

## Lecture (2)

The stronger by August Strindberg (1849-1912).

The setting: is the introductory paragraph in the most plays, which introduces the place, time, and action of the play.

The setting of the stronger is A corner of a woman's café; two iron tables, a red worsted shag sofa, and some chairs. This description represents the place of the play.

The characters are Mrs. X and Miss. Y.

-The action is the struggle between two women for defending settlement of a family. Mrs. X defends her marriage with her husband Bob.

---@@@ The kind of this play is dramatic monologue. Only Mrs. X was talking and talking about her family, jealousy, her imitation to what Miss Y was doing in order to protect her family. While Miss Y was only listening and reacting, but without any answer.

--This drama is unique because it contains three characters, but only Mrs. X is speaking. As she speaks with Miss. Y. The reaction of Miss. Y appears in the form of facial expressions and gestures. The act of silence tempt a person to judge the silent of the young woman.

THE plot of this play:

Mrs. X cannot know Miss. Y's heart or motive. Instead she makes the stories and fill the gaps of her inquiries or the blanks in her mind. In fact Mrs. X does not find the answer she needs. In the process of interrogating Miss. Y, Mrs. Y finds some truth about herself. She discovers that she has learned about life through imitating Miss Y. She makes it a point to get one last barb in when she tells Miss Y "Thank you, Amelia for your good lessons. Thank you for teaching my husband how to love. I am going home-to love him". (Twaij & AlSoudani, 1986: p.15).

Strindberg wrestles with the "woman question", feminism of the time. It has been said that for him "woman existed for him only as her status as a wife", but not really as an individual. He does not believe that the woman should have a profession, believing the woman, among other

very derogatory things, should remain in the home. Several authors called him as a "misogynist".

However, this play opens the horizon for different arguments "conflicting" interpretations. As the play progress, the readers will discover that Mrs. X and Miss Y are rivals for more than theater roles- Miss Y is having\ has had affair with Mrs. X's Husband. Except that the play never really corroborates this- we only know that by the end of the scene Mrs. X believes that this is true. So we have two very different readings: in the first, Mrs. X is an astute wife who discovers the truth about Miss Y and her husband; in the second, Mrs. X is a pathetic and paranoid woman who's insecurity about her marriage has brought her to slander.

The characters in this play are "the characters on the stage" and the "characters off the stage"

The characters on the stage:

- Mrs. X is the protagonist. She is round and dynamic because she develops and changes in the course of the play.

- Miss. Y is the antagonist. She is flat and does not develop and change. She only Listens.

--@@ The characters of the stage:

Bob, Maja, Lisa, Mrs. X servant Marie, Frederique, Miss Y's father Eskil: all are flat characters.

This in turn, leaves the question of **who is "Stronger"** one (which is, after all, the key to the play) open.

**Is Miss Y, who chooses to maintain her silence against Mrs. X's accusations "whether false or true" stronger in her independence? Or, as Mrs. X would have it , is she the stronger one, because she has accepted the truth about her husband and found a way to go on?**

**Discuss Strindberg's Stronger as a drama of Gender Roles.**

**References:**

**Kian Pishkan. (2008) Guide to English Literature**

Abrams & Humphry (2012). Glossary of Literary Terms, Tenth edition, Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Twaij & Alsoudani. (1986) One Act Plays, University of Baghdad Press.