

**August Strindberg's "The Stronger " as
Monodramatic
Situational –Plot Structure :
A Stylistic Study**

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Abstract

On the surface , there is nothing particularly complicated about Strindberg's monodramatic situational plot one – Act play structure , "**The Stronger** ". Tow women- Tow actresses – run into each other in a restaurant on Christmas Eve . One is married and has been out shopping for presents for her family , the other is unmarried and is sitting alone in the restaurant reading magazines and drinking . We are told almost nothing about these tow women- they are not even important enough to have names ; Strindberg calls them simply **Mrs. X.** and **Miss. Y.** And , the entire play consists of nothing more than a single conversation between these tow women. There is no action , no real plot development , nothing particularly out of the ordinary . In fact , one of the woman – Miss. Y. does not even speak in the entire play ,i.e. **Miss Y.** maintaining her share in the development of the action by pantomime , facial expressions , and an occasional laugh ,
(**The Stronger** ,P.: 22).

0. Introduction

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.

1.One –Act Play

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

2. Dramatic Structure

Drama is a pattern of words and actions having the potential for “**doing**” or becoming living words or actions. **Drama** is a literary form involving parts written for [actors](#) to perform. It is a [Greek](#) word meaning "action," drawn from the Greek verb, "to do," (Rasbury,2002: 2).

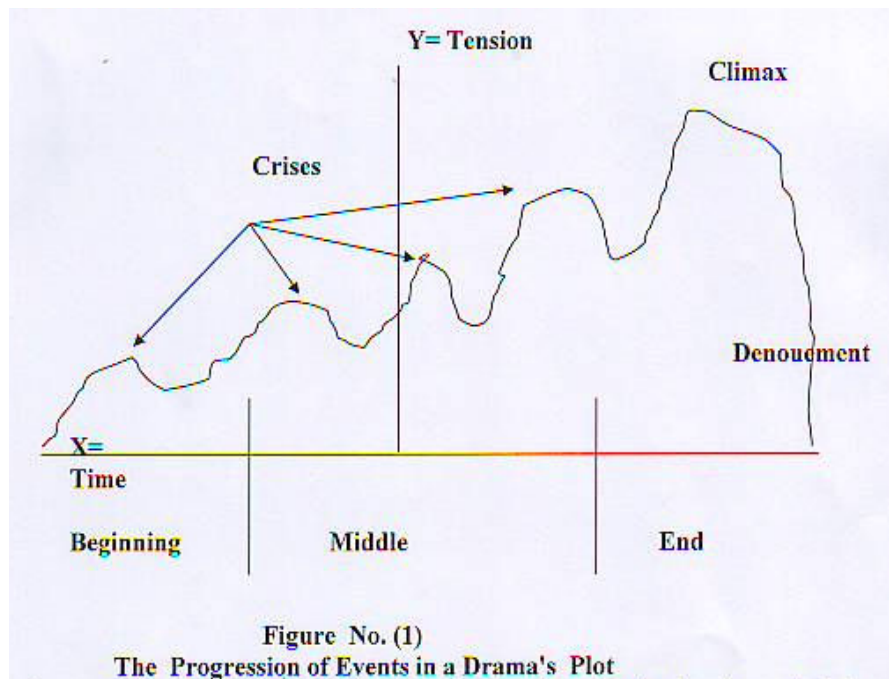
Dramas can be performed in a variety of media: live performance, [film](#), or [television](#). "[Closet dramas](#)" are works written in the same form as plays (with dialogue, scenes, and "stage directions"), but meant to be read rather than staged(Calleve, 2004: 3). Drama is also often combined with music and dance, such as in [opera](#) which is sung throughout, musicals which include spoken dialogues and songs, Improvisational drama, a form of [Improvisational theatre](#), is a drama that has no set script, in which the performers take their cues from one

another and the situations (sometimes established in advance) in which their characters find themselves to create their own dialogue as they perform. Improvisational drama is made up on the spot using whatever space, costumes or props are available. Then, any play is an attempt to synthesize decoration, costume, speech, and action into one mood, i.e. into one plot.

2. 1. Plot

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.

Nearly, all dramatic material can be reduced to some version of this generic structural form. If this structure were to be plotted on an algebraic-style graph, it might yield something like the bell-curve in the figure below(See **Figure No. 1**). The x axis represents time, and the y axis represents tension. As the plot progresses through time, there is a rising and falling of tension with each crisis, and an overall rise as we approach the climax. At the end of the climax the tension is rapidly dissipated as all elements of the play are resolved and explained. Notice that this falling of tension occurs very near the end of the play because it is nearly impossible to sustain audience interest very long after the climax.



A key question for the dramatist is where in the play to begin the plot--called the **point of attack**(Jahn,2003: 7). An early point of attack picks up the play near its origin, and a late point of attack nearer to the end or climax. Many dramatic plays use one or the other of these options which are sometimes called **episodic** , **climactic** and

situational structural forms. Some plots use elements of all(Rasbury ,2001: 9). Many critics describe plot as the skeleton that holds a play together. Just as a skeleton connects the body's knee-bone to its ankle-bone, connects them both to the more distant wrist-bone, and keeps them all part of one functioning, coherent organism, so also plot keeps the murder at the end of a play , for example, linked to a conversation in the first scene, and keeps them both logically linked to the precious statue that was stolen somewhere in the play's middle, and even links everything to the flashback about the protagonist's childhood events. A good, well-structured plot connects the various events in a play into a coherent whole, flowing smoothly and logically, no matter how surprising the characters' behavior. "**Plot**" ,then, doesn't just tell **what** happened; it tells **why** it happened.

2.3.Aristotle's Elements of Complex Plots

In addition to his theory about beginnings, middles, and endings, Aristotle described a number of elements that he considered crucial to the creation of a complex, fully developed plot (The Columbia Encyclopedia,2005: 3):

2.3.1.reversals — Characters should find themselves going from good fortune to bad, and back again, etc., as both result and cause of their choices and actions. These reversals serve as climactic moments in the plot.

2.3.2.discoveries — Aristotle said that characters should make discoveries, especially about themselves. These discoveries may be about their pasts, their flaws, or even their own motivations.

2.3.3.complications — Something should stand between the protagonist and his objective .

2.3.4.catastrophe — It needs not be an earthquake or a mass murder; it might be an emotional catastrophe, completely internal to the character's psyche. But no plot will be interesting if things go too

smoothly. Bad things should happen, even to good people. It's how the characters deal with catastrophe that produces plot.

2.3.5.resolution — The plot should reach some satisfactory conclusion that continues logically from the events of the story. (In other words, the plot does not rely on coincidences, in which some new element gets introduced suddenly at the end to resolve the plot.)

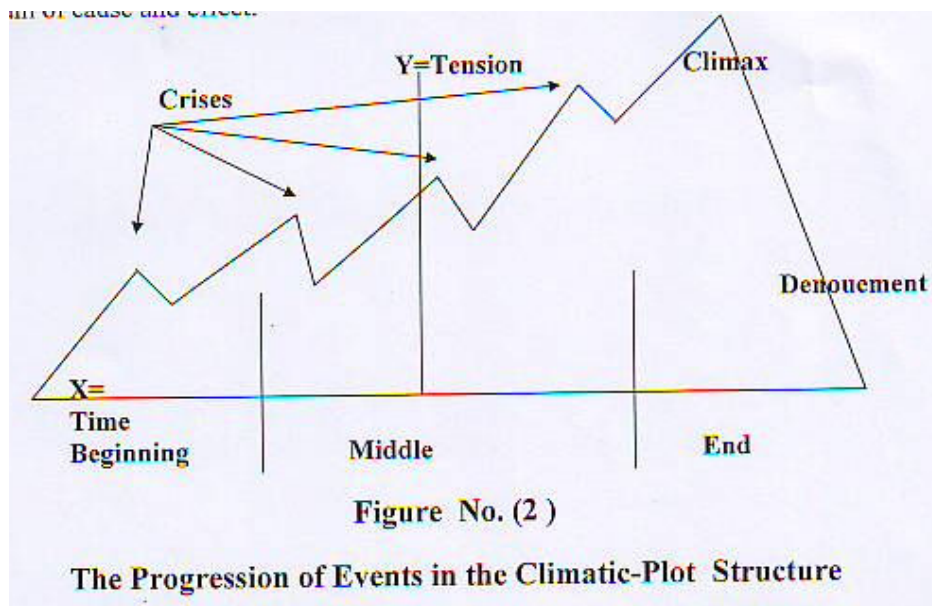
2.4.Common Play Structures

The structure of the play is the manner in which the playwright organizes the dialogue into a meaningful and coherent whole(Rasbury,2002:4). In **Western Drama**, plot and action are based on a central conflict that is confronted using complication, crisis, and climax. This variance of this pattern gives the play its structure.

2.4.1. Climactic Plot Structure

Probably the most common is the climactic plot structure. Its late point of attack helps to create a much more compressed and naturally taut story line. Because there are fewer events to depict, it is particularly favored for the stage because it cuts down on the number of actors, sets, and costumes that must be paid for. One of the challenges of this form is that the audience must somehow be made aware of the events that have led up to the point of attack(Jahn,2003: 9) . Traditionally, this has been done through exposition. Aristotle considered Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* to be the perfect tragedy. It is also an extremely clear example of climactic plot structure: it has only six characters; takes place in one location; and the story begins and ends on the same day yet turns on events that happened years before. The play is basically a murder-mystery in which the "**detective**" is King Oedipus himself. He interviews a series of witnesses, each of whom reveals clues and facts that eventually lead to the killer. With each step forward in the plot, he learns of an event farther back in time, until he arrives at the final clue which is the circumstance of his own

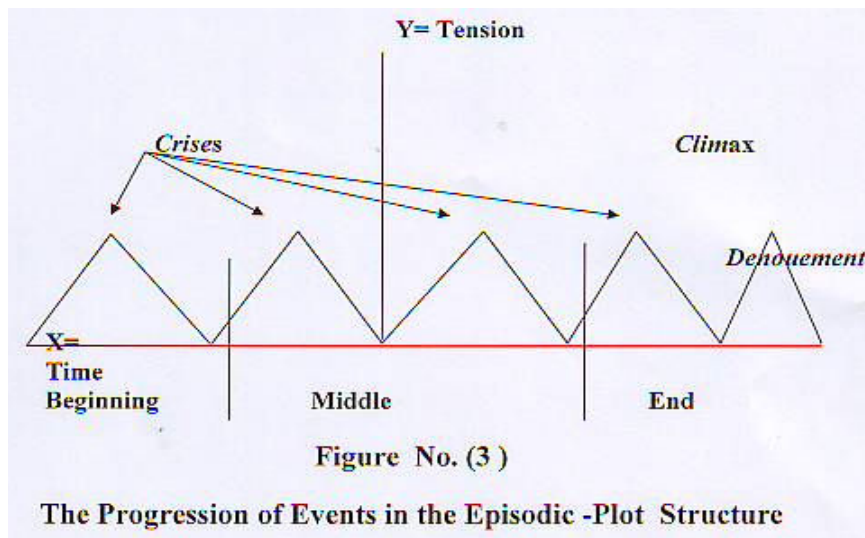
birth(See **Figure No. 2**). This fact reveals that he himself is the murderer. This simultaneous movement forward in real time and backward in virtual time was invented by Sophocles and has been used constantly ever since. A modern adaptation of this technique made possible by film is the flashback. In a **flashback**, events that happen before the point of attack are depicted in brief scenes rather than discussed in retrospect. Flashback scenes either with or without dialogue, especially at the beginning of films, have become an important technique in paving the way to a climactic structure. Climatic structure contains incidents that can be seen to lie along a line of causality from a beginning to an end. Causality- the belief that human events have causes and therefore consequences; as a result, events are seen as joined in a chain of cause and effect.



.4.2. Episodic Plot Structure

In the episodic structure the dramatist chooses to begin early in the play line. We see the title character first in childhood. Since there is so much material to be covered, the author must then select only certain key events, then skip ahead through time. We next see the protagonist as a teenager, and finally as an adult. In this way the dramatist can

sample bits (episodes) of his life in order to give the audience an impression of his entire life. By their nature episodic plots create the need for many different characters and settings and tend to be longer. Another word which describes this structure is **epic**. The word *epic* evokes great sweeps of history and landscape, and casts of thousands. Episodic structure traces characters through a journey to a final action. Our view of the episodes helps us to explore the characters and know what the journey meant (See **Figure No. 3**).



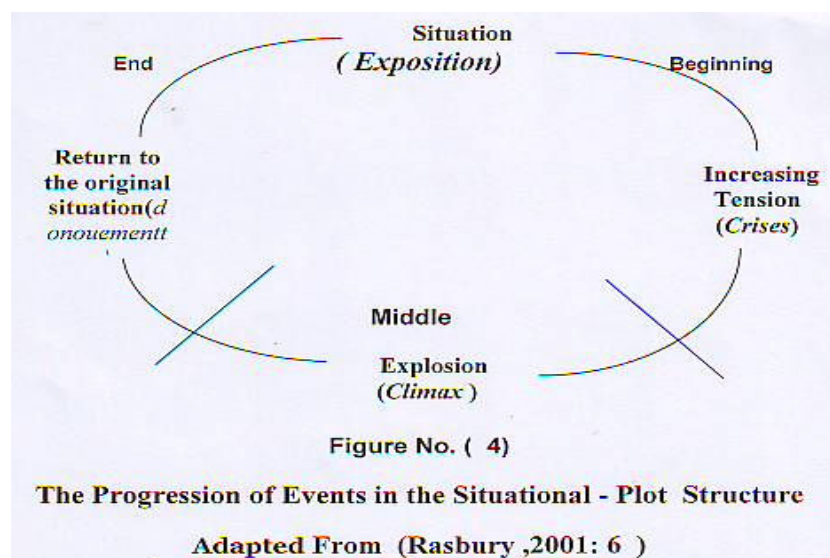
Sometimes, a full range of possibilities remain available to the characters until the very end. Episodic plays can cover many years and locales in one play. This allows the characters to keep a full range of possibilities unlike climatic structure. Episodic structure is “loose” in nature and allows characters to pass through situations instead of getting caught in them.

2.4.3. Situational Structure

Early man, frightened by what must have appeared to be a chaotic world around him, sought comfort in making some sense of it. Over the millennia art, religion, and science have all played a part in this effort. In spoken language, humans have organized vocal sounds according to a certain code to create communication. We call this coded structure grammar and syntax. Art is a kind of language too because all art is a pattern or organization of elements in some coherent way in order to express an idea. Structure in the arts is the

organization of its raw material (medium) in such a way as to make it understandable and meaningful to its audience. In dramatic art, whatever the source of play material, it must be organized into a form that is suitable for performance by actors on the stage --it must be **dramatized**. Most of what we call dramatization means that the story must be told through action--actual human behavior. Human behavior consists outwardly of physical movement and speech, inwardly of thinking and feeling. Actors must use these behaviors to live the lives of the characters they play, and in so doing the story is told. It may be helpful to think of story as the raw material on which dramatic art is based. When we compare and analyze various plots we can deduce common plot patterns or structures that appear repeatedly in dramatic literature. Therefore we can say that plot is based on a story, and structure based on a plot.

In situational plot structure of a play the situation shapes the course of the play- typically found in Absurdist and naturalist plays(Rasbury ,2001: 6). A “circular plot” replaces the journey or the causality. And as described by Joseph Campbell in his numerous books, the situational structure plot is common in fairy tales, folk tales, and myths. It involves a specific situation , which might be graphically represented as a circle, since this situational structural plot begins with the specific situation and ends with the same situation(See **Figure No. 4**) .



3.Types of Utterance in Drama

Dramatic language is modelled on real-life conversations among people, and yet, when one watches a play, one also has to consider the differences between real talk and drama talk. Dramatic language is ultimately always constructed or ‘made up’ and it often serves several purposes. On the level of the story-world of a play, language can of course assume all the **pragmatic functions** that can be found in real-life conversations, too: e.g., to ensure mutual understanding and to convey information, to persuade or influence someone, to relate one’s experiences or signal emotions, etc.(Diaz, 2001: 5). However, dramatic language is often **rhetorical** and **poetic**, i.e., it uses language in ways which differ from standard usage in order to draw attention to its artistic nature .When analysing dramatic texts, one ought to have a closer look at the various forms of utterance available for drama.

3.1.Monologue, Dialogue, Soliloquy

In drama, in contrast to narrative, characters typically talk to one another and the entire plot is carried by and conveyed through their verbal interactions. Language in drama can generally be presented either as **monologue** or **dialogue**. Monologue means that only one character speaks while dialogue always requires two or more participants(Encyclopedia,2005:1). A special form of monologue, where no other person is present on stage beside the speaker, is called **soliloquy**. Soliloquies occur frequently in *Richard III* for example, where Richard often remains alone on stage and talks about his secret plans. Soliloquies are mainly used to present a character in more detail and also on a more personal level. In other words: Characters are able to ‘speak their mind’ in soliloquies. That characters explain their feelings, motives, etc. on stage appears unnatural from a real-life standpoint but this is necessary in plays because it would otherwise be very difficult to convey thoughts, for example. In narrative texts, by contrast, thoughts can be presented directly through techniques such as [interior monologue](#) or [free indirect discourse](#). Critics often refer to soliloquy simply as monologue, as this is the more general term. In

case of a **monologue**, other characters can be present on stage, either overhearing the speech of the person talking or even being directly addressed by him or her. The main point is that one person holds the floor for a lengthy period of time.

3.1.1.The Double Bass : A Monodrama

A monodrama is a stage narrative taking usually about twenty minutes to act , having a single chief character , and a single problem which predominates , and is developed by means of a plot so compressed and so organized that every utterance and every action of the characters move it forward to a finish which presents the most striking features, while the whole is so organized as to produce a single impression ."(Page , 2006 : 5).

The monodrama is defined by one speaking part, which in classical drama served in addition to that of the chorus. In the eighteenth century the monodrama was accompanied by music and centered often on classical heroines (Millett,2001: 66). In the role of an eavesdropper the audience witnessed the expressed thoughts and feelings of the character as in the case of dramatic monologue. The form degenerated to melodrama in the nineteenth century but was finally reborn again with August Strindberg. *The Stronger* (*Den starkare*,1912, as cited in *ibid.*:79) consists of one scene-situation about fifteen minutes in length. The monodrama is a modern experimentalist form, in which a playwright presents the conscious and unconscious thoughts of the speaker(Rasbury,2001:8). Accordingly , Monodrama is a special feature of the play that, this medium or technique permits a playwright to place his reader (audience) inside the mind of its subject's to experience their thoughts and feelings. In monodrama - *stream of consciousness*- the entire play is delivered through the consciousness of the subject. It is a

method of representing the mental processes of fictional characters as a continuous blending of sense-perceptions, thought, feelings and memories as if they were recorded directly without the author's intervention, sometimes without punctuation(cf.Cohn, 1978). In [literary criticism](#), **stream of consciousness** denotes a [literary technique](#) which seeks to describe an individual's point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character's thought processes. Stream-of-consciousness writing is strongly associated with the [modernist movement](#).

Stream-of-consciousness writing is usually regarded as a special form of [interior monologue](#) and is characterized by associative (and at times dissociative) leaps in syntax and punctuation that can make the prose difficult to follow, tracing as they do a character's fragmentary thoughts and sensory feelings. Stream of consciousness and interior monologue must be clearly distinguished from [dramatic monologue](#), where the speaker is addressing an audience or a third person, and is used chiefly in [poetry](#) or [drama](#). In stream of consciousness, the speaker's thought processes are more often depicted as overheard (or addressed to oneself) and is primarily aliterary device.

3.1.2.The Personal Nature of Consciousness: Flow and Structure

In [literary criticism](#), **stream of consciousness** denotes a [literary technique](#) which seeks to describe an individual's point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character's thought processes. Stream-of-consciousness writing is strongly associated with the [modernist movement](#). (Diaz , 2001 : 9).

It's a phrase coined by the American philosopher and psychologist W. James in his **Principles of Psychology** (1890) to describe the flow of thoughts of the waking mind(*ibid.*). In the book, James treated thinking and knowledge as weapons to help us cope with life(*ibid.*). Sigmund Freud encouraged his patients to speak freely and without conscious control, to verbalise their unconscious thoughts, and he published transcriptions of several of their monologues(*ibid.*). Monologues and the idea of the stream of consciousness, that is the

revelation of personality and behavioural motivation through unguarded speech, became, as a result, a major literary and dramatic technique in the 20th century.

This means, for example, that sense impressions simply do not appear, this is partly because when engrossed in thought few of them reach consciousness, and partly because they are irrelevant to the topic in hand. So the stream of consciousness in question is a special kind of stream, and its presentation is selective.

3.1.3.Representation of Consciousness

Rather more intricate than representations of speech in direct or indirect mode are representations of thought, which can be conceptualised as a kind of silent speech or inner speech. Obviously, it is possible simply to represent thought, just like speech, using direct or indirect discourse.

But there are other ways of representing thought or consciousness. The advantage that narrative prose has over drama, for instance, is that it can tell the reader about a character's mental processes and emotions without having that character burst into speech (as in a [soliloquy](#) in drama for instance). The reader is allowed to look into a character's head, though of course in the narrative the character continues to act like most people do and keeps his thoughts to himself. It is worth noting that with the representation of a character's consciousness in narrative prose a realistic effect is achieved – the reader feels he receives firsthand and inside knowledge of the character – through really rather unrealistic means which has nonetheless become a convention. In reality, of course, we cannot look into other people's heads; the only thought processes we will ever get to know intimately are our own. Three major methods of thought representation have been identified, depending on the level of noticeable narrator interference (taking up Cohn's distinctions ,1978: 7).

3.1.3.1.Interior monologue : A monodrama

The thoughts are presented in the first person, several thoughts run into each other as perceptions of different things crowd into the character's consciousness, syntax and punctuation are not those of conventional written language, but try to imitate spoken (or thought) language. This technique of presentation is now most commonly

called **interior monologue** and it is intended to present a character's thoughts directly, imitating as much as possible the way this character might 'actually' have thought his thoughts.

The notion that one's thoughts are not in fact orderly and well-formulated but more of a jumbled-up sequence of associations, gained currency with a concept developed in psychology, called **stream of consciousness**. This term was coined by William James, the brother of the novelist Henry James (Miller, 2000: 1). It is important to note, however, that for William James the stream of consciousness was not necessarily verbal but also included other sensual perceptions, especially visual representations. Interior monologue is one narrative technique – necessarily limited to verbal representation – that tries to reproduce non-orderly and associative patterns of thought. It is also possible to reproduce the stream of consciousness in **narrated monologue** (see **Table No. 1**). The term stream of consciousness thus refers to the way cognitive processes take place, it is not itself a narrative technique. Unfortunately, many critics use the term to denote a narrative technique, which confuses the issue.

Table No.(1)
The possibilities for the representation of thought or
consciousness (adapted from Nunning 1996: 223)

Term	Formal Criteria	Effect
direct discourse	quotation marks, inquit formulas (optional), dominating tense is present tense	mimetic reproduction of actual thought event
interior monologue (direct thought in longer passages): A Monodrama	reference to character in first person, uses narrative present, syntactical conventions and punctuation partly or completely dispensed with	high degree of immediacy, can reproduce character's stream of consciousness
indirect discourse	grammatical structure of reported speech	can create a feeling of distance, but need not, consciousness of

		character who gives the report interposed
narrated monologue / free indirect discourse	narrator refers to the character in third person and narrative past, syntax less formal: uses exclamations, ellipses, etc.	narrator reports character's thoughts using the character's mind style: 'dual voice', can create immediacy but can also be used to create ironic distance, can reproduce character's stream of consciousness
psychonarration or narrative report of thought	refers to the character in third person, usually uses narrative past, syntax mostly complete and ordered, one hears the narrator's voice	usually summarizes thought processes using the narrator's and not the character's syntax and diction; can create distance

3.1.3.2. Psychonarration

Obviously, interior monologue is a technique that puts a certain amount of strain on the reader. Thus, it is more common (outside avantgard fiction) to learn about a character's consciousness from the narrator, who takes it upon him- or herself, to report the character's thoughts to the reader. In psychonarration the heterodiegetic narrator remains in the foreground throughout, even adds some general observations not originating in the character. While we certainly learn about the whale's thoughts and feelings, we hear it entirely in the narrator's voice, syntax and vocabulary. We do not hear the voice of the whale as in the rendering above in interior monologue. The difference in effect is quite marked, the reader remains much more distant from the character's consciousness and the level of mediation remains noticeable in the foreground.

3.1.3.3. Narrated Monologue

A third technique for the representation of consciousness is called **narrated monologue** or **free indirect discourse**. This represents, in a

way, a mixture between psychonarration and interior monologue. In a narrated monologue the narrator often sets the scene but the character's thoughts are reproduced 'directly' and in a way that one would imagine the character to think, though the narrator continues to talk of the character in the third person. The syntax becomes less formal (incomplete sentences, exclamations, etc.) and the character's mind style is reproduced more closely (for the concept of mind style. We hear a 'dual voice' (Millett, 2001: 69), the voices of the narrator and the characters are momentarily merged. This can create an impression of immediacy but it can also be used to introduce an element of irony, when the reader realises that a character is misguided without actually being told so by the narrator .

While the narrator resurfaces at the beginning and the end of this version, the voice of the whale becomes more dominant in the middle section which is given in narrated monologue (the relevant section is marked bold) though the narrator is still apparent in the use of the third person and past tense. Compare the two previous versions: [Interior monologue](#) and [Psychonarration](#). A classic example for the frequent use of narrated monologue or free indirect discourse is [Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway](#),(Nunning,1996: 234).

4. the Stylistic Analysis of *The Stronger*

Plot is what gives dramatic art its weight, importance, and staying power. Without significant plots plays may seem slight, trivial, and forgettable .Thus, the title of this one –situational plot play suggests the theme ; who indeed is the stronger of the tow characters ? The silent **Miss Y.** who is perhaps having an affair with the husband of **Mrs. X.** , or the loquacious **Mrs. X.** who may, (or may not) , in the final analysis have the upper hand in this awkward , in a tea shop ?!!!. So , there is much provocative discussion as to how to interpret this play . Yet , what is it that makes the play so powerful? To begin with , Strindberg uses a combination stage direction and reaction from **Mrs. X.** to ensure that **Miss . Y.** is more than a passive listener and that her responses , or at any rate , **Mrs. X** interpretations of her responses influence and guide the thread of this monodramatic – Situational One – Act play.

4.1. "The Stronger " as Situational Structure Plot

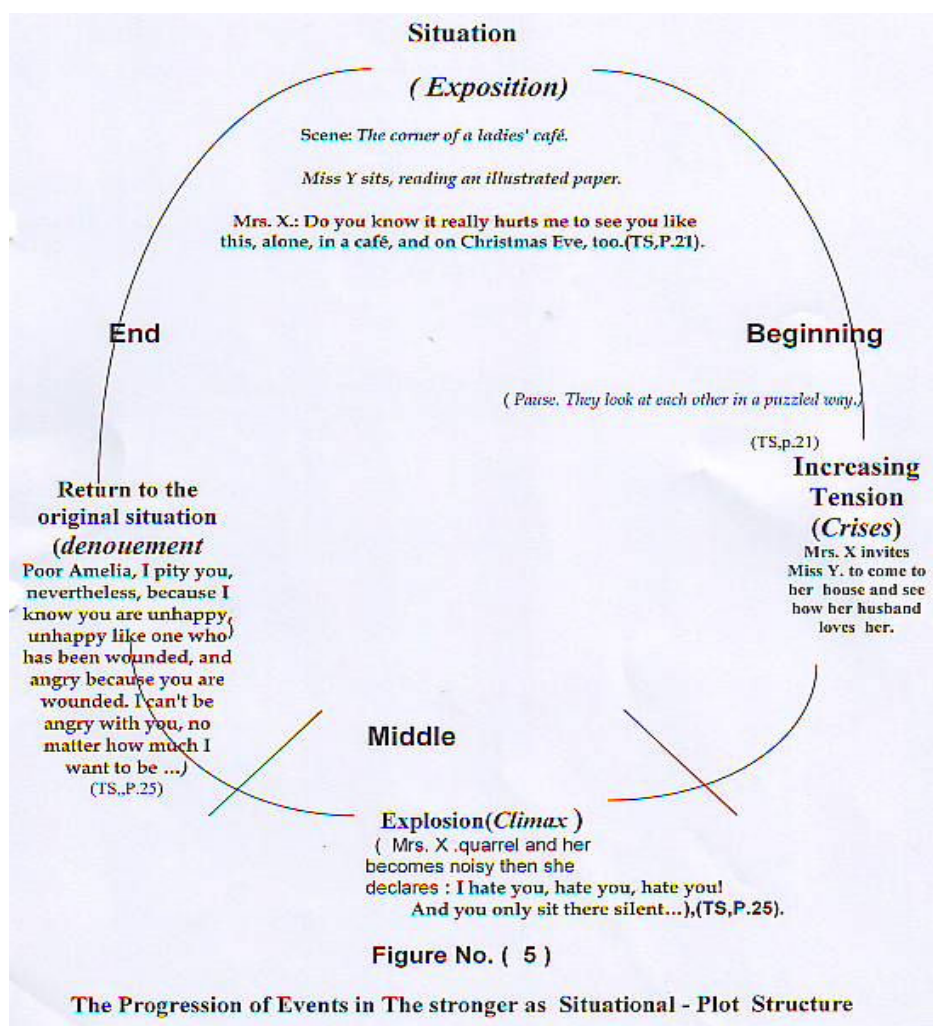
A *dramatic situation* is a situation, in a narrative or dramatic work, in which people (or "people") are involved in conflicts that solicit the audience's empathetic involvement in their predicament. Often we are plunged directly and immediately into a dramatic situation, right at, or shortly after, the opening of the play. In such cases, it is the business of [exposition](#) to acquaint us with the basic facts we need to understand in order to grasp, at least initially, the dramatic situation. In other works -- for example, those which use suspense to catch the audience's initial attention -- the exposition will be employed to generate instead some [dramatic question](#). Sometimes, though, the dramatic situation gets introduced more gradually, as the action unfolds. This may happen in works that use suspense to capture our attention while we become acquainted with additional objects of interest. Some plays engage our interest in dramatic situation for its own sheer excitement often a dramatic question comes to attach to a conflict's outcome, while others exploit it to draw attention to some ethical or prudential point (a "moral"), or to interest us in the peculiarities of character of one or more of the agents involved in it. And when we become enmeshed in a dramatic situation, we may find that its nature turns out to be more richer and more complex than it did in its first emergence in the play, or that its nature changes in ways we need to pay attention to.

The point of these reminders is that we want to avoid hobbling ourselves with the illusion that all plays turn exclusively, or primarily, or even at all, upon conflict. We want to keep ourselves open to the possibility that the piece with which we have to do is designed to satisfy other, or additional interests. In Strindberg's *TS* the reader realizes that he/she is hooked in suspense, we want to be alert to the possibility that part of the play's strategy in doing this is to bring us into contact with a dramatic situation. At the same time, it may be that the play we are reading is not undertaking to solicit our identification within a situation of conflict. It may be that *this* is a play that operates primarily on the level of suspense, or in the manner of an expository parable. Equally, though, when we find ourselves confronted with the dramatic situation, we want to be alert to the fact that this may be for the sake of ulterior ends. As the dramatic situation becomes progressively more clearly defined, we want to be asking, "So what?" *Why* is the author choosing to put before us precisely this set of conflicts? Such curiosity is necessary if we are to

tune into the issues the play may be concerned to present for our inspection and reflection. If we are simply involved in a more or less immediate way in the dramatic situation, we may remain blind to the point of its presence in the play in the final analysis.

4.1.1. Exposition:

It is true that no stage production, no matter how detailed the situation is, can ever do more than *suggest* reality. The evening begins with a specific situation .The opening situation features **Mrs. X** talking with, or to be more accurate, talking to the unnervingly quiet **Miss Y** at a quaint, little restaurant(see **Figure No 5**).



4.1.1.1. The Beginning

The greeting of **Mrs. X** lets both the audience and **Miss Y** know right from the beginning that the restaurant won't be quiet for long:

1.Mrs.X. : Good afternoon, Amelia. You're sitting here alone on Christmas Eve like a poor bachelor! ... Do you know it really hurts me to see you like this, alone, in a café, and on Christmas Eve, too. ...You know what, Amelia! I believe you would have done better to have kept him!,(TS,P.21).

The rest consists of **Mrs. X's** monologue as she talks to **Miss Y** and herself, trying to piece together why **Miss Y** might be so nervous, and then deciding what should be done about her theory. Then we hear the entire monologue again, this time in a far different environment, casting great doubt on the sanity of **Mrs. X's** frustrated mind:

2.Do you remember I was the first to say "Forgive him"? Do you remember that? You would be married now and have a home. Remember that Christmas when you went out to visit you fiancé's parents in the country? How you gloried in the happiness of home life and really longed to quit the theatre forever? Yes, Amelia dear, home is the best of all--next to the theatre--and as for children--well, you don't understand that." (TS,P.21).

4.1.2.Increasing Tension : the Crisis

At the heart of every dramatic play there is a conflict. Indeed, it is widely held that without conflict, there is no dramatic art. What, then, is conflict and what forms does it take in story structure?. The answer lies in the nature of **vicarious** pleasure. To enjoy something vicariously means as an observer rather than as a participant. The primal power of dramatic art is that it allows us to participate vicariously in extreme situations and events that we would likely never encounter in real life, and would avoid if we did. It permits us to be emotional *voyeurs*--to take an emotional thrill-ride--one without consequences. Yet, not all conflict involves violence:

4.(Pause. Miss Y stares at Mrs. X curiously).

Mrs. X (*thoughtfully*). Our acquaintance has been so queer. When I saw you for the first time I was afraid of you, so afraid that I didn't dare let you out of my sight; no matter when or where, I always found myself near you--I didn't dare have you for an enemy, so I became your friend. But there was always discord when you came to our house, because I saw that my husband couldn't endure you, and the whole thing seemed as awry to me as an ill-fitting gown--and I did all I could to make him friendly toward you, but with no success until you became engaged. ...I didn't get jealous--strange to say! And I remember at the christening, when you acted as godmother, I made him kiss you--he did so, and you became so confused--as it were; I didn't notice it then--didn't think about it later either--have never thought about it until--now! (TS,P. 22).

And:

5. Why are you silent? You haven't said a word this whole time, but you have let me go on talking! You have sat there, and your eyes have reeled out of me all these thoughts which lay like raw silk in its cocoon--thoughts--suspicious thoughts, perhaps. Let me see--why did you break your engagement? Why do you never come to our house any more? Why won't you come to see us tonight?... Mrs. X. Hush, you needn't speak--I understand it all! It was because--and because--and because! Yes, yes! Now all the accounts balance.(TS,P. 23).

4.1.3 Explosion : Climax (the Middle)

Technically , the dramatic conflict is a struggle between two forces or desires , either externally as between two characters or internally as a conflict within a person's mind . Thus , Almost as powerful as

fighting is the argument. It can range anywhere from a mild disagreement to an in-your-face shouting match. A good argument is essentially a fight with words. In fact, today we speak of verbal abuse as being on a par with physical abuse. It is hard to imagine any dramatic material that does not contain an argument of some kind. Since it involves language rather than hardware, it has the added advantage of developing character as well as introducing ideas and facts that further the plot. Strindberg uses an argument to get characters to reveal thoughts that they otherwise would conceal. An emotional argument gives an excuse for his characters to reveal inner states of mind without seeming artificial and stagy:

**6. That's it. Fie, I won't sit at the same table with you.
(Moves her things to another table) That's the reason
I had to embroider tulips--which I hate--on his
slippers, because you are fond of tulips; that's why
(throws slippers on the floor) that's why my boy is
named Eskil--because it's your father's name; that's
why I wear your colors, read your authors, eat your
favorite dishes, drink your drinks--chocolate, for
instance; that's why--oh--my God--it's terrible, when
you think about it; it's terrible. Everything,
everything came from you to me, even your passions.
Your soul crept into mine, like a worm into an apple,
ate and ate, bored and bored, until nothing was left
but the rind and a little black dust within. I wanted
to get away from you, but I couldn't; you lay like a
snake and charmed me with your black eyes; I felt
that when I lifted my wings they only dragged me
down; I lay in the water with bound feet, and the
stronger I strove to keep up the deeper I worked my
self down, down, until I sank to the bottom, where
you lay like a giant crab to clutch me in your claws--
and there I am lying now.(ST,P. 24).**

And:

7.I hate you, hate you, hate you! And you only sit there silent-- silent and indifferent; indifferent whether it's new moon or waning moon, Christmas or New Year's, whether others are happy or unhappy; without power to hate or love; as quiet as a stork by a rat hole--you couldn't scent your prey and capture it, but you could lie in wait for it! You sit here in your corner of the café--did you know it's called "the Rat Trap" for you? (ST,P. 25).

4.1.4. Return to the original situation: (*donouement*)

Both of the (ST) 's characters are excessively flexible .The technique of characterization of the one act –play requires rapidity and flexibility Rapidity means that the dramatist must quickly characterize , leaving no line of dialogue without dramatic contribution to the main method of portraying characters . Flexibility indicates the sudden shift of the character's behaviour and responds towards the others without presenting a long exposition to introduce or motivate this changeability(Wayne,1967: IX) . Accordingly, in (TS), we see that the characters's behaviour is easily changed to suit its specific situation and conditions so that to return to the same situation . This trait is dramatically presented in the abrupt shift of **Mrs.X** brhaviour towards **Miss . Y. Mrs. X** is suddenly going to reveal her sense of confident within herself so she says :

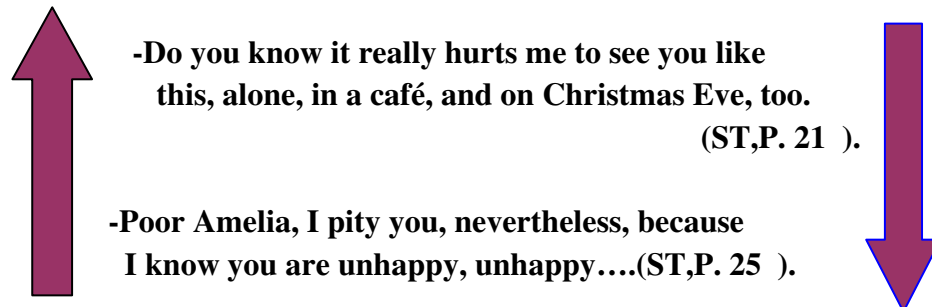
6.And if you taught me how to dress--*tant mieux!*--that has only made me more attractive to my husband; so you lost and I won there....we mustn't be too exacting.... Perhaps, take it all in all, I am at this moment the stronger one. You received nothing from me, but you gave me much. And why are you always silent, silent, silent? I thought that was strength, but perhaps it is because you have nothing to say! Because you never think about anything! (TS,P. 25).

4.1.4.1. The End

The dramatic aim of the previous represented action is to focus our attention on this specific situation itself, which will primarily serve as a frame surrounding immediately our next thoughts. Henceforth, the cynical action of **Mrs. X.** is over- determined, in that, there are more than enough reasons for her action. But the main reason is revealed by **Mrs. X** herself(**See Figure No. 6**). She says :

7. Poor Amelia, I pity you, nevertheless, because

I know you are unhappy, unhappy like one who has been wounded, and angry because you are wounded. I can't be angry with you, no matter how much I want to be.... ,(TS,P.25).

**Figure No.(6)****The Cynical Action of Mrs. X towards Miss Y****4.2. "The Stronger " as Monodrama**

A central character may be set up by the author to end up with an understanding of what happens that the audience is supposed to appreciate as off the mark -- mistaken in some minor or major particular, even outright warped. The author's job here is to convey, through the distorted lens of the narrator's consciousness, enough clues for it to dawn on the readership that its job is to construct a different understanding of what has happened, or of its meaning, than the narrator himself or herself ever arrives at.

Most of us "talk to ourselves" (**aloud**) on some rare occasions, but few if any have a practice of sustained oral self-address in private. Yet

that is what a monodrama consists of. Monodrama - literally "**talking and acting alone**" - derives from the theater, where early on the need was felt to be able to give an occasional inside view of the private thinking of a character. In the theater, no thinking can be made directly available to the audience unless it is brought to speech, so it is necessary to propose a convention: the character would speak aloud, and the audience would understand that what they were to imagine they were hearing is what the character is saying to himself, or what he would say if he were to give voice to his thoughts. In other words, the audience was invited to imagine that the character was "thinking aloud," but was expected to agree not to import into its judgments about the character those considerations it might import in real life if it were to hear a person carrying on aloud with himself(Encyclopedia, 2003: 2). That is, the audience is not to suppose that the character is *necessarily* unbalanced *just because* he is speaking aloud to himself, however vehemently. Of course, at the same time, this does *not necessarily* mean that the audience is expected never to suppose that the character *is* balanced! Everything depends on the nature of the thinking put before us for inspection!

A monodrama, in other words, is a type of dramatic discourse. But it differs from a [dramatic monologue](#) in that, with the latter, we are to suppose not only a particular scene and situation, but that in this situation is *another person*, an addressee who is not the speaker, but an additional concrete character who, however, does not speak. In a dramatic monologue we are challenged to imagine this other person's reactions, expressed and unexpressed, whether anticipated or unanticipated by the speaker, and whether the speaker addresses these or, apparently, does not. In a monodrama, we are invited to suppose that the speaker is actually in complete privacy as present.

Then, **Mrs. X** 's monodrama tends to be autobiographical and intimately connected to the individual bodies that have conceived them as well as to the temporal and spatial context out of which they have grown. The language of the play is oral and spontaneous, showing remarkable similarity to the entries of diaries. The dramaturgical structure displays heavy reliance upon memory as the speaker moves freely and frequently imperceptibly between the past and the present(See **TableNo. 2**).

Table No.(2)
The representation of thoughts or consciousness of Mrs. X. in
"The Stronger"

Term	Formal Griteria	Present	Past	Effect
interior monologue (direct thought in longer passages): A Monodrama	reference to character in first person, uses narrative present, and past syntactical conventions	I really think... I've bought... I know... I hate... I know he's faithful... Oh, yes ,I know. I don't know why... I know now... I think it's so horrid... I don't know... I remember... I haven't thought... I see it all now! I don't want... I hate... ...,now I think of it... I lay... I'm laying there now! Ugh, how I hate you... I feel sorry ... I know you're unhappy... I can't be... I think you have... I suppose ... I don't regret it! I want to own... I really am the stronger-as I have done. Now I'm going home-... Now I'm going home, to love him.	I thought... I was... I wanted... I could understand... I got... But I didn't. I didn't.... I was... I was at home! I'd heard it... Iwas never quite sure... I always felt... I first met you... Iwas afraid of you... I went... I took care... I didn't dare... I didn't dare become... I became your friend... I always felt awkward... I saw... I felt uncomfortable... I did everything to make... I didn't become jealous... I made him... I didn't notice... I had... I had to wear your... I wanted to run away... I couldn't... I tried to... I sank... I reached the bottom... I'd like to be... I'd run away... I had gone of... I used to think	high degree of immediacy, can reproduce character's stream of consciousness

The Plot is primarily oriented around the personal process of the central character ,i.e. **Mrs. X**. with dramatic conflict arising out a sense of oppositional discourses, as the speaker's stream of consciousness runs perpendicular to her history.

It was clear pretty much at the outset that, we are dealing with a "**first-person**" narrator: the narrator refers to herself as "**I**." When this happens, we are on notice that the play is being told to us by a one of the [characters](#) in the play. Monodrama, however, unlike prose forms of personal expression, is conceived with performance in mind. The presence of viewing character in the context of a live performance introduces a different set of both aesthetic and social questions as the issue of the representation of the private '**I**' is brought to the forefront.

The speaker's subjectivity is found to be dependent upon the participation of the other character , i.e. **Miss Y** in an act of semiotic interpretation. The '**I**' becomes contingent upon a wide range of cultural values and ideological .

The stream of consciousness theatricality with which Strindberg has crafted his monodrama *Preparing* hints at an awareness of the complications implicit in playing solitaire([Freedman,1990](#):75). The piece depicts **Mrs.X** engaged in the act of preparing her personality for various occasions which are made socially integral to a woman's experience. The speaker's ritualized dressing and living of her body become an analysis of how women find themselves participating in a life cycle of preparation for a drama that is not their own: **Everything, everything came from you to me, even your passions. Your soul crept into mine, like a worm into an apple, ate and ate, bored and bored, until nothing was left but the rind and a little black dust within. I wanted to get away from you, but I couldn't; you lay like a snake and charmed me with your black eyes; I felt that when I lifted my wings they only dragged me down; I lay in the water with bound feet, and the stronger I strove to keep up the deeper I worked my self down, down, until I sank to the bottom, where you lay like a giant crab to clutch me in your claws--and there I am lying now.**(ST,P. 24).

It is suggested that the **Mrs.X's** 'value' is dependent upon her ability to perform up to her husband expectations. Her desire is always framed and contained: **And if you taught me how to dress--*tant mieux!*--that has only made me more attractive to my husband; so you lost and I won there. ... --we mustn't be too exacting.... You received nothing from me, but you gave me much.**(TS,P. 25).

Mrs.X is overtly aware of the power her faith in her husband has in the determination of her worth. With this awareness, she similarly condemns all of the other character as guilty. The collective 'you' that she prepares for is defined as hostile and antagonistic from the first lines of the play where she cries : **Good afternoon, Amelia. You're sitting here alone on Christmas Eve like a poor bachelor! ... Do you know it really hurts me to see you like this, alone, in a café, and on Christmas Eve, too. ...You know what, Amelia! I believe you would have done better to have kept him!**(TS,P.21).

Miss. Y. is recognized as crucial to the cycle of deception and role-playing because it is her gaze which sanctions and approves the appearance of **Mrs. X** 's stream of consciousness . Even though **Mrs. X** is ostensibly alone on the stage

The speaker, **Mrs. X.**, is revealed in the simultaneous process of uncovering and exposing herself to **Miss. Y** whose presence and participation become integral to her discovery. She is established as 'very real' as she speaks of her own life and acknowledges the presence and reactions of her as supportive. The conventions of the theatrical frame appear to disappear and are replaced by 'real life. That is to say that ,**Mrs. X**'s monodrama constructs a woman attempting to manage family, marriage and career whilst juggling answering machine , Miss y observing , diapers . The final act of the play finds **Mrs. .X.** on the verge of nervous collapse, her monologue seeping into disjointed hysteria:

6.And if you taught me how to dress--*tant mieux!*--that has only made me more attractive to my husband; so you lost and I won there. Well, judging by certain signs, I believe you have already lost him; and you certainly intended that I should leave him--do as you did with your fiancé and regret as you now regret; but, you

see, I don't do that--we mustn't be too exacting.... Perhaps, take it all in all, I am at this moment the stronger one. You received nothing from me, but you gave me much. You have no little Eskil to cherish, even if your father's name was Eskil. And why are you always silent, silent, silent? I thought that was strength, but perhaps it is because you have nothing to say! Because you never think about anything! (TS,P.25).

Recognizing the onset of madness, **Mrs .X** reaches out. Her true personality is penetrated and **Miss Y** is exposed and invited into **Mrs. X's** space. At this moment the boundary that distinguishes 'play' from 'real life' is approached, and an intimate connection is established between **Miss .Y** and **Mrs. X** . Theoretically, **Miss. Y** becomes a responsible confidant, positioned not to 'determine' **Mrs. X** but instead to acknowledge and respond to her as a real, live subject. The legacy of motherhood stands dutifully behind her.

Strindberg (Gutman,2001: 2)argues that the paradox of avant-garde theatre is that in seeking to stage a moment outside of representation, one cannot evade the gaze of the audience that constitutes that representation. He notes: 'Theatre has always suggested a funhouse of mirrors we never escape, a precession of simulacra which remind us we can never reach a body outside of representation. **The Mrs. X's** monodrama, in its very struggle to surmount the pitfalls of representation, is a documentation of the struggle to control one's view.

5.Conclusion

In the light of the previous stylistic analysis of Strindberg' " **The Stronger** " , the researcher has reached the following concluding remarks :

1.The term **Situational - plot Structure** is not generally used to refer to just any situation characterized by conflict that a dramatic work seeks to interest us in. It is employed rather to point some conflict that the action of the play seeks to engage us in the presentation of. A dramatic structural situation (in this special technical sense of the term) will be part of the action that the play foregrounds as present. In **TS** , the conflict between **Mrs.X** and **Miss Y**. is over and done with before the play even begins, and whose history is uncovered in the course of the unfolding action that the play does present for our immediate inspection.

There does not seem any point in limiting the concept in this way. The purpose of the notion in the first place is to focus our attention on a particular kind of situation that structured 'imaginative involvement in the actions presented dramas. In *TS*, the conflict between the two women is not disqualified from being spoken of as the only one dramatic situation of the play, just because it is not resolved at the end of the play. Indeed, the play is so constructed as to invest its hopes of staying power with the audience in the fact that larger conflict between the women concerning men remains open when the curtain falls. The various issues connected with this conflict are, if anything, even more central to the ultimate theme of the work as a whole than those the audience is left to ponder in evaluating the women's decision to withhold what they know. In fact, the function of this dramatic question -- which has to get laid on the table almost immediately -- is to hold our attention until we can get oriented with the deeper concerns of the play, among which can be the thematic issues at stake in the various conflicts the play is designed to involve us in.

2. Strindberg calls the audience's gaze into the play by exhibiting a purloined gaze, a gaze that announces that it has always been presented to our eyes; is designed only to be taken up by them. We can conclude that, Strindberg announces that the 'I' is always already another; its characters assure us of their displacement, announcing, 'I am already taken. In *TS*, the monodrama in particular, is the appropriate medium for the dislodgement of the audience's gaze and the re-addressing of representation. When *Mrs.X* speaks in the first person singular, the solo speaker understands that 'I' is always already beyond her control. It is that reality that she documents. From the direct experience, monodrama feeds back to revise the audience's horizon of expectations and to challenge the very conventions and meanings that that 'I' represents.

3. In *TS*, Strindberg is cleverly open the debate about gender roles. He captures wonderfully the fundamental duality of the role woman play in society. With *Mrs. X*, we have the woman as caring mother and devoted wife. A person who has lost all individuality and has been completely reshaped by the demands of her husband, a woman whose glories are in the stability and warmth of the family life she has

achieved . On the other hand , we have **Miss. Y.** , who is independent woman , who lives her life her own way and is able , because of her independence to shape others to her personality , but who ultimately ends up alone in a restaurant on **Christmas Eve** . Strindberg 's point is precisely to make them stereotypes and set them off against each other , so that what is essentially a quarrel between tow women becomes a larger debate about the role of women in society, and that is why , the researcher thinks , they have no names but merely symbols ,**Mrs.X** and **Miss .Y.**

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