

Kristina in Master Olof

In this great drama of ideas between men there is an interesting female supporting role: Kristina.

She is the wife of the reformer Olaus Petri, daughter of the rebel and the anabaptist Gert Bokpröntare, daughter-in-law of her namesake, the deeply religious and bigoted Kristina who strongly distances herself from both Olof and his wife.

Torn between loyalties, Kristina realizes that she has been deliberately kept in the dark all her life, first by her father and then by her husband. She has no knowledge of society but reacts spontaneously against anything that feels wrong. Her father wants her to go to a monastery, but she herself wants to follow Olof in his work to reform the church and face the new age.

Kristina is one of Strindberg's most sympathetic female portraits, straight-backed and empathetic. He lets her tell a lot of truths about the role of women in society.

Strindberg sharpens the dialogue in this scene between the spouses in the home at the beginning of the third act:

Kristina waters flowers, prattles with the birds in a cage. Olof is sitting at the desk and is getting increasingly irritated. She asks about his work, he replies that he is translating a text, and she asks him to read a paragraph (which appears as almost parodic theoretical and incomprehensible).

Kristina: Hold up! Why can't I understand this? Don't I have the same spiritual powers as you? I am ashamed of you, Olof, that you should have such a poor wife, who does not understand what you say; no, I'll stick to my knitting, I'll clean and dust your study, I'll at least learn to understand the desires in your eyes. I will be your slave girl, but never, never shall I understand you!

Kristina: Do you think I can learn to understand your book there?

Olof: I am convinced of that! But you won't get that!

Kristina: Should I still be kept in the dark?

Olof: No no, understand me. The moment you understood what I understood you would stop admiring me...

Kristina: Like a God....

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