be hidden, and not the starting point for it, as it should be to my mind.

The inconsistency of the transportable set and the permanent venues are actually a part of the character of a touring performance. You cannot transport the scenography as a completed vision; rather the spatio-visual arrangement has to be adapted to the changing circumstances. This generates a sense of temporality and movability, which could and should be creative. A touring scenography is continuously being slightly re-staged which contributes to a living relationship with the performance space.

The director Annette Arlander remarked that one of the best performances of *Miss Julie* took place on a tourné in Mariehamn, where the venue was a tiny room and they had to leave most of the set out. She recalled the scene where Julie tries to tempt Kristin to follow her and Jean to Switzerland:

*On the [home] stage there was a huge distance when Jean, with his face in shaving foam, tries to eavesdrop on the women in the opposite corner. But there, at the Blå Teater in Mariehamn, they hardly had any room for walking. It was super-tight but it was good for the performance.*⁴

What I think happened in Mariehamn was that the small size of the venue was so dominating that they were forced to quickly modify the performance to suit the local space. This dynamic relationship to the surrounding space gave new life to the acting too. It confirms that a performance can not be set up in nothingness but part of its energy is derived from the lived environment.

One more paradox was that when they were on the home stage at ÅST, which had better technical conditions, it seems that the scenography suffered. Ahlbäck recalled that the scenography, designed to fit in a space of 5 x 5 meters, looked 'forsaken' on the home stage at ÅST which was almost twice as large measuring 9 x 9 meters.⁵

The staging did not fit very well on the home stage because it was made according to the demands of regional circumstances. Nor did the ensemble have time or money to have two versions, the second corresponding to the dimensions of the large stage, or taking advantage of the spatial contradiction.

Surprisingly, it often is more difficult to adapt a performance to a too large stage than to a tiny one. It is not only a question of making the set wider. In plays like *Miss Julie* the proxemics of acting are often based on an intimacy which is broken if the distances between actors are too great.

On the other hand, if the concentration of scenography is retained, a vast extraneous area remains around the set. This extra space does not necessarily disturb if you can ignore it, or if it provides the performance with some in-

4. Arlander 2001.

5. Ahlbäck 2001a.

teresting meaning. When I imagine the touring set on the baroque-stage of ÅST with the decorated proscenium opening and royal boxes, I do not think that the disparity between the set and the atmosphere of the baroque-theater could be hidden, nor turned into a fruitful dialogue.

The scenography was not only too small but it was also made for a very different context. It was meant for touring purposes where the apparent technical restrictions of regional venues served as a kind of an excuse for the sense of provisoriness and for an unavoidable clumsiness of illusion. The atmosphere in regional venues is often that of a small-scale social event. The buildings are also used for local amateur performances which thus serve as a point of comparison for the touring play.

To my mind, a certain naivety is part of the charm of a touring performance unable to boast technical brilliancy. However, when the touring scenography, done according to the humble regional circumstances, was set up on the large baroque-stage of a professional theater it was like camping in a living-room. The building and the performative situation no longer justified the technical shortages of scenography.

› Refer to the illustration of the ÅST stage in Appendix 4.

The ÅST venue is the oldest theater building in Finland and therefore, carries significance for the whole of Finnish theater history. The style of the baroque-stage gives rise to expectations of visual grandeur, which could not be fulfilled, nor deliberately opposed by the scenography of *Miss Julie*.

The question which arises is: Why did they have so many performances of *Miss Julie* on the home stage, if it was primarily made for touring purposes. After all, ten performances out of eighteen took place at ÅST.

The apparent answer is that the most receptive audience for *Miss Julie* was in Turku, and not in the region. The next logical question is: Why did they then have to do *Miss Julie* as a touring play? Ahlbäck heavily criticized the choice:

The most terrible thing was the decision to tour the play in districts where theater is used for social interaction, meeting people, and where

a comedy for all the family would have been be more appropriate. The duration of the play must also have felt odd in Kemiö, Houtskari, etc., where you have to travel a long distance to go to the theater. It must have been hard for the actors when the auditoriums where not filled.

At that time, for some reason or another, there were several such mistaken choices, which caused quite irritated feedback. And the feedback was that the audience did or did not come to see the next play. They don't necessarily react at once, but nobody comes to see the next performance.⁶

One reason for choosing *Miss Julie* as a touring play was no doubt practical: it was easy to transport because it required only three actors, one scenery, and no special technical tricks. However, there are certainly other plays that are as easy to stage and correspond more to the expectations of regional audiences.

Ahlbäck made an accurate observation that many touring plays like *Miss Julie* were actually typical studio-dramas. I wonder whether the touring activity compensated for the lack of a studio stage which was later established in the building of ÅST. Many studio plays are artistically ambitious stagings, and so was *Miss Julie*.

Like studio performances, the touring plays were technically modest with only a few personnel, and thus cheaper to produce. A possible failure in box office sales was less fatal, since the costs were smaller, and even an artistic disaster could be forgotten more easily if the premiere was in the region (as it sometimes was). The possibility to do such performances is, of course, vital for the development of theater. They are important, not only for actors, but also for introducing and acclimatizing audiences to different kinds of theater.

It is also easy to see the importance of the touring activity for the ÅST region as the only Swedish-speaking theater in Southwestern Finland. A great part of its audience lived in the countryside and in the archipelago, necessitating long and complicated journeys. The touring performances probably offered them the only contact to professional theater. It was exactly for this kind of audiences that the regional theater system was established. On the

6. Ahlbäck 2001a.

other hand, Ahlbäck remarked that reaching this status was not only a matter of theater-politics but that of economical survival.⁷ The money granted for touring activity was needed in order to run the theater.

ÅST was one of theaters striving for the status of regional theater. At the time of *Miss Julie*, in the autumn of 1979, it had not yet been granted this title but there was a lively debate going on, and names were collected for an appeal. The reviewer of *Aamulehti* pointed out this connection:

*During the most heated debate about the status of regional theater the first performance primarily meant for touring purposes has been produced at ÅST. They have aimed high with Miss Julie by Strindberg. It is neither easy to carry out, nor to understand.*⁸

It is necessary to note here that *ÅST* had, in fact, a long tradition of touring. The reviewer of *Aamulehti* must have meant that *Miss Julie* was the first play made in the context of the new regional theater system. Considering this situation, and the fact that *Miss Julie* was mostly performed in Turku, the question arises whether *Miss Julie* was mainly addressed to those evaluating the artistic level of Finnish theaters. To what extent was the production of *Miss Julie* burdened by an ambition of showing the artistic competence of *ÅST* as a touring theater? Was it produced as a demonstration of artistic ability?

It is hard to say whether that was the case, at least consciously, but there is one thing that I am certain of: the artistic leaders at *ÅST* certainly tried their best to fulfill the qualifications necessary for a regional theater. Choosing *Miss Julie* probably corresponded to the values they conceived as essential for good touring theater.

Moreover, by 1979 Annette Arlander had directed only a couple of plays at the Swedish Student Theater in Helsinki and at Theater Academy. She was making her debut in a professional theater with *Miss Julie* which was also a demonstration of her artistic competence. The whole production must have been laden with an awareness of outward expectations and observation. This was, arguably, not a very fruitful starting point for creative work.

When the theater manager George Malvius offered Annette Arlander position of director, he only gave her a choice between *Miss Julie* and *The Broken*

7. Ahlbäck 2001. Her view was confirmed by several newspaper articles.

8. Itäranta 1979.

Jug by Kleist. This shows that the management had already decided to stage appreciated classical play as the touring production. This corresponds to the *Volkstheater* ideology which stresses the educational role of theater. The choice of *Miss Julie* as a well-known masterpiece of drama history is to some extent beyond criticism since the value of the play is undisputable, especially in the Swedish-speaking context.

The choice of a young inexperienced student to direct *Miss Julie* was certainly a more risky venture, although it was not unheard of in professional theaters at that time. Looked at from another point of view, hiring a young director from the Theatre Academy might reinforce the image of ÅST as a modern theater keeping up with the times. The Theater Academy has often been considered as the site of the Finnish avant-garde. It is likely that those at ÅST knew that *Miss Julie* was going to be different from traditional theater and probably not a box-office success but they consciously took the chance. They showed a conscious disregard for economic risks and prejudices.

On the other hand, it is interesting that the theater offered an inexperienced director a job which required a lot of practical knowledge about the particular circumstances at the theater. I think it shows an appreciation for theoretical thinking achieved through education which may be connected to the emphasis on the professionalism of the theater.

The production was perhaps more a representation of a classic play connected to artistic ambitions, than a performance that was really addressed to the region. What seems to have been forgotten were the regional and practical contexts in which the performance was made and seen. It is also possible that these local contexts were not very familiar to the theater manager Georg Malvius who was a Rumanian by birth.

7.2 THE PRACTICE OF CARRYING OUT SCENOGRAPHIES

I have proposed above that the performance was actually put together independently of the regional context in which it was performed. The scenographer could not personally ensure that her stagings would work in the various locations, nor could she fully understand the restrictions. Her design was done for no particular place.

This was not determined by Ahlbäck personal preferences but by the time-tabling that was common practice in Finnish theaters at that time. How would she have been able to visit the regional venues before designing *Miss Julie*, when she was working on two sets and costume designs during a busy schedule that autumn? And how could she have gone touring with *Miss Julie* when she had to start immediately on the next scenography?

Consequently the technical staff had a relatively big responsibility for carrying out the local versions of the scenography. It was they who in reality decided where exactly to place the trees, and where to have the spotlights. Having done this for years they had gained a lot of experience about the particular restrictions and possibilities, but they often lacked further ambition. Ahlbäck described how touring lights used to be made: “The stage manager took a couple of lamps with him, and he would put any play together using them”.⁹

If that attitude is compared to Arlander’s lightning plans, a deep incompatibility between her artistic ambitions and what was practically feasible can be observed. If her plans had been followed it would have required a large amount of lamps, which would have needed to be fixed in very precise places. The theater certainly did not possess that many spotlights, they could not be installed in the right positions in local venues, and finally there would never have been enough time to do all that work on the tours.

Although Ahlbäck was already an experienced and well-trained scenographer at that point, she was used to different working methods and attitudes from her previous post. By her own admittance she had been spoilt by the warm and caring atmosphere at Tampere Workers’ Theatre where the directors were skilled in scenography and lightning and where the technical staff had a cooperative attitude.

In the Turku Swedish Theater the situation was different. The director of *Miss Julie* was undertaking her first staging in a professional theater. Working with the carpenters was difficult and the technician responsible for the lights was color-blind. Ahlbäck remembered that although the theater had recently supplied a new lightning board for touring, nobody could really use it. She recalled the rehearsals when the lights were made:

9. Ahlbäck 2001b.

We had spent all eight hours feeding the different moments in. When the day came to an end and the lightning board ran out of capacity, we had only completed the lighting for the first 15 minutes of the play. I did not understand anything anymore, and could only sit there and stare into the distance. I was so used to the skilled technicians and the directors, Auvinen and Majanlahti, at the Workers' Theatre, that I was not prepared to solve out how the light could come through the wrinkled trees, nor could I fight for any holistic vision.¹⁰

The central scenographic idea was to make the trees appear transparent by means of light. The decorative forms of the trees were cut out of plywood, and there was tulle glued on the holes between the branches. Their character should change by means of a light coming from back: the tulle is opaque in front light but in backlight it becomes transparent.

However, this effect caused problems. According to the director Arlander the reasons for this was due to the structure of the trees where the surface of the tulle between the branches was too small in relation to that of the plywood.¹¹ It is likely that they could not have been much bigger, since larger holes in the trees would have made them collapse. Ahlbäck remarked that the trees were made of very thin plywood because they were working with a low budget. The principle was "let's use what we have"¹². There was probably also an intention to make the transportable set as light as possible.

Although the failure with the trees seems quite a trivial error made by the team, a deeper dimension can be seen. What Arlander actually wanted was a stage that lost its materiality and offered direct access to an inner vision. The scenic apparatus transmitting the artistic ideas had to become transparent not only concretely but also in a way that enabled the constructed nature of the illusion to be hidden. Paradoxically that failed because the practical constructions were considered as unimportant when generating the visual ideas.

The scenic apparatus – by which I mean the scenographic practice of constructing the set – became painfully visible exactly because it was ignored at the performance-planning phase. The visions were not designed in terms of the material possibilities which are the means by which they must be finally realized. To put it theoretically: the artistic work took place on the level of abstract significations rather than engaging with and constructing concrete

10. Ahlbäck 2001a.

11. Arlander 2001.

12. Ahlbäck 2001b.

signs. To put it in practical terms: the young director did not know how the sets were made but still had the responsibility for the scenic entity. The visual imagery she wanted could not be carried out with the skills and technology available.

It is, however, unfair to only blame the inexperience of the director. The *ÅST* production system favored a distinction between design and realization. The planning and execution of the performances were not developed in parallel or in cooperation with each other but as two separate phases of work.

The carpenters saw their job as simply making technical constructions and all artistic work was the domain of the scenographer. Tove Ahlbäck gave an illuminating example of this:

They thought that the painting of the set was always the job of the scenographer. Kari Junnikkala, who made a set for a musical, traveled from Kuopio in order to paint his set black during nights. I said it was not a reasonable demand. I then said, 'Okay, I'll paint the set but you paint the base for it unless you have something else to do' – they had been forbidden to help me; it was supposed to be a matter of principle. And when I had won this fight, they started to ask, whether the paint really is a base, and not the final visible surface.¹³

When the technical staff adopts that kind of attitude, it means that they refuse to have anything to do with 'artistic work'. They think of themselves as only working-men carrying out what the scenographer tells them to do. I can understand this, knowing how low their theater salaries are compared to the industrial wages paid for corresponding jobs. It is a natural conclusion to do only what they are exactly paid for, and nothing extra. However, this leads to everlasting negotiations, as what can be counted as an artistic work and what is purely technical is unclear.

The scenographer usually begins the design of a set by making a scale maquette which is presented to the whole working team. When the director and the theater manager have accepted the model, the scenographer has to give the carpenters the instructions. The common rule here is that the scenographer says how the set is supposed to look, and the carpenters are responsible for figuring out its construction. It may sound like a simple issue

13. Ahlbäck 2001b.

of dividing the work but in practice you realize that the technical and artistic solutions are interwoven with each other. You need to know the construction of an element in order to figure out its appearance in detail.

The scenographer constantly negotiates his/her artistic ideas with the requirements of stage actions and the practical necessities of carpentry. If the technical staff is excluded from these negotiations, the scenographer has to be very skilled in carpentry himself/herself. That skill is not included in scenographer training, nor in the requirements of the profession. Most of us need the help of stage managers and carpenters.

The technical staff has practical know how unavailable in any books. The scenographer often has to invent new kind of solutions which cannot be done using common skills and knowledge about carpentry. I have frequently realized how much good advice you can get from technical staff. Having extensive experience in special theatrical tricks, they can suggest constructions that make the artistic ideas possible. This is also the point when their work stops being about technical realization and becomes a part of the creative artistic process. It is exactly this kind of cooperation that is blocked by the strict division between artistic and technical jobs.

7.3 THE IDEAS TO BE STAGED

The director, Annette Arlander, wrote in her rehearsal diary, at an apparently desperate moment:

*What is the point of staging a play like Miss Julie once again? What can it say today, that could not be said better in another way? I can give no answer to that and, yet, it is still me who has to try to direct the play.*¹⁴

A statement with relevance and originality is often conceived as the most important issue of modern theater. A clearly defined reason as to why a particular play has been put on and what the artists want to say by it must exist. This kind of thinking places the director's analysis at the core of the process because it serves as the central idea to be supported and expressed by all theatrical means, including scenography.

14. Arlander 1979.

According to Arnold Aronson, one elementary feature of modern scenography is the embodiment of “a fundamental concept of metaphor of the production through the use of a single or unit set, or the use of transcendent motifs”. It functions “not as a representation of the world, but as a metaphor for something other”.¹⁵ It is vital for the scenographer to grasp the production’s ‘big idea’, and to generate a spatio-visual equivalent for it.

We can be in no doubt about Arlander’s profound commitment to *Miss Julie*. As a student she tried to follow the methods she had been taught at the Theatre Academy. She showed me a huge heap of papers where she had discussed the interpretation and structure of the play; figured out the thoughts of the characters, and searched for stimuli and impulses in different readings. She had also drawn all the scenes like simple cartoons during the rehearsals, and tried to construct ‘curves of intensity’, a method her supervisor the theater manager Georg Malvius had introduced to her. When I was with her, Arlander looked at all the notes and sighed: “How could I ever have understood these?”¹⁶

› Look at the drawings from rehearsals by Arlander in Appendix 4.

C.G. Jung’s psychoanalytical theories were the basis for her ‘big idea’ for *Miss Julie*. According to Jung the rupture between the conscious mind and unconsciousness is the reason for the destructivity of Western culture.

The basic idea for the scenography was an overlapping of two spaces; that of the realistic kitchen and that of a mystical wood which referred to nature, unconsciousness and sexuality. It can be seen as a statement about the simultaneous and entwined existence of rational everyday life and the more transcendental, unconscious dimension to life. They can be highlighted by different lightning but they do not exist separately. The revealing capability of light can be seen as equivalent to the director’s gaze, penetrating into the deeper truths beneath the apparent surface.

Arlander interpreted the tragedy of Julie as a consequence of her inability to achieve the Jungian transcendence, the communion with her unconsciousness. Blocking the transcendental function of her psyche was symbolized by her bird’s murder, the blood of which became the leading visual metaphor

15. Aronson 1991, 4–5.

16. Arlander 2001.

on the set. Everything was painted dark red, a shade which was described as 'the blood of an ox'.

The red color symbolized that Julie could only realize her true sexual being in the bloody connection to her own death. During the rehearsing period Arlander had written in her notebook:

Why does she have to die? Because she has no other opportunity that would allow her to experience a relationship with reality or nature, to feel communion or meaningful togetherness.

More than anything else the play is about the death struggle. To annihilate oneself instead of letting oneself be annihilated, to free oneself through death, when no other freedom is possible.¹⁷

Since Julie does not find a way to realize her sexuality on her own terms, she ends up committing suicide rather than continuing with an unsatisfactory life. Her tragedy is that in order to live through her sexuality she has to die. Arlander's analysis of the play can be understood as a young woman's search for her erotic identity, and frustration at the repression that prevents her from defining her own sexuality.

I think that, in spite of its stylized appearance, the scenography can be linked to a naturalist notion of the stage; an environment that gives information about the protagonist's life. Usually a traditional set in this style contains realistic objects that reveal details about a character's past; however, this set represented the unconscious condition of her psyche whose origins are found in the structures of human mind. In this instance it was a universal inner imagery that was supposed to enhance comprehension of the play's events.

Feminist tendencies were implied in the performance program, the private notes made by Arlander, and in some reviews. Julie's suicide was represented there as a protest against a male culture that sees a woman's sexual being as a dangerous combination of the whore and the Madonna, leaving no room for the internal experience of female erotica and, thus, justifying her symbolic and actual death.

17. Arlander 1979.

However, today Arlander rejects the suggestion that she had an intentional feminist agenda:

I don't think the performance had those tendencies. Maybe it implied some kind of sexual freedom. In hindsight you could say that it was a proof of my sexual repression as a teenager...

I was terribly young. I think I was interested in the link between sexuality and death... I took an interest in the sexual power struggle. I remember my train of thought about self-destruction, Julie is not a victim but has consciously killed herself...it is a sick reading of the text, but it was the point I was making. All this feminist emphasis was compulsory stuff for me, because Miss Julie cannot be created without it. It has been written as a reaction to feminism.¹⁸

Arlander's interpretation was not feminist in the sense that it stressed the social subordination of women. Rather, she aimed at revealing the deep-psychology of the rejection of female sexuality. *Miss Julie* was seen as an allegory for the mental condition of contemporary human beings who have lost their contact with nature, their own sexual bodies, unconsciousness and death. Julie's tragedy was that death provided the only way for her to fuse with nature. If there was a social critique, it was aimed at a lack of spirituality in our culture.

Traces of Eastern philosophies, which were fashionable in the 70s and 80s, were present – Arlander had traveled in India during this period. An interest in the psychology of the human mind was also a general phenomenon among the younger generation who opposed the politically engaged theater of the 1960s and 1970s.

If you apply these psychoanalytical ideas to stage practice, you come to think of the theatrical performance as a rite to be lived through. It is not so much a story told about fictive people but an event that incarnates the invisible, unknown aspects of psyche. This harks back to the ideas of Artaud who was a subject of common interest in the beginning of 1980s. An edition of his writing was translated into Finnish in 1983, with an essay by Dan Steinbock discussing the importance of non-verbal languages and visual imageries in theater.¹⁹

18. Arlander 2001.

19. Steinbock 1983.

The stage should not represent something else but be a reality on its own, corresponding to an internal experience of 'truth' – it is probably no coincidence that Arlander later moved into performance art where visuality was given a new emphasis, replacing the dominance of spoken word.

7.4 SEEING INTO THE UNCONSCIOUS

The subject of Arlander's psychoanalytical investigation was not so much the character of Julie, nor the author as an invisible puppeteer but the universal constitution of the human psyche. Besides being protagonists in a play, the stage figures represented universal unconscious dimensions of the human mind – in terms of Jungian psychoanalysis they were archetypes.

Arlander wanted to show a more 'true' level of existence. The scenic image-ries should not just represent a kitchen but a metaphysical nature concealed under the surface of everydayness. It was a scenery filled with illusions that let the spectator observe universal psychic structures as they were understood out in Jung's theories.

Jung proposed that all human beings share an archaic level of mind, a collective unconsciousness, from where the so-called *archetypal* images come. They manifest themselves in dreams, art, religious rituals, and legends repeating same kind of patterns all over the world. The origins of *archetypes* are in early mental evolution where certain meaningful experiences have kept reoccurring. This makes the *archetypes* universal for all mankind – and perhaps even for animals.²⁰

In the context of *Miss Julie*, the most interesting Jungian *archetype* is the feminine principle existing in the male unconsciousness, called as *Anima*. The *Anima* is an 'inner woman', a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies, like vague emotions and feelings, divinations and predictions, irrationality, capability of personal love, a sensitivity for nature and a contact to the unconsciousness. A good relationship with the *Anima* serves, for instance, as the source of the male's artistic creativity or as a protective spirit revealing subconscious knowledge. When rejected, the *Anima* can become a destructive force, which is observed in the *archetypes* of 'bad' women, like witches, femme fatales, etc.²¹

20. Jung 1965, 79–97;
109–136.

21. von Franz 1991
(1964), 177.

Jung paid attention to symbols, the visual manifestations of *archetypes*. A symbol, in the Jungian sense, is an image that carries an unconscious signification that is beyond the rational concepts articulated in normal language. They can never be completely defined or explained but we can access the contents of our unconsciousness by means of a Jungian symbol²² – this come close to the poetic images by Bachelard.²³

Arlander's visual model for the staging was the art of Edward Munch, a contemporary of Strindberg. Both of them are famous for their complicated relationships with women. The works of Munch, as well as those of Strindberg, deal with male jealousy and sexual anxiety. He painted his female models with an aggressive expressivity that was almost violent.

From a feminist perspective, the paintings of Munch can be seen as expression of his frustration at not being able to control and possess a woman as an object of his desire. Applying a Jungian analysis, they appear as representations of the destructive aspects of *Anima*. They do not portray living women but female figures projected by the male mind. What makes a difference in theater is the presence of Julie as an embodied female person instead of a figure painted on a canvas. The similarity of the living actress to the figures by Munch suggests a woman 'trapped' within the visual representation. There is the suggestion that a woman only exists through the cultural models created by the male mind which experiences female sexuality as dangerous.

Arlander showed me the pictures in the program as examples of what she wanted the performance to look like: "Look, this is the visual world I would have wanted, this kind of timeless man and woman stuff."²⁴

There was a sexually suggestive photo where Jean was standing right behind Julie. They were so close to each other that they were actually merging into one figure. Because of a soft light from the side only half of their faces were seen, and the edges of the photo are faded and softened. Applying the Jungian ideas of psychic integrity, this photo could be interpreted as a unification of opposite principles, male and female, mind and body, culture and nature – a unification impossible for Julie.

> Refer to the photo in Appendix 4.

22. Jung 1991
(1964), 55.

23. Bachelard 1969
(1958) xi–xx.

24. Arlander 2001.

Another photo also showed Julie in a very erotic way bending over a burning candle, wearing only underwear and with her hair hanging loose. There was a certain ambiguity about her being. Her face looked gentle and innocent, but her gesture suggested physical tension. Her concentrated focus on the flame suggested a shamanic trance-like state. Her hands were placed on both sides of the candle. You could not say whether she was protecting the flame, or if was she going to push her hands into it. I think that the picture embodies the female archetype, combining the image of a protective mother and that of a demonic witch with access to secret powers.

› Refer to the photo in Appendix 4.

The history of painting shows us that a candle can be interpreted as a sign for many things. It may stand for an inner spiritual light, for knowledge or a new idea (for example, in cartoons a candle, or more commonly a light bulb, above a figure's head represents the moment of inventing something). In the Christian religion it symbolizes divinity, in the Jungian context it could refer to an enlightening achieved through the individuation process. In one review of *Miss Julie* the candle was read as a fallosymbol²⁵, which never occurred to me. For an audience, mature in age, coming from remote islands where the electricity had been installed only recently, a candle may refer to the insufficiency of light during the dark nights in autumn. A logically minded spectator might also ask, what do you actually do with a candle in the light midsummer night?

That is, of course, not to say that the visual significations should be unambiguous and easy to decode. On the contrary, I think that their power often arises from a dynamic movement between different meanings. The magical power of an image is derived from its balance between the known and unknown. It serves as a bridge communicating between consciousness and unconscious. If we can explain the image too easily, it remains a simple sign without symbolic power in the Jungian sense. That's what happens if we think of the candle simply as a tool of illumination. On the other hand, if we do not understand anything about it, it cannot lead us to the unconsciousness since there is no connection point in our minds. There must be some understandable elements, which serve as gates to the unknown region.

25. Jansson 1979.

The problem here is that the boundary between known and unknown is not constant. An archetypal symbol may lose something of its power when being too familiar and easy to interpret. People living in distinct cultures may also hide different kind of knowledge in their unconsciousness. The reception of a performance using symbols is especially dependent on its context.

The psychoanalytical viewpoint also gives the performance a kind of therapeutic aspect. The recognition of archetypes should contribute to an increasing understanding of oneself. In order to find the symbols meaningful and dynamic, the spectator should also share the psychological dilemmas connected to them, in order to be an inside member of the ‘therapy-group’. There is reason to believe that the regional audiences had very different mental horizons compared to that of Arlander.

The crucial question is how Arlander’s visual ideas worked in the *ÅST* performance. Thus far, I have studied her intentions and analysis as if they were a work of their own. Could the scenic images be experienced as archetypal, generating a connection to the unconsciousness? It is of course impossible to provide any evidence about the reception of a common audience 24 years ago. There is at least one review that provides a positive answer.²⁶ On the other hand, the red color, which was essential to the analysis of Arlander, was not mentioned in any review, except one that remarked it was too dark and somber.²⁷ It is apparent that the red tone was mostly ignored as insignificant, although the photos show that its presence could not be ignored.

Arlander told a story about the way the actor’s work was read:

*The audience was so conservative. I remember a discussion with literary students in Turku where they explained what they had seen. I think that they had only seen what is written in literature history: Miss Julie collapses and cries throughout the second act. In this production she didn’t and instead had a terrible fight, despite this they still read it that way. You see what you expect to see.*²⁸

The scenographer, Ahlbäck, confessed that she did not grasp the ideas intended by Arlander. She highlighted the importance of putting ideas in understandable form: “No matter how many elements you can find in a good

26. Jansson 1979.

27. Lehtonen 1979.

28. Arlander 2001.

text, you have to make a pattern out of it, through which you can tell a story to the spectator.”²⁹

I agree with her here, the skill of a scenographer or director is not only to generate an interesting reading of the play but also to enable the spectator to have a meaningful experience through the process of watching the show. That can of course be done in many ways. Traditionally conceived, the scenic artist and the audience in a way start their journeys at opposite ends: The scenographer and director first try to understand what they want to say, then they figure out a staging corresponding to it. A spectator only sees the staging and s/he is supposed to be led by his/her perception and to catch the idea lying behind the artistic process.

Theater gets its energy from the interaction between actors and living spectators in a physical place that is inseparable from its local and temporal environment. The ideas do not work if they are not understood by the audience, no matter how relevant and interesting they could be in other contexts. This can also be applied to Arlander’s analysis, which I found fascinating, and to Ahlbäck’s scenography which looked very beautiful to me in the photos. There was, however, no interesting relationship between them, at least not in the opinion of the artists themselves. Their frustration also proves that living theater can only be made through personal involvement with the production which was lacking in this case.

Images with symbolic or poetic force can be generated and experienced only by living through them, not by calculations. One of the biggest challenges for any theater is to create working conditions that allow the scenographers to let their imagination lead their work without neglecting the practical necessities. It seems to me that neither of these conditions was satisfactory fulfilled at *ÅST* in 1979.

29. Ahlbäck 2001b.

8

Miss Julie in KOM-teatteri 1983

To See or Not to See?

When *Miss Julie* was staged at *KOM-teatteri* in 1983 the scenographer, Måns Hedström, turned the *Kino Cabaret* venue into a cafeteria. Hedström had been working at *KOM* ever since its establishment 1969 and his experiments, there with space and reduced visibility, had become important stylistic hallmarks of Finnish avant garde scenography in the 1970s. Laura Jäntti was the director for *Miss Julie*. She had coworked with Hedström in several productions where the scenography very much defined the whole performance.

My evidence from the production is based on a videotape of the performance which unfortunately has been taken in *Koitto*, a venue where *Miss Julie* was later moved and where the scenography suffered. Aside from this I have relied on a study written about it by Merja-Liisa Karhu.¹ Together these sources provide relatively good information about the staging which allows me to concentrate more on a performance analysis than on the process of making the scenography as I did in the previous chapters.

Moreover, I interviewed the director Laura Jäntti and the scenographer Måns Hedström, whose thinking I am familiar with from the years of my study (1980–85) at the Department of Scenography, where he was one of the most influential teachers. I also worked as his assistant during the summer of 1982.

The audience was given special emphasis in this production and therefore, I have also used reviews a lot because they offer the only evidence about the reception and the variety of opinions among them is also interesting.

The study by Karhu is very good to my mind. I have tried to avoid my work overlapping with hers, and focused less on the general performance. Rather,

1. Karhu 1991.

I have concentrated on how the scenography functions. I have examined the scenographic idea of performing *Miss Julie* in a cafeteria. My suggestion is that placing spectators in an unexpected position emphasized the limits and possibilities of vision.

The theatrical venue *Kino Cabaret* was not actually decorated as an illusionist cafeteria. The place was defined only by the spatial arrangement of tables scattered all over the space and spectators sitting at these tables, having coffee and bread. The space maintained its proper character as *Kino Cabaret* which was *KOM*'s regular venue during that time.

The conventional scenographic signs were reduced to a minimum. There was only one table and a couple of chairs reserved for the actors. A black cloth covered this table and it had a bunch of flowers on it, as a reference to Midsummer.

Even if the spectator was not supposed to step into a determined fictive world, this possibility was open for those who wanted to see it this way. It seems as if the scenographer would have deliberately avoided all visual signs anchoring the stage to any fixed context.

The atmosphere and style of the fictive cafeteria was, however, not defined precisely. The disposable coffee cups referred to a cheap snack bar but the folksy clothes of Jean and Kristin, who were identified as waiters, belonged to a cozy coffee house with home-baked bread. When the performance was later moved to the *Koitto* stage, the cafeteria-feeling was changed to that of a rural festival with china cups and a copper coffee pot standing on a big table covered by a white cloth.

Some reviewers even saw there the conventional kitchen in the Count's house:

*We are in the rooms of the servants of the manor; it is crowded, almost stuffy.*²

*The spectators identify themselves with the celebrating peasants, who have secret access to the events in the Count's manor.*³

2. Ollila 1983.

3. Sundqvist 1983.

Judging by the photos there were some drawings on the walls that had nothing to do with *Miss Julie*, but probably were part of an exhibition coincidentally occupying the venue at the same time.⁴ They were not mentioned in any review or in the study by Karhu. The fact that they could be there (at least in the dress rehearsals where the press photos have been taken) suggests that the importance of the visual environment was subordinate to the action. Documentation of the performance did not necessitate moving them out of sight, as usually is the case if there are extraneous props on stage.

Miss Julie was later performed on the *Koitto* stage, since *KOM* had to leave *Kino Cabaret*.⁵ The spatial solution was not as impressive here. The actors performed in an aisle between the cafeteria-tables, and most of the audiences were sitting in two conventional auditoriums facing each other. For the most part the spectators had an undisturbed view of the actors. They were more like guests in a rural Midsummer party than curious outsiders in a cafeteria. In *Koitto* the coffee was served in china cups and the tables were covered with white cloths, except for the actors' table which remained black. That differed from *Kino Cabaret* performance, where the cups were disposable and all table clothes black.

According to Laura Jäntti the performance lost much of its intended impact, as a result I will concentrate in my discussion on the *Kino Cabaret* version.

> Refer to the photos in Appendix 5.

8.1 STAGING THE AUDIENCE

Although the audience made up a very visible part of the staging, they did not participate in the scenic action in any way. They retained their role as spectators, serving as a kind of living scenography for the performance. Thereby, the situation was very clearly defined as theater.

When I asked the scenographer, Hedström, about the reasons for the spatial solution in *Miss Julie* he immediately linked it to the history of *KOM*, whose debut was in the cafeteria-lobby of the Swedish Theater in Helsinki, 1969.⁶ Thereby, the idea of placing *Miss Julie* in a cafeteria also is a reference to the particular traditions of *KOM*.

4. The director Jäntti could not remember exactly why the drawings were there but she supposed that there was an exhibition in the venue at the same time.

5. Jäntti 2004.

6. Hedström 2000.

The director, Laura Jäntti, remembered that they began by rehearsing *Miss Julie* on a conventional platform stage but they soon found it impossible because it made the play appear outdated. They then considered the idea of bringing the events amongst a group of people, into a cafeteria where the boundary between public and private was emphasized.

“The credit goes to Måns and his brilliance,” said Jäntti. She continued: “His way of creating holistic scenographies was very rewarding for a director.” According to Jäntti Hedström’s scenographies were always playful. He could come to rehearsals carrying a bucket of clay or 30 meters of rope, and say: “Here you have the complete scenography.” Jäntti found this kind of attitude liberating: It helped to get rid of conventions, allowing more ‘breathing space’ for the text. However, she noted that it was hard to discuss this kind of a scenography verbally because it was such an all encompassing devise.⁷

Placing a performance in a cafeteria was certainly not a new idea to Finland in 1983. However, the combination of a tragedy and a casual site for everyday socializing and pleasure was different from the more conventional habit of performing entertaining shows in pubs or cafeterias. Another provocative aspect was the systematic conversion of naturalist premises.

My first impression was that the scenography of *Miss Julie* discussed more theatricality than the thematic of the play but on the other hand these two issues can be seen to be interwoven with each other. *Miss Julie* is a play that allows things to be only partly seen and that is exactly what happened in *KOM*.

The scenographic arrangement mixed together the acts of watching, being with other people and having refreshments. The spectator was like an eavesdropper in a cafeteria, overhearing a private discussion at a neighboring table. It is a situation that most of us have experienced in real life. When the struggle between Jean and Julie became intensified, they directed their issues and opinions to the audience, as if they were trying to win them onto their side. The spectator was put into an unpleasant situation between the quarreling couple, neither of which could achieve the total sympathy – a familiar situation in reality, too.

7. Jäntti 2004.

The audience was also put in a confusing situation where they drank and ate while the protagonists suffered. The spectator was, thus, staged as an observer who was indifferent enough to enjoy his/her refreshments during the tragedy. The fate of Julie was served to the audience like part of the coffee menu. It can be read as an ironic response to Strindberg's aspiration for a time "when we have become so developed, so enlightened, that we can remain indifferent before the spectacle of life, which now seems so brutal, so cynical, so heartless"⁸.

Even some hard-boiled critics found the situation uncomfortable:

*Am I really supposed to sit here drinking my coffee and eating my bread while those people act out great emotions? Should I pretend to be an indifferent cafeteria-guest since they also only pretend to have contact with the audience?*⁹

Jukka Kajava also expressed his dislike of the performance in his review: "What's wrong with Finnish theater? Everything has to be something exceptional, at any price."¹⁰

The style of acting was actually quite realistic not in the naturalist sense but in the sense formulated by Ralf Långbacka. It was not illusionist but emphasizes the essential psychological and social development of the characters expressed physically through gestures.¹¹ This was neither very experimental nor surprising in 1983 but rather an accepted style. It was mostly the scenographic solutions that determined the reception of the performance.

It seems that the placing of the audience dominated the reception of everything that happened. The scenographic solution must, thus, also have been the starting point for the direction. It was not only a part of the direction; it somehow preceded it and determined its limits and possibilities.

8. Strindberg 1992 (1888), x.

9. Eklund 1983.

10. Kajava 1983.

11. Långbacka 1977, 199–210.

12. Karhu 1991, 103–104.

The director, Laura Jäntti, was mostly interested in the basic situation of the play, the place where a small group of people had to reveal themselves, and the shame involved.¹² There was a negotiation involving the boundary between the public gaze of the audience and the privacy of Julie. The naturalist tradition of peeping into the protagonist's intimate life was made painfully visible. It prevented the conventional reception of tragedy by making

the spectators aware of their own roles as observers. Ultimately it even questioned the legitimacy of being a spectator in a performance based on the naturalist tradition of revealing the secret life of the protagonists.

The point of the scenography was to position the performance in a cafeteria, not the visual representation of a fictive environment. How does this fit to the conventional concepts of scenography as a perceivable environment? How does a single idea serve as scenography?

This kind of a staging comes close to conceptual art which in the first place does not offer aesthetic pleasure but engages the spectator in philosophical conversations. It could be termed intellectual in comparison to more decorative styles. The scenography in *Miss Julie* represented the most minimalist and functionalist aspects of modernist theatrical thinking. The visual appearance was reduced to as little as possible in order to focus all attention on an essential idea. The scenography stimulated philosophical discussions on a general level but this partly detracted from the pleasure of immediate perception.

This reminds me of Arnold Aronson's¹³ apposite use of the expression "scenery as Platonic shadows" in reference to modern scenography, one central task of which is to communicate an abstract idea to the audience. This aim seems to justify the lack of visual detail in *Miss Julie*. The visible surface's function was to mediate ideas, and had no purpose or legitimacy on its own. All extra decorations would disturb this primary communication and the importance of meaningless 'pure' sense perception was rejected.

On the other hand, I am not so sure whether the scenography in *Miss Julie* simply denigrated the perceptual experience in favor of a transcendental idea. The artistic act of the scenographer was to put the spectator in a surprising or even provocative situation, and his/her experience of being there was supposed to make him/her think of the play in a new way. In this sense the scenography was not a container for ideas created in advance but a source for new, partly unpredictable ideas emerging from the spectator's living experience of the space.

Instead of reflecting ready-made thoughts, the scenography generated thinking which then could be articulated into unforeseen ideas. Instead of stand-

13. Aronson 1991, 4.

ing for one definable thought, the unconventional position of audience generated different opinions and arguments. The reception of the performance, therefore, became a process that was never completely predictable. An awareness of the spectator's fluctuating interpretations became an element of the performance, as one reviewer noted: "Laura Jäntti has started in her direction from many viewpoints. The spectator has to pick out the problems about human relationships from the performance that most interest him/her."¹⁴

It was characteristic of Hedström's scenographies to attempt to spatially modify the audience reception in some way, thus, having an influence on the reception of the whole play. Thereby, he powerfully manipulated the spectators' experiences but he also made them very conscious of their constructed relationship to the performance.

I attended Hedström's classes in autumn 1981 at the Department of Scenography. I remember that he started his first lesson by proving to us that black is white. He used a slide-projector to show a black square on a white wall, and asked us what we saw. "A black square on white background," we answered. Then he switched the projector off, pointed at the empty white wall and said: "There is your black! I did not put any blackness there!"

With this trick he wanted to show us that the shade and value of a color is a relative matter, not an absolute fact. I think that this anecdote serves as an example of his visual thinking in the sense that I am familiar with. It shows an interest in the limits and margins of the perceptual processes. I would like to condense this discussion into a statement: what we see is always constructed by our habits of making sense of what we perceive. Hence, you cannot be sure whether what you see is 'real' outside your experience. Thereby, you could study the meanings embedded in the visual communication itself, which we otherwise understand as an immediate point of access to the object seen.

In my opinion the *Miss Julie* scenography makes the claim that our vision is not unproblematic but is a process determined by many internal and external physical and psychological circumstances. The naturalist notion of equality between knowledge and visibility was questioned in *Miss Julie* by placing the spectators in a location, much like eye-witnesses to an authentic event, and thus preventing them from seeing everything.

14. Ollila 1983.

This idea can be developed further; you only see and know a fraction of all available information, and can never reach an omniscient vision. Moreover, the visual information you are able to grasp depends on you, on your cultural, psychological and physiological conditions.

Having an education as an interior architect, Hedström considered his work as a continuation of the functionalistic tradition of Kaj Franck. The general aim of functionalistic design is that the objects should be appropriate to their purposes. Consequently Hedström kept asking what the actors really needed on stage, and how the essential idea of the play could be made concrete through place and visual form. Any beautiful decoration or external illustration that does not have a purpose lessens the efficacy of communication. Every element onstage has to be related to the action or interpretation of the performance.

One function of scenography is to make things visible. It could be argued that a functionalist scenography creates a means for communication with the least physical elements. I would like to compare two quotes by Hedström and Franck, where they explain their utopian vision about design. According to Franck no extra material is needed for a perfectly designed object. This thinking is expressed in his writing about a traditional container of butter:

When people went to make hay in their small fields far out in the forest each of them took dark bread and a piece of butter as lunch. In the hard crust of the bread they cut out a round piece, maybe 5 cms in diameter, enough room to put the butter in the hole. It provided a cool and accurate container. After the bread was eaten in the break, the butter container had also disappeared.¹⁵

Hedström writes in a Theater Museum annual *Theater in Space*:

In an empty space the set designer always has to start from the beginning; a new space has to be created, he must act as an architect and designer, at which point the central problem of all set designers is encountered. From what material do we build a theatre space so that it is favorable for the performance – a space must have atmosphere or character. The first thing we to deal with is the material, then the architecture and space, then finally the character of the space. Noth-

15. Franck 1989, 24.

ing else is needed. Good stage settings – be they naturalistic or stylized – always have these qualities: material, space and character. We build the space for the performance...

*What is set design all about? What is it really? When I came to Lahti City Theatre I said I would be content if I could use the curtains and lobby spaces. With these means I could do my bit to ensure that the play's message got through to the audience.*¹⁶

The scenography of *Miss Julie* emerged from the use of the space, and when the performance was over there was nothing left but an auditorium filled with the tables and chairs. The scenographic design was not only defined and justified by the practical use of the space; in essence the use of the space was the scenography.

What was finally staged in *Miss Julie* was not so much the story told in the drama but the act of seeing theater. The spectator was made to question his/her role which provided her/him with a new perspective and arguably prevented the traditional realistic drama reception.

In his very critical review, Jukka Kajava pointed out the impossibility of communicating *Miss Julie* without the conventional theatrical framework: "What was proved was that if any play in this world requires a posed picture, it is *Miss Julie*. The dramatics are based on the fact that the spectator can see Julie as well as Jean and Kristin."¹⁷

However, the *Miss Julie* text also contains negotiations between visibility and non-visibility and is connected to the naturalist concepts of knowing and explaining the play-world. Una Chaudhuri refers to this:

*Invoking the impressionist painters and "their idea of asymmetrical and open composition", Strindberg breaches the naturalist contract to total visibility in its own name, substituting a partial visibility offered as an invitation to the spectator's cooperative imagination... In a movement that is also typical at the level of the play's meaning, the spectator's attention is distracted from its hypnotic fixity, drawn towards the limits and margins of the stage. Upon these margins are inscribed the ideological limitations of naturalism.*¹⁸

16. Hedström 1988, 44–46.

17. Kajava 1983.

18. Chaudhuri 1995, 35.

I think that this theoretical reading was put into practice in the *KOM* scenography. This probably caused problems for the reception of the drama which was staged as if the spectators were really in the location. This effect, whereby the audience forgets their own existence in the theater-house through an emphatic involvement with the play's events, is actually the aim of the realism rhetoric. However, being concretely on location seems to have emphasized the experience of watching in *KOM*, and thus distanced the spectator from realistic identification with the characters.

Moreover, the focus was on the very act of seeing and its problems. Initially the cafeteria-staging in *KOM* can be examined very simply and practically. Each individual spectator had his/her specific view of the show. Although they could follow some scenes from an intimate distance of less than one meter, none of them could see all scenes. This was because the actors were sometimes behind their backs or other members of the audience blocked the line of sight.

Where a conventional theater space aims to provide as good a sight line as possible for everybody, the scattered staging of *Miss Julie* did the opposite. Instead of enjoying the pleasure of watching, observing the performance was a frustrating experience because of the obscured lines of sight. Blocking parts of the performance actually made the spectator aware of his/her desire to see other people's private lives.

It can be said that the scenography staged the very act of seeing and not seeing things and, as was mentioned above, peering into the protagonist's private world is one of the central issues for modern realist drama. The performance also challenged the premises of naturalist theater, both as an enterprise of making the private affairs public and as an aspiration for total visibility. It can be argued that not only was the characters' privacy made visible, but so was that of spectators who were not allowed to hide in the safety of the darkness.

This shows an insight similar to that of Una Chaudhuri. She argues that in *Miss Julie* "naturalism proposed a world of total visibility – and then performed its limits."¹⁹ Chaudhuri also suggests that the logic of total visibility "finds its fantasies fulfilled" in the movement of environmental theater, the logic of which is similar to that of cinematic wide-screen technology

19. Chaudhuri 1995, 44.

in the desire “for a field of experience organized around human anatomy and laid out in such a way as to define reality as readily available to human subjects.”²⁰

She proposes that the environmental theater practice is in a continuum with naturalism, although their relationship has been disguised as a dichotomy: “The principle that links these two supposedly antithetical practices is what I call the logic of total visibility.”²¹

Miss Julie at *KOM* no doubt belonged to the tradition of environmental theater, although Chaudhuri focuses on stagings that invite the spectator inside an ‘authentic’ play-milieu. This was not the case at *KOM* where the cafeteria was identified as the place for the theatrical event; however, the spectators were situated in relation to the play as if they were in a location where they were supposed to be reliable witnesses. Total visibility was made impossible by this arrangement of the space that raised the issue and problematic of visibility as an integral part of both environmental and naturalist performances.

In *KOM’s Miss Julie* the act of seeing became private in the sense that each spectator had his/her own view but simultaneously this privacy of vision was made public. The focus was shifted to the receptive and interpretative process of the spectator in a way that is similar to a remark made by Chaudhuri. She argued that in *Miss Julie* “the naturalist agenda transfers the function of recognition from the protagonist to the spectator; here discovery and revelation are of purely hermeneutic order, within the theater but outside the drama.”²²

The gaze of Strindberg’s naturalist spectator is a tool of power which provides him/her with the possibility of understanding the behavior of the protagonist. In *KOM* the spectator was prevented from having a holistic, omniscient view, and s/he was made feel unconformable about the privileged position of being an observer. The performance thus stripped the spectator of his/her epistemological power.

On the one hand this scenography seemed to let the spectator have his/her own view, but on the other hand it put him/her in a powerless position. The variability of vision did not offer the freedom to choose one’s viewpoint. Even if the spectator was not exposed to Strindberg’s suggestive illusion, his/

20. Ibid.

21. Chaudhuri 1995, 27.

22. Chaudhuri 1995, 32.

her experience was strictly limited and guided. S/he was not only brought into the middle of the plays events, s/he was given no possibility to stay outside the theatrical community dominated by the style and ideology of the artists in *KOM*.

From the viewpoint of the protagonist, the tragedy played in a fictive cafeteria problematized the possibility of having access to the intimacy of other people. The crucial question here was whether sharing physical and mental space is possible at all, and whether we really can know something about other people. Stepping inside the same space can also be seen as a metaphor for the intrusion into the mind of the protagonist. Can it really be done, or will the spectator always remain an outsider, whose supposed knowledge about other people is a result of his/her 'colonizing' power? Can the inside mind be revealed without disgrace?

8.2 AN ENVIRONMENTAL STAGING

KOM's Miss Julie can be linked to a tradition called environmental theater as defined by Arnold Aronson on the grounds of its non-frontality. A frontal performance takes place within a single frame, outside of which the spectators are situated. The spectator does not have to turn his/her head more than 45 degrees in order to see the whole scenery.²³ Respectively, a non-frontal environmental staging comprehends the whole space including both actors and audiences, and it more or less negotiates with the visibility they offer to the spectators. Aronson made the following remark:

*Frontal performance creates an essentially one-to-one relationship between the performer and the spectator; there is a clearly defined boundary between the two. Environmental performance places the spectator at the center of the events, often with no boundary between performer and spectator. The performance frame may be distant and indistinct, and it becomes increasingly difficult to exclude any space or action as non-performance.*²⁴

Richard Schechner first used the term 'environmental' in 1967,²⁵ and Aronson points out that it was a theoretically-based movement with its roots in experimental theater and art at the beginning of the 20th century. Respec-

23. Aronson 1981, 1.

24. Aronson 1981, 13.

25. Schechner 1994, xix.

tive ideas became popular among young Finnish theater practitioners during 1970s and 1980s.

An environmental performance does not show a complete picture but the visual perception is fragmented in one way or another. The staging may enclose the audience inside the scenography, all of which can never be seen with a single glance; there can be several simultaneous scenes to be observed or the performance can be scattered in separate places. The simplicity of conventional viewing is disturbed by blurring the boundary between performance and non-performance areas.²⁶

The arrangement of *Miss Julie* in *KOM* used a ‘diluted’ version of a concept called *local-focus* by Richard Schechner, introduced in his manifesto *Six Axioms of Environmental Theater*. A *multi-focus* performance offers a coherent experience of different points of view to an undivided audience; in a *local-focus* performance only part of the audience can see or hear some events. Those who are excluded from following the play are either served alternative scenes, or they are left outside the performance for a while.²⁷ Schechner admits the difficulties with this practice but proposes that the empty moments may serve as a kind of individual intermission benefiting the intensity of the show:

*The moments of local-focus are breaks in the action when they can recapitulate what has gone on before or simply think of their own thoughts. These open moments allow for “selective inattention”. Why should an intermission occur all at once? I have found that these pauses – these pools of inattention – surprisingly draw spectators further into the world of the performance.*²⁸

A *local-focus* experience depends very much on the personal, environmental and accidental conditions of each spectator. It resembles an everyday experience where no dramaturgy has influenced sequence of interesting events, and where no scenographer has arranged the visual access to them. In *KOM*’s *Miss Julie* the theatricality of the spatial situation was blocked and the play’s sequence of events was distorted. This divided the opinions of the reviews very evenly. Three writers out of six found the cafeteria-theater a very stimulating and appropriate solution for *Miss Julie* while two criticized it heavily. Jukka Kajava belonged to the latter group:

26. Aronson 1981, 1–14.

27. Schechner 1994, xxxvii–xxxviii.

28. Schechner 1994, xxxviii.

How exactly could Miss Julie survive being scattered all over the space so that most of the time the spectator only sees one of the participants in a scene?...

If you have to listen to Jean roaring behind your back, struggle to see Julie lying and suffering on the floor, and can only see the red nose of the spectator facing you, you soon come to wonder how long it will be before you can get away from here.²⁹

Hilkka Eklund also disliked the partial visibility in *KOM*:

The distance between actors and spectators is only a dozen or so centimeters but there is no contact. The artificiality of the situation makes one object. I started to experiment as a spectator. I experimented with whether the intensity of Jean (played by Kari Hakala) was enough if I only looked at Julie (played by Marja-Leena Kouki), who was lying at my feet. It wasn't. I had to turn around to see what Jean looked like at that moment. When a play with three characters is split up in this way, it is not possible for the spectator to see and experience the tension between the characters. One can say that the experiment has failed, at least from the perspective of the spectator.³⁰

On the other hand, the existence of different subjective viewpoints gave rise to several positive reviews, for example, according to Riitta Wikström the interpretation of the play's contents were derived only from personal perceptions. She concluded: "It is unnecessary even to say that the intimate solution was fascinating especially in the context of *Miss Julie*, which belongs to the chamber plays by Strindberg."³¹

Kirsi Ollila also wrote:

One can say that the Miss Julie in KOM does justice to the variable solutions offered by Strindberg. Openly subjective experiences can be found and should be looked for in Kino Cabaret. Don't expect a profound universal philosophy, or a performance that remains as a holistic picture in your consciousness.³²

29. Kajava 1983.

30. Eklund 1983.

31. Wikström 1983.

32. Ollila 1983.

Regardless of the writers' like or dislike for the performance, the reviews are proof of their *local-focus* experiences that were due to the intimacy of the surrounds and to their placement inside the space shared by actors. While conventional stages are designed in order to allow as good sightlines as possible, the cafeteria-staging denied the opportunity to see everything. It was a reversal of ideal theater space.

The paradox here is that when the spectator is most intimately enclosed in to the performance space, s/he can no longer see it properly. In some sense the fragmentary and frustrating view in *KOM* was a consequence of carrying out the naturalist premises of showing the play as if it were really happening in front of the eyes of the audience. When you witness an intermittent event in real life, you hardly ever can see everything. In this sense the *KOM* staging of *Miss Julie* served as an opposition to the naturalist tenets of total visibility.

Asserting the audience inside the stage makes them focus on their own existence there. This has two partly contradictory consequences. As Annette Arlander has remarked being physically present in the performance space often lessens the spectator's ability to be mentally involved, to believe in illusions and identify with the protagonists.³³ The reception tends to be rather intellectually than emotionally oriented.

On the other hand, it is the physical presence of the spectator on stage, which makes him/her incapable of achieving an objective view of the event. The intellectual efforts of reasoning and analyzing the drama do not lead to any unambiguous conclusion. The spectator's sharing of the same space with protagonists metaphorically questions the existence of one solid truth about the tragedy of Julie.

A similar idea can be seen in the scenographic arrangement suggested by Strindberg for *Miss Julie* in his preface. By offering the spectators a seemingly accidental view he wanted to bring them inside the sphere of the play-world. As Freddie Rokem has shown, the partial visibility also points to the limits of knowledge.³⁴ The diagonal set proposed by Strindberg is a conscious framing of the visual field leaving part of the scenery hidden. There is a continuous negotiation between what is seen and what not, and the knowledge about the play-world is marked by uncertainty.

33. Arlander 1998, 52.

34. Rokem 1986, 49–58.

The physical closeness is an obstacle for a holistic vision but is also an indication of being present in an authentic location. When you look at something from the outside you have a more contrived view. It is like looking at a postcard compared to visiting the site. If you want to have holistic view of a scene, where the details are in rational relation to each other, you have to be outside it. By positing the spectator inside the performance space the *KOM* staging made him/her part of the visual field which is traditionally the observed site. It was his/her own existence there that prevented the spectator from getting reliable information.

Here the simple act of seeing compares metaphorically to a popular concept of Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty in physics, according to which the act of measuring prevents the possibility of attaining exact information about all variables in a system. It is as if the presence of the observer would have an influence on the system s/he observes. Similarly the spectator at *KOM* was made aware of his/her impact on the performance as an essential participant in it.

Annette Arlander has formulated an important distinction between two alternative ways of sharing the performance space: either bring the performance into the auditorium, or place the spectators on the stage inside the scenery.³⁵ In the latter case the shared space is conceived of as a fictive milieu of the play where the audience is invited in. Vice versa when the actors occupy the spectators' space, it is conceived as a 'real' theater room housing a performative event.

The scenography at *KOM* avoided all illustrative signs signifying the fictive environment of *Miss Julie*. In that respect it belongs to the former tradition of acting in the 'real' space of audience. On the other hand, an illusion of a place was created that never existed on the level of everyday life: *Kino Cabaret* was previously a movie-theater and was used by *KOM* regularly at that time but it never was a cafeteria outside the context of *Miss Julie*.

The audiences in *KOM* were invited to make up a theatrical situation with no references to the fictive environment of the drama. The arrangement served as a setting representing an unconventional theater space but it was an illusion itself. This brings to mind the analogy Una Chaudhuri's draws between environmental theatre, using the audience as a semiotic element of

35. Arlander 1998, 51.

the performance, and an ecological attitude called *resourcism*. The latter concept refers to the natural world as an endless source of raw material for more advanced cultures.³⁶ In the same way, the audience becomes the source of its own theatrical experience, and a resource used for artistic purposes.

In *KOM* there were two simultaneous performances going on: one representing the story of *Miss Julie* and another staging the theatrical happening itself. Everyone present there took part to the latter but only the actors were performing the former. The audience in *KOM* was, however, not an essential element for the fiction of the play. The spectator was a necessary – but perhaps not always voluntary – co-actor playing the role of a spectator.

When the performance was later moved to the *Koitto* stage only part of the audience were seated at tables, the others were sitting in two normal auditorium stalls facing each other. In this case there were two kind of spectators, public and private ones.

Both the audience and the players in *Miss Julie* were used for staging the theatrical situation, and this situation was the main focus of the performance. When I looked at the video of the performance, it occurred to me that almost any intimate play could have been performed in the same space. The cafeteria-solution, of course, had an effect on the reading of the play but it seemed unjustified by the analysis of the characters and their fates. Its reasoning was arguably linked to previous stagings of *Miss Julie*, and different theatrical traditions.

8.3 THE RHETORIC OF STAGE SPACE

There was a general enthusiasm for experimenting with stage space in Finnish theater during the 1970s and 1980s. The proposals for creating new kinds of audience-relationships were often influenced by ideas of democracy that would allow the spectators to participate in the performances. This thinking was perhaps most clearly expressed by the writings of the Swedish theater-maker Per Edström and the Finnish architect and scenographer Pentti Piha, whose joint book *Room and Performance* (*Rum och teater* 1976) was frequently referenced by theater practitioners in 1970s and 1980s. In their view

36. Chaudhuri 1995, 25.

the theatrical space was a determining tool of the rhetorical attitude of communication.

In his book *Why Not Theatres Made for People?* Per Edström presents his theory: all spatial forms of theater have developed from a simple situation where people gather around an interesting event. To me this idea is a spatial equivalent to the Brechtian street scene where the essence of a theater is enacted when somebody tells other people on the street about a recent accident. Edström further proposes that the different basic forms of theater “were created by the shape of the borderline an actor puts between himself and his audience which in turn depends on the style of language and expression he chooses.”³⁷

The organization of space is, thus, seen as the creation of a communicative medium that defines the positions of sender and receiver. Edström particularly distinguishes between the so-called monologue or picture stage, and the form of an arena. The crucial question here is whether the performers speak to a passive audience, or whether the spectators are included in the communication as active participants. According to Edström the arena is a democratic arrangement where everybody has an equal opportunity to act and speak whereas the conventional frontal stage is meant for authoritarian monologues and picture theaters.³⁸

What kind of a speech situation was created by the scattered cafeteria-staging of *Miss Julie*? It was neither an arena, nor a monologue or picture stage.

Thinking in terms of a curious crowd gathering around an event as the germ of theater, it could be said that the cafeteria makes up the spatial situation before this spontaneous gathering. When the spectators entered the cafeteria there was nothing specific on which to focus one's attention. When the actors started the play the spectators had to make an effort in order to have a better look at what was going on. The temptation to stand up, turn around or change place existed, but this could not be done because the implicit rules of theater behavior prohibited this. I think that the spatial situation in *Miss Julie* presented the moment when a desire to see an event is stimulated but cannot be completely satiated.

In the scattered staging at *KOM* the spectators' personal viewpoints existed as a result of different limitations. Although not one single audience member

37. Edström 1990, 12.

38. Edström 1990, 17.

had access to all the scenes, the compilation of the perceptions of all spectators covered the whole space. From the viewpoint of the protagonists the community of the audience was like one big eye, together they were capable of perceiving everything on stage.

Julie had no place where she could hide from all the gazes but no individual view of her could be complete. This is in fact the painfulness of public exposure. Any public revelation of the private mind is distorted because of the limits of every individual perspective. However, you cannot escape the eyes of other people who define your being on the basis of their partial knowledge.

Herein also lies the difference between the spatial rhetoric of *KOM* and that of Strindberg. There is no doubt that they share a common idea about audience and actors occupying the same space even if it was carried out concretely in *KOM* and expressed only abstractly and implicitly by Strindberg. The visual access to the play was, however, constructed in very oppositional ways.

In the *KOM* staging what you saw was a matter of personal luck and coincidence. However, the creation of these spatial circumstances was a rather manipulative construction and this was not hidden. On the contrary, the spectators trying to have a better look were probably very aware of the existence of a scenographer who had placed them in problematic positions on purpose. With the spatial design he used a visible power to limit the gaze of the spectators but he could not exactly anticipate what each of them was going to see. Instead of a planned perception there were a variety of unpredictable framed points of perception.

Respectively, a play-world built according to Strindberg's scenic instructions appears to be occasionally framed but in fact everything is very carefully planned. For example, Strindberg describes the scene where Jean changes his coat in the following way: "Goes further over to the right; one of his arms can be seen as he changes his coat."³⁹ In order to carry this scene out there must be a corner in the set, which frames Jean partly out of the line of vision. It is not enough to have a site where the actor can hide, but the boundary between visibility and invisibility must be stringent. Otherwise Jean's arm could not be framed so distinctively. This is only possible in a frontal and 'narrow' staging, where all spectators have approximately the same view of the scenery.

39. Strindberg 1992
(1888), 6.

A scattered staging will be looked at from all angles and directions. There can be no theatrical secrets hidden in the back of the set. In scenographic terms it means that you can rarely create any suggestive illusions. Hence, the scenic vision does not consciously 'lie' but it never tells the whole truth to any individual spectator.

In this sense the rhetoric of visibility in naturalism and environmentalism are contradictory. In naturalism everybody in the audience sees the same limited view which conceals its margins. In a scattered staging nobody sees everything, and they all know it. However, nowhere on the stage is completely invisible to everybody.

When you are really inside a space you can only perceive the details that are within your reach. You have a direct experience, but you cannot see the details in logical relation to each other or in relation to the larger context. Understanding these relationships was one central aim of naturalism proposed by Strindberg:

*What we want to see are just the wires, the machinery. We want to investigate the box with the false bottom, touch the magic ring in order to find the suture, and look into the cards to discover how they are marked.*⁴⁰

The Strindbergian vision should serve as a source of deeper knowledge. The accidental nature of the line of sight in *KOM* denied this possibility. There the limits of empirical knowledge do not appear as previously given and permanent but as depending on particular and changing conditions. Even if I personally do not see something, somebody else will, and moreover, there is something that prevents me from perceiving it. I might even try to remove the obstacles, move to another place in order to have a better look, or ask others to tell me what they saw.

In order to know more, the spectator could actually turn to ask other members of the audience, and as a result the reception and interpretation of the play becomes a collective process. This is in accordance with the ideology of *KOM* that emphasizes democracy and togetherness, and also facilitates the creation of a community that you have to interact with when seeing a performance.

40. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xvi.

On the other hand, the *KOM* performance emphasized the notion that, as a spectator, your view is always different from that experienced by your neighbor. When the performance is seen from different personal views, it is like creating small theatrical spaces that are temporal and individual. The spatial relationship between each spectator and actor is formed and renewed constantly. The concept of theatrical space therefore becomes a human interaction rather than a physical place.

I think that the interest in experimentation with shared space has diminished in the recent past. The environmental theater movement, from the perspective of today, already seems outdated.⁴¹ However, I do not think that we have simply returned to frontality, as it was conceived in opposition to environmentalism. Rather, the interactive and constructed character of theater has become so obvious to us that it does not have to be emphasized by a special manipulation of spatial reception. Theater-makers and audiences are aware of the complexity, relativity and subjectivity of spatial problematic. The emergence of ‘small personal stages’ actually happens in any performance because each spectator receives the play in his/her own way.

8.4 SPATIAL IDEOLOGIES

Henri Lefebvre has suggested that spatial codes can be understood only in relation to particular spatial practices within the society. The meanings of the space are flexible, and they are formed by interpretations of social power relations and values. According to Lefebvre, there is a triad consisting of; spatial practices; representations or conceptualizations of space; and representational or directly lived spaces. The theater is an especially complicated case, since all the dimensions are involved here. Theater is a social practice, and a representational space because of being a sign. The scenic design, for its part, is a conceptualization of space.⁴²

What kind of social practices were present in the cafeteria-staging of *Miss Julie*? What kind of meanings do they contribute to the reading of scenography?

The only things that were totally discernable were the two common-place spatial practices combined in *Kino Cabaret*: that of a cafeteria and that of a

41. Aronson 1991, 13.

42. Lefebvre 1991, 33–39; Saarikangas 1998, 187–188; Wiles 1997, 19–21.

theater venue. This elicits several meanings from the dialogue between these spatial practices, and between them and the Count's kitchen, where the play was supposed to take place.

A theater and a cafeteria have a lot in common. Both are public places affiliated with leisure time, entertainment and social relations. Of course the difference between them is that the theater is a site for watching fictive characters, whereas the cafeteria serves as a place for eating, drinking, meeting friends and making new acquaintances.

Although you are not supposed to stare at strangers in a cafeteria, looking at passers-by is part of the fascination of sitting there. You are also aware that you might be an object of interest yourself. Respectively, people go to the theater not only to see performances but also because of the social aspect. The coffee served during the interval plays an important role for many spectators. You can also see a more metaphorical comparison there: enjoying a theater performance is much like enjoying refreshments.

One important difference between the original Strindbergian kitchen and a cafeteria is the degree of public exposure. In the Count's manor the kitchen was a room hidden from the eyes of the high society who lived in another part of the house. On the other hand, the servants working in the kitchen there allowed no privacy. A cafeteria is a relatively open place, more or less conducive to people watching, and the waiters there are independent individuals who have their private lives and homes elsewhere.

A cafeteria does not represent the social power systems present in the kitchen; rather it stresses the free choice of people inhabiting it more or less accidentally. Since it is an open public place it is not such a big deal if Jean and Julie are seen together there. The gossiping crowd, forcing them to escape to Jean's room, was left out of the *KOM* performance. Jean and Julie left the stage quite voluntarily, embracing each other and totally aware of what was going to happen. The cafeteria space did not impose the fatal force of the Count's kitchen.

The history of urban cafeterias goes back to the middle of 19th century, when new types of places that blurred the boundary between the public and private sphere emerged, like coffee houses, terraces, boulevards and depart-

ment stores. They offered an opportunity to move outside the home, and even to be *flâneurs*, particularly for middle class women.⁴³ In this sense the cafeteria-environment gave Julie a new dimension as a modern woman associated with the urban society. The noble world of the Count's house seemed totally forgotten. Coming to the cafeteria did not mean that Julie lowered herself but it offered Julie and Jean equal positioning. Their relationship was that of two people who, rather accidentally, were driven to have an affair.

The spatial milieu in *Kino Cabaret* was not visually characterized as a particular type of coffee house. On the other hand this simplicity could suggest an informal cafeteria, visited by young intellectuals and students who do not care for decorations. The impression was strengthened by the cheap, disposable coffee cups. According to Laura Jäntti, the reason for this was that they had no dishwashing facility.⁴⁴ The same kind of cups was also used in the *KOM* lobby during the intermission of all performances and as a result they referred more generally to *KOM*'s broader audience as potential customers of the fictive cafeteria.

The cafeteria could be understood as the *KOM* space, discernible by an avoidance of rigid festivity. For example, it was customary for actors there to work at the coat check and sell coffee in the lobby. It was not only a practical necessity but also a declaration of their democratic and informal attitudes.⁴⁵ As mentioned above, one reference point for the staging of *Miss Julie* was the history of *KOM* as a group who started its activity as a cafeteria-theater.

When the performance was later moved to the *Koitto* stage it gained a political dimension because the venue was historically linked to the labor movement and in the 1980s it was occupied by the extreme left. This was not a conscious agenda motivated move but rather a practical necessity. Regardless, it greatly influenced the reception of the audiences that were aware of *Koitto*'s and *KOM*'s political reputations.

From the beginning, *KOM-teatteri* was the most well-known group committed to the new-leftist ideologies in the late 1960s and 1970s. Can this political engagement be linked to the use of stage space? Can scenography be political?

43. Saarikangas 1998, 189.

44. Jäntti 2004.

45. Karhu 1991, 22.

According to Merja-Liisa Karhu, who has written the history of *KOM*, strong interpretative statements about the play and an avoidance of illustration defined their performances.⁴⁶ The visually reduced style, a systematic avoidance of naturalism and spatial experimentations were also characteristic of the scenographies in *KOM*, mostly created by Måns Hedström.

KOM's rejection of realistic illustrations was not only a matter of style but also a call for a fundamentally different concept of theatrical communication. According to W.B. Worthen, the anti-thesis to realism is usually found in political theater that openly makes statements. This is oppositional to the rhetoric of realism, the hallmark of which is not verisimilitude but "the framing machinery that seems to make such lifelikeness appear". The realistic scene claims to offer the spectator a freedom of judgment by denying its own rhetoricity.⁴⁷

The theatrical practice of *KOM*, determined by its ideology, also appeared in its scenographic style, which became a *KOM* hallmark. Like other theater groups at the turn of 1960s and 1970s, the artists in *KOM* wanted to offer an alternative to the conservative repertoire of mainstream theater addressed to middle and upper class audiences. The spatial practices of bourgeois theater were identified with large institutional houses with conventional proscenium stages that separated the audience from the performance.

For *KOM* theater was a tool for influencing attitudes and changing the world. Not only did they stage openly political plays at *KOM* but they also sought to attract new audiences who were not traditional theater goers. This was made possible by bringing the performances to sites where this audience already was; to places of work, schools, and institutions. Since they had to carry their sets and props into places without technical expertise or facilities, the scenographies had to be very simple but still communicate their idea effectively.

The *KOM* scenographies developed in conjunction with its tradition of aspiring to be emphatically different from mainstream models of production. Although *KOM* had a permanent venue of its own from 1978 onward, the scenographies maintained their reduced and functional style; however, they were more concerned with spatial experiments.⁴⁸ This scenographic attitude had become a sign for the values connected to *KOM*.

46. Karhu 1991, 132–33.

47. Worthen 1992, 14–21.

48. Karhu 1991, 20–22; 26–27.

By the 1980s *KOM* performances had a reputation for turning conventional traditions upside down and creating new interpretations and approaches to classical texts. The breaking down of traditions is problematic. An awareness of conventional traditions is an essential part of challenging them. An experimental performance is radical only compared to what is expected on the basis of previous traditions. When the experiments form a tradition of their own their provocative power is diminished. Instead of amazing the audience with broken expectations, the ability to choose representative modes and styles is made apparent. Instead of basing theatrical communication on a totally new foundation, the experiments are different paradigms that create new conventions.

Miss Julie was produced in 1983 when the heyday of the leftist group movement was over and *KOM* was in an economic crisis. There was also a change in the political atmosphere and a general re-valuation of leftist ideologies. The radical politics of the 1970s appeared as too simple and one-sided to the new generation. Merja-Liisa Karhu writes that, at the end of 70s *KOM*'s political manifestos were considered tired, and an interest in classical plays with more psychological depth in human characterization increased. The production of *Miss Julie* was one example of this development.⁴⁹

Karhu writes that at *KOM* the collapse of *Julie* was a personal tragedy caused by her loss of dignity and her disappointment with people in general.⁵⁰ The interpretation of *Miss Julie* was, thus, based more on individual and human traits and failures than on an analysis about social forces or gender struggles. The director, Jäntti, remarked that the actress playing *Julie*, Marja-Leena Kouki, was very far from an upper-class character and her representation of the role undermined class distinctions.⁵¹ In her performance the tragedy was due *Julie*'s innocence and ignorance.

Julie was asking for love but she was rejected. It was her longing for eroticism that made *Julie* fall for Jean. This was a mistake because *Julie* did not realize that Jean was taking advantage of her until it was too late, and this hurt her so deeply that she was willing to commit suicide.

Julie's suicide became somehow unnecessary. There was no social evolution that would lead to a brighter future and give *Julie*'s sad fate a purpose. Nor was there a metaphysical destiny guiding the events. Her disappoint-

49. Karhu 1991, 43.

50. Karhu 1991,
104–105.

51. Jäntti 2004.

ment and death were caused by unhappy coincidences and human mistakes. When I saw the performance on video I was not sure whether I would even have understood that Julie was going to commit a suicide, unless I was familiar with the play. Pia Ingström also noted that the performance gave the impression that Julie could have made another choice: “Her Strindbergian destruction becomes suddenly and is only one possibility among many, one begins to hope.”⁵²

I think that the tragedy of her story was exactly the lack of a final cause for and consequence of her death. She could have survived but she just did not. There were no “wires, machineries or false bottoms” to be revealed, as proposed by Strindberg in the preface.⁵³

Compared to *KOM*’s early political manifestations, *Miss Julie* was an expression of a more multileveled and relativistic view of the world. The multiplicity of different viewpoints offered by the spatial order stressed the lack of any ideology as a solid and only truth. The arrangement can be seen as an attempt to return to a position where you have not been able to make up your mind. There is no absolute view and no definite statement. Even the scenography was somehow ultimately made by the spectators’ presence. The scenographer and director ‘retired’ from the role of giving ready-made visions or definite interpretations. Coincidentally, *Miss Julie* was the last scenography Hedström made at *KOM*, seemingly indicating the end of a tradition.

From the viewpoint of an outsider in 2003, a hidden pessimism and disappointment concerning the original ideology of *KOM* can be seen. The belief in social advancement and theater’s capability of changing the world was not valid anymore. The commonly shared space, whose optimistic ideology once united *KOM* audiences, had become a place of witnessing individual tragedies with no heightened purposes. The joyfully shared space of *Miss Julie* turns into a cruel machine that facilitates a meaningless tragedy. The spectators have their coffee party while helplessly witnessing Julie’s suicide.

52. Ingström 1983.

53. Strindberg 1992, xvi.

9 Miss Julie at the National Theatre 1984

Theater Inside the Mind

Miss Julie was staged in the small studio of *Willensauna* at the Finnish National Theatre in 1984. The scenography by Kari Junnikkala made a very strong impression, and I would call its style expressionistic or surrealist. The walls of the kitchen were icy-looking screens with contorted, irregular shapes. Strong lighting effects altered the stage's appearance.

> Look at the illustration in Appendix 6.

My focus for this scenography is on vision, which is used as a major tool for theatrical communication. This is possible for the National Theatre production because of the high quality visual evidence of the performance. The performance has been recorded on videotape, and there are very good photos of the scenography. I also interviewed Junnikkala and the director Olli Tola.

Junnikkala had studied at the Department of Scenography in the University of Industrial Arts during the 1970s. By 1984 he had already made a prominent career in Finnish theaters, working f.ex. in the Turku Swedish Theater, Kuopio City Theater and *Lilla Teatern*. Together with the director Olli Tola they are an established team, often using visuality as a central mode of communication. Junnikkala described their cooperation in our discussion in 2001:

Olli Tola is a director, who very willingly interferes with the visual aspects. We are used to doing very exact work together in this area... I would say that we are an eternal working team. Especially recently, Olli has been writing the scripts and purposely creates really difficult visions. Then we solve them together. We have invested in it [visuality] from the very beginning; it is a terribly important part.¹

1. Junnikkala 2001.

I think that in *Willensauna* the visual perception was one of the – maybe even the most important – basic starting points of the performance. The scenography and other non-verbal channels communicated the essential parts of the tragedy. The stage imagery was supported by music composed for the performance by Pekka Laitinen, who was the third member of this long-standing artistic team. There was also a dancing group whose performance was choreographed by Anu Panula.

The effectiveness of the non-verbal communication is based on its capability to express emotional experiences which is hard to put into precise words. According to Junnikkala his aim was to create “an inner image, a state of mind”.² (The Finnish word *mielentila*, which means a state of mind or mood, can also be read as space of mind. The latter part of the word *tila* also refers to a concrete space, as well as to an abstract state of affairs.) The function of the scenic apparatus was to make a subjective world visible to the audience. The dreams, fears and traumas of Julie were not only acted out but they were also represented through scenography.

The production of *Miss Julie* proved problematic. The very first thing Junnikkala told me was that it was a work he would rather forget. He felt it was a failure because the acting grew in a separate direction to the audio-visual elements of the performance. It is legitimate to ask why I want to study a scenography that the artist was himself discontent with. My answer is that despite Junnikkala's proposition of failure, the production serves as an example of a great scenic vision working as primary means of communication.

9.1 A SPACE OF MIND

The most visible element of the scenography was the kitchen back wall, constructed of partly transparent ‘icy’ screens. They were made of irregularly shaped polystyrene sheets fastened on metallic constructions. Their surfaces were painted and sanded down by turns so that they looked like icy windows. The looks of the set could be altered very much by lighting. For example the metallic constructions became visible only in back light, resembling then tree-branches.

2. Junnikkala 2001.

One practical reason for the flatness and the partial transparency of the set was the shape of the studio *Willensauna*. Its low ceiling and the floor-plan, which was the shape of an elongated rectangle, restricted the options. In *Miss Julie* the auditorium was situated on one of the long sides of the room. As result the stage was very wide but lacked depth. The free-standing polystyrene screens could be placed on stage so that they slightly overlapped each other, and thus created an illusion of depth. The floor planks that got narrower as they reached the back wall, emphasized this.

Although the furniture on stage made reference to a rustic kitchen, it was hard to read the scenography as a representation of a concrete environment familiar to us. It seemed to make several associations and allusions, none of which could be seen as definite and permanent. You could see a magical wood, an ancient cave, a haunted house, an iceberg, a mountain of glass, the basement of an old house with windows covered by ancient dirt and cobwebs. In certain lighting I even saw two pairs of huge, staring eyes. The world seen on stage never showed itself as something stable and open to precise analyses.

On a realistic level the stage space could be read as a kitchen placed in a cavernous basement in the Count's house. The background, with the surrounding garden, suggested a cemetery. We could think of it as a world ruled by the ghosts of Julie's noble ancestors, impressing their regime on the living inhabitants. In the reviews the screens were mostly interpreted as iconic representations of ice or glass:

*The director Olli Tola and the scenographer Kari Junnikkala have placed the events inside a cold green glass-mountain.*³

*What are those ice-looking glass-walls, through which the light shines glowing but distorted?*⁴

*Instead of Midsommer night, the construction made of transparent reinforced plastic brings to mind the castle of the Snow-Queen from a fairy-tale by Andersen.*⁵

*The scenography with its glass- and mirror plates is far from the naturalistic realism of Strindberg.*⁶

3. Sundqvist 1984.

4. Ritolahti 1984.

5. Eklund 1984.

6. Helenius 1984.

Otherwise the reviewers had very contradictory opinions about almost everything. The direction was praised for an interesting interpretation as well as accused of lack of it.

The scenography attracted the attention of most reviewers from the very beginning. Some of them enjoyed the visual and aural world, others found it disturbing and strange, and criticized it for being too distinct from the rest of the production.

*Already the opening of the play is a shock.*⁷

*The scenography by Kari Junnikkala is startling when you step inside Willensauna.*⁸

*In the beginning the spectator considers the view created by Tola and the scenographer as strange, but along with the performance the figures find their places, and the icy scenery with its mirrors by Kari Junnikkala underlines as well the broken identity of Julie, as a night-marish circle of life.*⁹

*And why is all this done in a milieu, which resembles of the set of the fairy-tale Sleeping Beauty with its plastic, spray painted walls?*¹⁰

The scenography could not be passed and its representations noted. The spectators had to stop to examine it more closely, and look for the significations. This was probably one reason for its strong impression. Instead of accurate signs there was a mass of indefinable connotations and associations giving cause for wonder. The meanings of the set could not be finally 'figured out', but the spectator had to keep looking at them, grapple with them and then look again.

This process went on and there were no final interpretations to be found. This was opposite to commonplace experiences of everyday life, where we are used to more or less automatically understanding what we see. Here vision became a problem.

The wonder caused by the scenography could be experienced as disturbing because it had the power to draw the focus away from the acting. On the

7. Sundqvist 1984.

8. Ritolahti 1984.

9. Ståhlhammar 1984.

10. Siikala 1984.

other hand it could be understood as enabling a creative state of mind, facilitating new ways of seeing the play. In both cases the perception of scenography had a dominating role in the reception.

The director Olli Tola explained the intended function of the scenography:

As far as I remember, the basic idea behind the scenography was the representation of the many layers of the human mind; the secret, hidden and partly unconscious world... We envisioned a scenic solution that was transparent so that sometimes you could see through it – and then in other instances it would be opaque. The same element would have the ability to conceal and reveal – we had previously used veils for this purpose. This time we aimed for strong visual impact, where the appearance of the human being would be slightly contorted, like in a distorting mirror, and we thought that bent plastic would create that kind of distorted and exaggerated effect.

We also hoped that this partly surrealistic vision of the unconscious would inspire the actors to develop their expression in a more passionate, intense and stronger direction; so that they would abandon realism as the traditional style connected to chamber plays. However, we didn't quite succeed with this.¹¹

The most apparent interpretation of the *Willensauna* scenography is that it is the world as seen through the eyes of Julie. Her tragedy was not received as a course of events seen from outside but as an emotionally charged experience of living inside a frozen, distorted world. Thereby, the emphasis of the visual communication was on those unreliable feelings which Strindberg wanted the spectator to suppress in favor of rational observation: “But perhaps a time will arrive... when we have closed up those lower, unreliable instruments of thought, which we call feelings.”¹²

What I find important in the *Willensauna* scenography is the inherent notion that feelings and emotions are not something superfluous but they are inextricably linked to all our mental processes. All perception and understanding of the world is more or less affected by them. In *Willensauna* they were presented as the primary condition for experiencing the world and act-

11. Tola 2004.

12. Strindberg 1992 (1888), x.

ing in it. The emotional experience was the environment where the play took place.

This approach corresponds to an expression often used by scenographers and directors: a performance takes place inside the head of the protagonist. Here the fictive protagonist's subjective psyche is made visible by showing the world in the way that s/he sees it. Sharing his/her mental condition is based on our capability to experience mood and feeling in a visual perception. An internal condition tends to change our orientation in the outside world.

I will take a simple example of this in the verbal field. We used to say in Finnish that when somebody is angry, s/he 'sees red'. Of course the colors of our surroundings do not change but our inside feeling seems to correspond to the experience of seeing the red color. A scenographer can use this phenomenon in the reverse way. Exposure to a certain shade of red light makes us feel restless or even aggressive for no particular reason. We do not only respond to the representations of places but the moods of seeing both depend on and influence the emotional state of the spectator.

To briefly explain the scenography's basic idea: the tragedy took place within Julie's internal experiential world, and her impressions of the external world were conveyed to the audience through the perception of the hardness and coldness of the set's simulated ice surface. Instead of an outward analysis the spectator was supposed to share Julie's solitude, lovelessness and feelings of rejection. Understanding the play was made possible only through an internalization of her mental state.

This can be seen as an extension of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, according to whom our embodied way of inhabiting the world precedes our conceptualizing, abstract thinking. *Miss Julie* was presented here as an experience primarily determined by a visual perception. By manipulating the mood of the spectator's vision, s/he was directed to receive and interpret the performance in a way intended.

The suggestive manipulation of the vision is a twofold question that also concerns the ethics of scenography. If sense perception really precedes rational thought, it is a very effective way of ruling other people. We cannot escape the emotional influence of a suggestive sense perception if we are

dependant on this primary experience in order to develop more advanced thinking.

On the other hand, the capability to live through visions and other experiences without first analyzing them is vital when taking in a work of art and it ultimately makes it possible for us to identify with other people's experiences. Tola gave an illuminating example of this when recalling something else he worked on with Junnikkala, in this instance they successfully carried out a devise very similar to that of *Miss Julie*:

Luckily Kari and I succeeded with our aims in various other stagings at that time... One was "Mephisto" at the National Theatre shortly after Miss Julie, and another, preceding it was "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in Kuopio. We used transparent wire [a kind of screen, normally used by the paper industry, but frequently adopted for theatrical purposes (my specification)]. Kari and I created a world, which showed the reality, and simultaneously showed how the Indian, who was the central character in our adaptation, saw the mental hospital. We used the transparent walls, which enabled us to show his nightmarish visions aside the 'reality'. I had one of my best reviews, when Olavi Veistjää, an institution in Finnish theatre, wrote that the performance dealt with the issue mental health in a way that was too shocking.¹³

Like the production in Kuopio, the scenography in *Willensauna* was used to make us more capable of seeing the world from other people's perspectives. The character's emotional problems are presented as something that can only be understood through personal involvement. This was in opposition to the practice of observing them from a distance and drawing rational conclusions. Here the experiences were discussed by means of other experiences.

On the other hand, the subjective and constructive nature of the vision was very apparent. The scenography did not hide its artificiality with the illusion of an objective existing reality but made a very strong statement pointing to the scenographer as the artist responsible for the vision. The audience was supposed to know that everything they saw was a subjective suggestion about how the subjective mind of Julie might see the world. In this sense the intensity of the scenographic experience contributed to an awareness of sev-

13. Tola 2004.

eral potential views and to the possibility a dialogue between them. That, I think, was illustrated by the very diffuse opinions expressed in the reviews.

9.2 A TRANSPARENT SCENOGRAPHY

The scenography of Junnikkala was distinguished by an interplay between transparency and opaqueness which was used by him to good effect in many productions before and after *Miss Julie*:

*The idea behind transparency, that we can reveal and hide the scenery by means of lights, is what I have been engaging with a lot. But there is nothing new in it. Of course, along with contemporary lighting technique the purpose of transparency has changed somewhat. There are many more possibilities for variations, and these transitional forms can be used.*¹⁴

In spite of the physical concreteness of this transparency I think it can be analyzed more metaphorically, too. The screens served as a surface whose opened or closed nature determined the view of the spectators, revealing and concealing the structures behind them. The surface also became transparent in the sense that their realistic materiality ‘disappeared’ and the spectator was supposed to see the illusions. The scenographic significations were not linked to stable properties of the screens but depended on the shifting associations and inner imageries they evoked.

Light was the means by which the visibility of the set was regulated. Sometimes the screens represented the opaque walls of the shabby kitchen; sometimes they revealed a mysterious unknown world behind them. They formed a kind of a membrane between an outer reality, and internal experiences of it. The opaque surface would occasionally become transparent and reveal a hidden unknown sphere, as if letting the audience see into the mysteries of mind.

Here the scenography brought up the question of our ability to see in the more profound sense of the word. The vague indeterminacy of vision challenged trust in our eyes, but on the other hand it hinted at our capabilities of

14. Junnikkala 2001.

seeing more than is apparent. The scenography seemed to oscillate between different levels of consciousness and various modes of seeing things.

Besides the screens there was a wooden floor and furniture. To me, their genuine appearance and opaqueness made them seem like a quotation from a naturalistic set. They could have been used in any realistic scenery representing a rustic milieu. In comparison to the transparent background screens they were solid and opaque. This generated a spooky atmosphere. In the photos the furniture looked like toys. All the pieces of furniture had the same monochromatic reddish brown coat which complimented the blue hue that dominated the screens when they were illuminated. The contradiction of colors made the objects stick out from the background, as if they did not really belong to it.

The audiences' attention was particularly drawn to the big, triple mirror, which was more appropriate for a bedroom than a kitchen. It stood almost in the middle of the stage. Its frame was made of the same kind of reddish-brown wood as the rest of furniture, thus, associating it with them. The mirror became an important detail, not only because of its apparent symbolical value as a medium of seeing oneself, but also because it could give an undistorted view. The reflections and shadows on the screens were vague and messy but in the mirror the picture was clear.

The sober image in the mirror showed the world in the way we are used to seeing it. Therefore, it can be seen as a symbol for naturalist representation, in that it provides an exact copy of the outer appearance of an object. The mirror was a point of comparison for the subjective view of the stage. It is a mechanical vehicle reproducing the view as it is. The view in the mirror showed an external view in opposition to internal subjective perception.

Whereas the scenography showed how Julie was experiencing events internally, the mirror was a reminder of the existence of a common world where people only see each other's outer appearance. On the other hand, the mirror stood almost in the middle of the expressionistic scenery. The 'objective' vision was thus surrounded – and subordinated – by a subjective one, referring to our comprehension of the existence of things 'as they are'.

Junnikkala remarked when looking at the video of the performance:

KJ: The mirror is like a hole.

*LG: Yes, one can imagine that it is possible to walk through it.
Was that the idea?*

*KJ: In a way, yes. That's why we put a real mirror there, so it
would be as smooth as possible [and not a cheap reflecting
plastic sheet which would give a distorted reflection.
(my specification)].¹⁵*

The idea of the mirror as a hole also referred to an opportunity to exit the distorted world of shadowy visions and enter a sober one. In fairytales and fantasy books a mirror or painting is often used as a window into a transcendental world but here the mirror was like a door out of the hallucinations into a decent common world where things appear as they 'really' are. Or, to be precise: they appear to us in a way that we believe corresponds to their 'real' existence.

However, since we know that one cannot step inside a mirror, these normal conditions of perception were beyond reach in the world of *Miss Julie*. The transparency of the screens also referred to the inability to exit through them, despite the possibility of seeing through them. A transparent prison wall makes the captivity especially painful, since you can see freedom but you have no actual means of escape.

The idea of captivity was mentioned in several reviews, and was also visually communicated in the poster drawn by Junnikkala.

*The mountain made of glass finally captures them inside itself.*¹⁶

*Miss Julie and the prisoners of the past (The title of the review).*¹⁷

*Imprisoned by a cage without a cage (The title of the review).*¹⁸

Three erotic dancing scenes in the play, performed by a group of four dancers, made a significant impact on the audience. One of the scenes opened the play, apparently referring to the peasants celebrating Midsummer outdoors. When Jean and Julie later went out for their second dance together the

15. Junnikkala 2001.

16. Sundqvist 1984.

17. Kajanto 1984.

18. Ståhlhammar 1984.

group appeared again. They were lit from the back with greenish and yellow lights which revealed the tree-shaped constructions of the screens. There was an illusion of a nocturnal, mysterious garden. There were also spotlights under the floor, and the light came through the chinks between the planks.

The dancers, who seemed to represent the uncontrollable erotic forces of the Midsummer night, mostly performed behind the screens. Only during Jean and Julie's hidden intercourse did they come to the front of the stage in a wild erotic dance. It was as if the rejected passions were penetrating through the borderline of control. The expressive lighting that came through the floor indicated the existence of the forbidden, demonic instincts 'below' us.

> Refer to the photo in Appendix 6.

The stage's atmosphere changed totally after Jean and Julie's love affair was consummated. A cold, blue light dominated which was suggestive of ice-mountains or – to my mind – ancient caves. The moment when Jean killed the little bird, was underlined by a quick, red lighting effect. When the Count called Jean, mysterious figures emerged from behind the screens. They were dancers wearing black 19th century male costumes and white masks on their faces. They were like messengers from the Underworld. I also felt there was a reference to Julie's noble ancestors haunting her life. Although the Count never entered the kitchen, he was represented through these figures who essentially ruled over the house.

I interpreted the changing appearance of the screens, due to different lighting, as paralleling shifting emotions and moods. Much like the human mind keeps changing and adapting to different roles, the screens reflected and reacted to the circumstances of the surrounding world. The screens in *Miss Julie* were actually not thought of as artistic objects themselves but as material to be used for creating different visions by means of lighting. The set was not conceived of as a physical environment but as a reflective structure making the different illuminations possible.

It could be said that the concrete stage elements were a kind of 'dead' material to be brought to life by means of light. It was also the lighting which ultimately governed the way of seeing the scenery. It made things visible and

invisible; it focused the attention, framed the vision and gave it the final coloring and atmosphere.

The scenography and lighting were an inseparable continuum, both preconditioning each other. The same is also true for everyday phenomena. To put it simply, light makes us able to see. Objects are visible only when illuminated. On the other hand, light itself cannot be perceived without the surfaces reflecting it, and we cannot stare directly into a source of light without being dazzled. Understanding this interaction has been one of the most important issues in the development of modern scenography.

The reflections of light can be regulated by the degree of the surface's transparency. By using transparent scenic materials we can construct a stage where the vision is created by means of its most primary element, the interaction of light and surface. That makes vision a very dynamic and changeable process. Moreover, it is not a projection of a permanent space but an image existing only in the transient perception of the disappearing light-rays. It is possible to make a metaphorical comparison with Strindberg's idea of the human having no nucleus of its own, he argued that it comes into being through interaction with other people and influences from the outside world.

9.3 SCENOGRAPHY AND STRINDBERGIAN PAINTING

Junnikkala worked on the screens for *Miss Julie* little by little, trying to carry out his personal vision of the play. When doing the work himself he could react to the development of the performance in rehearsals.

KJ: We worked on it for quite a long time. We sanded it down and put paint on it in turns.

LG: Did you participate in the work yourself?

KJ: Yes, I did. That kind of job is hard to delegate to anyone. That's why, little by little, I carefully and continuously worked on it while the lights were being done.¹⁹

Although technically more complicated, this process came close to that of a painter, creating visions corresponding to his/her inner images. Junnikkala did not remember having any special impulses or stimulation from visual

19. Junnikkala 2001.

arts but to me his scenography is similar to expressionistic painting. Olli Tola noted that they were influenced by the works of Edward Munch. Interestingly the *Miss Julie* scenography also reminds me of Strindberg's paintings, one of his lesser known activities.

Strindberg was interested exclusively in landscapes, mostly sea views which he painted with such intensity that they almost turned into an abstract mixture of colors and brush strokes. He often repeated the same composition where the structures of clouds, waves and rocks lived their own life appearing as obscure figures. For example, his self portrait can be discerned as part of one landscape, when turning the picture upside down.

Art historians and critiques have put Strindberg's painting in diverse categories during different times. At first in the 1890s he was defined as an impressionist but later moved to the camp of expressionists. In the 1960s Strindberg was seen as the predecessor of the spontaneous painting of abstract expressionism. Today his visual art works have been connected to his interest in occultism and quasi-scientific romantic experiments.²⁰

› Look at Strindberg's painting in Appendix 6.

Painting and writing served distinct functions for Strindberg. Harry G. Carlson suggests, that painting offered Strindberg the possibility to let his emotions and imagination a free, immediate flow, whereas writing was the tool for a more exact, analytical description. When Strindberg was 'loosing himself' in his paintings through the shadowy zones of irrational and intuitive thinking, he also found a deeper level of his own mind.²¹ The ambiguity of the hazy visual forms led him into the realms of his unconsciousness.

Time and time again "simmig" [= hazy] was the kind of word he chose to represent his response to the shadowy zone of expression where the imagination was allowed free flight.²²

According to Carlson there was a new development in Strindberg's thinking at the beginning of 1890s, only a couple of years after writing *Miss Julie* in 1888. Before that time Strindberg had thought of imagination as a passive and mechanical part of the mind, only receiving and transmitting perceptions. Now he understood the creative potential of the imagination, having a

20. Hedström 2001, 9–10.

21. Carlson 1991, 258.

22. Carlson 1991, 256.

new, collaborative relationship to the artist. An artist was no longer supposed to observe and objectively describe the existing world, but s/he was now capable of creating worlds of his/her own, in a way parallel to nature itself.²³

Carlson writes:

*Strindberg was learning to read the Book of Nature in a new way. Instead of just examining natural surroundings as a background for action, he was attempting to understand the essence of Nature's creativity, and the results provide examples of how he anticipated future trends in art.*²⁴

The insight that images are not merely projections of the outside world but may emerge out of the mental apparatus of the artist, is connected to the emergency of subjective vision. According to Jonathan Crary, this happened in the artistic and scientific fields before the middle of the 19th century.²⁵ The point is that perception is not an empiricist documentation of reality but an act constructed by the embodied being and position of the perceiver. This idea can be implicitly found in the theatrical space of *Miss Julie* as worked out by Strindberg in the play text and preface.²⁶

I think that it was unavoidable that Strindberg's naturalist tendencies concluded that vision was subjective. When trying to show the world as understandable and explicable he must have run into the critiques of empiricist perception. As Bert O. States has proposed the difference between naturalism and expressionism is actually a continuum where the most intensive observation of outward reality shifts focus to the process of perception.²⁷ The logic of expressionism can be understood as naturalism turned inside out. The inside mind becomes the stage where the outside world appears, whereas in realism that which is experienced internally is introduced through external appearances.

It is the internal imagery that becomes meaningful in the subjective vision characteristic of both the scenography in *Willenssauna* and Strindberg's thinking. The outside world only serves as a kind of screen where you can reflect on the personal and creative experiences of your life. A similar kind of logic was visible in the use of the transparent walls in Junnikkala's scenography for *Miss Julie*.

23. Carlson 1991, 259.

24. Carlson 1991, 263.

25. Crary 1990, 70.

26. Rokem 1997, 32–33.

27. States 1985, 83–88.

Strindberg also wrote a lot about 'seeing' different figures in occasional objects, like pillows, walnuts or crumpled handkerchiefs.²⁸ These, so called, 'chance images' are linked to a question about our capability of seeing something that does not actually exist. From a metaphysical point of view (a school of thought Strindberg was familiar with); messages from another level of existence were present. For a psychologist these 'chance images' are much like a Rorschach test, reflecting the unconscious mind of the interpreter himself/herself.

According to Magnus Florin 'a chance image' has the arbitrary quality of a linguistic sign because the iconic significations seem to alter:

But as soon as light is shed upon something dark, something else obscure is discovered, waiting just around the corner. Thus, the source of fascination is not the manic search for truth, but the never ending movement on to the next strange sign, and then the next, and so on.

For me, this movement has more to do with language than with occultism and the like. It touches upon the uncertain relationship between sign and sense, or meaning, and the effect of this uncertainty. Articulating an interpretation holds out the promise of meaning that is always both failed and renewed, as its fulfillment is continually deferred.²⁹

Likewise the scenography in *Willensauna* could not be interpreted according to any exact sign system. It could, of course, be associated with different things that explained the meanings of the set and objects. The screens resembling ice were signs of physical coldness which could be enhanced by the realm of the psyche as a metaphor for frozen emotions and mental solitude. Regardless, this decoding of the scenic significations seems to undermine the actual visual experience of the scenography. If it were just a matter of understanding the meanings of certain signs, why would we need an elaborate visual image at all? The scenography carried meanings that relied on being sensed.

A similar attitude can be found in modern painting, the contents of which can be grasped through 'pure perception'. There is a case for the existence of an independent language for visual perception of forms, colors, structures,

28. Strindberg 1894;
Florin 1991.

29. Florin 1991, 273.

compositions and volumes. Communication transmitted through this language cannot be translated into other sign systems, like spoken or written words. The capability of using visual language has often been seen as a matter for individual sensitivity, although there have been efforts to figure out visual grammaticism, for example, in the theories of Kandinsky.

A nostalgia can be seen to exist for the vision of a child who sees the world for the first time, when things do not yet have names. This kind of aspiration can be traced to the thinking of many modern artists and theoreticians; for example in Julia Kristeva's concept of semiotic which means the prelingual, undifferentiated experience that was lost along side the learning of language.

However, we know that it is very hard or even impossible to perceive an object without giving it any significations or representational dimensions. Perhaps there still is a moment when we are looking for the meaning and waver between several possible interpretations. If that process is activated by a visual image – or by any form of artistic communication – we are brought into a state of uncertainty which reminds us of the boundary between undifferentiated experience and defined significances.

As a result the work of art leaves many issues unexplained and many gaps unfilled, bringing our brains back to unknown regions. I think that the visual dimension in modern scenography is often somehow connected to these kinds of efforts which aim at giving shape to the invisible mysteries of the human mind by means of strong images that escape the definite nature of spoken language. Here immediate vision can serve as a means of communication based on some very profound or even constitutive experiences.

9.4 SCENOGRAPHY VS. ACTING

According to Junnikkala they had problems with the actors whose work became too separate from the audio-visual framework of the performance. When I looked at the performance on video I had the feeling I was watching an early rehearsal where the actors had not yet found a proper way of occupying the space. In some reviews the actress Marjukka Halttunen, who played Julie, was accused of interpreting the heroine as weak, scared, helpless, fra-

gile, bloodless and subordinated to Jean. That was quite the opposite to Tola's analysis of the role:

*Our interpretation emphasized the strength of Miss Julie, for example, she dares to play this game. It was not a side-step made by a fragile noble girl, but an act of a woman who isn't yet aware of all her mental resources.*³⁰

It is possible that the contradictory readings of Julie's role were due to the obvious disparity between the acting and scenography in *Miss Julie*. It was also visible in the problems surrounding the costume design which was also made by Junnikkala. The costumes can be seen as intermediating sign system between the set and actors. They are part of the visual entity of the stage but also an integral element of the actors work. The clothes continue and support the gestures of actors who then can influence and comment the holistic stage vision.

According to Junnikkala they had difficulties with the dresses, and the result did not satisfy him:

LG: You also made the costumes?

KJ: Yes, I did, but they were a failure... We then gathered some clothes from the store, and made something out of them; and some new ones were sewn. I don't remember exactly, but it was a complicated process.

*[About the blue dress of Julie] I have no idea, how we ended up with this. There must have been some kind of compromise between the original thought and the wishes of Marjukka... Even from the choice of the tissues everything went wrong!*³¹

The actors' final looks were almost contemporary, as if the characters were released from all historicity. The costumes referred to a kind of universal past because the actresses were wearing long skirts but these were not connected to any definite historical period. Their outfit could actually have been worn on the street in 1984 without attracting too much attention. The hairstyles especially looked like styles that the actresses sported in their private lives. Personally, I had difficulty in seeing any particular significance in the cloth-

30. Tola 2004.

31. Junnikkala 2001.

ing. It seemed as if the artistic team could not decide which style they should choose. They apparently ended with a compromise, where all strong statements were given up.

The meaninglessness of the costumes had an influence on the scenographic entity, since the characters did not work well visually with their environment. The connection between the actors' bodies and the set was broken. This was particularly true of Julie's blue dress in which she looked like a school-girl. She appeared too everyday to become part of the expressionist environment. It did not offer up any clues for a realistically oriented psychological interpretation either. Her white lace dress visually matched with the icy scenography but represented Julie as an innocent virgin stressing the problematic fragility in her character.

To me, the imbalance between scenography and acting was apparent also in the documentary material of *Miss Julie*. When I looked at the photos showing the completed scenery, they were like great paintings. The actors could be seen as secondary parts of the pictures, like small figures in a landscape that completed the image but were not expected to have leading roles. It was in the video that the problems first became apparent to me because I received it as a theater performance where you mainly follow the actors.

To put it simply, the power of the acting was not equal to the standard of the scenography but was rather 'swallowed up' by it. Thus, the performance was off balance, and the actress playing Julie might be received as weak and anemic compared to the visual background although that was not intended. Junnikkala discussed these problems:

It is quite true, you can almost do a play like Miss Julie with merely the actors, and it does not need any extra accompaniments. It would probably be better if it was only made by the actors work. On the other hand, if the acting is strong enough, the visuality does not disturb it either.³²

However, I think it was not only the volume of expression but also its quality. The style of the scenography at *Willensauna* could be classified as expressionist, whereas the actors stuck to a realistic style. It seemed that in *Willen-*

32. Junnikkala 2001.

sauna they both functioned on their own terms, and as a result no dialogue or continuum evolved between them.

Somehow the spectator had to ‘switch the communicative channel’ when looking at the actors or at the set respectively, and try to read the embedded meanings. This could be experienced as disturbing. When you chose to focus either on the realistic acting or on the expressionistic scenography, the other one appeared formalistic or insignificant because it could not be received in its proper terms. The director Tola discussed the problem:

The most traumatic thing there for me was that we failed in spite of having all the elements we needed. Our team was extremely motivated and excited about this work, there was no distrust, and all the actors fitted their roles and were professionally qualified...

The ‘chemistry’ just didn’t work, as I used to say...

When we had come halfway in the rehearsing period I realized that this performance was never going to be what I wished – the actors felt they succeeded, the performance sold very well, the reviews were not very special... However, it lost its significance for me...

The actors’ interpretation did not respond to the interpretation by the scenographer and me. That’s why the meanings in the scenography were limited to the outer appearance of the plastic walls.

To my mind this play is based on sexual teasing and measuring each other’s strength... Julie challenges a sensual man with strong sexual needs, a man who is sexually very active and dangerous. Julie is playing with fire, and she goes too far because she thinks that she is safe and doesn’t expect his response. I wished that there could have been more painfulness and real passion on stage, but the actors performed it very analytically and intellectually, like a classic chamber play, and the scenography was not devised for that.

The actors did not bring the scenography alive. Afterwards, we considered whether we should have used other kinds of materials and structures, whether our starting point was too constructed, when

we believed that we could create contents by means of the distorted walls...

*But most of the acting was rehearsed without scenography; the walls did not change anything, the damage was already done before the scenography was set up on stage.*³³

The realistic and expressionist theatrical genres assign different roles and functions to scenography in relation to acting. The aim of expressionist scenography is to evoke a direct emotional response from the spectator. This is different from the conventions of realistic theater where the scenography should offer tools for psychological analysis but the representation of the emotional experiences is the actors' job.

The emotional response of the spectator in realistic theater develops gradually through his/her empathetic involvement with the actors' performance. It is a slow and reflective process compared to the perception of expressionist scenery which immediately calls forth the personal feelings of the spectator.

Instead of following the plot, which at the end produces cathartic emotions, from the very beginning the spectator of an expressionist performance is enclosed within an emotionally charged atmosphere. It could be said that the linear sequence of events in time becomes a ubiquitous spatial experience. It is no wonder that actors and audiences used to realism feel confused when they find themselves inside the private mind of the protagonist. That which the realistic actors have revealed step by step, is suddenly exhibited all at once on the walls of the scenery.

According to Freddie Rokem, in realism the protagonist's private experiences are communicated to the audience through a process where the spectator identifies with the hero's struggle.

*The theatrical event consists of a process of discovery by the fictional character of his true identity, anagnorisis, which the spectator, discovering something about his own identity, experiences as a catharsis*³⁴.

The spectator, however, has to withdraw from his/her cathartic identification, and the protagonist is turned into a scapegoat committing a ritual sui-

33. Tola 2004.

34. Rokem 1986, 72.

cide.³⁵ We do not only have to identify with the protagonists, but we have to free ourselves from them, and see their fates as reflections of our own psyche. Only through that process can theater contribute to self-understanding, construction of identity and even serve as a kind of therapy.

The artistic goal of a theatrical performance – realistic or expressionistic – is the generation of a cathartic process in the spectator but the tools for it vary. The tradition of expressionism differs from realism by making the inside mind of the protagonist directly visible while a realistic stage shows his/her external living conditions. However, in both cases the main content of the performance is the revealing of the intimate psychological structure of the hero.

Within the conventions of realism the spectator is also supposedly allowed the freedom of choosing his/her attitude to watching, since the performance appears as a piece cut out of ‘real life’. In naturalism the author ‘disappears’ as an anonymous, invisible mediator transmitting a view of outer reality to the audience.³⁶ The illusion of reality is based on this presumed objectivity hiding its constructivity.³⁷

Seemingly in contrast to that tradition, expressionist theater openly defines the mood in which the spectator should see the play-events. Often an extreme statement is made about the world which gives a specific tone to everything that happens. It is like seeing the performance through colored and distorting sunglasses.

However, in spite of this apparent refusal of realism, expressionism in some sense develops illusionist rhetoric to its peak. There is no claim for a verisimilitude with the ‘real’ world but for equivalence to the most intimate realm of private vision. The identification with the protagonist takes place by seeing the world through his/her eyes. The spectator should not observe his/her behavior in order to recognize, understand or reject it, but spontaneously share his/her way of living through the events. Somehow the spectator is put inside the protagonist’s psyche.

The internal psychological processes of the hero are not an object of analysis but they are the primary conditions of seeing the play. It can even be said that the drama takes place in a world constructed by these conditions. The

35. Rokem 1986, 81.

36. States 1985, 87.

37. Worthen 1992, 20.

internal mind of the protagonist – as understood by the theater practitioners – is the actual environment of the performance. The subjective mood, in which the world appears to Julie, is shown as if it were the only existing reality within the limits of the performance. In order to withdraw from the cathartic identification the spectator has to be distanced from the whole performance which decreases his/her involvement in the play's events. The scenography simultaneously entangled the audience into the surrealist atmosphere and alienated them to a position outside the scenic illusion.

In some sense the internal and external states of the protagonists had been reversed in *Willensauna* when compared to the traditional representations of a naturalistic drama. What usually is concealed beneath the realistic surface of the play-events was exhibited in the scenery. Moreover, the internal state becomes the environment of the tragedy. It does not necessarily mean that everything is just imagined but that understanding an environment depends on the perceiving subject. It is only through this representation that it becomes meaningful for the subject. In this sense the world exists for us only in our perceptions of it, and is created by our mood of seeing. That, in fact, is a very phenomenological attitude.

The scenography was a major tool of communicating the contents of the drama because it constructed an experience that defined the way in which the play-world should exist for the spectator. Here, Julie once again became a victim of her environment but this time the surroundings were the product of her own psyche as it was understood by the theater-makers. Her prison existed in her own mind, through which the outer world appeared as a prison made of ice. The scenography did not so much incarnate a projection of her feelings but her way of perceiving constructed a tragic world with no exit. There could be no other world for Julie because she could not step out of her mind.

The subjective vision of Julie was not limited to her inside experiences, but other people – Jean, Kristin and the audience – had to share it too. The condition of Julie's psyche became the structure of the social world around her.

In the end scene of the original play text Julie has hallucinations where the kitchen appears only as a cloud of smoke:

*Julie [Ecstatically] I am asleep already – there is nothing in the whole room but a lot of smoke – and you look like a stove – that looks like a black man in a high hat – and your eyes glow like coals when the fire is going out – and your face is a lump of white ashes.*³⁸

The play text showed this as a private inside experience, only experienced by Julie. In *Willensauna* a shadowy atmosphere that could not rationally be comprehended by anybody surrounded all the characters, whereas Strindberg showed the realistic kitchen and let the subjective vision be only felt and expressed by the actress. However, the staging at *Willensauna* made the inside hallucinations totally visible and left the objective reality unseen.

The view seen through the eyes of Julie was not limited to her hallucinating mind, but rather grew into an irrational power that ruled over her environment. Thinking psychologically, her traumas did not only distort her private experiences but they had an influence on everybody living in the same world. It is not only the social situation that constructed Julie's psyche but her psyche has modified the social situations. Jean and Kristin, who lived in the same sphere, were also imprisoned in the iceberg produced by her mind.

In this sense the incompatibility of acting and scenography could be seen as interesting, but this was not the intention of the artists, nor understood in this way by any of the reviewers. The protagonists were like normal people inhabiting a haunted house without paying any attention to their queer environment, as if they had grown to accept it as something natural. For them the distortions of Julie's home – whatever their cause was – had become the only possible way of living.

The incomprehensibility of parts of the performance could be seen as a metaphor for the impossibility of completely understanding another person's experience. Although the subjective world was shown from the inside through the eyes of the protagonist, the spectator saw it from the outside. S/he shared the 'hallucinative' visions of Julie, but s/he could also see them as representations of the internal mood of another person. Thereby the reception was wavering between individual and shared, private and public visions.

The spatial boundary between the stage and auditorium was blurred in the scenography by a zigzag-patterned cutting off the front edge of the floor and

38. Strindberg 1992 (1888), 35.

table. Junnikkala explained the relation between the performance space and the space of the audience:

We tried to make it appear as if it was broken, so there was no clear boundary between the stage and auditorium. We presumed that through this solution it [the stage space] somehow continues for ever.³⁹

› Look at the photos in Appendix 6.

The borderline between the audience and the play world was represented as an arbitrary and almost violently drawn line. The zigzag-framing of the scenery reminds of the techniques of photography or film. The vision is like a piece cut out reality but simultaneously the spectator is made aware of this act of cutting and taking the image out of its context.

Although the broken boundary implied the continuity of the stage world, it also pointed to its own existence as the inevitable boundary between fiction and non-fiction, inside and outside. The impossibility of ever completely joining the mental world of other people was also concretized. The spectator was placed simultaneously inside and outside Julie's mind.

39. Junnikkala 2001.

10

Miss Julie at Q-teatteri 1999

Back to Strindberg?

The most recent performance of *Miss Julie* included in my study was performed at the *Q-teatteri* in Helsinki 1999, and had a revival premiere in 2001. The production's scenographer was Katariina Kirjavainen who only recently has become one of the most successful young theater professionals. Trained as a sculptor she ended up creating scenographies for the Students Theater in Helsinki, in the early 1990s. She first started her scenography studies at the University of Art and Design in 1997 and graduated in 2002. To date she has worked in many theaters, including both independent groups and the biggest institutions in Finland, such as the National Theatre and the City Theatre of Helsinki.

Miss Julie was the first collaboration between Kirjavainen and director Katariina Lahti. Lahti belongs to an older generation and her work is known for its creative use of visuality. Kirjavainen described their joint venture as economical in the sense that they only had a few meetings. Regardless, a very good mutual understanding evolved between them, and “things just happened and opened up for everybody simultaneously”¹.

When I saw the performance of *Miss Julie* at *Q-teatteri*, I was struck by its apparent traditional nature and loyalty to the original text of Strindberg. At first glance the scenography made by Kirjavainen seemed quite realistic. It closely resembled the Count's kitchen described in the playwright's instructions. However, closer examination revealed that the set was burdened with details contradicting each other and the play text which was not remarkably different from the original lines of Strindberg.

The scenography in *Q-teatteri* has a special position in my work because it is the only performance of *Miss Julie* that I have personally seen live while

1. Kirjavainen 2000.

working on my study. As a result I know this scenography better than the other ones because of my firsthand experience. On the other hand, my thinking has been determined and restricted by my subjective reception. I also feel my thorough enjoyment of the performance in *Q-teatteri* poses a problem.

Firstly, I am afraid of doing the other scenographies, from which I have had more distance, an injustice. I have not been able to live through the artistic experience offered by the performances; “*Strindberg 70?*”, *ÅST, KOM-teatteri* or *Willensauna*. All my knowledge about these productions has depended on other people: the theater-makers, the reviewers and those who have held the cameras when documenting the performance. What I definitely lacked for these productions was the opportunity to perceive the mysterious theatrical energies, which can be sensed only in the live, temporal and embodied interaction between actors and audiences. I could only experience them in *Q-teatteri*, and that is why my personal reception is emphasized in this chapter more than in the other ones.

Secondly, the artistic ‘goodness’ of the scenography of *Q-teatteri*’s *Miss Julie* is a very relative thing, reliant on my personal opinions and the conditions of my reception. I belong to the same generation as the scenographer Kirjavainen, and I share many of her artistic attitudes and values. If I experience her work as impressive, it only proves a consensus of our conceptions about scenography. And the reason for that consensus is probably the contemporary cultural environment to which we both belong. Thereby, I have become part of the subject of my study more clearly here than in the context of the other scenographies.

I have not tried to deny the partiality of my viewpoint. I rather try to discuss the scenography of *Miss Julie* at *Q-teatteri* as a place for an interaction between the scenographer and myself as a spectator. What has helped me is the clarity through which Kirjavainen has expressed her thinking. Aside from an interview with her, I have also had her writings about *Miss Julie* at my disposal which she turned into diploma work at the Department of Scenography. In this she emphasized the subjectivity of an artist as the starting point for her work.

Kirjavainen acknowledged that doing *Miss Julie* was of great personal importance to her. She wrote in the plan for the written part of her diploma work:

When I think about the importance of Miss Julie for me as a significant performance and work process, another theme aside from the meaning of the place arises: why was I completely enthused over this play, and why did I see something real, valuable and significant in the interpretation of our team and in the direction of Katariina Lahti? I was totally in love with this performance. Now when time has smoothed the wrinkles of this love, the making of it and the result come to my mind as a perfect experience of making art. It was so personal and it became so universal.²

She finished the paper with the following lines:

So, in Julie I could meet my own blackness, when working on it I was inadequate, unfit to survive and self-destructive. I gave myself to Miss Julie and I was also her, complete for a while.³

The last sentence tells how the working on a theatrical performance had served as an almost therapeutic experience for Kirjavainen. The identification with the protagonist's traumas had helped her meet her own dark side, and that process had created a temporal experience of mental wholeness. She also believed that the spectators could recognize and share this experience precisely because of its intimate, internally exposed character. It was simultaneously personal and universal. I think that it showed the fundamental problematic about the possibility of sharing mental structures and significations – a problematic that is present in every work of art. How can the subjective experience of an artist be made into the subjective experience of the spectator?

Miss Julie was put on at *Q-teatteri* fifteen years after the production in Wilensauna, the previous subject of my study. There had been many changes in Finnish culture and society during that time. Work in the theater world had become economically more uncertain, and its status has decreased. The demand for efficient, cost effective theater productions has left less room for figuring out scenographies that would differ from the mainstream performances.

Independent theatre groups like *Q-teatteri* have always struggled with financial difficulties. The practical necessities and restrictions dictated the scenographic planning of *Miss Julie* from the very beginning but the artistic

2. Kirjavainen 2002.

3. Ibid.

quality was not sacrificed, thanks to the workers' flexibility and to the unusual personal involvement and devotion of Kirjavainen. Aside from the artistic design she did lot of technical and administrative work, for example, she sought out the workers who constructed the set and spent a significant amount of time working with them she also gave up a quarter of her salary in order to hire a stage manager.

› Look at the description of the working process in Appendix 7.

Another cultural change during late 1980s and 1990s has been that the growth of new technology and mass media has generated a new visual culture which has influenced the ways in which we receive and interpret images. This must have had an impact on the development of Finnish scenography, and it is probably visible in the production of *Miss Julie* at *Q-teatteri*.

Although I do not want to compare it artistically to the earlier performances, I think that the scenographic thinking here is different. It is not so much about a change of scenic style but rather a change of the presumptions about the conditions of receiving the play. Still the scenography in *Q-teatteri* does not seem to be an antithesis to the earlier thinking but rather is a continuum. Here, the modern scenographic ideas have developed into a new kind of form corresponding to the more general changes in contemporary thinking.

What I would like to suggest is that in this production naturalism becomes interesting in a new way that could be called postmodern because it focuses on the visible 'raw' appearance of the world as a boundary between inside and outside. The significance of empirical experience is highlighted; however, it is not seen as an entry point to the essence of things.

10.1 AN IMPOSSIBLE SPACE

The set consisted of genuine objects mostly collected from flea markets but they did not make out any logical entity. All the props and furniture were from different times, and some of them were from the present day. While they were talking about the Count's world, Jean was reading today's newspaper and taking butter from a box similar to the one that I had in my refrigerator.

The set appeared as a naturalist representation of an authentic milieu but this milieu could not exist in the past or present world as we know it. It is exactly this inconsistency which made the scenography so interesting to me. I think that this has much to do with the thinking of Strindberg – at least in the sense we, living hundred years after him, can understand it.

Kirjavainen analyzed her staging:

According to the Strindbergian instructions I put part of the kitchen behind the constructed walls. So the stage was divided to a back and a front part, which worked in different ways with the direction, lights and sounds. The back-space, which was only partly visible, was the performance's subconscious; a space that created and motivated the action and the solutions made in the front-space. Because the back-space could not be totally seen from the auditorium, the spectator's imagination completed the vision and the mystery of the space was maintained.⁴

› Look at the photos and verbal descriptions in Appendix 7.

Kirjavainen's idea was that every piece of furniture should be different from the others, thus being an individual and having a meaning of its own. The furniture was also placed so that every piece of it seemed somehow lonely. Kirjavainen wrote about her work:

I paid a lot of attention to the placing of little objects in order to create a tension between them. I put them in places where they could not be reached and where the distance to the next object was extremely big. In this way I generated a kitchen, which at first glance was normal, but on closer examination was an impossible kitchen of lonely objects, where Julie faces her end.⁵

The inconsistent nature of the set was very subtle; however, the costumes attracted attention by being up-to-date and fashionable. Kirjavainen told me that her idea was to use them to intentionally provoke and irritate:

[They were intended to] somehow antagonize a reaction, create a fruitful contradiction. I got a lot of feedback about the costumes,

4. Kirjavainen 2002.

5. Ibid.

people commented that that they were too much...that when the characters talk about traveling with horses and carriages, and there is supposed to be this kind of a class society, such modern clothes are not accurate. But I think that this sense of confusion was exactly the reason for the contradiction.

I think that they connected the play's world to our every-day experience, thus making a surreal contrast to the old-fashioned elements. It brought the performance into an interesting liminal level. I had a feeling that the play was happening in some other reality, maybe in the distant future, where things from past and present are combined in a new way, like in science fiction. Or maybe it was the isolated world of the invisible Count continuing his outdated life within the framework of modern times.

The scenography described a world that was simultaneously familiar and strange to me. In that reality there may be some clothes and objects exactly like our own, but others also exist that are radically different, the exact purpose of which we do not know. And what is more important is that the rules and conventions of behavior do not have to be parallel to ours, or even to our ancestors. That made it easier to accept the reasons for Julie's suicide, even if we would not believe in them in our own world.

The scenography functioned, as Kirjavainen observed, "according to the firm logic of a dream"⁶. Much like a dream that seems totally real and rational for as long as you are asleep, the dissonance between different elements in the scenography was taken for granted. It was not just the inconsistency of the things mixed together that provoked an irrational atmosphere. Rather, it was the way the absurd logic of a dream was coupled with common sense to the extent that I was unable to discern which parts were odd. For this reason the otherwise realistic scenery was laden with an almost magical atmosphere. I think that this effect was observed well by Lauri Meri in his review:

The objects were not allowed to have a representative meaning, even when not being used they kept carrying an unsolvable mysteriousness.⁷

Kirjavainen defined their style as *supernaturalism*.⁸ I understand this as that combination of the materialistic every-day level with the inexplicability of inner experiences. The everyday normal perception was intermixed with an

6. Kirjavainen 2000.

7. Meri 1999.

8. Kirjavainen 2000.

irregular one. The emphasis was neither on the outer, nor on the inner level but rather on their counterpoint. The scenography was not meant to be an illusion of a real place but a space offering possibilities for several different and even contradictory readings.

The scenography contained a lot of possible significations that suggested new dimensions to the play but it did not dominate the performance. The visual statements I analyzed were not very striking. The stage could also be simply read as a common place, a cheerless and shabby kitchen if the inconsistencies were ignored. The uncertainty about how to read the scene made it seem that it was up to the spectators to decide what they saw.

That seems to be in accordance with the conventional naturalist rhetoric where the spectator is left with the (liable?) feeling that s/he voluntarily chooses his/her object of interest and develops his/her own opinion about it. Considering the multiplicity of possible motives and explanations of Julie's sad fate suggested by Strindberg in the preface⁹, I asked Kirjavainen, whether she had figured out the reasons for the tragedy. She said the following about the artistic team's starting point:

*If you ask whether we had a moralistic attitude, or whether we tried to solve the dilemma, I think the answer is that we did not. We just let it happen. I think that was really good.*¹⁰

The peculiar nature and loneliness of the scenic objects were a consequence of this. The scenography showed a random collection of individual things that had been picked up and put on stage. There was no totalizing principle through which a unity of the space was created. Nor was there any holistic explanation chosen by the team. In the scenography there were a multitude of dialogues between separate objects, all telling their own stories, but with no coherent structure. It was possible to see a lot of possible significations, but their accuracy was never confirmed. This is also true of how we understand the tragedy. Like Strindberg himself pointed out,

*As a rule, the spectator chooses the explanation his reason can master most easily, or else one that reflects most favorably on his power of reasoning.*¹¹

9. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xi.

10. Kirjavainen 2000.

11. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xi.

The simultaneity of distinct individual readings was concretized on the level of the play text. As morning breaks, and Julie has left the kitchen in order to steal her father's money after desperately agonizing over her fate, Kristin comes on stage with a huge vacuum cleaner which makes a terrible noise. To me, the mess all over the kitchen represented the inner chaos in Julie's mind, but for Kristin it was simply dirt to be cleaned up as soon as possible, without empathy or analysis. On the other hand, the noise made by her vacuuming – interrupted by Jean who disconnected the plug – was her wordless but loud protest to the night's events. Kristin had an opinion, but she was not allowed and even incapable of expressing it in any other way than by aggressively emphasizing her role as a maid.

By “just letting it happen” the team performed the play, on the surface level, very much as it was written by Strindberg. The analysis of the director Katriina Lahti – based on the essay about *Miss Julie* by Per Olov Enquist¹² – was that Julie was searching for her own death and uses two innocent people, Jean and Kristin, as tools for carrying out her suicide. Kirjavainen explained the starting point of the whole production:

*There was a theme which was really clear for the whole team: we tried to raise not the class-issue, but the theme of self-destruction. In that way we also made comments about the preface where Strindberg degrades Jean and Kristin. Our approach – it was based on the reading made by the director, and was a very sharp-sighted reading to my mind – was that Miss Julie has killed herself through these innocent people.*¹³

Per-Olof Enquist writes that Julie's actual crime is not the intercourse with Jean but the ‘staging’ of the tragic events leading to her suicide. She is possessed by an internal will to die which she carries out by taking advantage of Jean and Kristin. Strindberg describes the servants as impersonal stereotypes with less human value than Julie. Enquist notes that here Strindberg shows a directly fascist attitude, defining Jean and Kristin as lower kind of people. It is implied that some exceptional individuals – like Strindberg himself and Julie – are entitled to use common people for their own purposes.¹⁴

Enquist draws a parallel between this attitude and Strindberg's own life. He treated other people ruthlessly, for instance his wife Siri von Essen, or the

12. Enquist 1993, 61–99.

13. Kirjavainen 2000.

14. Enquist 1993, 61–99.

young servant girl he seduced at the time of writing *Miss Julie*. However, Strindberg kept asserting that it was he himself who was the victim. Likewise, Julie escapes her responsibility by constructing her victimization. Her suicide is thus, not only the fulfillment of the destructive drift, but an act of placing the guilt for her fate on other people. If we consider the drama in this way Julie is not only a victim of her own unhappy life but also culpable for forcing Jean and Kristin to assist her in her neurotic games.

Q-teatteri advertised the performance as a new interpretation that showed Julie as responsible for her fate and not as a victim, as portrayed in traditional readings of the play.¹⁵ In fact, no previous production has intentionally asserted the heroine as a victim seduced by Jean. Rather, they have characterized Julie as a strong, independent woman, who legitimately longs for love and sex, and her failure to get these things is responsible for her fall. What was different at *Q-teatteri* was the demonic and aggressive eroticism that seemed to guide Julie's behavior, and evoked no sympathy. One reviewer wrote:

*Henriikka Salo interprets Julie as an extremely disgusting female figure, exactly like one described by Strindberg in his worst degradations of women. Julie is a coquet bloodsucker who catches other people in her own net with an enormous need of power. She spreads poison around her so that it fills the whole space.*¹⁶

The *Q-teatteri* reading of *Miss Julie* also reminds me of Evert Springhorn who has written about the ritualistic level of *Miss Julie* as the only way of performing the play's final scenes without losing the credibility. According to Springhorn, Julie keeps playing a self-destructive game. It is like a ritual, in which she uses Jean as a co-actor, and this time the ritual is carried out to the very end. That ritual aspect is especially present in the final scene of the play where Julie asks Jean to order her to commit suicide, and where she walks to her death as if in a hypnotic trance.¹⁷

In fact, the *Q-teatteri* staging resembled a ritualistic space because of its relatively symmetric floor plan and the big slaughtering bench standing in the middle of it, like a sacrificial altar. The metallic cooking equipments, hanging above the sink, were like instruments for some mysterious ceremony. The props carried a double meaning. They were common spoons and whisks, as well as tools for a magical ritual. The grey coloring and the metallic props

15. *Q-teatteri* 2001.

16. Koski 1999.

17. Springhorn 1972, 55–66.

gave the impression of a cruel antiquated machinery which was put in motion by Julie's will to die.

› Look at the photos of the set in Appendix 7.

10.2 HELL AND HEAVEN ON STAGE

Kirjavainen described the starting points for her design in the following way:

*The director provided me with the wise words: "It is a question about heaven and hell. The world of Julie and the Count is a heaven for Kristin and Jean, worth pursuing. On Midsummer's night, Julie's personal hell starts. The theme of the play is the loss of love to death."*¹⁸

Kirjavainen told me that, when starting the design, the first idea that came to her mind was to build a literal hell in which there would be nothing but some burnt remains. The director got enthusiastic about it. However, Kirjavainen recalling the process in our discussion, moved away from that idea: "Then...I wondered, how the Count's house could have actually become like that?"¹⁹ The scenography developed independently towards a more realistic space based on real objects instead of conceptual or symbolic visual ideas.

I think that the final, more realistically oriented scenography was more consistent with their reading about Julie's responsibility for her own fate. When Julie staged her own destruction in Kristin's kitchen, she transformed the every-day working-place into the dramatic scene of her tragedy. No hell existed in advance. It was Julie herself who made the kitchen function as a hell. That may be one reason why it initially had to be a normal-looking world which becomes a destructive machine due to her actions. The idea of hell, suggested by the director, was developed further by the concrete scenic solution made by the scenographer.

The kitchen was not a place to which Julie belonged. Rather, it was an occasional environment, having only the potential to serve as the machinery that destroys her life. That potential was activated when Julie entered the kitchen and started her game, from which Jean warned her: "There are inflammable surroundings to be counted with."²⁰ Even if he refers to himself, he talks as

18. Kirjavainen 2001.

19. Kirjavainen 2000.

20. Strindberg 1992 (1888) 10.

if his respectful polite behavior is at risk of being discarded in favor a more improper attitude driven by base desires.

A machine, which is not normally a threat, can become a hell when its limits are tried. Likewise, the props in the set could be seen as everyday kitchen utensils, or they could appear as magical objects containing hidden power. The significations of the kitchen could be read simultaneously as symbolic or ironic which once again created a sense of unstable meanings.

The heavenly aspect was represented by the skylight-window situated partly above the audience. However, its existence was a paradox. How was it possible to see the open air through a window in the ceiling if you are supposed to be in the cellar of the house? The kitchen was simultaneously situated in a basement beneath the street and in the uppermost floor with a view to the sky. Heaven and hell were present in the same space.

Kirjavainen wrote:

The presence of the Count in the text and in “heaven”, a blue-painted cloth behind the skylight-window seemed to me logical and consistent with the spirit of the performance. From above the Count contacts his servants with a bell, in our version by an interphone. The skylight window continued over the auditorium because I wanted the weight of the Count to reach over the spectators.²¹

However, when I first saw the play, I did not realize at all that there was a skylight window because I was sitting in the front of the auditorium just below it. Later, when I was conscious of its existence, I could not help thinking of an invisible eye that was using it to look at the audience. The skylight-window could also be associated with the lens of a huge microscope, under which everybody was observed in ignorance. The investigating, invisible eye of a naturalist observer was actually present in the staging but this all-seeing view was not available to the spectators. While we observed Julie’s life we were simultaneously exposed to observation by something superior.

The invisible Count is one of the central characters, felt through his power that rules the kitchen. By situating him in the heaven space Kirjavainen actually connected him to the divine beings guiding the events on the mun-

21. Kirjavainen 2002.

dane stage. For me, the blueness revealed behind the window was not a representation of the natural sky but rather signified the Count's world which was perceived as a heaven by Jean and Kristin. This heaven was actually an artificial construction – a painted cloth – contradicting the natural structure of the building.

The spiral stairs leading to the skylight were reflected on its windowpane, and were thus multiplied as if they would continue several floors upstairs. The play's characteristic vertical movement was signified by an endless spiral, and this was partly an illusion created by the reflection. Only the stairs leading down to the kitchen were real, not those that offered the possibility to move above and beyond that space. Both the hell and the heaven were ultimately constructions of the human mind and behavior, however, on stage there was no access to the heaven, only to the hell.

Aside from hell and heaven there was also a combination of a cellar and an attic on stage. Gaston Bachelard has analyzed the poetic imageries connected to these opposite parts of a house. Based on the psychoanalysis of C.G. Jung, he suggested that a cellar is connected to the underground irrational forces of the unconscious, while an attic is the place for rational understanding.²² The cellar is the place where you store useless, outdated or even dangerous things. We live above the basement of our house; we continuously walk over it, sometimes without knowing it. Bachelard claims that it is not possible to see things rationally in a cellar, whereas it is easy to do this on the attic.

What seemed to be missing from the Count's house at *Q-teatteri* was the level between cellar and attic where the living rooms should be. Was there no place left for normal life, but only a tension between high and low, rationality and irrationality. Or was the skylight window a symbol of an attempt to shed light to the darkness of the basement?

I do not think that these questions should be answered. It is precisely the disquiet created by the various and partly contradictory possibilities of interpretation that made the scenography such a living experience for me. The scenic imageries awoke in me a response, which could never be stabilized into precise thoughts. Rather there was a process that called forth new visions from my own imagination and memory. I think this is what Bachelard

22. Bachelard 1964
(1958) 17–19.

meant by his idea of poetic images, although he was talking about literal imageries and scenography pertains more to perceived visions.

10.3 A SPACE OF FEMALE MEMORY

One crucial issue surrounding *Miss Julie* is the incredibility of the play's final solution in the context of the modern world. We hardly recognize ourselves in Strindberg's half-woman who commits suicide because of her lost honor. However, the scenographer Kirjavainen a successful artist and a mother of three children, identified strongly with the idle Countess Julie. She also found the kitchen as a place that united her life to that of Julie's:

For me the scenography and costume-design for this play was a journey into my own self-destructivity. When doing it I was absolutely crazy. Strindberg discussed his own self-destructive drive when writing the play, and hundred years later I'm discussing the themes of my own destruction: the workaholic and the endless masochistic net of being a woman.

Julie and I even have the same place: the kitchen. That is my place, and that was Julie's place to face her fate. That is the place where Julie reveals herself, lowers herself before the 'lower' and struggles in her trap, which she has set herself. That's where I find myself, cleaning the table after evening meal, thinking about her, who made a different choice. When asking for love she got a razor, whereas I got an ever-stressful frenzy, the headlock of career and family. We are both inside me, having a discussion whether there is such a big difference?²³

It is like there are two women looking at each other from the opposite edges of the modern era. Even if the connecting place for them is the kitchen, it has a quite different meaning to them as a woman's place.

The kitchen in *Miss Julie* is actually the working place of Kristin; Julie causes trouble and confusion here because she does not know her place. She is an emancipated woman unable and unwilling to behave in the space connected to the traditional female role. On the other hand, as a member of the upper class these practical duties do not mean anything to her. Descending into the

23. Kirjavainen 2001.

kitchen, Julie wants to join in on the servants' fun but she does not show any understanding of their tiredness after a hard days work. She merely uses the kitchen as a venue for her games, flirting with the gender roles of a woman. All the while her despise for the life of common working-class women, such as Kristin, is evident.

For Kirjavainen the kitchen seems to be the place of her daily survival, representing the treadmill of endless cooking, cleaning and washing dishes. Even if she is an independent modern woman with a career of her own, her relation to the kitchen rather resembles that of Kristin's. In her reading the combination of Julie's tragedy and everyday female reality brings the discussion to a more abstract level. It is not the fate of Julie, but that of an emancipated woman in general, that appears as painful.

It is often said that a modern woman is asked to make the impossible choice between career and family, and most young women want to have both. In some sense the two female characters in *Miss Julie* represent stereotypes of opposite female roles. Kristin is the dumb cook who is only fit to provide the basic material needs of a man and his family; whereas Julie is an intelligent and dangerous seducer, whose ambitions exist somewhere outside the kitchen. The incompatibility of career and family is somehow concretized in the difference between these two female figures who, at *Q-teatteri*, were socially situated at polar opposites.

In many later productions role of Kristin, described by Strindberg as "a female slave", has often been interpreted as an attractive young woman and a noteworthy rival for Julie. This was not the case in *Q-teatteri*. Here, Anna-Maija Valonen brilliantly played the role of a folksy and somewhat vulgar cook, whose existence never extended beyond the kitchen. Henriikka Salo played Julie with a wild, neurotic sexuality, perfectly embodying the "classical" imagery of a hysterical woman. Her performance was supported by the clothing designed by Kirjavainen who defined her interpretation of Julie's collapse as "a top-rate model with an amphetamine hangover".²⁴

The costume design by Kirjavainen connected the old nobility to contemporary jet-set society, showing them like different historical versions of upper class corruption. On the other hand the figure of Julie made visible the

24. Kirjavainen 2001.

repeated cliché of a woman, whose uncontrolled, ‘bad’ sexuality drives her to destruction.

› Look at the closer descriptions and photos in Appendix 7.

When these two female stereotypes, Julie and Kristin, were situated in the kitchen, it clearly appeared to be a women’s place. The temporal discontinuity of the staging made me think of the scenography as a space of female memory, where the temporal and cultural distance between our contemporary world and that of the Count’s house was displayed. The objects and clothes belonging to different decades and contradicting the period indicated by the play text, created a kind of a path that mapped the modern epoch.

Our contemporary world was somehow present in the scenography of *Miss Julie*. I asked Kirjavainen how she imagined the fictive surroundings outside the visible stage. “The contemporary city zone Töölö in Helsinki, where *Q-teatteri* is situated”, was her answer. She also associated the world outside the Count’s kitchen with a ventilator on the back wall of the stage. Through that ventilator you could see light coming from outside and grass growing on the sidewalk which acted as a reminder of normal street life.

In this way the spectator was simultaneously made aware of his/her actual position in 1999 Helsinki and the world of *Miss Julie* in 1888 present on stage. There was an almost Brechtian alienation that made the audience aware of their observation of another period.

The postmodern composition of inconsistent objects can be seen as an accumulation of referents to modern history that constitute our contemporary being. In my opinion, the neglect of temporal unity emphasized the passing of time that separates us from Strindberg.

Instead of showing a reconstruction of a past time, the impression of an old, decayed world sunk beneath contemporary city-life was created. The present moment was showed in this place as an accumulation of temporal layerings, not very different from Strindberg’s idea about the characters as conglomerates.²⁵ The spiral stairs, multiplied by its reflection in the skylight window, even suggested a drill penetrating throughout different layerings.

25. Strindberg 1992 (1888), xii.

› *Look at the photos in Appendix 7.*

The most contemporary elements were common objects related to everybody's daily life, such as butter-packages, beer-cans, newspapers and fashionable clothes. These details brought the characters closer to the spectator; they ate the same kind of butter, drank familiar beer, read the same newspapers and wore similar clothes.

The old kitchen utensils on the set represented the collective memories and shared histories that constitute our contemporary selves. After all, today we live surrounded by remnants of the past. This pertains both to the objects we own and to our thinking. Moreover, we can only look at the past from our present position. Our relation to history is a continuous interaction between past and present, and we can never separate them from each other. In this sense it is only logical to mix the artifacts from different ages together. That is what happens to our thoughts, experiences and knowledge about the past in everyday thinking.

The scenography consisted of props and furniture gathered from flea markets, and all belonging to different decades of the 20th century – and all still functioning. It is clear that the second-hand-appearance of the objects made reference to the production's small budget. However, even this knowledge of the economical emphasized the history connected to the objects. Their particular history was manifested in their signs of wear, thereby letting the audience know that they were really used, second-hand things, not theatrical props made to look old. Even if their particular histories cannot be known in detail, the existence of their past could be felt by anybody with memories connected to similar objects.

For example, there was a refrigerator, a gas cooker, a vacuum cleaner, a dishwasher, a hot water boiler, a sink and several kitchen utensils made of stainless steel. They were all too old to be used in our everyday-lives but new enough to be recognized as something "my granny had". Thus, it was possible to see them as remnants from our recent past, which we can still remember and which still have an effect on our lives.

There were also household appliances connected to the image of a modern woman found in advertisements; for example, those that represent young,

smiling women keeping house with their new vacuum cleaners, dishwashers etc. These machines, seen once as hallmarks of modern advance, are part of the imagery of a woman belonging to the kitchen. Ultimately designed by men, they define the possibilities and limits of a woman's place.

Even if these machines have made the household easier to keep clean and thus enabled women to enter public life, they are also part of the image of 'superwomen', who are capable of working both inside and outside their homes, making careers, being loving mothers, perfect wives and good-looking mistresses, all at the same time. The kitchen machinery also represents a modern belief in the advance of technology. I remarked to Kirjavainen that the kitchen was very effective. She answered:

*Yes, it was an effective kitchen, but it was also a bit pitiful as an effective kitchen. It was of course also due to economics that we had to collect the furniture [rather than make it], as we had such a small budget.*²⁶

The kitchen appliances in the scenery looked rather worn-out and outdated. I think that there was a feeling of nostalgia connected to the old objects, which even added an ironic dimension to the scenery: Here we have the new modern world where Strindberg addresses his theatrical ideas to a more contemporary audience. Here we have the place of the 20th century women. It is a place that has already become dated and hardly anyone still believes that it could make us happier. The slaughtering block, positioned in the middle of the space, also provided a very strong metaphor about the conditions of modern life, especially concerning the women.

I think that through these feminist themes the staging also questioned the aims of last century's emancipatory movement and argues that they can be seen to drive women into a trap. Even the personal relevance of the play for Kirjavainen can be connected to Strindberg's critique of early suffragettes, questioning the end result gender equality pioneered. Strindberg's misogynistic idea about Julie being a half-woman can be reversed into questions about the premise of equality: Does Julie actually despise her own sex, when throwing away her femininity? What is understood by femininity and who has ultimately defined it? Do emancipated women just adapt male values and ideologies without questioning them? Is there any way in which women can speak on their own terms?

26. Kirjavainen 2000.

Kirjavainen remarked that she had chosen many of the objects for the sound they made, for example, a metallic wardrobe or a sink.²⁷ The sounds elicited by the furniture may also be interpreted symbolically. They can be compared to common female speech which mostly has been classified as empty gossiping or hysterical shouting without any important content.

If the feminine has always been determined as 'other' by male culture and language, female experiences find their expression in the margins of public and rational speech. It is like the obligatory sound of a useful machine, for example, the sound of a loud vacuum cleaner terrorizing everybody in the same room. The furniture noises, like women, were something annoying but unavoidable.

Working women talking to each other are seen to be like the clattering and rattling props on the stage, sometimes making disturbing noise but often ignored by the surrounding culture. This association was emphasized on several occasions when Kristin discharged her jealousy and anger by cleaning loudly and clattering when washing the dishes. Unlike Julie and Jean she did not have sophisticated language to express her experiences as an uneducated woman belonging to a pre-emancipated time.

Likewise the dirty worn-out back wall of the scenery (which was the genuine wall of the building) can be seen as an unreadable manifestation of the memory of generations of women, carved in the structure of the place. The authenticity of the wall emphasized the idea of female memory as something collective and anonymous, something that has accumulated throughout the ages. Those who knew about the room's previous life as a market hall could also imagine it as a place for women to meet each other when shopping.

There were no intentional signs or figures to be seen on the wall; rather it was a mess of grayish colors. However, the audience has the opportunity to 'see' different things on the wall, projected by his/her own imagination. The wall may serve as a representation of any meanings, even different and contradictory ones, depending on the individual spectator. Every spectator will reconstruct its meaning on the basis of his/her personal experiences. This makes the scenery a simultaneously subjective and collective experience.

27. Ibid.

Like the meaningless noises these nonfigurative patterns on the wall can also be seen as expressions of undifferentiated feelings, which can not be articulated because of missing words. The inconsistency of the scenic props and objects might also refer to the heterogeneity of different women – we know that female scripts have been both multiple and varying! The scenography withdrew from making definite statements and was instead open to individual interpretation and did not demand consensus.

10.4 MISS JULIE IN POSTMODERN TIMES

There is a temporal distance of 15 years between the staging of *Miss Julie* at *Q-teatteri* 1999 and the previous subject of my study. Compared to the earlier scenographies dating back to 1970s and early 1980s of the *Q-teatteri* production seemed to lack a willingness to offer a new reading of the play but rather rested on ideas found in Strindberg's original text.

One reason might be the change in cooperative traditions. Even if scenographer Kirjavainen and director Lahti agreed on almost all artistic questions, they worked separately. The scenography was not a primary way of expressing the analysis of the play; it was rather an environment where the drama could be acted impressively. It was possible for the scenographer to suggest ideas by visual means – and it was possible for another scenographer to read them in her own way – but these ideas did not determine the conditions of the performance in the way the scenographies did, for example, in *KOM* or *Willensauna*.

Another important feature distinguishing this scenography from the other four discussed earlier in my study is the emphasis on a concrete kitchen space. The other productions sought to create a world that would raise the play to another metaphorical level, so that it was “something more than just a kitchen”. The performance in *Q-teatteri* definitely happened in an authentic looking – though inherently contradictory – kitchen. The important thing here was not to communicate an idea through visual symbols, but to give the overall sense of accumulated living experiences that inhabit an everyday environment.

The kitchen props, marked by particularity and individuality, suggested a world where many possible stories can be told. *Miss Julie* was one of the many tragedies taking place and leaving its trace.

Despite the potential for several readings, the roles of Julie and Kristin appeared as stereotypes, much like Strindberg described them. To me it was not so much about an age-old story that repeats itself over and over again; rather it was comment about this often-told story's role in constructing the identity of women for the past hundred years.

Both Julie and Kristin can be seen as schematic models of female behavior, influencing gendered thinking ever since the publishing of *Miss Julie*. Comparable to the missing logic of the mismatched stage objects, they did not appear to be psychologically complete personalities; rather they were like quotations taken from their historical context.

Similarly, the design by Kirjavainen was like a visual discussion pointing to parallels and differences between our age and the late 19th century. It closely corresponded to postmodern design as it has been characterized by Arnold Aronson:

*One definition of postmodern design is the juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous elements within the unifying structure of the stage frame, the purpose of which is to create a referential network within the mind of the viewer that extends beyond the immediately apparent world of the play.*²⁸

*Through the use of discordance, ugliness and juxtaposition – what postmodernists would call rupture, discontinuity, disjuncture, etc. – the spectator of postmodern design is constantly made aware of the experience of viewing and, at the same time, in the most successful examples, made aware of the whole history, context and the reverberations of an image in the contemporary world.*²⁹

The descriptions of missing coherence and the awareness of contextual meanings outside the theatrical fiction coincide with the *Miss Julie* scenography at *Q-teatteri*. Strindberg's ideas, his play text and characters were put in a dialogue with the contemporary spectators through this kind of 'quoted'

28. Aronson 1991, 5.

29. Aronson 1991, 2.

naturalism. The sense of a multiplicity of readings was created by suggesting references that could not be anticipated because of their subjective nature.

On the surface level the scenography invited the spectator into a conventional realistic space, where the signs are iconic representations of objects similar to them. We expect that to be understandable and explicable to us. In *Q-teatteri* the simple iconic reading did not offer any coherent image of an understandable world. The impossibility of carrying out a conventional realistic reading activated a search for all possible meanings connected to the scenery, even outside the realm of the play world.

There was an authentic world on stage – the genuinity of objects and the building – but it did not refer to an illusionist place. Rather, it was used to present a sample of communicative signs. The scenic objects were loosened from their actual contexts and brought together like quotations from the world we are familiar with. As a result they resembled photographs, which despite their iconicity also make reference to the act of shooting and, thus, cropping the picture so that the subject becomes estranged from its background.

The strong feeling of documentation paradoxically emphasizes the absence of the original object captured in the photo. Similarly the authenticity of the scenic objects stressed their disconnection to the kitchen as a fictive place. The random mismatched nature of the props suggested that they had been collected from flea markets and brought on stage. Thus, the illusion was shattered by the awareness of the authenticity of the props.

In some sense the authenticity was also a kind of postmodern quotation. It referred to concepts such as, ‘naturalism’ or ‘illusion’ rejected by modern scenography. But it also referred to the claim for ‘real’ and ‘truth’ often expressed by modern theater-makers. The vocabulary of modern scenography was somehow present in the set, but it was used in a different way.

The scenography of *Q-teatteri* did not aspire to be a realistic imitation of the existing world, nor did it reject the use of illusion according to the modernist tradition. The antagonism between ‘real’ and ‘illusion’ seemed to be a relative and even indifferent issue, which could be used like any other aspect of a sign. The authentic space and objects were not supposed to reproduce a real world but serve as signs. This process of signification is similar to the

way that words belonging to a language are arbitrary and can be connected to each other in various ways. Similarly, the scenic elements could be used and combined in any way regardless of their original contexts.

The polarity between ‘real’ and ‘illusion’ has been one basis of modern theatrical design but the postmodern concept of theatrical space somehow denies this dichotomy. Aronson writes:

*Historically, stage design has asked the spectator either to suspend disbelief or to accept the stage as an essentially neutral, though perhaps emblematic and special place. Certain modern designs have tried to combine the two demands, but much postmodern design seems to thwart both processes. Found objects are placed onstage, yet the framing device of the stage does not permit the spectator to view the object as object or the stage as stage. Normal perceptual mechanisms are circumvented. The stage is stripped of its vocabulary so that a reading of signs is consistent with an understanding of the concrete world outside the stage becomes difficult, if not impossible.*³⁰

These two opposites are actually dependent on each other. An illusion is illusion only compared to something more real. The same is true the other way round: a modernistic scenography, which uses the reality of stage space, is ‘real’ only, if you can think of it as a more truthful alternative to the illusion. The empty stage is an authentic space only as long as you are aware of the false coulisses that have been stripped from it. If you don’t have an absolute concept of reality, an illusion is not a fakery, but both styles are just different ways of seeing things.

The scenography in *Q-teatteri* could neither be classified as an illusion nor as a real space of the theater, because that distinction was irrelevant. In my eyes, the set did not represent any level of reality, but rather presented an appearance of a world whose ontological constitution we do not know. The only thing we knew for sure was that there was a process we, the audience, went through to try to understand it. Instead of just looking into the world, we were forced to focus on our perceptive and interpretative apparatus.

Thus, the scenography had lost its transparency, and its capability to lead the spectator’s vision into a world beyond the apparent surface of perception.

30. Aronson 1991, 8.

The audiences were not meant to observe the scenography as if it were an objective world. Nor was it meant to be a purely subjective experience showing the view of the inner eye, rather it was a continuous movement between the visible surface of the existing world and the process of seeing and making sense of one's perception.

This idea is connected to the philosophical statement that the things perceived cannot be separated from the act of perception. In other words, we encounter the world only through our perceptive apparatus, and that apparatus comes to exist as a result of our contact with the world. That's why an exclusively subjective or objective attitude never is enough for understanding ourselves and the world around us. And that's why the antagonism between 'real' and 'illusion' does not work. The inner and outer are always mixed together in every perception – because that interaction is the foundation of our perceptive facility.

I think that Kirjavainen meant something similar when she wrote:

Making theater, doing scenographies, is for me an issue of being there in the world. Art may emerge out of it. In Miss Julie I worked intuitively, guided by my feelings. This time something emerged.³¹

I interpret her to mean that art is generated from our contact with the world that we inhabit. It is not a matter of representing the world or our internal individual minds; rather it is about perceiving the interactive process of inhabiting the world. When working on the scenography for *Miss Julie* Kirjavainen did not figure out the play world or her personal experience of it. Instead she focused on relating the objective and subjective to each other. This was a very unpredictable process that obeyed no rules.

Thereby the focus of my discussion is oriented to the reception of the production. The scenography at *Q-teatteri* differed from the earlier productions (this was perhaps less true of its stylistic features) with its assumptions about the mechanics of the interaction between the audience and the visible stage. Instead of making new claims about the play and its theatrical structures there was an ethos of "just letting the drama happen"³², as described by Kirjavainen.

31. Kirjavainen 2002.

32. Kirjavainen 2000.

The modern reversal of old conventions often had a hidden implication, that the audiences are seen as part of the outdated structures because of their conservative preferences and opinions. However, when the conventions have been reversed too many times, it is the reversal that becomes the rule. When the artists are expected to continuously make new and fresh statements the experiments as well as the old conventions appear as postmodern quotations referring to previous representations. A painful feeling, that everything has been said and there's nothing new to say, emerges.

Any scenographic style then becomes a sign for the productions where it has been previously introduced or cultivated. The postmodern lack of a stylistic coherence prevents linking scenery to one single model, however, it creates a network of intertextual references. As Aronson writes, postmodern design "often pastes together a collage of stylistic imitations that function not as style but as semiotic code."³³ The postmodern speech appears as a series of quotations, where you do not commit to a standpoint.

I think that the scenography at *Q-teatteri* was made for postmodern audiences familiar with modern experiments and different styles. The scenography's role was based on the capability of the spectator to think of the stage as a system of signs that have their references anywhere in culture. The naturalist surface was successful because no spectator was expected to 'believe' in its illusion.

However, Kirjavainen was not enthusiastic about the postmodern habit of referring to theater by the means of theater. She stressed the importance of the subjectivity in her artistic work.³⁴

When doing a work of art an artist, the creator, gives his/her own experiences as materials for the work, and in the search creates not only the work, but himself/herself anew.

*Making theater is very much a matter of feelings and of awaking them in the spectator. I believe that the strong identification of the artist with his/her work is transmitted through it... Something so personal that it becomes universal.*³⁵

For Kirjavainen working on the scenic space served almost as a kind of therapeutic process where she explored her personal experiences. However, other

33. Aronson 1991, 5.

34. Kirjavainen 2000.

35. Kirjavainen 2002.

people shared the scenography's reception; and the internal and private, contained within the set, was supposed to become collective and public. Kirjavainen defined her interpretation of the role of theater as a place for community: "A place where people can gather together, make something together or see something together."³⁶

I think that the subjectivity stressed by Kirjavainen should not be understood as a simple opposition to objectivity. It is rather the internal feeling of being-there-in-the world, through which the individual human being can join in on the social and cultural community around him/her. As Merleau-Ponty has said, it is through our internal experience of our own embodied being that we can recognize the humanity of another person inhabiting a body similar to ourselves.³⁷ The shareability of the scenic world can be seen as an indication of the plurality of consciousnesses and the anonymity of cultural objects. The subjective becomes a gateway into the collectivity and anonymity, precisely because it is lived through. Theater is a place where you can subjectively live through things that are not limited to individual experiences, but grow into something collective.

The simultaneity of individuality and collectivity was present in Kirjavainen's scenography. The uncertainty of scenic meaning emphasized the heterogeneity of subjective readings which highlighted the experience of seeing the performance together with other people.

I think that this phenomenological reading of the scenography makes the paradoxical combination of naturalism and contemporary postmodernism possible. The scenic vision is ultimately understood as a construction of our way of coming into contact with the world. The idea of naturalism is turned into the perception of a world with an impenetrable surface. Even if we cannot gain any certain knowledge from it, we can only understand the world and ourselves by reflecting on this surface. The creation and experience of art is one way of reflecting on our perceptive process, and I think that through art we can come closer to our primary contact with the world than by any other means.

36. Kirjavainen 2000.

37. Merleau-Ponty 2002
(1945), 405–409.

11

Creating Perspectives;

Summary and Conclusions

The five scenographies discussed in my study seem to differ from each other in a great variety of ways. The set for “*Strindberg 70?*” consisted of elements chosen during the rehearsal period, and were not part of a strategized scenographic design. The production in the *Turku Swedish Theater (ÅST)* was played against a decorative, red-colored scenery which could not come into its own because of the touring conditions. In *KOM-teatteri* the venue was temporarily turned into a cafeteria, and *Miss Julie* was performed in that space. Visuals had the main role in the *Willensauna* production where the scenery was an ice-looking construction, offering a view into the mind of Julie. The scenography in *Q-teatteri* was a surprising return to the naturalistic premises of Strindberg in postmodern terms.

What, however, combines all the scenographies is that they all depart from the traditional role of being an illustrative background, and make attempts to generate more conceptual thinking by means of spatial and visual experiences. The scenographies thereby function as a kind of non-verbal language. The diversity of the outward appearance of the sceneries is an indication of the multiplicity of the ways in which the spatio-visual speech is supposed to work.

Another central issue they have in common is their ability to question acts of perception and interpretation of space and vision. In everyday life we are used to thinking of vision as a flow of direct information streaming to our eyes. We orient ourselves naturally on the basis of this information and trust in the evidence it provides. However, modern and postmodern visual art – including scenography – has drawn attention to the margins and limits of vision. Vision in art is no longer conceived of as providing direct access to the

world but rather as a process conditioned and constructed by many factors. It is this process that has become the main subject of the work of art.

The focus on the process of perception, to me, raises a phenomenological question. The world exists for us only through our perceptual apparatus, and we have no access beyond it. When an artist makes a representation of the world, s/he actually reconstructs his/her encounters with the world. The work of art, thus, contains the perceptual apparatus as a structure by which the world is seen. The scenographer Anu Maja once noted in a discussion that it is not places we stage but people. This statement succinctly encapsulates my point: we stage ways of inhabiting and experiencing spaces.

Moreover, the work is communicated to the audiences because they are supposed to share the structures. The art, thus, shows a statement about our thinking by making the ways in which we perceive visible. I suggest that through this kind of phenomenology the scenographies of *Miss Julie* emphasize the heterogeneity of experiences and the diversity of individual voices. The multiformity of representational modes is possible precisely because we neither focus on the object of perception nor on the perceiving subject, both of which are understood to be more or less permanent and stable. Instead we concentrate on the interaction between them which is temporal and changing. The world can be seen in many ways and from many angles. We may also examine the ways in which perception is constructed, and question the reliability of visual information given to us.

To put it simply: scenographic variations of vision may very concretely help us to see the world from different perspectives. On an idealistic level it benefits us in being able to understanding other people's viewpoints – or is at least links us to such attempts. A more critical approach might stress the examination and rejection of hegemonic ways of seeing. By making the spectator see the performance in the way wished, a scenographer is an expert of manipulating other people's experiences. This makes the study of the premises of scenography an ideological and political issue.

11.1 WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NATURALISM OF MISS JULIE?

One thing the scenographies had in common was of course the text of *Miss Julie*, written by August Strindberg in 1888. By challenging, opposing or continuing with the naturalistic premises, they all opened and enhanced the Strindbergian negotiation between subjective modes of perception and the objective conditions of the outer world.

To my mind, the most important scenographic innovations of naturalism, that can be played out in *Miss Julie* and enabled by the advance of theater technology, are as follows:

Firstly, the living environment of the protagonist becomes an important part of his/her fate, and this is shown by the scenic surroundings. The stage scenery represents social and historical structures, defining the limits of the characters' lives and the constitution of their behavior. The scenography is one of the primary sources of information and provides tools for explaining the play's events. However, the reliability of these tools of explanation was also questioned in *Miss Julie* by developing naturalist premises to their peak.

Secondly, the actors are brought into dynamic and physical contact with the set. They are shown as corporeal beings living inside material circumstances which correspond to the everyday experience of the audience. A table is represented by a real table, not by an immaterial painted illusion, and it is important for the actor to be able to grasp at the objects. I think that this is a scenic equivalent to the more philosophical idea of the protagonists being determined by material conditions instead of divine forces. The actor now has an active relationship with his/her environment which in a way becomes a co-actor for him/her.

Thirdly the scenic world is introduced to the spectator through a suggestive illusion as if s/he were following the events in the location. The rhetoric of naturalism is based on hiding the constructed nature of the illusion by making the theatrical apparatus 'disappear'. The author of the performance is like an invisible almighty puppet-master. S/he makes things happen in front of the eyes of the audience, so it as though they are witnessing an excerpt cut out of 'real' life.

How were these ideas present in the scenographies of *Miss Julie* roughly one hundred years after the writing of the play?

The director of “*Strindberg 70?*” rejected the possibility of reproducing the original ideas of Strindberg, and claimed that he only could produce his own reading of the problematics of the play. The performance was supposed to show a spontaneous working process, which was actually very carefully directed. The director was like an invisible puppet-master; only this time he was not staging the play but rather staging the way in which it was represented. Instead of peeping to the privacy of the protagonist, he revealed the creative process of the actors and himself.

In contrast to a naturalist approach, here the focus of study was on the theatrical process of making meaning, and there was an illusion that the actors were spontaneously inventing scenic expression. What “*Strindberg 70?*” also had in common with Strindbergian ideas was the close integration of both actors’ gestures and the set. However, the natural way of treating objects became meaningful gestures, which did not correspond to everyday behavior. The stage props did not represent objects in real life but were metaphorical tools for the actors’ expression.

Although the red-colored set of *Miss Julie* in the *Turku Swedish Theater* (ÅST) looked different from a naturalistic kitchen, it actually served some of the functions Strindberg ascribed to scenography. (Here I focus on the artistic intentions regardless of their proposed failure in achieving the desired effect.) First of all it was a suggestive illusion. However, the illusion did not imitate everyday perception but showed another level of reality seen by an ‘inner eye’.

The scenery also served as an explanation for the fate of Julie. It symbolized the destructive separation of the conscious mind and unconsciousness. This, according to the director, characterized our Western culture. In other words: our unsatisfying psychological living conditions create a world from which Julie cannot escape and is driven to death. The source for explaining the tragedy was not found in social and historical circumstances but in deep-psychological structures made visible on stage.

The integration of actors and scenography in *AST* was manifest not only in the naturalistic style of using authentic props but also in the director's way of thinking of the scenes like paintings. The figures of actresses were elements of a holistic vision recalling the expressionistic works of Edward Munch. Julie was imprisoned by an archetypal female imagery, created by a male artist obsessed with his sexual anxiety. This could be read as a visual sign for Julie's incapability to live through her sexuality on her own terms, without being determined by a misogynic male gaze.

The scenography for *Miss Julie* at *KOM-teatteri* seemed to defiantly turn all Strindberg's instructions upside down. Instead of introducing the Count's claustrophobic kitchen with no honorable exit for Julie, the play was acted in a cafeteria which was an open and public place that put no limits on her movements. Instead of peeping into a carefully composed scenery, the spectator was put in a confusing situation where his/her occasional position determined what s/he could see. Instead of letting the spectators empathize with the characters, the performance rather made them aware of their own existence as witnesses of the tragedy. I got the impression that the irrevocability of Julie's fate had diminished and the drama, thus, lost something of its usual thematics. Instead, the scenography discussed the naturalistic rhetoric and traditions more than the play itself.

In fact, the anti-naturalist inclusion of audience and actors in the same space in *KOM* was actually a culmination of Strindberg's idea of the diagonally placed kitchen imaginarily intruding into the auditorium. By blocking the spectators' sightlines to the actors, the performance pointed to the limits of a subjective view. The explanatory power of the spectator's gaze was thus denied. Here the audience was put under the gaze of the investigating eye.

Not only were the actors integrated into the set but the audience was too. Together they made up the scenography which in the first place was identified as a space for theatrical representation. However, there was an illusion in *KOM*: the cafeteria-arrangement was fake and the performance actually staged the act of receiving a play in an unconventional situation.

The scenography for *Miss Julie* in *Willensauna* created the most suggestive visual illusion among my examples. However, it aimed to contradict the conventions of naturalism by presenting a very subjective view, and by not pro-

viding the audience with rational explanations. This caused problems with the actors' realistic style in the final performance. The scenic imagery was separated from the action, and instead functioned as background scenery. Both the director and the scenographer experienced this as a painful failure which proves of the importance of the integrity between diverse signs system in modern theater.

The expressionistic visual orientation into internal experiences, however, reminds us of Strindberg's subjective vision, manifest in his works. The outside world is accessible to us only by means of the internal mind whose experiences can never be completely shared.

The *Miss Julie* scenography in *Q-teatteri* came closest to the instructions given by Strindberg in the play text to which the production remained remarkably faithful. The scenography made a seeming return to naturalism but it simultaneously blocked all possibilities for reading the set as a source of consequential knowledge. The objects looked occasional and unconnected to each other.

I suggest, therefore, that Strindbergian naturalism became interesting in a new way in *Q-teatteri*. The real-looking surface of the world could be seen as a mysterious counterpoint to the internal mind and outside world. There was no possibility for transcendental knowledge exceeding this borderline but only an unsolvable dilemma which could, however, be discussed by theatrical means. The explaining function of the scenography was denied by using a naturalist illusion.

The actors' relationship with their environment in *Q-teatteri* was not only integral but also active. While Strindberg proposed that the fate and character of Julie had been constructed by her unhappy circumstances, in this performance it was Julie who took advantage of her surroundings. The kitchen was an arena for her self-destructive games, rather than a representation of the permanent laws of nature.

11.2 VARIATIONS IN SCENOGRAPHIC THINKING

One important criterion for the selection of the productions studied here was that they could serve as representatives of some typical styles in contem-

porary Finnish scenography. In spite of their differences they can be seen as variations of modern and postmodern scenic design. Their divergence gives cause for discussions about a dynamic understanding of space and vision; and about the possibilities of making meaning through spatial and visual means. These problematics show in the function given to scenography in each production.

The main aspect of interest in “*Strindberg 70?*” was the construction of scenic language by means of actors’ gestures. The production was studying the emergence of scenic signs as something fluctuant and dependant on the collective rehearsal process. I suggest that there was a justification for claiming that, like language, meaningful vision and spatial experience have their foundation in human interaction and not in material objects or in subjectively developed imageries.

The scenography in “*Strindberg 70?*” was not identified with the fictive Count’s kitchen, rather it was a theatrical place for acting. The stage contained occasionally selected everyday objects, which could be integrated into the in actors’ expression. It was like a store of possible theatrical signs whose exact meaning was not yet defined. The stage was changed from a particular historically and geographically defined place to an arena where anything could appear, and was metaphorically comparable to the human mind. Thereby the scenography also stressed the timelessness and repetitive nature of the gendered problems in *Miss Julie*.

The function of scenography in *Miss Julie* at ÅST was to create a visual equivalent to the director’s analysis about the play. Her interpretation of Julie’s tragedy was based on Jungian psychoanalysis, and the stage was supposed to reveal an unconscious level that exists beneath the everyday world. The scenery was laden with visual symbols which according to Jung were shared by all mankind. The scenography thus aimed at inner experiences that are universal and collective; and in this sense could be seen as more ‘truthful’ than the visible surface of the normal everyday world.

This production by ÅST also raised the question about the ‘materialistic foundation’ of scenography. In order to communicate we need a concrete apparatus to create the signs. Here the practical requirements were neglected partly because of ignorance, and partly because of an attitude privileging

immaterial artistic ideas to the physical work of building and setting up the sceneries. This attitude, however, can not be linked to anybody personally but was rather part of a general development emphasizing the division between artistic and technical work.

Placing *Miss Julie* in a cafeteria at *KOM-teatteri* was a very manipulative act that dominated both the direction and reception of the performance. I think that here the whole play was read through the spatial and situational arrangement which was used as a tool for studying the relationship between actors and audience. The scenography made visible the act of exposing the protagonist's internal privacy before an audience – the basis of realistic theater. Thereby, it questioned both the spectator's capability for objective, all-seeing observation, and his/her act of legitimizing peeping into other people's private world. The scenography did not illustrate or explain the story but made statements about theater's existence and studied the position of the spectator.

The scenography also had the leading role in the performance of *Miss Julie* at *Willensauna* where visual perception influenced the reception of everything else. The strong impression made by the scenography – the speculation about its meaning, its identification with feelings of coldness, the violence of the expressively lit dancing scenes – dictated the mood by which the play was to be received and understood. Here the scenography literally made the spectator see, because the scenic imagery had a thoroughly artificial character. It exposed the internal, subjective vision of Julie, as imagined by the scenographer, so that the audience could witness Julie's internal experiences.

Unlike the earlier productions, the *Miss Julie* scenography at *Q-teatteri* did not make strong claims contradicting naturalistic premises; nor was there any consequential analysis about the play to be read in the stage space. Instead the scenography was a surface where you could read possible significations, and the divergence and openness of these readings were essential to the functioning of the scenography. To me the point of this scenography was precisely the awareness of the personal process in relation to the collective, the artists and the audience, seeing and understanding the same things. As the scenographer put it, theater is a matter of doing things together. The union with other people was generated through the experience of sharing the capability to create and receive meaningful visions. That of course goes for

every work of art; *Q-teatteri's* performance stood out because of its awareness of the divergence of experiences.

The function given to scenography in the performances naturally echoes in the role attributed to the scenographer in the working team. What is definitely apparent in all productions is the strong assimilation of scenography and direction. In "*Strindberg 70?*" the scenography was integrated into the direction and acting so completely that a special scenic designer was not needed. On the other hand, in *KOM* and *Willensauna* the scenographer and director were working in such a close cooperation that spatial and visual statements were the starting points of direction. The frustrations of the director and scenographer in *ÅST* also show how important this relationship was for them.

The reasons for the problems in *ÅST* were probably many, but I would like to point out the implication of a production system that separates the design and planning of direction from the concrete practice of constructing the sets. As a scenographer I want to stress the often neglected importance of the employees who have the practical know how and skill of putting scenographies together. As a theater scholar I want to shed some light on the obvious fact that the artistic appearance of a set is the result of a very concrete technical process. The scenographic vision is not a work of art that has popped out of the designer's head; it is constructed by the existing theater technology, the labor policy of the theater, the model of producing the performance, and the working methods adapted by the theater manager and director.

Compared to the earlier productions, the scenography in *Q-teatteri* was designed relative independently from the direction. Still it worked very well with it, and even through it. One reason might be the team's faithfulness to Strindberg. Furthermore the scenographer created an environment where many different readings and responses were possible and the director and actors knew how to benefit from it.

11.3 SEEING THE SPACE

Along with the function of scenography, the conceptions about space and vision have altered in the scenographic thinking manifest in these examples.

In “*Strindberg 70?*” visions were transmitted as holistic acts of perception, not as readymade pictures. The experience of space, traditionally primarily perceived through the eyes, was here internalized into the actors’ gestures. It was thus connected to all factors defining human experience: other senses, memorized images, temporal situations, psychic orientation, etc. The director’s idea, as I understood it, was that scenic imagery emerges only in the moment of perception, and cannot be captured beforehand in pictures planned by the designer.

The stage imageries at *ÅST* were produced by the ‘inner eye’, seeing to the deeper essence beyond the apparent everyday surface. The illusion was like the vision of a seer understanding the deep psychology of Julie. However, the problems there remind us that our capability to see and share visions always depends on cultural conventions, and on the material technology available. Moreover, the local environment and context of the performance have an effect on the ways of experiencing the scenography.

The visually minimalist scenography in *KOM* highlighted the problem of seeing a space. The line of sight was restricted by the position in which the spectator was situated in relation to the space that s/he was supposed to observe. There was hardly any visible set on stage. The scenography could not be reduced to scenic objects or a set; instead it was a conceptual idea for questioning the conventional role of the audience and the presumption of vision as an immediate, unproblematic route of access to the outer world.

In *Willensauna* vision was a vehicle for directly transmitting the internal experiences of Julie, as interpreted by the scenographer. The overwhelming impression made by the scenic vision was intended to awaken an emotional response, more primitive than conceptual or verbal analysis, in the spectator. The tragedy was to be understood by means of this primary experience. The scenography manipulated the spectator to see the world as Julie’s subjective vision but on the other hand the artificiality of the stage was so apparent that it also pointed to the scenographer’s act of creating this subjective vision for the part of Julie. This made a statement about the impossibility of ever completely sharing another person’s experience. The spectator was simultaneously inside and outside of Julie’s mind.

Actually, the scenography primarily determined the central style and rhetoric both in *KOM* and *Willensauna* although the performances were completely different. Both of them emphasized the subjectivity of vision; *KOM* by focusing on the different views caused by the placing of the spectator; and *Willensauna* by creating suggestive illusions of inside experiences.

The stage in *Q-teatteri* was like a surface reflecting the spectator's own thoughts and imagination, and allowing no definite, unambiguous interpretations. I also suggested that the scenography here could be seen as a space containing female memory. There was an awareness of history as an accumulation of personal experiences; a denial of a holistic explanatory structure of the play world; a presumption about audiences who were used to reading the stage as a collection of signs instead of expecting illusions; and there was an emphasis on the heterogeneity of subjective viewpoints.

The scenographer in *Q-teatteri* emphasized the subjectivity of her work as her artistic starting point. She suggested that her own limited experience could become universal precisely because of its subjectivity. Here, I think she refers to the idea that we recognize our own internal personal experiences in other people through our contact and interaction with them, and we recognize that there is a fundamentally similar way of existing in the world.

11.4 ON THE SURFACE OF VISION

It is hazardous to draw very extreme conclusions about the historical development of recent scenography on the basis of the evidence given by the five *Miss Julie* productions although they intuitively correspond to my ideas about typically well done designs of their times. It has, however, proved useful to compare the *Miss Julie* scenographies to the development from modern to postmodern scenic design.

The four earliest stagings, done between 1970 and 1984, can primarily be connected to the multiform movement of modern theater, while the most recent 1999 scenography can be linked to postmodern thinking. As I have mentioned, the boundary between modern and postmodern seems anything but clear and these movements meld with, rather than being exclusive of, each other. I would like to suggest that postmodern attitudes can be dis-

cerned in all these scenographies but they were developed the furthest in *Q-teatteri*.

The hallmark of modern scenography was the rejection of the illustrative function connected to naturalism. The belief was that beyond the superficial appearance of the objective world there is a deeper structure which the artist can make visible to the audiences. Furthermore, a naturalistic representation, committed only to representations of surface reality, was seen to prevent us from seeing a deeper hidden context.

While the naturalist sceneries showed the world as it appears to us, modern stage design stressed ideas graspable through scenic experiences but not comparable to objective reality. This was seen particularly in the productions of *Miss Julie* in *ÅST*, in *Willensauna* and in *KOM*. The difference between them was that the two former productions used mainly visual means, and the latter was based on a spatial and situational arrangement that reduced visibility to a minimum.

Modern scenography has developed from the transparency of naturalist illusions to a conscious use of the scenic apparatus as a sign system. This has directed the focus to the functioning of the representative machinery, and on the interpretational processes. Thereby, scenography has become more closely integrated to theatrical performing, its reception and cultural contexts. The problems with how scenography functions in a performance are symptomatic of the complicity of vision. Though the world can be seen in almost any way, vision does not always generate meaningful experiences.

Studying scenic signs that expressed ideas was the central concern in "*Strindberg 70?*", and nowhere were uninvolved observation and objective knowledge put so much at stake as in *KOM-teatteri's* production. The way in which the visual communication functioned was brought to the fore in both *ÅST* and *Willensauna*.

In *Q-teatteri* the 'raw surface' of authentic objects, typical of naturalism, did not offer any relevant knowledge about the world, but rather pointed to the impossibility of ever exposing the deeper structures of existence. The transparency typical of naturalism and of other scenic styles based on illusion was blocked by naturalist means, by showing the world as it appears to us. I sug-

gest that the naturalist authenticity and particularity of the scenic objects in *Q-teatteri* stressed the constructed nature of the stage; much like a photograph whose iconicity also points to the act of shooting and framing the picture.

Instead of letting us see through the visible appearance into the inherent structure, the spectators gaze was reflected back. The scenographic statement in *Q-teatteri* was that all we have is the interplay between perceiving subjects and objects of perceptions, and that there is no access to definite knowledge about anything. The diversity of possible interpretations was also emphasized here. The performance did not invite you to figure out the 'right' reading but rather reminded you of the heterogeneous experience of receiving the play simultaneously with other people.

There is an interesting parallel between the performances in *Q-teatteri* and *KOM*: while the latter denied access to unambiguous knowledge by strongly rejecting naturalist illusion, the former made the same statement by using the naturalist illusion as an impenetrable surface. I think that this difference has to do with the shift from modern to postmodern scenography.

The naturalist illusion has lost its credibility among contemporary, postmodern audiences that are used to massive manipulation of vision. Scenography can no longer hide its rhetoric in a transparency created through an apparent verisimilitude with real life. Audiences are not supposed to 'believe' in an illusion as a window into another reality, no matter how authentic the objects are. The lifelike illusion is rather like a game consciously played with the spectator's perceptual apparatus.

This change is linked to more general habits of seeing and reading visual perceptions. The dichotomy between artificial illusion and natural reality has been blurred. Our belief in pictorial representations baring indisputable evidence about the world has been lost for a long time. Thus, the naturalist mode of representation has lost its privilege as an access route to the world 'as it is'. More important for contemporary scenography, however, is that the power of visual experimentations and provocations has diminished. What is left is a skeptical and disinterested attitude towards all illusions and definitive visual statements.

1. Here, the word believe does not mean that the audience would not be able to distinguish the boundary between illusory stage-fiction and the everyday world. I rather refer to the 'willing suspension of disbelief', the willingness to be involved with the story, to identify with the characters and to enjoy the performance as a meaningful, coherent structure.

Paradoxically, once again, that attitude enables a more creative and unprejudiced use of images as unstable and undetermined signs. When understood as a process oscillating between the perceiver and the object of perception, vision may also gain a new potential to serve as interactive communication.

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MERI. LAURI. "Rakentava kokemus", Teatteri 6/1999.
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(In the collection of Teatterialan keskuskirjasto.)

Appendix 3.

THE PRODUCTION OF “STRINDBERG 70?” AT TAMPERE UNIVERSITY

“*Strindberg 70?*” was a training and experimental production arranged by the Drama Department in the University of Tampere, called *Draamastudio*. It was directed by the Polish actor and director Adam Hanuszkiewicz. He took total responsibility for the performance, including the scenography. Aside from the *Miss Julie* text there were fragments from the plays; *Taming of the Shrew* by Shakespeare, *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Albee, and from the Biblical story about the Fall of Adam, included to the performance.

The rehearsals took place in two periods 1–19 June and 14–20 August. There were six public performances at the Tampere Theatre Festival 20–25 August 1970. It was the Festival's second year, and it was a colorful happening staging a variety of domestic performances and offering an occasion for lively discussions. All the performances of “*Strindberg 70?*” were sold out.

The production was very completely documented in a *Draamastudio* publication, *Vastavallo*.



Photos © Aulis Hämäläinen, Esko Sala and Matti Sellaane

THE CAST AND CREW:

Dramaturgy and direction • Adam Hanuszkiewicz
Set and costume design • Juha Lukala
(the City Theater in Turku)
Assistant of the director • Kari Salosaari (*Draamastudio*)
Technical assistant • Aulis Hämäläinen

MISS JULIE

Miss Julie • Tuija Vuolle (Tampere Theatre)
Jean • Juhani Niemelä (Kouvola Theater;
connected to the Tampere Theatre in 1970)
Kristin • Salme Karppinen (the City Theater in Kotka)

THE TAMING OF A SHREW

Petruchio • Jarkko Nurmi (the City Theater in Rovaniemi)
Katharina • Riitta Elstelä (the City Theater in Kotka)

WHO IS AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

George • Yrjö Parjanne (Kouvola Theater)
Martha • Aune Lind-Lehtinen (Vaasa Theater)
Nick • Jarkko Nurmi (the City Theater in Rovaniemi)

THE FALL

Pirkko Laakso (the City Theater in Oulu)

Although there was a professional scenographer, Juha Lukala, among the participants, his job was restricted to the practical realization of the stage rather than being involved in independent designing. Lukala (born in 1940) can be considered as one of Finland's most prominent scenographers, having devoted much of his professional life to the Turku City Theater, since 1962. Prior to that he had studied at the Art School in Turku from 1959–61, and completed his former education in Prague.



ADAM HANUSZKIEWICZ

(born 1924)

Adam Hanuszkiewicz graduated as an actor from the Theater School in Łódź, and as a director from the Theater School in Warsaw. He worked as an actor in different theaters since 1945, and was employed as a director by the theater of Poznań in 1953. In 1957 he became the leader of the TV-Theater and in 1963 the leader of his own ensemble, Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw. Five years later he was appointed to as director of Teatr Narodowy, the Polish national theater to which Teatr Powszechny was then united. Later he was let go from his post. He continued with his career abroad, but never left Poland completely.

Hanuszkiewicz had a very close relationship with Finland. His ensemble was the first Polish theater to visit Finland at the Helsinki Festival in 1968. However, his Finnish directing debut had been the previous year when Hanuszkiewicz directed *Figaro's Wedding* in the City Theatre of Helsinki. Between the years 1968 and 1990 Hanuszkiewicz directed ten plays in different theaters in Helsinki, Turku and Tampere, for example: *Don Juan* by Molière, *Woyzeck* by Büchner, *Once Again, Sam* by Woody Allen.

DRAAMASTUDIO

Draamastudio was established in 1960 in connection with *Yhteiskunnallinen Korkeakoulu*, which later became Tampere University in 1965. From 1964 onward directors and theater scholars graduated from *Draamastudio*. Besides this academic education, short courses for professional theater-makers were run during the summertime. "*Strindberg 70?*" was one of these projects, which continued until early 1970s.

Kari Salosaari led *Draamastudio* from 1963 to the end of the 1980s, he is best known for his studies about theater semiotics. The *Draamastudio* activity in the 1960s was an exceptional attempt to combine theoretical thinking and theater making. In 1975 a formal training structure for theater practitioners was established. *Draamastudio* became part of the Department for Art Studies at the University, which concentrated mostly on academic research. The theater scholar Pentti Paavolainen notes that maintaining the practical education in *Draamastudio* was defended as being a non-leftist alternative to the Theatre Academy in Helsinki.¹



THE STAGE OF MONTTU

The production took place on the *Draamastudio* venue called *Monttu* (= the Pit) or *Teatterimonttu* (= the Theater Pit). *Monttu* was completed in 1967 as a part of the building work on the University. It was designed by the architect Toivo Korhonen, and was seen as an exceptional stage in its own time, connected to the modernist ideology. According to Timo Koho, who has studied the values of theater architecture, the idea was to influence the University students who later as young professionals should infiltrate the ideology and methodology of empty space into theater practice.²



The stage consisted of only black walls and a balcony encircling the empty space. Conventional sets were not supposed to be used there, and according to the architect, Korhonen, carpentry workshops did not belong to theater as a dignified cultural building.³ The stage technology here, however, was

the most modern in Finland in 1967. The auditorium, with 160 seats, consisted of movable elements allowing for different arrangements of the stage space. However, Salosaari remarked that in most productions the audience was simply frontally facing the performance, as was done in "*Strindberg 70?*"⁴



THE SCENOGRAPHY OF "STRINDBERG 70?"

according to the description by Juha Lukala⁵

The space for acting was marked by averaged sized rehearsing screens. Behind them there were three bigger screens, two meters tall. All the screens were covered with green or brown velvet, and sprayed in order to look old. The larger screens at the back were slightly darker in order to stress the illusion of depth. The smaller screens, which surround the acting space, had the following details: a scenery painted in the style of the 19th century, a photograph of Strindberg and an old interphone. The furniture was rustic: a genuine wooden table, five chairs, a bed, a wooden bench and a modern electric stove. The rest of the props were as genuine as possible: wooden dishes and pottery. The lightning was figured out scene by scene, thus, supporting the respective atmospheres.

The processing of the scenography started immediately, once they began rehearsing on the stage after three days of reading the play. It was documented by Salosaari in the following way:

5 July, the first day of stage rehearsals in the theater room. There are rehearsing screens, some tables and a bench, chairs and platforms. Hanuszkiewicz seems to receive this furniture as though it is here by coincidence. Without explanation he arranges the screens in the shape of a half-circle in front of the auditorium. Then, seemingly randomly, he places the table to the left of the circle and to the right he places a small bench with a back and some chairs.⁶

The working method was commented by Juha Lukala:

The whole solution was kept as elastic as possible to the very end, so that even big changes would be possible. This kind of a solution gave us an opportunity to experiment with different variations at a very late stage in the process, and therefore, it is an excellent method to adopt for training production.⁷

THE COSTUMES

Juha Lukala wrote about the costumes in the following way:

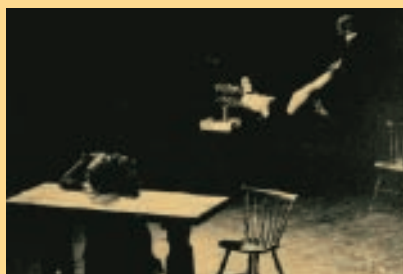
With regards to the costumes we ended up with a kind of collage: the style of the 19th century was applied to the contemporary style of dress. Miss Julie's dress and the screens would have the same color. In the 'Shrew' scene historical costumes were to be used.⁸

Kari Salosaari recalled the costumes:

They were costumes from the end of the 19th century. This was signified by the fact that the women wore long skirts. But Miss Julie was wearing a kind of a pant and skirt combination. In the Shakespeare-scene there were costumes from the Shakespearean age, and in the other scenes they had contemporary clothes. The angel (who told the story of Adam and Eve) was dressed as if she was performing in a Christmas party.⁹

The actress playing Julie, Tuija Vuolle remarked of her costume:

I cut my wedding-dress in two at the waist. I had a wedding-dress with sleeve ends cut in a bell-shape, and there were frills, too. It was made of a thick silk, and there was a pattern on its surface. I also had a red plastic belt. The only thing that was made by the University was a pant-skirt of green velvet. I had red plastic boots. I had a whip at my side at all times. I had a velvet ribbon round my neck... This was all dictated by the resources of the University. They had nothing. My costume was put together like this because Hanuszkiewicz liked the materials: the soft velvet, the blouse, and in contrast the cheap plastic. He said that it made reference to the internal nature of the character.¹⁰



THE DRAMATURGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PERFORMANCE

The final performance was a kind of collage, where tragic and comical scenes alternated. When the diversity of different texts was criticized for being too heterogeneous and disconnected, Hanuszkiewicz responded by saying that its purpose was to surprise the spectator and prevent him/her from being too involved with the events. The excerpts represented for Hanuszkiewicz 'different degrees of truth', for example the Shakespeare text was a 'real biological truth', and the Albee-parody was an 'unnatural biological truth'.¹¹

The basic structure of the performance, as it was rehearsed, was as follows:

Prologue
...
Miss Julie from the beginning to Kristin's pantomime
...
The proposal scene from the second act of <i>the Taming of the Shrew</i> by Shakespeare
...
<i>Miss Julie</i> from Kristin's pantomime to Julie and Jean's intercourse
...
The end scene from the second act of <i>Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> by Albee
...
The story of the Fall (I Mos. 3. 1, 4-7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 19, 24)
...
– Intermission –
...
<i>Miss Julie</i> to the end
...
Epilogue



The Interludes between *Miss Julie*:

The Prologue

The preface for *Miss Julie* was developed into a prologue for the performance. They invented six characters who discussed theater and used quotes from the prologue as a way to present different attitudes about it. There was a middle-aged thinker who led the conversation, two cynical actresses, a conservative female spectator, a young female student who was eager to discuss intelligently; and a common man. One of the actresses was to represent the *harakiri* discussed in Strindberg's preface. After a moment of realistic horror on stage she would reveal it as a theatrical trick, showing the use of artificial blood, etc. This would make it clear from the beginning that the performance was dealing with theatricality itself.

The prologue was altered and developed in several ways, but Hanuszkiewicz decided to leave it out one day before the premiere. Instead they started the performance with a short quotation from the preface which came from a loud-speaker and was spoken in Swedish as if it were being read by Strindberg.

The Taming of the Shrew

When Jean and Julie had left the kitchen in order to go dancing, Kristin's pantomime was replaced by a scene from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The scene used was the one in which Petruchio proposes to the bad-tempered Katharina. It was realized as a physical fight full of action and humor, and Kristin was sitting on the bench watching it:

...Katharina throws a pillow at Petruchio.... Petruchio grasps Katharina by her belt. While she is pulling away he loosens his grip and she falls on her back. Petruchio hides behind a screen, Katharina hits the screen with her fist and Petruchio pretends to fall on the ground. From there he grasps at the woman's ankle, stands up and makes the screen fall upon Katharina, who then kicks the screen and the man away.

Katharina sits on the table... Petruchio crawls on his stomach under the table... Katharina bends down to draw a face on the back of his trousers with a piece of chalk – he turns and grasps Katharina by her feet – she grasps Petruchio by his feet – the man releases his other hand and tickles the woman on her sole – she laughs - her grip loosens. Petruchio stands up and takes Katharina by her feet, so that she is crawling on her hands like a wheelbarrow, in order to move her off the stage. Kristin watches this taming of a woman from the bench.¹²

Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

The dance of the peasants was replaced by the last scene from the second act of *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Albee. Here Martha and Nick were driven to their love affair because of the indifference of George. The idea was to show modern academic people playing childish sexual games without having contact with real, genuine childhood. Martha and Nick's seduction scene started in the style of 'a western movie'. The actors approach each other like cowboys, their hands poised to pull out their revolvers. The instance where Martha approaches Nick was thought of as a parody from the scene where Jean kisses Julie's hand. Hanuszkiewicz wanted to show that Albee didn't understand anything about love. In order to emphasize the mechanical nature of the erotic behavior Martha strokes Nick's back as if it were dough, she even uses talcum powder. The main actors took off their shirts and skirts while the others looked at them bored, indicating that mere sex is boring.¹³



The Fall

The biblical story about the Fall of Adam and Eve was read by an angel and was accompanied by electronic rock-music. The actress was dressed like a little girl at a Christmas Party. She was carrying her wings on her arm since an angel does not need the wings when walking on the earth. She also announced the intermission.



The Epilogue

The performance was planned to end with a fictive interview with Strindberg, based on the preface of his anthology of short stories, *Giftas*. After that the actors were to gather around the body of Julie in order to discuss love. Finally, the playwright would present his manifesto 'The Rights of Women', while others listened disinterestedly. This epilogue was removed along with the prologue.



USING THE SCREENS

Hanuszkiewicz places Julie behind the screen to watch Jean. Julie disappears completely when she asks about the name of the youth beloved to Jean...Julie has to stand on two counterweights in order to have her head visible above the screen. The image expresses the mental mode of two playing children. The stage servant brings a flower to Jean and only Julie's hand reaches from behind the screen to take it.

When Jean confesses having heard Julie's discussions, and hints at his knowledge about the strange erotic rituals between Julie and her fiancé, he suddenly pulls the screen away from Julie, and she is seen standing on the counterweights, as if on stilts.

Jean goes behind the screen, and with the line "I caught sight of a pink dress and a pair of white stockings - that was you!" he positions another screen behind Julie, so that the daughter of the Count is situated between two screens. In this way he could whisper his lyrical memories into Julie's ear, but at the same time remain detached from her.¹⁴

The dream about Switzerland should be presented like a childhood dream about being in paradise, and assert itself as a strong protest against what has happened in reality. The origin of the dreams should be figured out, for instance by dancing. The action should be something that has remained an instinct from childhood. Somebody suggested playing hopscotch – Hanuszkiewicz asked for a piece of chalk. He tested it on



the floor and then asked Julie to draw her idea of Switzerland on the right side. She drew mountains, houses, trees, flowers, and a railroad. Hanuszkiewicz told her to continue so that the drawings surrounded her on the ground like a circle... Jean and Kristin came closer to look at Julie's drawings. Jean stepped on the 'railroad'. Julie either had to push him back, or draw on his shoe. The actress found the former reaction as more natural; Hanuszkiewicz was interested in the other one.

(The end scene of the play) Jean stays to look at Julie's chalk drawing. He takes a rag and goes to clean it away. The spotlight was directed onto this part of the stage – other lights were switched off. The last thing Jean wipes away is the 'sun' drawn by Julie... A wet circle appears on the floor, which shines in the light. Jean looks at it like a mirror and then stands up slowly, after which the lights are turned down.¹⁵



THE RECEPTION

Newspaper critics paid a lot of attention to "Strindberg 70?" and their responses were mainly positive, stressing the difference of "Strindberg 70?" to mainstream Finnish theater. The reason for the proposed weaknesses was mostly put on the educational and experimental orientation of the production. Some critique was directed towards the incoherence of the performance and the irrelevance of the interludes.

*The most startling performance I saw in the Theater Festival, you only seldom run into theater with such intensity.*¹⁶

*A huge performance, flashing with electricity, glowing with strong colors a breathing and panting performance! Theater, wild, ruthless and trembling theater; especially theater by Hanuszkiewicz.*¹⁷

*The means used to make the performance fresh; the strong visuality, the avoidance of pedantic psychological analysis and the breaking of the stage illusion did not startle with its newness, but produced some especially touching moments.*¹⁸

MISS JULIE BY HANUSZKIEWICZ IN TAMPEREEN TEATTERI 1971

The next year *Miss Julie* was re-staged by Hanuszkiewicz and the same leading actors in a reduced and more traditional form in *Tampere Theatre*. Ritva Valkama played the role of Kristin and the scenographer was Ulla Selinheimo, who was then permanently engaged at Tampere Theatre.

The leading actors participating in both productions remarked that the play was completely re-directed. The intermission with the texts by Albee and Shakespeare, and the excerpts from the Bible were left out. The scenography was now a more realistic representation of the Count's kitchen. The stage was smaller and the actors could use the walls and doors of the building. There was also a live jazz-band, and the lighting was described as expressive and effective in the reviews.

1. Paavolainen 1992, 227.

2. Koho 1991, 75.

3. Koho 1991, 70–72.

4. Salosaari 2000.

5. Lukala 1970, 9.

6. Salosaari 1970, 10.

7. Lukala 1970, 9.

8. Lukala, 1970, 9.

9. Salosaari 2000.

10. Vuolle 2003.

11. Salosaari 1970, 20.

12. Salosaari 1970, 20–21.

13. Salosaari 1970, 15.

14. Salosaari 1970, 15; 27.

15. Salosaari 1970, 28; 30.

16. Fabritius 1970.

17. Veistjä 1970.

18. S.S. 1970.



Appendix 4.

MISS JULIE IN THE TURKU SWEDISH THEATER 1979

The touring production of *Miss Julie* had its premiere at the Turku Swedish Theater (ÅST) on 7 November 1979. Thereafter it was performed 18 times in Turku and the region, and was seen by 1788 spectators.

THE CAST AND CREW:

Fröken Julie • Marjorita Hulden
Jean • Lasse Fagerström
Kristin • Janina Berman

Direction • Annette Arlander
Scenography • Tove Ahlbäck
Costumes • Tove Ahlbäck, Iris Linkoranta,
Maija-Liisa Forssé

Props • Margaretha Palmberg
Stage technics • Matti Berg, Pekka Aalto, Väinö Laakso
Lightning • Osmo Leinonen, Birger Bergfors

Program • Annette Arlander, Tove Ahlbäck
Photography • Matti Kivekäs
Poster • Tove Ahlbäck
Music from the record *Organ and Panpipe* by George
Zamfir and Marcel Cellier



Åbo Svenska Teatern

TOVE AHLBÄCK (born 1945)

The scenographer Tove Ahlbäck graduated from the School of Industrial Arts, in 1969 after which she worked with the National Theatre assisting the older scenographers, making her own designs, and helping with marketing. In the early 1970s Ahlbäck studied for two years at Yale University in the US. There she earned a Master of Arts in scenography and returned to Finland in 1974. She then worked for the Tampere Workers' Theatre, but left in 1979 for Turku due to family reasons. She started at ÅST in autumn 1979 with *Miss Julie*. She stayed there for ten years but was also a guest scenographer for several theaters. Nowadays she has set aside her scenographic career. She is currently running a consulting enterprise that designs web-sites. Her latest scenography was *The Wind in the Willows* at ÅST (1998).

ÅBO SVENSKA TEATERN, ÅST – TURKU SWEDISH THEATER

The Turku Swedish Theater (*Åbo Svenska Teatern*, ÅST) is located in Finland's oldest theater building, dating from

1839. The beautiful baroque-venue housed different theatrical activities in the 19th century. Among them was the first domestic Swedish-speaking theater-group in Finland, called *Svenska Inhemska Teater*, which was founded in Turku in 1894. It became *Åbo Svenska Teater* in 1919, and it is still known by this name. By 1979 it had grown into a medium-sized theater with 33 employees.

ÅST was one of the five professional Swedish-speaking theaters in Finland, and three of them (ÅST, the Vaasa Swedish Theater and *Skolteatern*) produced touring performances. The Swedish-speaking minority in Finland was 6,5 % in 1974.¹ ÅST had traditionally close contacts with Sweden but many Finnish-speaking directors and scenographers also visited there. The technical staff was mostly Finnish-speaking but knew enough Swedish to get by.

The ÅST stage is a baroque-stage with a horse-shoe shaped, decorated auditorium. The width of the proscenium opening is about 10 meters. In 1979 the building was in urgent need of renovation which was carried out in the middle of 1980s. This renovation saw the addition of a small studio stage.

Miss Julie has been performed in ÅST in 1919, 1958 and 1979.

During the 1979–1980 season ÅST had following plays in its repertoire:

August Strindberg: *Fröken Julie* – a touring play

Ludvig Holberg: *Jeppe på berget* – a touring play

Dale Wasserman: *Riddaren från la Mancha*

(*The Man of La Mancha*) – a musical

A musical show: *Tillsammans* (*Together*)

Bo Carpelan: *Vandrande Skugga*

(*The Wandering Shadow*) – a touring play



The maquette © Tove Ahlbäck

THE TOURING ACTIVITY

Like most Finnish theaters ÅST had a long tradition of touring. In 1979 it was granted regional theater status obliging it to tour in the surrounding areas, and it was granted extra subsidy from the state for that purpose. This regional theater system was established little by little in Finland during the 1970s and 1980s. Its roots were in the old amateur theater tradition and *Volkstheater ideology* but it was also influenced by the 1970s group-theater movement.²

At the time they were working on *Miss Julie* there was an intensive debate going on about the regional theater selection process. Names collected in an appeal to the state on behalf of the ÅST which was competing with Vaasa Swedish Theater (*Wasa Svenska Teatern*). They finally both achieved regional status, since the subsidy was divided among them.

The region of ÅST included the districts of Turunmaa, Ahvenanmaa, and Länsi-Uusimaa. There were some towns with a Swedish-speaking majority, like Karjaa, Tammissaari, Hanko and Maarianhamina, but a great part of the regional audience consisted of rural farmers and fishermen living on the coast or in the archipelago.

The touring performances of *Miss Julie* took place in Nauvo, Västana fjärd, Dalsbruk, Karjaa, Hanko and there were three shows in Maarianhamina. The first three mentioned regions are rural communes in the archipelago, and the other three are small towns with a Swedish-speaking majority. The rest of the performances (10 out of 18) were in ÅST's home venue.

THE SCENOGRAPHY OF MISS JULIE

The set consisted of flat, stylized trees cut out of plywood. Between the winding branches there was tulle, which could be lit either from the front or from behind. This lighting could change the visual character of the trees. The kitchen furniture was partly fastened to the trees as if they were growing out of them. There was a vaulted window frame, a stove, a table, some chairs, and a block of wood.

Everything on stage was painted dark red, a shade described as ox blood. The red color of the set was motivated by the director Arlander's idea that killing the bird symbolized the impossibility of Jungian transcendence, the unity of conscious and unconscious mind.

The set had to be modified to suit touring purposes. The amount and placing of the trees could be varied. There were two different stage-floors, one check-patterned made of hardboard for the home venue and another, made of painted fabric for the tournés.

The scenographer Ahlbäck recalled the making of the scenography:





© Tove Ahlback

I felt that it was natural to combine the idea, that the change of the time of the day would be seen through the leaves of the trees... The trees were flat, in that way they could be combined in order to fill the space and the environment. The idea was that the trees could be made higher or smaller... I do not remember anymore, whether the size of the trees could be changed, or whether we just made bigger and smaller trees.

LG: How was the set for Miss Julie made? Was it just plywood and tulle?

TA: Yes, we took what we had: the thinnest plywood. The practice was: let's take what we have. We did not have any big resources. The amount of tulle was quite small, it is likely that I just went to the wardrobe and picked some tulle that happened to be there. Then I remember that we picked from a junkyard authentic plates to the wood stove. I can still hear it my ears: the hatch was genuine. In some scene they put wood into the stove. We had a genuine butcher's block from somewhere... And this sink and the worktable must have been found somewhere. I remember that one of the chairs was my own which I had got in an auction ... a lonely chair that just felt nice there on stage.

LG: And everything was painted red in the set?

TA: Yes, everything that could be painted!

THE DIRECTION

The director Annette Arlander described the performance and direction:

AA: The performance began with a pantomime, where Julie and Kristin danced together wearing underwear from the beginning of the century. It was like an exercise, where one is subordinate and then they switch roles. The first act was pure naturalism... For example: Jean leans on the stove and suddenly realizes that it is hot... There was also a scene where Jean is sitting on a bench and Julie pours some wine on his head. He then takes off the white shirt.

In the second act there was more speed. When Julie came with the canary bird it was almost ... not comedy, but there was a comical element. It is quite absurd; I mean this trip with the canary bird, and the last chance... The way in which we did it in the performance was much like a farce. You could see it when she entered the stage in her lacy dress.

AA: The murder of the canary bird is the decisive act.

LG: It was like the murder of Julie?

AA: Not like the murder of Julie, but it symbolized the destruction of hope and the impossibility of transcendence. Of course this can be seen to be true in Julie's death, but she was not as much a victim. We emphasised the theme of sexuality and death whereas the classical stress is on Miss Julie and the social class structure. We considered this too, from the standpoint of Jean. But what I was interested in was the struggle for sexual power. It was a representation of a self-destruction but not that of a degenerated upper class. In the end scene Julie in a way forces Jean to hypnotize her – it is there in the text, too.

There was a kind of multi-sexuality too. I know that somebody interpreted the drama to include a lesbian relationship between Julie and Kristin. I did not really see this but I did feel that some sort of triangle existed between the three central characters. The notion of all three of them living together and establishing a hotel was farcical. And I had positive feedback from colleges who were interested in seeing that Kristin was having feelings...

I remember when (the theater manager) Malvius came to look at the rehearsals, and he wondered why there was – and I wouldn't have used this word then – a sadomasochistic element, an eroticism that was aggressive. He thought that it shouldn't be that way. I remember that the actors defended my idea.

We had a goal to not change the text in any way and we talked just old Swedish. The only change was with the scene where the celebrating crowd comes in. It was changed to a pantomime by Kristin. And that was in fact one of the best scenes. When Jean and Julie are supposed to be making love, Kristin is alone in the kitchen and washes herself in a washbasin. It was a very erotic scene, a person washing her skin with a sponge, and all the while the audience is aware that the other two characters are having sex ...³



Sketch by Tove Ahlback



Sketches by Annette Arlander

RECALLING THE PROBLEMS OF PRODUCTION

The scenographer Tove Ahlbäck:

I would compare doing scenographies to painting icons or doing etchings in graphics. The limits and the facts to be taken into account should serve as vehicles for creativity, rather than suppress it.

It is also good to have in mind the tool box of traditions... Sometimes I'm suspicious when young directors find blowing new winds so important, and I make sarcastic remarks that this idea comes from trick-box number 35 or 12... I have often said, let's take trick number 3 and turn it upside down. What I mean by this is that there are a limited number of tricks but they can always be used again in new contexts.

I try to take the viewpoint of the spectator. They do not have any fixed idea, since they don't know the text. If you push some fixed idea onto them, then it has to create new understanding about the play. I longed for this in the staging for Annette. Although she found so many different elements in the script, she should have developed a structure that would communicate them... That is the way you tell a story to the spectator.

Solutions are nicer if they are natural, and you have not just glued on something that is good-looking. That approach should be reserved for musicals where the visuality has a role of its own. There you provide a feast for the eye, and entertain with it.

I feel the same way as Seppo Nurmimaa who has taught me a lot. When I asked him, how I would know what it will look on stage, he said that if you have everything there in the maquette, you just follow it. Even if you have to solve out all materials and scales on the way, it is going to be exactly like it is in your maquette. And I have realized that very many times.

LG: Annette was interested in the psychology of Jung. Do you remember having participated in these discussions?

TA: I might have but I have my feet so firmly on the ground, and when I hear some-

thing unbelievable, I just shut my ears. Often discussions happen that have nothing to do with anything, and the spectator won't understand them either. If the spectator doesn't understand them, they don't matter. For example, I got nervous in the rehearsals because I could not understand Annette's analysis about miss Julie and the maid having a lesbian relationship. There was an element of pantomime in the rehearsal performance

where this was expressed. I decided that I didn't care to watch anymore, I had better things to do. In hindsight I smile at myself, I was still so inflexible at that time...⁴

The director Annette Arlander:

I have a memory that the co-work with Tove was very painless. But it had to do with the fact that nothing happened in the set. My problems concerned the actors.

But there was also a disappointment: I was so trustful that we were going to have a kitchen which transformed into a wood. It didn't look quite like that.

LG: Did you feel that Tove promised more than could be done?

AA: That is always the way when you talk about your ideas. When they are carried out it is never exactly how you intended things to be. My knowledge about things that could be achieved through scenographic means was minimal...

If I try to analyze it now... It was the relationship between the tulle and pasteboard or plywood... This proves how helpless I was: I don't even know what material it was. The plywood covered very large areas...

Thinking now, it was visually and as a whole much more an époque play, than it was meant to be.⁵



Edward Munch: The Dance of Life

COSTUMES

TA: I remember also that Marjorita [the actress playing Julie] had beautiful old underwear. Iris [the wardrobe keeper] let me have as many genuine clothes as was possible. There was a scene, which was not in the script, where Miss Julie took off a lot of her clothes. She had genuine underwear on, and they were just wonderful!⁶

The director Annette Arlander used the paintings of Edward Munch as a visual model for the stage figures for *Miss Julie*. Arlander commented on the painting:

Look at this: A white woman, a red woman and a black woman... However, Julie never wore red clothes, she was in white all the time. Kristin was in black.

Everything was black-and-white, except that the set was the red of ox-blood. Perhaps Kristin was wearing something light, a light-blue outfit before she wore black. And I guess Julie was not in white from the beginning.⁷

THE POSTER

TA: We argued about the poster. She wanted this bird, even today I don't know what it is. I had an idea that there should be a boot, a riding boot, but she refused pointblank! And I would not have had anything against this if she could have told me why⁸.

AA: I don't like it very much because now Julie is this kind of a harpy. She has been made into a canary bird but that is somehow dangerous. You know that is not a sacrificial bird but an antique monster, and that was not my idea but that of the visual artist⁹.

THE RECEPTION

The response to the performance was ambiguous but encouraging. Most critics found the performance interesting but also unsatisfying. For example, in several reviews it was noted that the audience had been laughing at scenes, which were meant to be taken seriously. The most repeated example was a scene where Julie, shamed, crawled under the table like a dog retreating to its kennel. The unbalance between the two acts was also criticized since the latter was more speedy and comical. The contemporary relevance of the play was frequently questioned, and a fresher re-reading was wanted. Two reviewers understood the relationship between Julie and Kristin as lesbian, and they both found that solution good and justified.

The scenography was discussed very shortly in most reviews. Two of the critics mentioned the touring as an excuse for the minor shortcomings of the scenography.



The fairytale-like coulisses by Tove Ahlbäck ... There under the decorative trees Hans and Gretel get lost again and arrive at the witch's gingerbread house.¹⁰

The whole stage-construction made by Tove Ahlbäck has the atmosphere of Midsummer. This can be considered as a successful solution, supporting the contradictory effect of the play.¹¹

The set was very simple but captured well the slightly magical atmosphere of Midsummer.¹²

Tove Ahlbäck's scenographic solution has not been entirely faithful to Strindberg's exact instructions. She has kept the kitchen interior but added an arrangement of trees and lights in order to strengthen the atmosphere of Midsummer. The result is certainly more decorative but brings hardly anything to the play.¹³

Some critics were fascinated with the visual symbolics in the scenes; others found it just too odd. It seems that many critics were a bit confused by the performance not actually knowing what was being said. There was one completely celebratory review:

Tight symbolic language makes the play a dizzying journey through the unconscious, and a shaky settlement with the old archetypes and images surrounding woman. When the play is interpreted like this, it becomes not only a naturalist tragedy but a rather terrible rite, the society's slaughtering of the frightened sexual woman who changes into a self-destructive vampire sucking its own blood.

The parallels between Miss Julie, brilliantly performed by Marjorita Huldén, and Edward Munch's female vampires are obvious...

The love scene becomes an embrace with doom. In the final scene she, pale as a corpse and her red hair hanging loose, has finally changed to the image of a whore-vampire who has to destroy herself in a society which does not leave any other door open...

It is typical for the director to create visually beautiful and complete images, for example, the scene where Miss Julie, shaking with passion, stands in front of Jean, boots and a burning candle.¹⁴

THE DIRECTOR'S ANALYSIS

The Jungian analysis was expressed by Arlander in the performance program.

From the rehearsal diary:

*Erotics, a way of compensating
for the essence of life?*

Intercourse as a divine service?

The myth of female masochism?

*When mother earth and father heaven were
separated, then it all went wrong?*

*To find one's way home to the essence of life,
in the middle of a death culture?*

*To belong to life, not to be a cog,
member or part?*

*To wipe oneself out without
wiping oneself out?¹⁵*

Arlander explained these lines:

I remember that this was the key; to destroy, to annihilate oneself without annihilating oneself. You can understand it through Jung; to destroy oneself in the sense of destroying one's ego, without killing oneself and destroying one's body. It was that train of thought about destruction that I remember. Julie is not a victim of circumstances, nor a victim of her social class, nor a victim of the Jean's seduction but that she consciously kills herself.¹⁶

1. Krook 1975.
2. Koski-Vaittinen 1988, 166.
3. Arlander 2001.
4. Ahlbäck 2001.
5. Arlander 2001.
6. Ahlbäck 2001.
7. Arlander 2001.
8. Ahlbäck 2001.

9. Arlander 2001.
10. Vuori 1979.
11. Itäranta 1979.
12. Wallén 1979.
13. Rönholm 1979.
14. Jansson 1979.
15. The program.
16. Annette Arlander.
17. Arlander 2001.

Annette Arlander:

This is the visual world which I wished to have there. I have chosen these pictures: this kind of timeless man-woman-things.¹⁷



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Appendix 5.

MISS JULIE IN KOM-TEATTERI 1983

Miss Julie premiered in KOM-teatteri 22 September 1983. It was performed in a venue called Kino Cabaret, and it was later moved over to the Koitto venue. It had 28 performances within the 1983–1984 season and was seen by 1577 spectators.

THE CAST AND CREW:

Miss Julie • Marja-Leena Kouki
Jean • Kari Hakala
Kristin • Erja Manto
The violin player • Rauno Salminen

Direction • Laura Jäntti
Scenography and costumes • Måns Hedström
Lightning • Jukka Kuuranne

Poster • Måns Hedström
Photography • Rauno Träskelin



© Rauno Träskelin

MÅNS HEDSTRÖM (born 1943)

Måns Hedström graduated as an interior architect from the School of Industrial Arts in 1968. He started making scenographies for the Helsinki Student Theater in 1965, and became the regular scenographer for *KOM-teatteri* from the group's inception in 1969. He had a characteristic style of his own which became a *KOM-teatteri* hallmark. Hedström was responsible for almost all scenographies in *KOM* from 1969 to 1983, and *Miss Julie* was his last work there. After leaving *KOM* Hedström worked at Lahti City Theater, produced works for several theaters like Helsinki City Theatre, the Finnish National Theatre and the National Opera. He has made altogether almost 200 scenographies; his most



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recent work was *They call it love* by Arno Kotro, at the theater *Avoimet ovet*. It premiered on 21 September 2004.

KOM-TEATTERI

KOM-teatteri started its activity in 1969 as an artistically independent Swedish-speaking group. It was economically associated with the Swedish Theater in Helsinki, and performed in its lobby. Besides theatrical plays they arranged concerts, discussions, dance-evenings and visiting performances. A new, Finnish-speaking *KOM* was founded as a touring group with nine members in 1971.

During the early 1970s the *KOM* plays had a politically engaged cabaret style which represented social issues with a class-consciousness. Merja-Liisa Karhu, who has studied the history of *KOM* considers the performance *Kaamos* in 1973 as a point of culmination whereafter the psychology of individual characters came to the fore.

According to Karhu the hallmarks of a *KOM* performance were the presence of strong interpretative statement about the play, and an avoidance of illustration. They deliberately ignored the conventional models of representation and traditional values, and stressed the ability to communicate a message by means of the play.¹ Even when staging classic

plays their interpretation was often original and provocative. For example, in 1980 they performed *The Tempest* by Shakespeare, it was cast so that all the sex roles were reversed. Experimentation has, however, always been motivated by the play's contents.

KOM-teatteri was a touring group until 1978 when it got its first permanent venue on Hämeentie. In 1981 they did two site-specific performances in an old power plant in Suvilahti which was a pioneering enterprise in Finland. After the lease had run out, the theater was homeless for a while. At that time *KOM* also had economical troubles and had to temporarily dismiss all its employees. A new, very tiny venue was found in the summer of 1982 at Fredrikintori in an old movie-theater. They called it *Kino Cabaret*, and it housed several small-scale performances during the next few years.

Today *Kino Cabaret* serves as the venue for *Teatteri Takomo*, and for a long time *KOM-teatteri* has been based in another, bigger ex-movie theater.

The *KOM-teatteri* premieres during the year 1983 were the following:

Sofja Prokofjeva: *Lähempänä kevättä, lähempänä kevättä* (*Closer to the Spring, Closer to the Spring*)

Daniel Katz: *Jussi Laidastalaitaan and Pedro Papumaha*

Kaj Chydenius: *Kuivin jaloin* (*With Dry Feet*)

Mihail Bulgakov-Liisa Urpelainen: *Saatana saapuu Moskovaan* (*Master and Margarita*)

Aku-Kimmo Ripatti: *Karhunainen* (*The Bear Woman*)

August Strindberg.: *Miss Julie*

Hannu Salama: *Juhannustanssit* (*The Midsummer Ball*)

Georg Kreisler: *Tänä iltana: Lola Blau* (*Tonight: Lola Blau*)

VIDEO-STILLS

1. The audience enters.
2. The opening scene of the play.
3. Kristin and Jean at the beginning of the play.
- 4–10. Julie enters.

Video-stills are taken in *Koitto* and do not correspond to the *Kino Cabaret* performance.



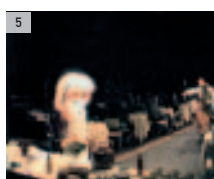
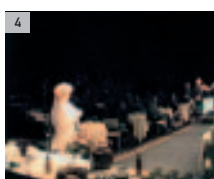
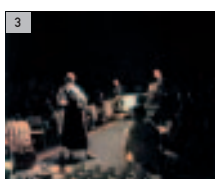
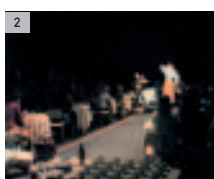
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THE GROUP-THEATER IDEOLOGY

KOM-teatteri is one of the best-known Finnish group-theaters. In the 1960s and early 1970s the new-born, often politically oriented groups opposed contemporary mainstream theater because they saw it as either elitist high-culture or bourgeois entertainment. Merja-Liisa Karhu describes their motivation and aims in her book about *KOM-teatteri*:

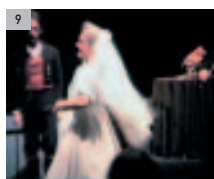
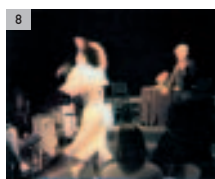
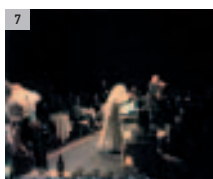
KOM-teatteri was born out of its founders' dissatisfaction with the ruling repertoire policy in institutional theaters, and with the fact that performances were addressed to the middle- and upper-class audiences. They thought that the working people were disenfranchised from the theatrical world partly because of their remote home districts but also because they were not interested in theater that did not deal with the workers' life.²

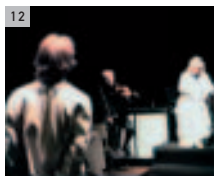
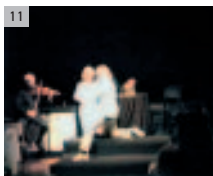
The theater represented by the groups sought out its audiences. It did not want to offer any escape from reality, in the way the mainstream theater did. Partly because of the new ideals, partly because of practical reasons due to the character of the performance venue: the theater offered neither mental, nor physical comfort.³



THE COSTUMES

At the beginning of the play Julie had a white dress. When first entering the stage she put a thin white scarf on her head, much like the bridal veil. Later she changed to a yellow traveling dress. Jean and Kristine were wearing stylized folk dresses.





In general the existence of strictly political theater was short-lived. The performance of *Pete Q* at *Suomen Kansan Teatteri* in 1978 has been seen as the initiation of a backlash against new-leftist theater that aspired to give a logical explanation about the world. The groups began to question the targets and impact of their activity. This crisis was made worse by economical difficulties, since the groups got practically no subsidies in the 1970s. At the end of the decade most groups sought permanent venues, and an interest in classic works of world literature followed. The production of *Miss Julie* was embarked on in that context.

THE MISS JULIE SCENOGRAPHY

The scenography itself was visually minimalist. It could be reduced to the conceptual idea that placing the performance in an unconventional situation defines its reception.

The venue of *Kino Cabaret* was turned into a cafeteria where the spectators were sitting at small tables drinking coffee. The actors moved all over in the space which was not visually decorated in any way. There was one table reserved for the actors. It was covered with a black cloth, and there was a bunch of flowers on it. The photographs reveal that there was an art exhibition in *Kino Cabaret* but the drawings were not connected to *Miss Julie*.

THE MOVE TO KOITTO

When the performance was later moved to the *Koitto* stage, the setting was changed so that a part of the audience was sitting in two normal seating areas facing each other. There were tables on the floor space between them where rest of the spectators were having their coffee, and there was an aisle crossing the middle of this space. Therefore, there was greater space for acting in *Koitto* than in *Kino Cabaret* and the staging was less scattered. There were actually two audiences, one sitting at the tables on the floor and another in the more conventional seating. Those in the latter group could perceive the former group as part of the staging.

On one end of the aisle there was a low platform with the actors' table. This spatial arrangement in *Koitto* could be associated with a throne room in a court, since the chair on the platform was used to imply hierarchy of power.

At the other end of the aisle there was



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per. The atmosphere reminded me of a party rather than a cafeteria. It even suggested a wedding party, which is very commonly celebrated on Midsummer's in Finland.

THE RECEPTION

The reception in the newspapers was divided. In some reviews the idea of placing the performance in a cafeteria was seen as a failure ruining the performance, while other critics praised the multiplicity of viewpoints created by the staging.

*The Miss Julie triangle looked at the phenomenon of our time with ruthless courage and without prejudices. The direction was marked by an unconditional and reduced interpretation. The perception was concentrated and the contents came only from the spectator's own experiences.*⁴

*KOM's starting point is artificial. From the point of entering the space the spectator has a feeling of falsehood.*⁵

*One can say that Miss Julie in KOM does justice to the Strindbergian multiplicity of differently oriented solutions.*⁶

The result is as absurd as the thought. Or should I say: directly dilettantish...

*Miss Julie is resolved in the impossibilities of the basic solution.*⁷

*It is unnecessary to say that this intimate spatial solution is fascinating in the context of Miss Julie...*⁸

*Even the smallest mimes and gestures get a new, more important meaning, when they are seen from an arm's distance...The performers in Miss Julie speak to each other above the heads of the audience, and are conscious about its presence. The performance achieves thus new depth.*⁹

The actress playing Julie was described as follows:

*Marja-Leena Kouki performed the destruction of the upper-class member with intensity and power, as is characteristic for her. Because of an imbalance between Jean and Julie you could not quite believe that Julie was so taken with Jean.*¹⁰

Marja-Leena Kouki is the KOM Miss Julie, a fat country girl in heat, representing the upstart nobility. In the beginning she sells



© Rauno Traskelin

*herself to Jean like one who is very experienced on the dance circuit in using 'ladies choice' to her advantage; with force and certainty...*¹¹

*There is luxuriance, sensuality, and a portion of erotic charge in Marja-Leena Kouki. However, her holistic interpretation is occasionally too sparkling, the emotions change too quickly. At the same time she lacks the anxiety which makes her so eager to offer herself to Jean...There emerges no clear image of a subordinated noble woman looking for her identity.*¹²

Marja-Leena Kouki is a robust Julie. She is clearly not neurotic and pathologically filled with hate, but a real heroine. She puts everything in the game, and she really deserved to win... There is a contradiction between the strength of Julie played by Kouki, and the hard punishment she inflicts on herself, her Strindbergian destruction becomes suddenly as one possibility among others.

Miss Julie by Marja-Leena Kouki radiates an erotic longing in her every cell. She needs closeness and warmth, she begs for just one friendly word. - -

*In the ecstasy of the Midsummer night she is easy prey. Her being cries for love.*¹³

1. Karhu 1991, 132–33.

2. Karhu 1991, 26–27.

3. Karhu 1991, 20–22.

4. Wikström 1983.

5. Eklund 1983.

6. Ollila 1983.

7. Kajava 1983.

8. Wikström 1983.

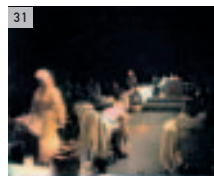
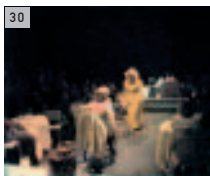
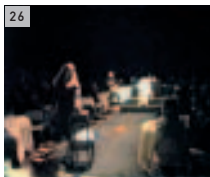
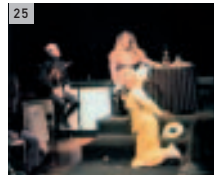
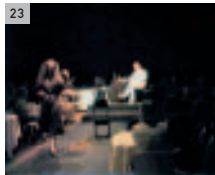
9. Sundqvist 1983.

10. Wikström 1983.

11. Kajava 1983.

12. Ollila 1983.

13. Sundqvist 1983.



11. Jean kisses Julie's shoe.
 12–15. Jean and Julie leave the stage in order to make love.
 16. Kristin is alone on stage while Jean and Julie are making love.
 17. Jean and Julie come back.
 18–22. Jean and Julie try to solve their problems.
 23. Kristin enters dressed for church.
 24. Julie enters in her traveling dress and carrying the bird-cage.
 25. Julie proposes Kristin to leave with them to Switzerland.
 26–31. The final scenes of the play.



Appendix 6.

MISS JULIE IN THE WILLENSAUNA STUDIOSTAGE AT THE FINNISH NATIONAL THEATRE

Miss Julie premiered at the Finnish National Theatre on 2 March 1984. It was staged in the small studiostage called *Willensauna*. It was performed 39 times altogether and seen by 4484 spectators.

THE CAST AND CREW:

Miss Julie • Marjukka Halttunen
Jean • Risto Aaltonen
Kristine • Soila Komi

Dancers • Ulla Laurio, Anu Panula,
Pauli Junnonen, Isto Turpeinen

Direction • Olli Tola
Scenography and costumes • Kari Junnikkala
Music • Pekka Laitinen
Choreography • Anu Panula



© Leena Klemelä

KARI JUNNIKKALA (born 1948)

Kari Junnikkala graduated from the department of scenography at the University of Industrial Arts. Since 1975 he has worked as a scenographer, costume designer and graphic designer in several theaters all over Finland, for example in the Finnish National Theatre, the Turku Swedish Theater, Kuopio City Theater, *Lilla Teatern*, Tampere Workers' Theatre and Jyväskylä City Theater. He has been both permanently employed and freelanced. He is currently employed by Lahti City Theater and has been there for thirteen years. His recent scenographies on its large stage have been responded to enthusiastically. He has designed scenographies, for example, for the musicals *Cyrano*, *Quasimodo* and *Anna Karenina*. His latest work was the scenography for *The Children of the Family Bladh* by Christer Kihlman performed at the Swedish-speaking group-theater *Viirus*; it premiered 1 October 2004.

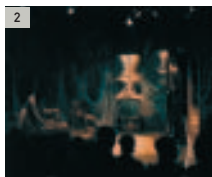
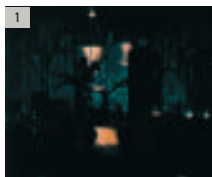
THE FINNISH NATIONAL THEATRE

The name of Finnish Theater (*Suomalainen teatteri*), founded in 1872, became the Finnish National Theatre (*Suomen Kansallisteatteri*) in 1902 when its new building was completed. It played a central role in the formation of the national identity and the cultural establishment of the Finnish

language prior to the existence of an independent Finnish state, and later during the nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s. The National Theatre has traditionally been seen as the main Finnish-speaking stage, serving as an example for other theaters in the country. Employment there has been seen as the artistic highpoint of an actor's career.

A growing competition with *Helsingin Kansanteatteri*, later the City Theater of Helsinki, emerged after the war period. One way of reestablishing the National Theatre's artistic stronghold was to increase and extend the range of the repertoire by having more than one stage. *The Small Stage*, which differs from the large one not so much by its size, but by its modern, functionalistic style, was opened in 1954. It enabled the production of new, experimental plays without losing the more conservative audience.

However, Kari Junnikkala noted that in 1984 the National Theatre had a bad reputation among theater professionals; the style of acting there was thought to be old-fashioned.¹ Today that is not the case, and young actors and directors frequently work there.



THE STUDIOSTAGE, WILLENSAUNA

A third, considerably smaller stage, called *Willensauna* was established at the National Theatre during Kai Savola's management period, 1974–1991, which was marked by remarkable growth and renewal of the theatre's personnel. He was particularly praised for favoring new domestic drama, and he also oversaw the opening of a fourth stage in 1987, *Omapohja* with only 50–70 seats.

Willensauna is situated on the level below the Small Stage. The space served originally as a restaurant which was also used for experimental studio performances from 1964 on. In 1976 the architects Kaija and Heikki Siren, together with the theater manager Kai Savola, transformed it into a studio stage. A permanent auditorium with 154 seats was constructed later in the 1980s. At the time of producing *Miss Julie* *Willensauna* was still an open, transformable space.

The name *Willensauna* comes from a bathhouse hotel and restaurant which was functioning behind the National Theatre before the enlargement of the building in the 1950s.²

The repertoire of The National Theatre in the season 1984–85 was the following:

LARGE STAGE: William Shakespeare: *King Lear*; Anton Chechov: *The Cherry Orchard*; Johann Nestroy – Tom Stoppard: *Paraatipäivä (The Day of the Parade)*

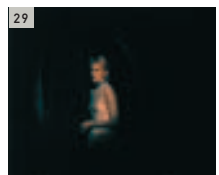
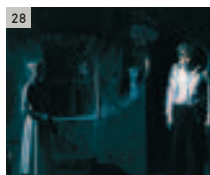
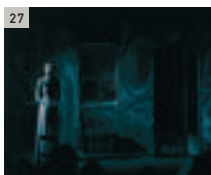
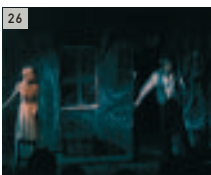
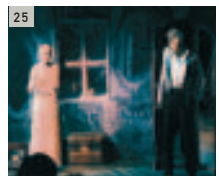
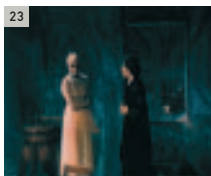
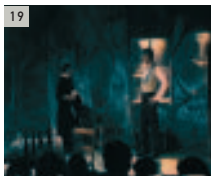
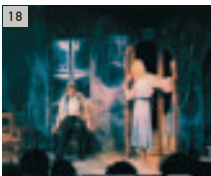
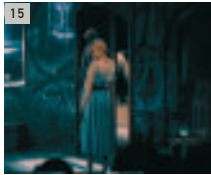
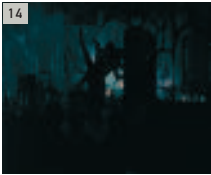
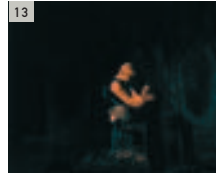
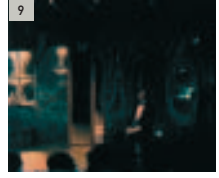
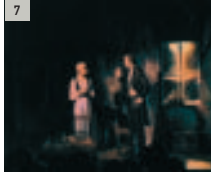
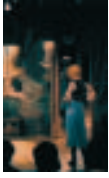
SMALL STAGE: Georges Feydeau: *Herra Metsästäjä*; Antonio Buero Vallejo: *Tarina kaimaanista (The Story about a Caiman)*; Antti Tuuri: *Mannerheim Puolassa (Mannerheim in Poland)*

WILLENSAUNA: Patrick Süskind: *Basso-viulu (The Bass)* / Eeva-Liisa Manner: *Sonaatti preparoidulle piano (Sonata for a prepared piano)*; Anne Habeck-Abaneck: *Tsehov Jaltalla (Chechov in Jalta)*; August Strindberg: *Miss Julie*

VIDEO-STILLS

1. The opening scene performed by the dancers.
2. Jean and Kristin in the kitchen at the beginning of the play.
- 3–5. Julie enters.
6. Kristin is alone in the kitchen while Jean and Julie are dancing.
- 7–9. Jean and Julie are flirting.
10. Jean kisses Julie's shoe.
- 11–13. Jean and Julie decide to go to Jean's room.
14. The dancers perform while Jean and Julie are making love.
- 15–16. Jean and Julie are back in the kitchen after making love.
- 17–18. Jean and Julie try to solve their problems.
19. Kristin enters dressed for church.
20. Julie enters in traveling dress and carrying the bird-cage.
- 21–22. Jean kills the bird.
23. Julie proposes Kristin to leave with them to Switzerland.
- 24–29. The final scenes of the play.







August Strindberg: *The Night of Jealousy*

THE SCENOGRAPHY FOR MISS JULIE

Kari Junnikkala recalled:

We started from the milieu of the kitchen and manor with thick stone walls; lime washed or plastered white stone walls. Heavy, thick wood, carved timber, as it has architectonically existed at the time. But then we realized that something further needed to be developed...

We used polystyrene, and its supporting structure was made freehand with steel tubing. It was made so that when light came from the back, it would look like tree trunks and branches. This was the structure of the garden. By heating the polystyrene sheet with a blast of hot-air we managed to create the convex, irregular shapes. Then we polished them with different wheels, and used spray paint on some parts of it, so that the light would get caught there.

LG: How did you end up using this material?

KJ: I don't remember at all. I would almost think that the material was chosen because of the space itself, its difficult form which is oblong. It is a little wedge like, too.

LG: The space for acting must have been very narrow?

KJ: Yes, it was narrow [in one direction] and wide [in the other director], there was no depth. Another reason for the transparency of the walls was that we had to have the backlights there. Maybe we shaped them like that in order to be able to store

them in a small space. The scenography was done in pieces that overlapped each other, and they didn't take much space. And the screens balanced by themselves.

The floor was a slightly slanting platform with a false perspective. The boards narrowed as they approached the back of the stage. One by one each board was shaped with a plane. There were spotlights under the floor, and there was a one centimeter gap between all the boards. Then there was a white cloth under the floor which reflected the light evenly through the gaps... The front edge of the floor was broken. The idea was that there would be no clear boundary between the stage and the auditorium. This structure was repeated on the corner of the table. The chairs, the mirror and the block were made by the carpenters; the other pieces of furniture must have been genuine: the washing bureau, the table, the box and, the hope chest. Their paint was removed and they were treated with wax. They were all treated so that the scale of colors was the same.



© Kari Junnikkala



© Kari Junnikkala



THE POSTER

Kari Junnikkala:

This poster was made by me. There was another one made because the theater manager Savola thought this was too indecent. A graphic artist who had made posters for them before made the more decent version. Originally this bird looked even more like a penis, I had to change it.³

THE RECEPTION

The reviews written about *Miss Julie* in Willensauna contained very contradictory opinions about almost everything. The direction was as well praised for its interesting interpretation but was also accused for a lack of it. Some reviewers enjoyed the visual and auditive world; others found it disturbing and strange.

Julie at Willensauna is in its unconventionality a fascinating experience.⁴

The performance quickly reveals that its components are not guided by any holistic thought. Since these components are both anemic and uninteresting, the spectator's only option is to entertain herself with Risto Aaltonen's performance.⁵

In Miss Julie you can concretely experience how a fresh realization of a classical play can reflect the era, values and problems of its performers. Miss Julie by August Strindberg has received exactly this kind of tone and emphasis under the direction of Olli Tola.⁶

In this production what Miss Julie can say to us in the here and now remains a mystery.⁷

The director sketches his Julie very frailly, almost stereotypically. The trace of his work is very neat and professional. The direction holds the play together well but it cannot answer the question, why they have staged just Miss Julie... This time the interpretation of Miss Julie is unfinished. Not in terms of it rehearsal process but in its analytical accuracy.⁸

The interpretation of Miss Julie at the National Theater is extremely interesting. Unfortunately the performances do not rise to the level of the interpretation on a technical level; you keep missing greater intensity, a tightness of the atmosphere.⁹

Olli Tola's direction picks up on the smallest features of August Strindberg's misanthropy. The air vibrates ever so delicately in the first scenes between her [Julie] and Risto Aaltonen. The air sparks with their electric charge... The music by Pekka Laitinen and the dances by Anu Panula create a strong atmosphere for their part, and raise the National Theater's interpretation far beyond the usual standard.¹⁰

The drama in Willensauna did not blossom, the brilliant structure by Strindberg faded, and there was not enough tension in the relationship between the actors.¹¹





The performance was frequently characterized as being feminist. The interpretation of Julie was blamed for making the Countess into a weak victim for Jean, rather than the self-destructive lady playing with her own destiny.

In this interpretation Julie could be called a feminist: Julie is an independent young woman, convinced of her own dignity and rights as a woman. The seduction of Jean is an exciting game for Julie, an attempt to subordinated man through her power. When Jean surfaces from the fight as the winner, Julie backs to the traditional feminine role, she is ready to abandon all her previous ideals and resigned herself to being a wife.¹²

From the very beginning Marjukka Halttunen is far from being bombastic and arrogant. Julie, who is brought up like a man, is her own Kullervo [A figure from Finnish mythology, marked by bitterness because of being treated badly in his childhood]; cold in her human relationships, longing for the fire that would wake her up. She is also fascinated by Jean's raw masculinity but afterwards, along with her humiliation, she experiences the emotional paucity in man.¹³

The clearest original idea in the interpretation is the softening of the character of Julie. The compulsorily emancipated daughter of the Count does not whip, rage, or hate in this version. She is endlessly subordinated, trampled down and tightly tied to Jean's lead.

I felt so sorry for Julie. Strindberg has been turned into a feminist author: that is quite an achievement.¹⁴

It was just impossible to believe in Marjukka Halttunen, the tender, timid, blue-dressed little girl as Miss Julie; a young

woman aware of her power and position, woman who made her fiancé jump over the bar and lashes him with a whip to thank him. No, from the very beginning this Julie was subordinate, driven by her blind passion, under Jean's thumb and because of this, a too easy piece of cake.¹⁵

In this interpretation Miss Julie, played by Marjukka Halttunen, is not the Nietzschean anti-woman she is often portrayed as ... A clumsiness and helplessness rule over the behavior of Julie during the whole play. The female input into the interpretation and its feminist tone are easily perceived.¹⁶

The Julie played by Marjukka Halttunen is extremely sensitive and vulnerable, weak and neurotic, and represented as the user rather than the used. In this interpretation her path to self-destruction was due to weakness rather than to broken strength.¹⁷

1. Junnikkala 2001.

2. Koski 1999, 326.

3. Junnikkala 2001.

4. Ståhlhammar 1984.

5. Eklund 1984.

6. Kajanto 1984.

7. Helenius 1984.

8. Siikala 1984.

9. Rautalahti 1984.

10. Sundqvist 1984.

11. Ritolahti 1984.

12. Rautalahti 1984.

13. Ståhlhammar 1984.

14. Siikala 1984.

15. Ritolahti 1984.

16. Kajanto 1984.

17. Helenius 1984.

Appendix 7

MISS JULIE IN Q-TEATTERI 1999

Miss Julie had its premiere at *Q-teatteri* 2 September 1999, and it was included in the repertoire again two years later, 11 May 2001. It was put on at the smaller stage, called *Half-Q*.

THE CAST AND CREW:

Miss Julie • Henriikka Salo
Jean • Tommi Korpela
Kristiina • Anna-Maija Valonen

Direction • Katariina Lahti
Scenography and costumes • Katariina Kirjavainen
Sound design • Juha Tuisku
Light design • Kaisa Salmi



© Tanja Ahola

KATARIINA KIRJAVAINEN (born 1963)

Katariina Kirjavainen initially trained as a sculptor. During her studies she started to make sets, costumes and masks for her brother's films, and later for the Student Theatre of Helsinki. From 1997 on she started her MA-studies at the Department of Scenography at the University of Art and Design, and graduated in 2002. By the time she began her professional scenography studies Kirjavainen had already worked on about 25 productions. After graduating she freelanced in a variety of places including, the National Theatre, the Kuopio City Theatre and the Lahti City Theatre. Today she is employed at the Helsinki City Theatre. Her most recent work there was *Atelier* by Jean-Claude Grumberg. It premiered 25 March 2004.

Q-TEATTERI

Q-Teatteri is a group-theatre founded in 1990 by Antti Raivio. Raivio graduated from the Theatre Academy as an actor one year prior to *Q-Teatteri's* establishment. Together with Leo Raivio and Heikki Kujanpää he wanted to create an alternative to big institutions, and they started to put on performances of a high artistic quality with minimal resources. The group of freelance actors and directors associated with *Q-teatteri* grew rapidly. The ideology that united them was a commitment to making phenomenal theater with personal involvement. *Q-teatteri's* first success was a production of *The Boys of Skavaböle* by Antti Raivio, in 1992.

The letter Q also means the moon in Finnish.

Q-teatteri has two permanent stages in the basement of an apartment building in Töölö, in the center of Helsinki. The room with the bigger stage is a former movie theater and the smaller stage, called *Half-Q* (the half-moon), previously served as a market hall. Kirjavainen described working in the *Half-Q* space in the following way:

I found the space intriguing because its particular history could be sensed and seen.¹

The Half-Q stage is challenging for the scenography. The space is divided by eight supporting columns that cannot be removed. It gives the impression of having three aisles; the middle aisle is supported by columns, and higher than the other ones.²

Q-teatteri productions during the 1999–2000 season:

Gogol – Larin: *Varastettu kuu* (*The Stolen Moon*)
Pojan lelut, Juha Valkeapään äänneilmä
(*The Toys of the Boy, A Sound Play by Juha Valkeapää*)
Minna Vainikainen: *Gekko*
Tennessee Williams: *Streetcar of Desire*
Turo Herala: *Hiirimies* (*The Mouseman*)

WORKING WITH A MINIMAL BUDGET

Kirjavainen talked about the working conditions at *Q-teatteri* in the following way:

There was very little money, as is usually the case. All the Q-teatteri tools were in Suomenlinna where they were involved with a summer theater project. So, there was nothing. That was ter



© Katarina Kirjavainen

rible. While everything went really well concerning the design, everything that could go wrong in the realization went wrong.³

Q-teatteri had hired an external producer who was unaware that the regular stage manager was not at our disposal. So in the first production meeting I gave up a quarter of my salary as the scenographer in order to hire a stage manager.

Hiring a stage manager within such a short time and with such a small amount of money was extremely difficult. All the good and kind-hearted carpenters were already engaged somewhere else and finally I only managed to get temporary help for the construction work.⁴

My working days began with me calling people to see if they could spare any time to do some work. I did a huge amount myself and collected many of the props.⁵



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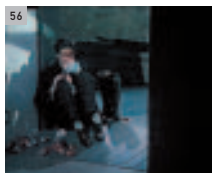
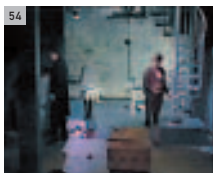
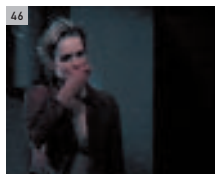
VIDEO-STILLS

1. The opening scene: Kristin cuts a cabbage in two halves with a huge knife on the butcher's block.
- 2–3. Kristin and Jean are eating in the kitchen at the beginning of the play.
- 4–5. Julie enters.
- 6–10. Julie wants Jean to come and dance with her.
- 11–13. Kristin is alone in the kitchen. The white object which falls from upstairs in the picture number 13 is Julie's handkerchief.
- 14–16. Julie interrupts Jean and Kristin.
17. Julie promises not to look when Jean changes his coat.
18. Kristin conceals Jean's privacy with her apron.
- 19–21. Jean kisses Julie's foot.
22. Julie drinks beer.
- 23–24. Jean has got something in his eye.
- 25–30. Jean and Julie go to Jean's room.
31. Darkness. While Jean and Julie are making love, empty beer cans fall from the ceiling on the floor.
- 32–33. Jean and Julie are back in the kitchen after making love.
- 34–35. Jean and Julie try to solve their problems.
36. Kristin enters dressed for the church.
- 37–38. Kristin starts cleaning the kitchen.
39. Julie enters in her traveling dress and carrying the bird-cage.
- 40–45. Jean kills the bird.



© Katarina Kirjavainen





46. Julie eats the dead bird.

47. Julie proposes Kristin to leave with them to Switzerland.

48–59. The final scenes of the play.

THE SCENOGRAPHY FOR MISS JULIE

KK: I came to think of stairs through which Julie could reach those who are subordinated by her, it was a means by which she could lower herself. I dreamt of small and slender spiral stairs but I knew it would be too expensive to build them. We were lucky; we found them in a junkyard in Tattarisuo.

The slaughtering block was a find from the University in Viikki's experimental farm...

I found other kitchen furniture, like the sink, the water boiler, the refrigerator and the metallic wardrobe in the recycling center. The gas stove was borrowed from the Theatre Acade-

my, and the dish washer and vacuum cleaner were bought from the Myllypuro Household Service. I found the chairs and the table in the Q-teatteri storeroom. A small armchair was found by the director in the garbage, and it was re-upholstered.

The props, which consisted of metallic kitchen utensils, knives, kettles and such things hung from a shelf near the ceiling, and were bought at flea markets and Ikea. We got the empty beer cans, which fell from the ceiling between the first and second act, from Silja Line.

The skylight window was placed in the middle of Half-Q, in the middle aisle supported by the columns and was an organic part of the architecture. The thought was quite surrealist and silly but I did not question it for one moment. I made the first sketch for the scenography only with the skylight. To me the Count was present in the text and in 'heaven', in the blue-painted heavenly cloth behind the skylight. There, from his elevated position, the Count contacts the servants below him by a ringing bell, in our version by an internal phone. The skylight extended to the auditorium ceiling because I wanted the weight of the Count to also be above the spectators... The Hell was the kitchen. There was a fire in the gas stove in our performance, as well as soot. In this Kristin was cooking the 'deviltry', the abortive potion for the dog. In this kitchen there was also a slaughtering block in the middle of the space waiting for a slaughtering.

When staging Kalevala [earlier in the same space] I had painted all the walls, columns and the ceiling of Half-Q gray. I decided to use this grayness for Miss Julie partly because of economical reasons but also because the color fitted well with the thought of an underground cellar kitchen. With the smooth gray tone I could emphasize the back wall of the old market hall which consisted of different layers of gray and brown paint, and was very visible in this spatial arrangement... I had mixed the paint myself out of white, red and green Rosco-paint. This allowed me to create a color that could be changed by means of light. I painted the wooden parts of the furniture white, in order to keep the color scale restrained. Kristine's red shopping bag on the



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and a blue dustpan worked as color spots...The light designer, Kaisa Salmi, lit the grayness of the set in a way that benefited the performance, using cold and warm lavender tones.

*I want to create scenographies where acting is possible. What makes this difficult is that you cannot see the mode of acting before the performance is finished... The way of designing scenographies is illogical. The scenographer should see into the future.*⁶

Kirjavainen talks about her relationship to Miss Julie and to the scenographic work:

I am a working mother with three children.... There is a long distance from my world to the upper-class idleness of a man- or at the turn of the century. Between working at my job and taking care of the children and house I have no time for anything else but daily survival. We modern women, conscious about our careers, are not expected to save our virginity and to perish along with the lost dignity; we are allowed to realize ourselves...

The place is the same for Julie and me: the kitchen... That's



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where I find myself, cleaning the table after the evening meal and thinking of she who made a different choice. When begging for love she got a razor, while I am in a permanent state of stress and rush because of the headlock of career and family. Julie exists in my head and we discuss whether there is such a big difference between our lives...Self-destruction is a way to exist and bear the stress in this world which still belongs to men.. The strength of masochism...Well, enough about that It is I myself who chose my lot, or did I?'

THE COSTUMES

Kirjavainen wrote about the characters and costumes in the following way:

At first I did not mean to make the costumes expressly modern but without any explanation the world of design started to fascinate me ...The fashionability of Julie stressed her privilege to wear expensive and unpractical clothes. Her endeavor to be loved is shown in her desperate attempts to be fashionable at the moment of her collapse.

The director described Julie as having a wavering sexual identity, being at first a seducer and fuelling the events in an immaterial and self-destructive way.

When she came to seduce Jean, Julie was wearing a transparent, thin, light-green little dress, the shoulder straps of which could not stay up. The bra was also dimly visible, as if were an accident...She had put under her dress tight shorts with tiger stripes. Over one shoulder and under one breast she had wrapped a thin, white knitted shirt. Her shoes were forgotten somewhere...

At the beginning of second act, after the seducing had taken place, Julie was wearing only a gray, lace bra and the tiger shorts. In order to cover her nakedness she had taken Jean black servant's coat. She has lowered herself.

After having stolen her father's money, in order to escape to Lake Como, Julie descended to the kitchen again. This time she was dressed in a traveling dress, a trouser suit which repeated the tones of violet, gray, green and red. The suit was fashionable, luxurious and tight-fitting, but Julie had forgotten to put a shirt under the jacket. Her hair was messed up and her make-up had run. She had really high-heeled shoes on her feet she, more than unpractical for the trip to Lake Como. It was in this scene that Julie collapsed. My image was of a top-class model with an amphetamine hangover; the collapse of an admired and privileged person who meets the extreme ends of success and destruction.

Words describing Jean were visionary, narcissistic, plebeian, corona-king ... The position of a servant should be seen in him. He had a black tailcoat, a white shirt with a stand-up collar, black, well fitting trousers and a light, dimly patterned waistcoat and black shoes. When polishing the Count's boots he put a black, full-length apron on...



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In the second act, when Jean had promised to go to church, he put on a gray tweed coat. In the end, while shaving he wore a black leather jacket over and a red Ferrari -cap with a peak.

Kristina was described by Katariina Lahti with words like reliable, having a good sense of humor, a good person, a good wife, not necessarily lucky with men, like a Swedish housewife in the 1950s... Kristina's aim was to get married to Jean and to have a family.

Kristina's working clothes were a clean, decent, checkered dress with a white collar, a white apron, anatomically modeled shoes and a protective cap; used by workers in food production. The play began when Kristina walked through the kitchen to the slaughtering block and cut a cabbage in two halves with a large knife.

At the end of the play, when Kristina was leaving to church, she came to the kitchen dressed in her best clothes. On her feet she had black extremely high-heeled but clumsy shoes made of suede, on her head she wore a blue chiffon scarf, she had gloves on her hands, a light poplin coat on her arm, a black handbag, and she wore a tight-fitting heavenly blue dress. In her own mind she was going to heaven.⁸

THE RECEPTION

The performance got a generally positive response, although there was some criticism of Julie's excessive hysteria.

*The best part of the performance's naturalism is that each of the spectators is a similar conglomerate. We are constructed by what is around us. The performance by Q-teatteri can, for good reason, be described as constructive.*⁹

*Julie, played by Salo, teeters on the edge of madness. Her black-lined eyes, sticking-out hair and half-nakedness tell the tragedy almost like a melodrama. She no longer seems to have a healthy relationship to the outer world or to herself.*¹⁰

*Miss Julie in Half-Q is strangely hysterical. The director Katariina Lahti has emphasized the struggling changes of mood by Julie too much, whereas the servant Jean is tame.*¹¹

*Henriikka Salo's Julie is an extremely disgusting female, much like how Strindberg described her at his most misogynistic. Julie is a coquette bloodsucker who fishes other people into her own net with an irreparable need for power. She spreads poison around her so that it fills the whole space.*¹²

The scenography was paid a lot of attention to:

The delicately full-bodied, accurate and beautiful kitchen-scenography by Katariina Kirjavainen, with its refrigerator and gas stove and many fascinating little things, is situated between old and new... The costumes by Kirjavainen are quite contemporary. Especially the creations done for Julie, Henriikka Salo, are beautiful and exciting. Kristina's church outfit, which is astonishingly blue and with high heels, looks as if it came directly from a shop window.

*In this space and situation the play by Strindberg is sometimes driven to the edges of credibility.*¹³

*In Kirjavainen's scenography naturalism is primarily put at the service of actors without any illustrative intentions.*¹⁴

*Maybe the scenography helps us to consider the ways in which the play's moral code still concerns us today. The human evolution does not happen with the same speed as technology, our conscience and unconsciousness reminds us of more primitive needs.*¹⁵

Naturally the passions in the cellar kitchen bring to mind Freudian theories about the structures of the human unconsciousness and basic sexuality...

*The postmodern diversity in Katariina Lahti's direction and the visual design by Katariina Kirjavainen is probably very deliberate but to my mind their theatricality underlines the temporality of the text unnecessarily.*¹⁶

*The scenography and costumes of Miss Julie are contemporary. It is not of great importance but on the other hand Victorian costumes in their inhibited nature and implicitness would have better shown the anxiety and pain in the game of human relationships.*¹⁷

1. Kirjavainen 2002.

2. Kirjavainen 2000.

3. Kirjavainen 2000.

4. Kirjavainen 2002.

5. Kirjavainen 2000.

6. Kirjavainen 2002.

7. Kirjavainen 2001.

8. Kirjavainen 2002.

9. Meri 1999.

10. Lehtonen 1999.

11. Tuominen 1999.

12. Kosk 1999.

13. Kajava 1999.

14. Meri 1999.

15. Linnavuori 1999.

16. Lehtonen 1999.

17. Tuominen 1999.