

Elise in The Pelican

In the chamber plays, Strindberg wanted to reveal clichés and archetypes, in *The Pelican* the myth of the good mother. But Strindberg's intentions and finished text are rarely identical.

Elise rebels both against the role of mother and wife. She is a middle-aged widow who has left her husband and thus perhaps also killed him. She refused to breastfeed her children and continues to starve them, putting her sensuality first, unabashedly affirms her sexuality, even the one that is "against nature", and longs openly - "I have longed for you" - or already has a relationship with his son-in-law: He "treats me not as a mother-in-law, but as a sister, because not to say girlfriend". Elise is therefore "boundless" in every way to use a popular adjective from our own time. She also has no counterpart in Strindberg's contemporary dramas, but on the other hand passionate fellow sisters in the *Medea* of Greek drama and mythology and in Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth*.

Is Elise an idol? A Jungian Evil Mother? Yes, but - perhaps the strangest thing in this strange drama - her children understand and forgive her, in the end: "poor mother, who was so evil, so evil". She also gets to defend herself. Do the children know her childhood? The basic conditions of man, the relationship between child and parents, man and woman, is poisoned from the foundation, from "the first parents", Adam and Eve.

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