An Analysis of The Stronger

Through the one simple scene of The Stronger, Strindberg creates an intense and powerful snapshot of life. The Stronger is rich in allegory and lends itself to many layers of interpretation. Though the play takes little more than ten minutes to read and perform, it makes a deep impression, and leaves one with the illusion that one has travelled far and seen much, even though the entire thing is actually incredibly short.

The Plot

Mrs. X meets Miss Y in a corner of a Women Café on a Christmas Eve. Mrs. X starts greeting and talking to Miss Y. Criticizing Miss Y for her loneliness, Mrs. X reveals memories about Miss Y’s relationship with Mrs. X’s husband. Mrs. X tells Miss Y that this relationship destroys her marriage; however, she feels stronger in all what happened. Their meeting reaches its end when Mrs. X announces that she will leave the café and go home to make love with her husband.

Climax

This uneventful plot reaches its climax when Mrs. X says: "I hate you! Oh, how I hate you". Before uttering these words, Mrs. X tries to pretend that she is calm. However, her mask of calmness and self-esteem falls apart and thus her anger, jealous, and sadness are well-recognized. According to this, the play is marked by its subjective point of view because the audience listens to one voice, namely Mrs. X’s voice.

The Conflict

The problem of Mrs. X is about her husband who has had an affair with Miss. Y in the past and now she has been given the chance to revenge. Although the speech of Mrs. X is very effective and loaded with bitter and hard feelings towards Miss. Y, Miss. Y never utters a word. The play demonstrates the power of the body language. The reader or the audience is easily getting the meaning and understanding the story despite the fact that Miss. Y is silent. The signals and the gestures are very enough for the audience to apprehend the play.
The Significance of the Setting

Miss Y sits in a corner of a woman's café. Miss Y symbolically separates herself from other people by sitting far in the corner. She apparently has no inclination to mix with others. When Mrs. X enters the café and meets Miss Y, she confirms the situation of being lonely: “Hello, Amelia darling! You look as lonely on Christmas Eve as a poor bachelor.” Moreover, Strindberg chooses the day of Christmas Eve for the meeting of the two women to emphasize the paradoxical connection between the whole situation and the happy connotations of this holly occasion. Although the occasion is blissful, Miss Y does not seem happy. She is alone, sitting in one of the restaurant corners reading and drinking. Then, by means of her body language as well as Mrs. X's memories, the audience will understand the message of the scene. Miss Y passes some troubled times. One of the main questions related to the setting is that of why Strindberg chooses a women café instead of any other café. The answer is that Strindberg's *The Stronger* focuses on the role and importance of women in the early 20th century. Therefore, the whole situation is set up at a female café so as to make it possible for the two characters to fully express their emotions rather than being influenced by men.

The Significance of the Title

The title of the play motivates the question of who is the stronger among the characters. Since the leader of the whole dialogue is Mrs. X, one may assume at very beginning of the play that she is stronger than Miss Y. However, analyzing the dialogue gives the reader certain information about the development of Mrs. X and Miss Y's relationship. In fact, through Mrs. X's recalled memories the reader views how their relationship passes by stages and thus the role of the stronger transforms between the two, Mrs. X and Miss Y.

When Mrs. X met Miss Y for the first time she feels that she is weaker than Miss Y. Mrs. X says: "it was so strange about us—when I saw you the first time I was afraid of you so afraid I didn't dare to let you out of my sight. Wherever I was, I was always near you—I didn't dare to be your enemy, so I become your friend." Mrs. X, in the early stages of her relationship with Miss Y, is no more than a receiver of power and an assimilator of Miss Y's mentality and behavior. This is confirmed by Mrs. X herself: "I had to wear your color, read your authors; eat your favorite dishes, drink your drinks…my God—it's terrible when I think about it .....Everything came to me from you even your passions...I wanted to escape from you but I couldn't " The helplessness of Mrs. X in confronting the dominated power of Miss Y is represented by a metaphorical image; Mrs. X compares herself to a bird whose wings drag it down until it sank to the bottom where Miss Y lays "like a giant crab ready to seize [her] in [its] claws" By comparing Miss Y to a crab, Mrs. X aims at humiliating her; she links Miss Y's nature with animal's nature aiming at degrading and insulting her.
Later on, Miss X calls Miss Y "poor Amelia"—a matter that gives the reader a hint that Mrs. X is stronger than the past: "I know you're unhappy, unhappy like someone who has been hurt, and nasty because you are hurt!—I can't be angry with you though I like to be—you're the weakling!"

At the present time, Mrs. X recognizes how she benefits everything Miss Y taught her. In fact, what Mrs. X learned from Miss Y taught her how to regain her husband, Bob: "you have taught me to drink chocolate…you have taught me how to dress—that has made my husband closer to me than ever…thank you, Amelia, thank you for everything you taught me...thank you for teaching my husband how to make love" At the moment Mrs. X learns how to take rather than give she becomes stronger. In fact, Miss Y tries to take Mrs. X husband but she fails. Mrs. X stolen from Miss Y everything that attracted her husband’s attention and thus she compares herself to "a thief" who steals everything before the awakening of others: "I'm like a thief-so that when you awakened, I had what you had lost."

Another event in the play that enhances Mrs. X's feelings of strength is achieved when she takes out the toy gun and pretends to shoot Miss Y who appears frightened. Her reaction might just be an exaggeration and serve as a joke because she knows that the gun is not real. However, her reaction might be genuine because she is afraid that Mrs. X will harm her.