



The Wife

Sigrid Undset , Tiina Nunnally (Translator) , Sherrill Harbison (Introduction)

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In **Kristin Lavransdatter** (1920-1922), **Sigrid Undset** interweaves political, social, and religious history with the daily aspects of family life to create a colorful, richly detailed tapestry of Norway during the fourteenth-century. The trilogy, however, is more than a journey into the past. Undset's own life—her familiarity with Norse sagas and folklore and with a wide range of medieval literature, her experiences as a daughter, wife, and mother, and her deep religious faith—profoundly influenced her writing. Her grasp of the connections between past and present and of human nature itself, combined with the extraordinary quality of her writing, sets her works far above the genre of "historical novels." This new translation by Tina Nunnally—the first English version since Charles Archer's translation in the 1920s—captures Undset's strengths as a stylist. Nunnally, an award-winning translator, retains the natural dialog and lyrical flow of the original Norwegian, with its echoes of Old Norse legends, while deftly avoiding the stilted language and false archaisms of Archer's translation. In addition, she restores key passages left out of that edition.

Undset's ability to present a meticulously accurate historical portrait without sacrificing the poetry and narrative drive of masterful storytelling was particularly significant in her homeland. Granted independence in 1905 after five hundred years of foreign domination, Norway was eager to reclaim its national history and culture. **Kristin Lavransdatter** became a touchstone for Undset's contemporaries, and continues to be widely read by Norwegians today. In the more than 75 years since it was first published, it has also become a favorite throughout the world.

The Wife Details

Date : Published November 1st 1999 by Penguin Classics (first published 1921)

ISBN : 9780141181288

Author : Sigrid Undset , Tiina Nunnally (Translator) , Sherrill Harbison (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 402 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Classics, European Literature, Scandinavian Literature

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From Reader Review The Wife for online ebook

Sinem A. says

1928 yılında nobel' i alan bu Norveçli kadın yazarın sanırım ülkemizde yayınlanmı? tek kitabı. O da Kristin Lavransdatter üçlemesinin 2. kitabı. Kitap Kristin adlı bir kızın hayatını anlatırken aslında geri planda Norveç tarihi hakkında çok şey söylüyor. keke olsa keke bilinse en azından bari bu üçlemenin diğer kitaplarını okuyabilsek.

Clif Hostetler says

This is the second book of the Kristin Lavransdatter trilogy. In my review of the *The Wreath* , the first book of the trilogy, I indicated I didn't feel optimistic about the marriage that took place at the end of the first book. This second book of the trilogy focuses on their married life (about 16 years covered by this book) during which they have seven children. The husband ended up not being as bad as I had feared. Based on fourteenth century expectations he could be rated as a mostly good husband, but certainly not perfect.

As a matter of fact the husband ends up taking some very reckless action near the end of the book that causes him to be placed in prison by the king. He's headed for certain execution which causes Kristin to exert her influence on an old admirer who in turn lobbies people in power to spare his life. These actions by Kristin are something of a turnaround for her because her relationship with her husband had become distant and cold. But when his life was in jeopardy her feelings of loyalty kicked in.

This book is full of many varied characters with differing strengths and weaknesses. The level of detail regarding everyday life is impressive. The description of the delivery of Kristin's first child is about as painful and drawn out as a written description can be. The same can be said for the death of Kristin's father near the end of the book. Thus I credit the author with good writing.

This book is as close one can get to a time machine for a visit to fourteenth century life in Norway. The author received the 1928 Nobel Prize for Literature based largely on Kristin Lavransdatter trilogy.

Tatyana Naumova says

???, ?????? ??? ??? ??? ??????

Nicola says

3 1/2 stars

2 in the Kristin Lavransdatter trilogy and to my mind a bit of an improvement on the first. Probably because as Kristin grows up and takes on the responsibility of being mistress of the Husaby estate we learn

more about the day to day life of those times in a way that we really couldn't when she was a young girl and just running around deciding who she was going to marry.

Kristin is a bit of a contradictory character. After her flightiness of the previous book I wasn't prepared for her to be so efficient at running a house, especially one that had been so badly neglected. But as soon as she had arrived and the wedding guests had departed (which showed a concern for saving her husband's face by not launching into it in front of everyone) she rolled up her sleeves and set straight to work, turning the house into a liveable residence. And, not only the house, but the stores and other such outbuilding which would obviously have a great impact on the profitability of the estate. Women of these times, we must infer, did not sit placidly down spinning and sewing - they were extremely productive members of the household.

All of this was very good to see, as was her holy pilgrimage. Not that I care myself about 'sin' but I thought that as a pious young lady she really did need to face up to the fact that she had behaved very badly according to the social and religious mores of the day. If only she'd left it at that but along with all of this maturity she also unfortunately entered into a running war with her husband where she displayed the passive aggressive sulkiness of a child.

Erland (hubby) took this in pretty good part considering his obviously hot temper. Partly because of his undoubted guilt over the appalling way he'd seduced her into, er, *anticipating* their wedding vows and partly (which was very pleasant to see) because he obviously did love her very much. I found Kristin once again to be very frustrating. Whatever had happened they couldn't change the past and seeing as they were now married for better or worse why on earth couldn't she put it behind her, truly forgive Erland for his misdeeds and become the contented and happy wife she really had it in her to be?

I'm tempted to blame it all on religion - that constant drumming into the ears of sin, sin, sin! It certainly played a part, a large part, especially if you consider the fact that it was because it was a sin in the eyes of god that Kristin wasn't a maiden on her wedding day that caused her father so much shame. If he hadn't cared, and if Kristin hadn't known how much he cared... Well, it would have been a very different book. Even so, after fight number 1001 over what couldn't be fixed I just wanted to give Kristin a right good shake and tell her to stop slicing off her nose to spite her face. She had made her choice and to keep flinging it in Erlands face was no part of a proper Christian wife. But there, isn't that always the way? Using religious piety for sanctimonious blaming of other people in an attempt to shift the guilt for your own misdeeds.

Anywho!

There was a lot going on around the constant fights and giving birth to lots and lots of babies. Norway was in a rather interesting situation as regards to Kings at the time and I highly suggest any reader reads the introduction to familiarise themselves with the bare bones of what was going on as it will make the 'male' conversations a lot more comprehensible. The men of course being very interested in the politics of the realm. Kristin paid absolutely no attention, even with all of the repeated meetings in Husaby and pretty treasonous talk going on right under her nose. As far as she was concerned it had nothing to do with her. Rather a blinkered view but, ok.

Rounding out the political talk was some history and economic lessons. I was very impressed to learn that women had a lot of economic power. In what was surely a holdout from pre-Christian times, they inherited property in their own right with, from what I could gather, equal shares among all the legitimate children, male or female. And, what is truly astonishing, *they kept their dowry and any inheritance separate from their husband!* If a wealthy woman married a man then he had no claim on her property or money. If she died without producing an heir then everything she had went to her nearest kin and he had to vacate the premises.

Wow! I do wonder how long that lasted once Christianity really got going in the country? That would not have sat well with the highly patriarchal nature of that religion at all!

Such things may not interest a lot of readers, but I do love my history and I know so little of Scandinavian history especially that it's great to get exposed to it in this way.

I'll shortly be reading the final book Kristin Lavransdatter, III: The Cross. I have to say I am feeling just a teensy bit anxious seeing as the picture on the front cover is a woman with a cross dangling from her wrist in what looks suspiciously like an attitude of weeping remorse. I've felt that this book has already pushed my tolerance for excessive catholic induced wailing over sin and I would prefer less not more of it in the concluding part of the trilogy.

Barksdale Penick says

The second book in the Kristin Lavransdatter series somehow reappeared in my life several months after I finished the first one, which I had loved. This tale is set in medieval Norway, which was united and relatively prosperous and had turned to Christianity recently enough that the old gods still held some sway here and there. Kristin is now married to a flawed man, but they love each other and raise 6 boys. I found the beginning a little slow, with debates about religion and faith going on for longer than I liked. But eventually the plot accelerates and, as with the first volume, ends with an emotional twist that is superbly developed. And that is what is so great about these books. By having such convincing emotional relationships set in medieval Norway, I was reminded that people have always been people, and their loves and lusts and goals and frustrations are so much like ours today.

Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says

3.5 stars

I expected to like this volume even more than the previous one, because in general I prefer content I've seen less often, and the story of a woman making her way as a wife and mother is much less common in my reading than the story of her falling in love and trying to avoid arranged marriage. But I actually prefer the first volume. The Wreath has its almost melodramatic moments, but it definitely kept me interested, while The Wife – covering about 15 years of Kristin's married life – slows that down. There's a lot about death, childbirth, illness, and Kristin obsessing about her sins. I know, it's the Middle Ages. But I wanted this book to be over more than I wanted to read it.

That isn't to deny its many positive qualities. Undset has clearly done a thorough job of researching the time period, and brings it to life. The writing is good, with beautiful descriptions of the natural world. The characters are believable as real people and as products of their culture. Kristin and Erlend's marriage turns out realistically, basically what you'd expect from the first book, and that depiction is a rare achievement in fiction, where protagonists' marriages are usually either near-perfect bliss or utterly terrible (I would call this couple's marriage a fairly bad one but am not sure they would say the same). Like the first volume, this one ends in an interesting place – it picks up with some major events in the last 75 pages or so and left me curious enough about the fallout that I may still pick up the third.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Kristin Lavransdatter 2: Husfrue=The Wife (Kristin Lavransdatter #2), Sigrid Undset

Beth says

I enjoyed this even more than The Wreath...The characters really came alive for me in their complexity, and new depths to their personalities were revealed, often as the characters were experiencing revelation themselves. It was interesting to learn so much more about Kristin's parents and their relationship, and to watch Kristin grow to understand more about them. As we mature we are increasingly (hopefully!) able to see others apart from their relationship to ourselves and their importance to ourselves. It was amazing to her to realize that her parents had such fullness to their lives, both joyful and painful, apart from her.

I also came across a passage that stunned me with its beauty, and I will recall it with pleasure: *"Her heart felt as if it were breaking in her breast, bleeding and bleeding, young and fierce. From grief over the warm and ardent love which she had lost and still secretly mourned; from anguished joy over the pale, luminous love which drew her to the farthest boundaries of life on this earth. Through the great darkness that would come, she saw the gleam of another, gentler sun, and she sensed the fragrance of the herbs in the garden at world's end."*

This captures so beautifully Ragnfrid's experience and inner life at this exact moment in her story. I am glad that Sigrid Undset didn't skip this moment, and that Tiina Nunnaly did such a gorgeous job on translation. Looking forward to continuing through The Cross if I can overcome my addiction to the Sudoku app on my iPad...

Tracey says

This is the second book in the trilogy.

I feel that Undset has done a good job of immersing the reader in the life of people in this time period, be it poor or rich. Definitely 'calamitous' times.

Religion was a staff to people then when life was so fragile and insecure. I am a christian but not a Roman Catholic and so it is interesting to me how the people sought intercession through those that had gone before. I believe it makes sense that the people would find solace from this.

Kristin feels deeply that she let down her father by her actions in book 1. She seems to take this out on Erlend, albeit unconsciously. She is quite a shrew at times. In the first book Kristin was the virginal fair maid. In this she seems to be a shrewish unforgiving wife.

In the last part of the book we focus on Erlend and the things he had been doing off the scenes.

There was a lot more of Norwegian history in this part which, being a historian first and a literature lover second, really appeals to me. There had been a period of relative stability and peace with King Haakon IV (1217-1263) and again under his son, Magnus known as the lawmender. However he only had a daughter

and her son was proclaimed king at the age of 3. A regency ensued and when Magnus claimed to come into his majority at the age of 15. This caused great unrest. The law was that he could not claim this until he was 20. Several uprisings occurred, one of which is described in this part of the book.

I was surprised at the ending of this part as I expected Erlend was to lose his life. Kristin comes to recognise her much she loves her husband and for the first time since book 1 she puts Erlend first in her thoughts and efforts.

We have the Black Death to look forward to in book 3. Between 1349-50 it has been estimated it killed 50% of the population of Norway.

Matty-Swytla says

3.5 stars

I think I prefer the first book of the trilogy because I got easily bored with some of the more religious passages in this book, which are quite many. While that is completely understandable, I got bored since few characters learned anything from repetition of the same old arguments from the first book. I still love Lavrans and wish we got to see more of him, but the story follows his daughter Kristin, so tough luck.

The main issue I have with this book is that Kristin doesn't know when to let things go, rehashing her past and her sins over and over again, to the detriment of her marriage and sanity. It's rather ugly of her to throw her past Erlend's face and blame him for her follies as a young maiden, as if she wasn't an active participant. I saw red - woman, you're married to the guy you've happily slept with in the worst places imaginable while being betrothed to another, and now you're not happy that you got him as a husband?! Wasn't this what you wanted? So, needless to say, the marriage is kind of rocky at times, and at one points functions best when Erlend is far away. Somehow they always find a way to each other, usually when one of them is in some kind of trouble. They are lucky so many people like them and help them out.

I think I'll finish the trilogy sometime next year. Now I need a break from the deep dysfunction of these two. I can already imagine the horrors their sons will turn out to be (or not?).

booklady says

It's not hard to see why/how Kristin Lavransdatter (the trilogy) won the 1928 Nobel Prize for Literature. This saga is amazing in so many respects: authentic attention to detail, moving narrative and deep insight into the human psyche. I am longing for someone who has read the book, to discuss it with me.

The author has done a phenomenal job presenting the slower-paced, farming-based, medieval life, centered on traditional values marked by a calendar of saint's days. She describes the local folklore and myths including where they occasionally obfuscate Christian morals while still giving us intelligent and believable men and women from that era. It is both refreshing to discover that our forebears struggled with many of the same moral dilemmas we face today and discouraging to realize their standards of moral conduct were higher than our own.

I did not want to put this book down. Going immediately to start the final book in the trilogy.

Calzean says

This book covers in great detail the Norway of the 14th century. Kristin gives birth to 7 sons, her husband is still reckless but tries hard. Their love is apparent even though they are both flawed.

The funeral preparation for Kristin's father was a strange highlight.

As in the first book, there were long sections of dialogue or internal thoughts mainly from Kristin and Erlend. Then occasionally there would be a major incident to bring life back into the story. However for me, there was a bit too much repetition covering their regrets on how they were married.

Nonetheless, the characters remain human, the rules and laws covering behaviour and allegiances were interesting, the power of the Church and religion were covered respectably while Norway comes out of it as a fairly mature and structured country for the Middle Ages.

Alex Marshall says

Somewhat to my surprise, I finished this, part 2 of "Kristin Lavransdatter". Surprised, because in one way it's chick-lit -- 1920s mediaeval Norwegian chick-lit. Besides, it's heavy on the Church, sin retribution etc, and very slow and detailed. But the detail has its own fascination; if you've ever wondered what 14th-century Norwegian farming families ate for dinner, and what they wore while eating it, and who sat where, and what they talked about, not to mention how long they sat there and where they slept afterwards, you're in for a treat. I didn't know I cared, or that I cd be interested in the life story of a nice girl who stands by her man no matter what. The "what" gets quite exciting there, for a bit, but then we're back to life on the farm, noting with amazement that bivouacking in a hole in the snow was quite the thing to break a journey, and enjoying lyrical descriptions of the Norwegian landscape in all its variety.

Kristine Grønlund says

En kamp å komme seg gjennom. Tok 7 måneder for en grunn...

Lori says

What a nightmare.

I totally understand showing the bad things you reap when you make awful decisions, but it's hard to read a whole book where nothing good happens.

At the point where Kristin is blaming herself for her husband's affair, I became so angry I had to skim the last 100 pages.

I have no idea why she loves Ereland at this point, and even less of a clue as to why she believes he loves

her. No interest in reading the third book.....
