

Analysis of the Stronger By August Strindberg

The Stronger is universally considered the quintessential short play and a superb monodrama of great psychological profundity. The play represents a triangular situation in which two actresses—one married, Mrs. X, and one unmarried, Miss Y—meet accidentally at a café while Christmas shopping and begin considering their past rivalry in love for Mrs. X's husband. The play is unique in that the subject of the discussion, the husband, never appears, and for the fact that only one of the women, Mrs. X, speaks, while the other, Miss Y, merely reacts. To say "merely" is, however, to minimize unjustly the silent role, for it presents challenges every bit as great as those offered to the silent Mrs. X. In *The Stronger* Strindberg demonstrates what a keen insight and capacity for observation he possessed in regard to human nature and its machinations. There is, of course, the fairly open question of which of the two women is the stronger, the married actress who takes all in stride, bends with the winds, and survives in the dog-eat-dog world, or the taciturn Miss Y who, as Mrs. X says, has failed to bend and broken like a dry reed. But is her observation correct or is it wishful thinking? For near the end she observes that Miss Y, rather than going after her prey aggressively, merely sits like a cat at the rat hole and outwaits it. Mrs. X may in fact be announcing her own eventual loss of her husband to Miss Y—except that she is currently so secure in her marriage and family that she is unaware of her unconscious premonition. Like all great works, *The Stronger* has built-in ambiguities .

The form of the One – Act Play could be distinguished from the full –length play by the restriction of its basic dramatic elements : characters , plot structure , language and dialogue . It tends to reveal character through a brisk sequence of events whereas the normal play tends to show character developing as a result of actions and under the impact of incidents in every detail . Accordingly, the plot and the language of one –act plays are reduced to an absolute minimum . The dramatic conflict is minimized to the extent that it is presented in one ,or sometimes tow, situation throughout the play . The motivation of the characters is often uncomplicated since the one-act play lacks the extension of time , place and action through which the normal character in the full length- play is developed . Because of the restriction of the previous dramatic techniques ,the language of the one-act play becomes highly suggestive . There is no room for any irrelevant statement . Every sentence basically and directly contributes to the main action . In short , the relation of the one- act play to the normal or the longer drama has often been linked to that of the short story to the novel (Holman , 1980 : 309). One of the important dramatists, who is contributed to the new wave of the one –act play, is August Strindberg . In his one simple situation , *The Stronger* , Strindberg creates an episode of incredible , poetic power – a snapshot of life so intense, so powerful , that it rivals Beckett at his best . *The Stronger* , (henceforth, TS), is full and rich in allegory and lends itself to many layers of interpretation ; it is a play that takes little more than ten minutes to read / perform , but that one can easily spend hours thinking about afterwards . It is moreover , a powerful play , one that makes a deep impression , and leaves one with the illusion that one has traveled far and . seen much , even though the entire thing is actually incredibly short.

A coherent play must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the beginning the audience is introduced to characters and oriented to what is going on. This is usually accomplished by what is called exposition. Expository dialogue is conversation, the purpose of which is to inform the audience of key facts. These facts might include introducing the main characters and setting up the situation in which they find themselves--the who, what, and where of the play(Pfister 1988: 22) . In the middle, the audience sees the story developed through a series of complications and obstacles each leading to a mini crisis. Fighting of all kinds, whether hand to hand or with high tech weapons, is the easiest way to grab the attention of an audience. In any case, this kind of overt conflict almost magically galvanizes audience attention. But there is a fatigue factor--it cannot be sustained indefinitely. Even the most skillful action sequence must end before the audience becomes sated and its attention wanders. Though each of these crises are temporarily resolved, the play leads inevitably to an ultimate crisis called the climax. At the end, the climax and the loose ends of the play are resolved during what is called the dénouement(Pfister 1988: 88).And finally the End or The Closure is the type of conclusion that ends a play. Tightly plotted plays often have a 'recognition scene' (in which the protagonist finally recognizes the true state of affairs), and in the course of the dénouement the conflict is usually resolved by marriage, death, or some other aesthetically or morally satisfactory outcome. Many modern plays lack closure, however, are open-ended, simply stop, or conclude enigmatically and ambiguously.